

# On this 16th Commemoration of 9/11: Are we safer from Islamic Terrorism?

by Jerry Gordon



On September 11, 2001, Islamic terrorists, 19 well educated young men – Saudi, Egyptian, and Yemeni nationals – hijacked four airliners (American Airlines Flight 11 and United Flight 175 from Boston’s Logan airport, American Airlines Flight 77 from Dulles airport and United Airlines Flight 93 from Newark Airport). They were part of a team of 26 Al Qaeda operatives inserted into the US. With captive passengers aboard, they flew into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. Brave actions of the 40 passengers and crew aboard Flight 93 led to the first counter-attack within thirty minutes of the sky-jacking. The Flight 93 heroes overcame the Islamic terrorists diverting the aircraft from its ultimate target, either the White House or the Capital building in Washington, crashing into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, 50 miles from Pittsburgh.

This writer, his son and colleagues and visitors at his midtown Manhattan law firm watched from a vantage point as this first Islamic terror attack on an iconic symbol of American and Western economic prowess fell in towering plumes of ash and debris. Later that day, I would hear from ash covered refugees of the twin towers attack of falling bodies of those desperately trapped by the blazing inferno on the upper floors.

Monday September 11, 2017 will be the 16<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the Al Qaeda suicide sky-jackings at the fateful twin towers in Lower Manhattan, the Pentagon in Northern Virginia and the diverted crash in Pennsylvania that took the innocent lives of 2,977 Americans and others. Many who survived told stories about the valiant heroes from the storied ranks of New York's Finest and Bravest.

Among the valiant fallen was [Rick Riscorla](#), former Army officer, who survived the Battle of the Ia Drag valley in Viet Nam. He shepherded many hundreds of investment firm employees to safety on 9/11. He did not survive. There was the ironic case of John P. O'Neill, Former Deputy Director of the FBI, who had successfully [investigated](#) and brought to justice [Ramzi Ahmed Yousuf](#) and blind Sheik Abdul Rahman, the main perpetrators of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, a precursor to 9/11. He had warned about a possible 9/11-type attack. However, his warnings were ignored. Ironically he was killed on 9/11, his first day on the job as the World Trade Center Security Director. O'Neil's quixotic counterterrorism effort and fate on 9/11 was memorialized in Lawrence Wright's 2006 best seller, [The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11](#).

What a number of us called the Pearl Harbor of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was perpetrated by Sunni extremist Jihadists, facilitated in part by the Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran and its proxy Hezbollah. Fresh evidence has recently emerged from a

federal case brought by surviving families of 9/11 victims that Saudi government officials may have been involved in a 'dry run' in late 1999, two months before the Al Qaeda attack team arrived in this country for 'aviation training'.

The 2017 memorial comes at a time when there is rising concern over global Islamic terrorism despite the footprint of the Islamic State, the self-proclaimed Caliphate of pure Islam, shrinking in both Iraq and Syria from attacks by US-led coalition, Kurdish Peshmerga and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Force, Russian, Assad Syrian Regime, Iraqi National Security with 'assistance' from Iran's nefarious Qods Force and its Shia proxies Hezbollah and Iraqi Hashd Popular Mobilization Force. Al Qaeda and its global affiliates are still active fomenting Jihad.

In America and Canada we have experienced attacks perpetrated by Jihadist US citizens and immigrants in several massacres in Boston, Chattanooga, San Bernardino, and Orlando. The Orlando massacre was the most significant mass shooting in American history. Then there were bombings in both Manhattan and New Jersey echoes of 9/11 carried out by ISIS sympathizers. In Canada there were attacks at the Ottawa Parliament and in the province of Quebec.

Over \$1 trillion in taxpayer funding has been spent to create new homeland security and transportation safety agencies, and establish counterterrorism intelligence sharing among domestic and international groups. The FBI is still tracking over 1000 cases of ISIS sympathizers. The Heritage Foundation has kept a running tally of the more than 97 Islamist terror attacks since 9/11, the latest one foiled in northern Virginia.



## The Memorials

Memorials will be held in lower Manhattan at the [National 9/11 Museum](#) in the shadow of the Freedom Tower that replaced the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (WTC). Later today, there will be a tower of twin lights that will illuminate the skies over lower Manhattan in [tribute](#) to the fallen.

President Trump and First Lady Melania will [preside](#) over his first commemoration as Commander and Chief. They will be joined by Defense Secretary James Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine General Joseph Dunford at the [9/11 Pentagon Memorial](#). A moment of silence will be held at 9:37 AM the moment when 184 were killed when American Airlines Flight 77 plunged into the iconic Defense Department building. The President has decreed that this 9/11 will be called Patriot's Day.

Vice President Pence will preside at the [Flight 93 9/11 Memorial](#) in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where 40 passengers and crew overpowered the Al Qaeda hijackers in the first counter attack against the jihadists who seized the aircraft preventing it from attacking the nation's capital.

A unique memorial at Point Lookout in the Town of Hempstead on New York's Long Island will honor those rescue and recovery workers sickened by the release of toxic debris from the fall of the twin towers. An [ABC report](#) noted:

The monument, built by the town of Hempstead near the [Atlantic Ocean](#) on Long Island's south shore, features a twisted, 30-foot-tall beam of Trade Center steel, an elevated walkway and granite plaques engraved with the names of the nearly 3,000 people who died in the attacks.

A separate plaque will have the names of 582 police officers, firefighters, construction workers, cleanup volunteers and others who spent time in the rubble of the World Trade Center in the days or months after the attacks and, years later, died of a variety of causes that they, their families or their doctors suspected were linked to toxic ash and smoke at the site. There will be room to add more names.

"I think what the town of Hempstead is doing is nothing short of honorable," said John Feal, a longtime advocate for 9/11 responders with health problems. "People who lost a loved one to illness suffer just like someone lost on that day. Hopefully this will offer some ease and comfort to them."

Hempstead will officially dedicate its \$1.3 million memorial at a service Monday, the 16th anniversary of the attacks.

## **Are we Safer?**

The question arises given the persistence of Islamic terrorism since 9/11 whether Americans feel safer. The answer is of two parts as reflected in an annual Gallup poll released this June. [UPI reported](#):

In the wake of recent terrorist attacks, 38 percent of

respondents in the [Monday](#).

“A strong public security presence at large events may serve to calm Americans’ fears of potential attacks at these locations and decrease Americans’ desire to avoid them over time,” said Gallup’s R.J. Reinhart. “However, should additional attacks occur at events in the U.S. or Europe, anxiety may rise and keep Americans away from crowded events.”

Terrorism also makes Americans leery of foreign travel.

A total of 46 percent respondents said they are less willing to travel overseas, including 32 percent less willing to fly and 26 percent less willing to go into skyscrapers. These numbers all have increased from 2011.

### **The ‘fresh evidence of Saudi complicity in “dry run” of 9/11**

*The New York Post*, the weekend prior to 9/11 published a [report](#) by investigative journalist and Hoover Institution fellow Paul Sperry. Sperry has surfaced extensive evidence that two long term Saudi government employees had participated in a alleged “dry run” of the 9/11 attack on the twin towers in November 1999 on a commercial flight between Phoenix and Washington, DC. Moreover, they had been investigated by the FBI after complaints were filed by the air crew and were found to have had Al Qaeda training.

Yet, despite evidence contained in several thousand pages of discovered files, the FBI did not file charges against the two Saudi government employees associated with a religious institute that also sponsored events at which the late Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, American born Imam, Anwar al Awlaki had preached.

Al Awlaki had ministered to two of the 9/11 perpetrators who were among the group who had entered the US for training less than two months, after the alleged “dry run” occurred.

The evidence of possible Saudi government involvement in this late 1999 “dry run” is part of the record for a case that has been brought by families of 9/11 victims and cleared for trial in a recent US court decision denying a claim of sovereign immunity by the Saudi government US lawyers .

*The New York Post* report noted:

Two years before the airliner attacks, the Saudi Embassy paid for two Saudi nationals, living undercover in the US as students, to fly from Phoenix to Washington “in a dry run for the 9/11 attacks,” alleges the amended complaint filed on behalf of the families of some 1,400 victims who died in the terrorist attacks 16 years ago.

The court filing provides new details that paint “a pattern of both financial and operational support” for the 9/11 conspiracy from official Saudi sources, lawyers for the plaintiffs say. In fact, the Saudi government may have been involved in underwriting the attacks from the earliest stages – including testing cockpit security.

“We’ve long asserted that there were longstanding and close relationships between al Qaeda and the religious components of the Saudi government,” said Sean Carter, the lead attorney for the 9/11 plaintiffs. “This is further evidence of that.”

### **The resilience of Al Qaeda and Islamic State terrorism.**

The Islamic terror threat that shocked us 16 years ago on 9/11 has not subsided. It has found fertile ground I Al Qaeda affiliates in Yemen, Libya, Syria the Sahel region of Africa, the Philippines and among the Afghan Taliban. While the Islamic State footprint has shrunk under relentless fighting in Iraq and Syria, thousands trained foreign fighters have returned to the West and homegrown invitees have wreaked havoc in bombings and truck and van ramming in Manchester, London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Barcelona, As we noted earlier in the



US we have mass shootings in Chattanooga, Garland, Texas, San Bernardino, Orlando, and bombing attempts in Manhattan and New Jersey.

Counter-terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman in an essay in the *Wall Street Journal Weekend* review section on September 9-10, 2017, "[A Growing Terrorist Threat on another 9/11](#)", wrote:

This Monday's 16th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, might be less mournful if we could say that the threat of jihadist terrorism had receded or disappeared. But that is far from the case. Al Qaeda has been quietly rebuilding, after ceding the spotlight for several years to Islamic State (which was al Qaeda's Iraqi affiliate until being expelled from the network in 2014). Taken together, these two groups—with their expanding capabilities and multiple branches across the globe—pose a security challenge for the U.S. and its allies every bit as perilous as what they faced immediately after 9/11.

Hoffman presented the following evidence of the resilience of ideological driven Islamic Terrorism by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State:

Al Qaeda's resurgence can be seen most clearly in Syria. Its local cat's-paw (recently renamed Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) is now the largest rebel group fighting the regime of Bashar al-Assad and controls a strategic area along the Syrian-Turkish border. In Syria, as a Dutch fighter in the group's ranks tweeted to his followers, al Qaeda "focuses mostly on political & military targets instead of civilians." As a result, Islamic State has taken almost all the heat from the Syrian regime and its allies, as well as from the U.S. and Turkey. Al Qaeda has thus been able to extend its reach and rebuild its military strength.

[...]



Al Qaeda today is just as ambitious and dangerous as Islamic State. From northwest Africa to Southeast Asia, it has woven a global movement of some two dozen local franchises. Al Qaeda's North Africa branch was credited with more than 250 attacks last year, and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, long the movement's most threatening branch, has seen its ranks quadruple in recent years. In Afghanistan, with its Taliban allies, al Qaeda has re-established a presence in nearly half of the country's territory. Al Qaeda is now thought to have tens of thousands of fighters—with some 20,000 in Syria alone, along with 4,000 in Yemen and 7,000 in Somalia.

[...]

As for Islamic State, it has been losing battles and turf in Iraq and Syria, underscoring its inability to compete with al Qaeda in terms of cohesion and staying power on the ground. But it remains stronger than its jihadist rival in one key domain: the ability to mount terrorist strikes in Europe.

U.S. intelligence officials think that over the past few years, Islamic State has dispatched hundreds of operatives into European Union countries, with hundreds more positioned in Turkey. These are the attackers behind such atrocities as the 2015 suicide attacks in Paris that killed 130 people and last month's attack in Barcelona, which killed 16.

But Islamic State's reach extends far beyond Europe. A year ago, the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, instructed potential foreign fighters who couldn't get to the besieged "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria to head for other Islamic State branches. According to the National Counterterrorism Center, Islamic State has established 18 such branches throughout the world—most recently in the Philippines, Afghanistan and Indonesia.

On this 16th commemoration of 9/11 the Long War continues against the jihadism of Political Islam. A pure Islamic belief system complicating Western efforts to protect its citizens from the threats of a burgeoning global network emboldened by social media and encrypted communications to inflict terror on Kufr, in the Dar al Harb, following in the way of their god Allah.