September 11, 2001: Timeline of Events

Less than 10 hours after the first attack on 9/11, NBC's David Bloom reports from New York on the minute-by-minute events of that horrific day.

Keywords

Citation
MLA
TOM BROKAW, anchor:
And I'm joined now, with a complete account of what this day has been like, from NBC's David Bloom, who's been my colleague all day long.
David, bring us up to date.

DAVID BLOOM reporting:
Well, Tom, more than 9 1/2 hours since the first attack, the smoke billowing from the hulks behind me is now more gray than black, indicating that the fires have diminished somewhat. But it's still an extremely dangerous situation. Just within the last hour or so, a third building, a 40-story building, also collapsed, 40 more stories of concrete steel and iron crashing to the ground. A makeshift morgue has been set up near the World Trade Center. New York City police, still sticking to their early estimates that the casualties ultimately may number in the thousands. Nothing more precise than that. We've put together a chronology of the events as Americans watched dumfounded and, yes, outraged and defiant.
The first attack plane, a hijacked American Airlines flight out Boston, slams into the north tower of New York's World Trade Center at approximately 8:42 AM Eastern time. The explosions and fireballs broadcast live by television helicopters which then, horrifically, spot the second attack plane, a United Airlines flight hijacked from Boston, taking dead aim at the World Trade Center's south tower. It's now approximately 9:03 AM.

Unidentified Man #1: Where the hell can I meet you? I'm across the street from the Marriott, man! A second airplane, a 727 just rammed into the building!

BLOOM: Emergency officials estimate 20,000 or more people may have been inside the two 110-story buildings at the time of the attacks.
Eyewitnesses report victims falling and, in some cases, jumping from the two buildings.
Unidentified Man #2: There were people falling out of the sky.

BLOOM: At 9:29 AM, President Bush in Florida addresses the nation for the first time.
President GEORGE W. BUSH: Terrorism against our nation will not stand.

BLOOM: But in the nation's capital, just 11 minutes later, 9:40 AM, a third hijacked plane, an American flight out of Washington Dulles crashes into the Pentagon in a burst of flames. The plane's wreckage tearing a gaping hole into one side of the building. Federal buildings are evacuated. Government leaders taken to secure hideouts. 9:59 AM, the, until now, unthinkable, the south tower of the World Trade Center collapses. An unknown number of people still trapped inside. Including the rescuers. Firefighters and police who had gone in trying to save lives. Then at 10:00 AM, hundreds of miles away in western Pennsylvania, a fourth hijacked plane, a United flight out of Newark, crashes 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. One half hour later, 10:28 AM, the north tower of the World Trade Center collapses. Rubble, debris spreading for blocks. In all, 266 people aboard four hijacked planes are killed. Untold others in Washington and New York missing and presumed dead. In New York, a defiant Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Mayor RUDOLPH GIULIANI: The city of New York and the United States of America is much stronger than any group of barbaric terrorists.

BLOOM: For the first time in US history, the Federal Aviation Administration closes all domestic airports, shutting down all US airspace, until at least noon tomorrow. The US military and American embassies worldwide placed on the highest alert. Navy aircraft carriers and destroyers deployed along the Eastern seaboard. The president, now in Louisiana, speaks for a second time.

Pres. BUSH: The resolve of our great nation is being tested. But make no mistake, we will show the world that we will pass this test.

BLOOM: The president is then taken to the secure strategic air command in Nebraska, meets with his national security team via teleconference before boarding Air Force One to return to Washington. But in New York late this afternoon, a third damaged building, the 40-story World Trade Center Number 7, also crashes to the ground. And emergency officials allow the first camera crew from NBC News inside the smoking hulks of the twin towers. Ground zero, cars overturned. Steel torn apart. Glass shards, small fires still burning. The very picture America most feared, the image terrorists most wanted.

As to who might be responsible, a senior American intelligence official tells NBC News tonight that they are now, and I'm quoting here, "90 percent certain that Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born terrorist, was responsible for today's attack." This official tells NBC News, quote, "This is not just surmise; this is new information." The president plans to address the nation from Washington, DC, tonight.