Early on the morning of September 11, 2001, 19 hijackers took control of four commercial airliners en route to San Francisco and Los Angeles after takeoff from Boston, Newark, and Washington, D.C. Planes with long flights were intentionally selected for hijacking because they would be heavily fueled. At 8:46 a.m., five hijackers crashed American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center's North Tower, and at 9:03 a.m. another five hijackers crashed United Airlines Flight 175 into the South Tower.

Five hijackers flew American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. A fourth flight, under the control of four hijackers, crashed United Airlines Flight 93 near Shanksville, Pennsylvania at 10:03 a.m. after the passengers fought the hijackers. Flight 93's ultimate target is believed to have been either the Capitol or the White House.

Three buildings in the World Trade Center Complex collapsed due to structural failure. The South Tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m. after burning for 56 minutes in a fire caused by the impact of United Airlines Flight 175. The North Tower collapsed at 10:28 a.m. after burning for 102 minutes. When the North Tower collapsed, debris fell on the nearby 7 World Trade Center building damaging it and starting fires. These fires burned for hours and compromised the building's structural integrity, and 7 WTC collapsed at 5:21 p.m.

All aircraft within the continental U.S. were grounded, and aircraft already in flight were told to land immediately. All international civilian aircraft were either turned back or redirected to airports in Canada or Mexico, and all international flights were banned from landing on U.S. soil for three days. The attacks created widespread confusion among news organizations and air traffic controllers.

There were a total of 2,996 deaths, including the 19 hijackers and 2,977 victims. The victims included 246 on the four planes (from which there were no survivors), 2,606 in New York City in the towers and on the ground, and 125 at the Pentagon. All the deaths in the attacks were civilians, except for 55 military personnel killed at the Pentagon.

A total of 411 emergency workers who responded to the scene died as they tried to rescue people and fight fires. The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) lost 341 firefighters and 2 paramedics. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) lost 23 officers. The Port Authority Police Department lost 37 officers. Eight emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics from private emergency medical services units were killed.

On September 20, 2001, President Bush addressed the nation and a joint session of the United States Congress regarding the events of September 11 and the subsequent nine days of rescue and recovery efforts, and described his intended response to the attacks.

Suspicion for the attack quickly fell on al-Qaeda, the Islamist militant group. In 2004, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who had initially denied involvement, later claimed responsibility for the attacks. Al-Qaeda and bin Laden cited U.S. support of Israel, the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, and sanctions against Iraq as motives for the attacks. The United States responded to the attacks by launching the War on Terror, invading Afghanistan to depose the Taliban, who had harbored al-Qaeda members. Many countries strengthened their anti-terrorism legislation and expanded law enforcement powers. In May 2011 bin Laden was found and killed.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks>