

# 9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

## *HISTORICAL BACKGROUND*

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen members of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda hijacked<sup>1</sup> four airplanes. Two of the planes were flown straight into the twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center, both of which fell within hours. A third was smashed into the Pentagon, near Washington, D.C. The fourth crashed in a Pennsylvania field after passengers and flight crew, having learned via cell phone of the hijackings, wrestled with the terrorists for control of the plane whose target was probably either the U.S. Capitol or the White House. Nearly 3,000 people, including the terrorists, died in these attacks.

The hijackers gave many good reasons for these deadly attacks – it was a reaction to American foreign policy<sup>2</sup> in the Middle East, including the presence of American troops in the area (especially near holy Muslim places in Saudi Arabia) and American support for Israel. In 1998 al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden issued an order stating that killing "Americans and their allies<sup>3</sup> is an individual duty for all Muslims." Attacks soon followed on U.S. government offices in Africa, killing hundreds, and on a U.S. Navy ship off the coast of Yemen, killing seventeen sailors. Bin Laden himself was watched and followed and killed by American forces in Pakistan on May 1, 2011.



The response to 9/11 was a need for a worldwide effort that has relied heavily on American and other nations' valuable supplies. Some of these changes, such as ending of certain privacy rights<sup>4</sup>, have led to worries about security and America's dedication to freedom. These changes lead us to focus on the basic rules of thinking that inspire our system of government and way of life.

<sup>1</sup> hijacked: to take over by force

<sup>2</sup> foreign policy: a government's plan in dealing with other nations

<sup>3</sup> allies: a country or group of countries that combine its resources/military with another country

<sup>4</sup> privacy rights: The right to privacy is our right to keep an area around us, which includes our body, home, property, thoughts, feelings, and identity. The right to privacy gives us the ability to choose which parts in this area can be known by others.

# 9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

*STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE NATION GEORGE W. BUSH SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, 8:30 PM*  
(Part I)

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens<sup>1</sup>, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate<sup>2</sup> and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable<sup>3</sup> acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief<sup>4</sup>, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding<sup>5</sup> anger. These acts of mass murder were intended<sup>6</sup> to frighten our nation into chaos<sup>7</sup> and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon<sup>8</sup> for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining. Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature<sup>9</sup>. And we responded with the best of America -- with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could. Immediately following the first attack, I implemented<sup>10</sup> our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts. Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured<sup>11</sup>, and to take every precaution<sup>12</sup> to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies<sup>13</sup> in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential<sup>14</sup> personnel tonight, and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions<sup>15</sup> remain strong, and the American economy<sup>16</sup> will be open for business, as well. The search is underway<sup>17</sup> for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement<sup>18</sup> communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction<sup>19</sup> between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor<sup>20</sup> them. I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences<sup>21</sup> and assistance<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> citizens: people who legally live in a country

<sup>2</sup> deliberate: carefully planned

<sup>3</sup> despicable: disgusting

<sup>4</sup> disbelief: shock/not believing

<sup>5</sup> unyielding: stubborn

<sup>6</sup> intended: meant

<sup>7</sup> chaos: noise and confusion

<sup>8</sup> beacon: guiding light

<sup>9</sup> human nature: how humans act

<sup>10</sup> implemented: put into use

<sup>11</sup> injured: hurt

<sup>12</sup> precaution: step taken to prevent trouble

<sup>13</sup> federal agency: government services/businesses

<sup>14</sup> essential: extremely important

<sup>15</sup> financial institutions: banks

<sup>16</sup> economy: process for making/selling

<sup>17</sup> underway: happening now

<sup>18</sup> law enforcement: police

<sup>19</sup> distinction: difference between

<sup>20</sup> harbor: to hide someone

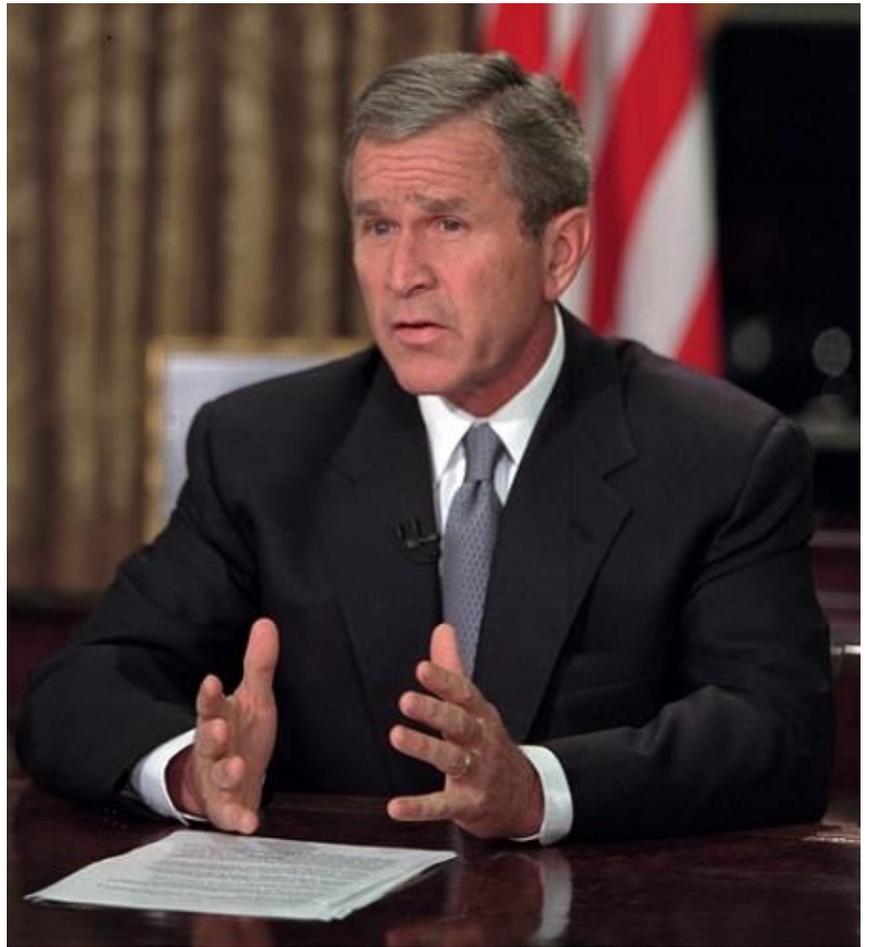
<sup>21</sup> condolences: kind words (because something bad happened)

<sup>22</sup> assistance: help

## 9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE NATION GEORGE W. BUSH SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, 8:30 PM  
(Part II)

America and our friends and allies<sup>1</sup> join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism. Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve<sup>2</sup>, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm<sup>3</sup> 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me." This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite<sup>4</sup> in our resolve<sup>5</sup> for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world. Thank you. Good night, and God bless America.



<sup>1</sup> allies: a country or group of countries that combine its resources/military with another country

<sup>2</sup> grieve: suffer (because of death)

<sup>3</sup> Psalm: religious song

<sup>4</sup> unite: come together

<sup>5</sup> resolve: willpower/determination

Video of Bush's speech: [www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothetation.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothetation.htm)

# 9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

*ADDRESS TO CONGRESS REQUESTING A DECLARATION OF WAR FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT DECEMBER 8, 1941*

(Part I)

Mr. Vice President, and Mr. Speaker, and Members of the Senate and House of Representatives: Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy<sup>1</sup>—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately<sup>2</sup> attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. The United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation<sup>3</sup> of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed<sup>4</sup>, one hour after Japanese air squadrons<sup>5</sup> had commenced<sup>6</sup> bombing in the American Island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador<sup>7</sup> to the United States and his colleague<sup>8</sup> delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic<sup>9</sup> negotiations<sup>10</sup>, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack. It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening<sup>11</sup> time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive<sup>12</sup> the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace. The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island. Japan has, therefore, undertaken<sup>13</sup> a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications<sup>14</sup> to the very life and safety of our Nation. As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole Nation remember the character of the onslaught<sup>15</sup> against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated<sup>16</sup> invasion<sup>17</sup>, the American people in their righteous<sup>18</sup> might will win through to absolute<sup>19</sup> victory. I believe that I interpret<sup>20</sup> the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert<sup>21</sup> that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery<sup>22</sup> shall never again endanger us. Hostilities<sup>23</sup> exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave<sup>24</sup> danger.

<sup>1</sup> infamy: fame (for something bad)

<sup>2</sup> deliberately: in a carefully planned way

<sup>3</sup> solicitation: asking for/encouraging

<sup>4</sup> indeed: in fact

<sup>5</sup> squadrons: large groups of airplanes

<sup>6</sup> commenced: had begun

<sup>7</sup> ambassador: representative

<sup>8</sup> colleague: fellow worker

<sup>9</sup> diplomatic: to improve relationships with people

<sup>10</sup> negotiations: back-and-forth conversations

<sup>11</sup> intervening: in-between/helping

<sup>12</sup> deceive: lie to/fool

<sup>13</sup> undertaken: tried to

<sup>14</sup> implications: effects/results/suggestions

<sup>15</sup> onslaught: attack

<sup>16</sup> premeditated: pre-planned

<sup>17</sup> invasion: sudden, unwanted entry into a place

<sup>18</sup> righteous: honest/respectable

<sup>19</sup> absolute: complete and total

<sup>20</sup> interpret: understand

<sup>21</sup> assert: strongly defend/express

<sup>22</sup> treachery: sneaky, criminal behavior

<sup>23</sup> hostilities: angry feelings

<sup>24</sup> grave: serious

# 9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

*ADDRESS TO CONGRESS REQUESTING A DECLARATION OF WAR FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT DECEMBER 8, 1941*

(Part II)



With confidence in our armed forces—with the unbounding<sup>1</sup> determination<sup>2</sup> of our people—we will gain the inevitable<sup>3</sup> triumph, so help us God. I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked<sup>4</sup> and dastardly<sup>5</sup> attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

<sup>1</sup> unbounding:

<sup>2</sup> determination: decision about something

<sup>3</sup> inevitable: unavoidable

<sup>4</sup> unprovoked: without any reason

<sup>5</sup> dastardly: cruel

Audio of President Franklin Roosevelt's speech, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5166>

# **9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001**

## ***Follow-Up Questions***

1. Are there common themes running through these speeches? Be specific.
2. What was the reason for delivering each of these speeches?
3. What effect do you think each of these speeches had on the nation and/or the rest of the world?
4. What impressed you most about each of these speeches?
5. Explain why today's lesson was important to better help you understand the events that took place on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.