

Aired September 11, 2019 - 04:00:00 &nbsp; ET

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: This just in you are looking at a - - obviously a very disturbing live shot there. That is the World Trade Center and we have unconfirmed reports this morning that a plane has crashed into one of the towers.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Another one just hit the building. Wow.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There are no words.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It appears that something hit the Pentagon on the outside of the fifth corridor.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We have a report now that a large plane crashed this morning north of the Somerset County Airport which is in western

Pennsylvania.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CARL AZUZ, CNN 10 ANCHOR: It all started at 8:45 on a clear Tuesday morning. We had a live camera up on what looked like a smoking slash

across one of the World Trade Center towers. A passenger plane had flown into it and I remember some of us here at CNN thinking this was some sort

of freak event. Then a second plane flew into the other tower, that was at 9:03 a.m. and at that point there was this deepening dread in everyone.

Something was wrong in a way we'd never seen before. Airports, bridges, tunnels in New York and New Jersey shut down. Within 30 minutes, President

George W. Bush said we were under an apparent terrorist attack and minutes after that every airport in the country was closed. That had never

happened before, it wasn't over though.

At 9:43 a.m. a third passenger jet crashed into the Pentagon, dark smoke rolled up from that part of that huge building. All eyes and many cameras

were on that and the two burning towers in New York and as all of us watched at 10:05, one of the towers gave way where it was smoking. The top

part crushing down on the rest of it and sending up debris in boiling gray clouds. Five minutes later, part of the Pentagon collapsed and a fourth

hijacked jet crashed in a rural part of Pennsylvania. The White House, the United Nations, the State and Justice Departments, the World Bank all

evacuated. America bound Atlantic flights were rerouted to Canada and the second Trade Center tower came down at 10:28. So many closings,

evacuations, shut downs except for emergency response teams, the heroes of 9/11. The country virtually stopped what it was doing and gathered around

TV screens. The President appeared just after 1 p.m. and asked Americans to pray and there wasn't much else we could do.

The destruction was more or less done around 10:30. It was less than two hours from the first crash but the change it inflicted was immeasurable.

More Americans were killed on September 11th, 2001 than on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and when President Bush addressed the nation

that night at 8:30 his tone was one of sympathy, resolve and warning to anyone who planned or supported the attacks.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

AZUZ: In the difficult days that followed, we learned that the Al-Qaida terrorist group led by Osama Bin Laden was responsible for all of this and

America's attention and anger turned to Afghanistan who's Taliban leaders were giving Al-Qaida a safe place to live and operate.

On Wednesday at 8:40 a.m. eastern, near the time when the first hijacked plane hit the north tower of the World Trade Center the 9/11 Memorial and

Museum in New York is holding a ceremony to honor the victims of the September 11th attacks. This includes the first responders as well. More

than 400 emergency workers including firefighters, police officers and medical technicians gave their lives trying to rescue people in the doomed

World Trade Center towers. The names of the 2,753 people killed in New

York City as well as the hundreds of others killed at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania will be read.

At the Pentagon Memorial there are 184 benches representing the 184 people who died there. U.S. President Donald Trump is scheduled to attend an observance ceremony on Wednesday alongside U.S. Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. And at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, the names of the 40 passengers and crew members who were killed there will be read starting at 10:03 a.m., the time when their plane was crashed into the field.

There are events like this planned across America on the 18th Anniversary of the 9/11 Attacks. They'll include moments of silence, movie screenings,

music, symbolic craft projects, messages of gratitude or hope. All in remembrance of the worst act of terrorism in American history and in honor

of the victims and those who gave and risked their lives to save them. The 9/11 attacks led to the war on terror. An international effort led by the

United States to fight terrorism organizations world wide, that began by targeting the Al-Qaida terrorist in Afghanistan and thousands of American

troops remain in the unstable Asian country to this day. The beginning of today's show gave you a sense of what it was like to observe the events of

September 11th as they unfolded. They brought a uniquely challenging experience for the reporters who covered them live.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And this is one of the most memorable shots from that day. This is Aaron Brown on the roof of CNN's old bureau in mid-town

Manhattan. Everyone has a 9/11 story, mine starts with hearing the words what channel is CNN on. We turned on the television and never turned it

off. Aaron Brown helped me and so many other people feel a little less afraid that day. He anchored all the way until midnight, until one in the

morning and he was never supposed to be on that air that day at all.

AARON BROWN, CNN ANCHOR: There has just been a huge explosion. We can

see a billowing smoke rising - - and I can't - - I - - I'll tell you I can't

see that second tower and we see this extraordinarily and frightening scene behind us of the second tower now just encased in smoke. What is behind

it? We're - - I - - I cannot tell you. But just look at that, that is about as frightening a scene as you will ever see.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You must have known through that smoke there was nothing there but you couldn't see it yet with your own eyes.

BROWN: I felt in that moment profoundly stupid.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Why?

BROWN: I - - I will tell you because I - - I will tell you a million things had been running through my mind about what might happen, about the

- - the - - the effect of a jet plane hitting people above where the impact was. What might be going on in those buildings and it just never occurred

to me that they'd come down and I thought - - it's the only time I thought maybe you just don't have what it takes to do a story like this, because it

just had never occurred to me.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Let me look at one other moment. This is the second tower falling. When you did seem more prepared for - -for what we were seeing.

BROWN: There is a large fire at the Pentagon. The Pentagon has been evacuated and there's, you can see, perhaps the second tower, the front tower. The top portion of which is collapsing. Good lord. There are no words.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Silence is what you used in that moment when you see it now, what stands out to you?

BROWN: First of all, from the moment the first tower fell there was a clock ticking and it was ticking in my head. It was ticking in the heads

of hundreds of millions of people in America and a billion people around the world who were watching it. Because if the first tower fell, the

second one was going to fall too. In that moment, there were men - - mostly men, firemen and - - and policemen who were running into that

building that was collapsing and - - and knowing they were never coming out. And I think when that building fell I understood better than at any other point in my life, before or since, what the word hero meant. It's not that we didn't try to tell that story great. It's that the story itself is too great to tell.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We're at the point now where this really is history.

BROWN: Yes. It was something that I was fortunately professionally to do and painful as an American to live through. It's a - - it's a weird contradiction that journalists live with.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

BROWN: The ambivalence of - - of on the one hand loving the big story and on the other hand hating the fact that that story's happening.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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