The 102 minutes that changed America

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Image
A graphic illustration of how the attacks unfolded - Jonathan Storey - AFP
A graphic illustration of how the attacks unfolded. Jonathan Storey - AFP

The attacks that left nearly 3,000 people dead took less than two hours to carry out.

First, two planes smashed into New York's World Trade Center, killing 2,753.

A third plane hit the Pentagon defence headquarters in Washington, killing another 184 people.

Forty more died after a fourth plane crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Investigators believe it had been headed for the White House but was stopped by a passenger revolt.

This piece drawn up by AFP for the 15th anniversary in 2016 of what became known as just 9/11 shows how events unfolded.

- 8:46 am: The first strike -

An American Airlines Boeing 767 making a Boston-Los Angeles connection with 92 people on board -- including five hijackers -- smashes into the North Tower of the World Trade Center (WTC), leaving a giant hole in the building's facade. Thick smoke trails into the sky from the tower's upper floors.

- 9:03 am: Second tower hit -

A United Airlines Boeing 767 making a Boston-Los Angeles connection with 65 people on board -- including five hijackers -- hits the South Tower of the WTC, sparking a massive explosion.

- 9:30 am: Bush speaks -

Then US president George W. Bush, in Sarasota, Florida, calls the blasts "an apparent terrorist attack". He orders "a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed these acts" and says he will immediately return to Washington.

- 9:37 am: Pentagon hit -

An American Airlines Boeing 757 making a Washington Dulles-Los Angeles connection with 64 people on board -- including five hijackers -- smashes into the Pentagon in suburban Washington, setting off two explosions.

- 9:42 am: Planes grounded -

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) orders the cancellation of all commercial flights in the United States.

- 9:59 am: South Tower collapses -

The WTC's South Tower, hit 56 minutes earlier, collapses in a huge cloud of smoke and dust.

- 10:03 am: Crash in Pennsylvania

A United Airlines Boeing 757 travelling from Newark to San Francisco with 44 people on board -- including four hijackers -- crashes into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers and crew apparently fought with the hijackers.

- 10:28 am: North Tower collapses -

The North Tower of the WTC collapses, an hour and 42 minutes after it was struck. A huge cloud of dust blankets lower Manhattan.

Video file
A videographic on how the 9/11 attacks unfolded. Peter Shard/Stephane Koguc/Nilay Syam - AFP

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