

## Patriot Day

19 years ago, we witnessed a lifechanging event. Those of us who were alive for this day, remember exactly where we were when we heard the news that an airplane, American Airlines Flight 11, was flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center, and when United Airlines Flight 175 was flown into the South Tower 17 minutes later. We then watched in horror as American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. A fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93 was hijacked and crashed into a field, killing all on board, in Pennsylvania after passengers realized the intent of the hijackers and attempted to retake the plane. The casualties for these attacks were almost 3,000 killed, 6,000 injured and with countless others effected by long term diseases from rescue operations. Personally, I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade English class, and my Science teacher came into the room and he was ghost white and told us the news.

The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks changed the landscape of America as we know it. I remember 9/12 as vividly as I remember 9/11. My father, mother, brother, sister and I were at a local Korean War monument with a group of other people living in our neighborhood. All of us with American Flags, wearing Red White or Blue, singing the National Anthem or chanting USA, and a local police officer driving by with sirens and lights on to show support. This is a far cry from just two years earlier when I was being bullied for my Patriotic views and support of my father, a Marine, and my grandfather, a Soldier. We all have these memories, but it is important for us to remember them, especially in today's day in age where Patriotic themes are under attack by many in popular culture. It is important to remember that 9/11 caused many of my generation to join the military or to become a police officer or firefighter, whose bravery was center stage on that horrific day, 343 firefighters, 72 police officers, 55 military personnel, 8 EMTs and 1 fire patrolmen (these 9 were part of privately funded emergency response teams thus not included in the FDNYs 343 count) lost their lives during the attacks. Their bravery and sacrifice saved countless lives and inspired millions of Americans.

All of us were personally affected, or know of someone who was affected, by these attacks. Whether it be someone who was killed or injured in the attack itself, someone who assisted in rescue and clean-up efforts, a member of the military who has been killed, wounded, or deployed because of the Global War on Terror. We owe it to these brave men and women to remember their sacrifices. We owe it to those who lost their lives on that horrible day, or the days that followed, to live our best lives in honor of them: to men and women like Officer John Perry, NYPD, 11 Sep 2001 New York City; Firefighter Eric Allen FDNY, 11 Sep 2001 New York City; John P. O'Neill, Edward Felt, Flight 93, 11 Sep 2001 Stonycreek Township Pennsylvania; Pfc. Walter Lewark, USA, KIA 13 Feb 2020, Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti; Sgt. Charles C. Strong, USMC, KIA 15 Sep 2014 Herat Province, Afghanistan; Master Sgt. David Poirier, USAF, KIA 28 Feb 2014, Undisclosed Location Southwest Asia; CWO3 Jonathan S. Gibson USN, KIA 17 22 Sep 2013, Red Sea; and the most recent death Sgt. Trevor Goldyn, USMC killed in Bahrain.

The 9/11 Terror Attacks helped shape how we view patriotism today. The valuable lessons we have learned as a country in the past 19 years need to be carried on to our children. We need to make sure that the next generations of Americans know of the sacrifices made by these brave men and women. This way our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will know why we have a deep love for this country, and by doing this, our great country will flourish for generations to come.

In Fraternity Charity and Loyalty,

Ben Frail, PDC

National Patriotic Instructor