

## **The Aftermath of 9/11, and the U.S's Response**

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On September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center was targeted by a terrorist group known as Al Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden. The whole nation stopped in that moment of realization when the reality of the situation sunk in. Their nation was being attacked. Because of these events, the nation responded immediately by shutting down air travel and addressing it with President Bush trying his best to ease the nation by giving a speech soon after. Not too long after the attacks, the nation set up multiple policies regarding air travel, immigration, terrorism, and many others to prevent something like this tragic event from happening ever again. The effects of the U.S.'s efforts were both good and bad. Many criticize the war efforts the United States made because of the aftermath of the Afghanistan war. However, the aftermath of 9/11 left the country in dismay, the capture of Al Qaeda members and the death of their leader during the war brought back an abundance of hope within the country. Good or bad the country's response had a massive impact throughout the world and the overall outcome was effective at capturing those responsible for the attacks of 9/11.

In Response to the events of 9/11, the U.S. took immediate action, such as shutting down the airspaces and launching operations domestically and internationally to stop any other terrorist attacks. President Bush took steps to increase security measures. Speaking domestically, the U.S.'s response included the creation of Homeland Security in 2002, in which President Bush provided 20 billion dollars in funding<sup>1</sup>. Along with that, the power of the TSA increased. This was to provide safer air travel and hopefully stop a devastating attack like 9/11 from ever happening again. Also across the borders, the Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force

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<sup>1</sup> U.S Archive, "The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days," U.S Department of State Archives, January 20, 2009, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/wh/6947.htm>.

was put together to stop terrorists from entering the country<sup>2</sup>. These weren't the only things that resulted from the events of 9/11. The United States in response put great emphasis on the investigations to find those responsible for these attacks. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created a large task force in order to follow thousands of leads that could expose terrorists involved in the attacks<sup>3</sup>. Hundreds of suspects were monitored and searched. Anyone with a reasonable suspicion of being a terrorist, even if you were not involved with the attacks of 9/11. You were still seen as a threat and the U.S. knew this, often these suspects lost privacy and other rights. This was just the domestic side of some precautions and actions the U.S. took in response to 9/11.

However, Internationally, the U.S.'s military engagement and presence were prominent in the Middle East. The morality of the nation after these attacks was low and the country was distraught of what happened. Everyone wanted those responsible to be held accountable and that was the mission of the United States shortly after the attacks. On October 7th, 2001, Operation Enduring Freedom was launched and its mission was to demilitarize multiple terrorist organizations involved with 9/11<sup>4</sup>. U.S. and British troops were sent to bomb AL Qaeda and its camps<sup>5</sup>. The U.S. and other countries came together and began freezing the accounts and assets owned by any terrorists living within that country. This led to over 33 million dollars of terrorist assets being frozen between 2001-2009. On May 2nd, 2011, the U.S. Army launched a raid in Pakistan and killed the Al-Qaeda Leader Osama Bin Laden.<sup>6</sup> One big downside of these operations and this 20-year-long war was the large amount of weapons left behind. The U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S Archive, "The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days," U.S Department of State Archives,

<sup>3</sup> U.S Archive, "The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days," U.S Department of State Archives,

<sup>4</sup> U.S Archive, "The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days,"

<sup>5</sup> U.S Navy, "Operation Enduring Freedom," Naval History and Heritage Command, April 22, 2024, <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/middle-east/operation-enduring-freedom.html>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S Navy, "Operation Enduring Freedom," Naval History and Heritage Command,

Military denies these claims however it is estimated that 3.5 billion items were left in an Afghanistan airbase alone<sup>7</sup>. These weapons while used to help win the war fell in the hands of the Taliban and reports show that they had almost 360,000 assault rifles alone. The total amount of weapons left behind is unfathomable. Due to the vast amount of weapons seized by the Taliban, they regained rule over the nation. Many old practices were forced into place such as women being removed from any form of power within the government.<sup>8</sup> This is one of the very depressing effects of the Afghanistan war, many women lost their human rights. The U.S. is often criticized when it comes to the Afghanistan war, because of reasons like this. After a 20-year-long war, American troops withdrew August 30th, 2021<sup>9</sup>. Thanks to the Biden administration soldiers were able to withdraw from Afghanistan officially ending the war.<sup>10</sup>

The long-term consequences included the USA Patriot Act, which was an act to help increase United States security<sup>11</sup>. This act included authorities over a lot of tracking methods that were targeted towards terrorism. However many believe that they were a target of these tracking such as monitoring them and wiretapping them even though they had no relations to any terrorist groups. The government was heavily criticized for this as it was believed to be a breach of privacy by the government. This was later brought to the public in 2013<sup>12</sup> when a man

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<sup>7</sup> Iain Overton, "Inheritance of Loss: The Weapons Left behind for the Taliban in Afghanistan," AOA, October 4, 2024, <https://aoav.org.uk/2021/inheritance-of-loss-the-weapons-left-behind-for-the-taliban-in-afghanistan/?scrlybrkr=7e1ca03e>.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Robinson, "Our Biggest Errors in Afghanistan and What We Should Learn from Them," Council on Foreign Relations, June 22, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/article/our-biggest-errors-afghanistan-and-what-we-should-learn-them>.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Navy, "Operation Enduring Freedom," Naval History and Heritage Command,

<sup>10</sup> President Biden, "Remarks by President Biden on the End of the War in Afghanistan," The White House, August 31, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/31/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-end-of-the-war-in-afghanistan/>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Government, "USA PATRIOT Act," FinCEN.gov, accessed November 22, 2024, <https://www.fincen.gov/resources/statutes-regulations/usa-patriot-act>.

<sup>12</sup> Ewen MacAskill et al., "NSA Files Decoded: Edward Snowden's Surveillance Revelations Explained," The Guardian, November 1, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded?scrlybrkr=7e1ca03e#section/1>.

named Edwin Snowden uncovered the massive amount of surveillance the United States had on US citizens. The NSA files were a huge controversy when it came to the government respecting the citizen's privacy. These files were brought to light, and a meeting between the president and the Brazilian president was canceled since she was worried about being spied on by the government. The NSA did not deny these claims but shot back with a statement "If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear."<sup>13</sup> The public didn't take this well along with organizations with the purpose of protecting your civil liberties. They believed what the NSA had been doing was a breach of their privacy and unconstitutional. The NSA was allowed "three degrees of separation" which in simple terms meant they could track you if you were "three hops" away from any potential terrorism suspect.<sup>14</sup> The effects of these monitoring following the attacks of 9/11 were widely frowned upon. The International Relations Between the U.S and foreign countries was strengthened for the most part. The Bush administration created a 90 country pact that's main goal was to stop terrorism. Their contribution to helping Afghanistan during the war was greatly appreciated. Just in 2008-2009 alone the U.S contributed 8 billion towards the Afghanistan political and economic development<sup>15</sup>. The U.S has delivered over 400 metric tons of food and supplies to those in need in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to help from the U.S and other countries, Afghanistan was able to function again as a proper nation for some time.

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<sup>13</sup> Ewen MacAskill et al., "NSA Files Decoded: Edward Snowden's Surveillance Revelations Explained," The Guardian, November 1, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded?scrybrkr=7e1ca03e#section/1>.

<sup>14</sup> Ewen MacAskill et al., "NSA Files Decoded: Edward Snowden's Surveillance Revelations Explained," The Guardian, November 1, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded?scrybrkr=7e1ca03e#section/1>.

<sup>15</sup> President Bush, "The Bush Record," National Archives and Records Administration, January 2013, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/factsheets/9-11.html#:~:text=The%20President%20has%20built%20a,and%20bring%20terrorists%20to%20justice>.

<sup>16</sup> President Bush, "The Bush Record," National Archives and Records Administration, January 2013, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/factsheets/9-11.html#:~:text=The%20President%20has%20built%20a,and%20bring%20terrorists%20to%20justice>.

This was until the taliban seized weapons left by america as mentioned before. The death tolls were down as the taliban seized control. Although that is not entirely the case because many cases of starvation were up due to policies implemented by the west.<sup>17</sup> While it seems that america helping in the east, delivering food, and funding the country did help a lot. They did not further make sure they left the country safe. Countless guns, offices, vehicles and western policies that further hindered the country from prospering as planned. This is another downside of the war. While yes less people died more people starved and others lost their rights.

The allied nations within NATO had seen and heard about the war crimes committed by the U.S; illiegal tracking, torture, abuse of human rights. This was a big arguing point for those against the war. America did capture terrorist responsible for the attacks however the ways they did were against so many rules. Not only that though, innocent civilians with no connections to terrorist groups were being monitored and having a profile made of them.

This is where some of the ethical and moral dilemmas come into play. The country had to balance between keeping the country safe from terrorist and perserving the human rights. When it came down to it thought, america sadly chose to invade civilians privacy and breach suspected terrorists human rights. This was widely frowned upon but others speculate that this was the only way it could have been done. Long after the events and war are over america still has operations and monitoring going on in the everyday life. This has brought a distrust among those who were a direct victim of these breaches of privacy. A research study shows that most americans do not believe that their rights should be given up in order to stop terrorism.<sup>18</sup> These same people say that the fully support monitoring suspected terrorist in order to stop them. This

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<sup>17</sup> comfort ero, "10 Conflicts to Watch in 2022 | Crisis Group," international crisis group, December 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2022>.

<sup>18</sup> 1. George Gao, "What Americans Think about NSA Surveillance, National Security and Privacy," Pew Research Center, May 29, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2015/05/29/what-americans-think-about-nsa-surveillance-national-security-and-privacy/>.

is where the moral dilemma comes in. How do you stop terrorists while not invading privacy of those civilians. America faced countless challenges due to the tragedy of 9/11. 2,977 people died in the attack alone along with 940,000 people involved during the war. They have learned and put into place multiple tasks force and operations in order to prevent an attack like 9/11 from ever happening again. From things to wiretapping and monitoring suspected terrorism to increased border control. Good or bad America has made a great effort in responding to the attacks of 9/11.

## **Source Notes**

**George, Bush. Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation. Georgewbush White House archives: 2001.**

**This source shows the immediate action President Bush took after the tragedy which struck the towers. His speech is used to offer the nation his condolences to everyone involved and also used it to ease the nation by showing his current actions in response to the attack.**

**Stephen Biddle. How 9/11 Reshaped Foreign Policy. Council on Foreign Relations: 2024.**

**This source presents multiple examples of how the government reacted and how 9/11 affected external affairs with other countries. It really shows multiple examples of the U.S. sending military to the East. it talks about the effects leading all the way to Barack Obama's drone strikes during his term.**



**Brian Katulis. The Lessons Learned for U.S. National Security Policy in the 20 Years Since 9/11. Cap 20: 2021**

**The article goes in-depth about how national security changed after 9/11. After the events, the government granted national security such as TSA more power in order to keep the country safe when it comes to air travel.**

**Antony J. Blinken. 22nd Anniversary of the September 11, 2001 Attacks. U.S Department of State. 2023**

**The source goes into the effects and reminisce about how the country was affected by the events of 9/11. It is a short but helpful source that provides such important details such as the total amount of people that died that day.**

**Muzaffar Chishti and Jessica Bolter. Two Decades after 9/11, National Security Focus Still Dominates U.S. Immigration System. MPI. 2021**

**This lengthy detailed source provides valuable information about the various immigration changes that has happened in the past 20 years since 9/11. Immigration policies were put into effect not too long after 9/11 since the 19 hijackers were all immigrants so it was believed that stricter immigration policies could maybe help prevent another attack like this one.**

**Muzaffar Chishti, Claire Bergeron. Post-9/11 Policies Dramatically Alter the U.S. Immigration Landscape. MPI. 2011**

**This article goes into the intense policies put into place between the periods of 2001 and 2011. Such policies included interviewing thousands of Americans that may not have even had any ties to the terrorist groups responsible for 9/11. This shows the intense actions that the U.S. government took after the tragic events of 9/11.**

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**Robinson, Linda. “Our Biggest Errors in Afghanistan and What We Should Learn from Them.” Council on Foreign Relations, June 22, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/article/our-biggest-errors-afghanistan-and-what-we-should-learn-them>.**