

## ***11 September 2001, an AFMC Shared Story***

*By: Jack Waid, AFMC/HO*

On 12 September 2001, AFMC personnel had already shifted focus from a four-day event highlighting acquisition reform efforts. Also known as the sixth annual Acquisition and Logistics Excellence Week, scheduled for 10-14 September 2001 throughout the DoD acquisition community. Unfortunately, Acquisition and Logistics Excellence Week was dramatically "overcome by events" and immediately cancelled amidst the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. After these attacks, SAF/AQ urged all acquisition specialists to transition to a wartime posture in order to support upcoming operations later known as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. SAF/AQ, prompted in large measure by the developing war on international terrorism, also formulated a third series of "Lightning Bolt" initiatives, designed specifically to respond to warfighters' needs.



Firefighters and Soldiers unfurl an American flag at the Pentagon Sept. 12, 2001.  
(courtesy photo)

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) quickly transitioned AFMC to a wartime mode. Along with other Air Force elements, AFMC was immediately called upon to support Operation NOBLE EAGLE—the defense of the US Homeland. As stated by Major General Michael P. Wiedemer, AFMC Director of Requirements, “the introduction of the Homeland Defense mission puts AFMC into the warfighting mission.”

To support NOBLE EAGLE and other GWOT initiatives, AFMC utilized “Technology Push” and “Technology Pull”. Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) scientists and engineers used Technology Push to conceive ideas applicable to the battlefield and quickly passed them on to the combat forces. The more traditional Technology Pull allowed combat forces an avenue to

# **HISTORY**

## **IN TWO**

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make their needs known so that AFRL could develop new technologies or modify existing ones.

By 7 October 2001, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) started with air strikes against terrorist and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. Once again, AFMC's technological and logistical support of weapon systems proved crucial to the operation's success. AFMC processed high priority Combat Mission Needs Statements (C-MNS) for emergency needs, accelerated the fielding of systems under development, and provided the extensive logistical support necessary for waging war halfway around the world.

Airpower quickly destroyed Taliban air defenses and attacked Al Qaeda terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. Air superiority was achieved by coordinating high tech capabilities with unconventional tactics – like the introduction of armed Predator UAVs in combat operations even though the aircraft had only recently begun Hellfire missile testing. The expeditious fielding of these assets represented especially significant contributions by AFMC.

AFMC also delivered other new and old capabilities which enabled the warfighter to successfully engage the enemy. The Wind Corrected Munitions Dispenser (WCMD) was deployed just in time for OEF and enabled high altitude precision bombing using cluster bombs. The WCMD, consisting of a tail kit connected to a tactical munitions dispenser, served as a guidance system for the munition(s). The Joint Directed Attack Munition (JDAM) also became especially effective with its widespread employment via satellite guidance. The JDAM quickly became the mainstay of aerial bombardment with 1,000- or 2,000-pound weapons delivered by a variety of aircraft such as the B-1B, B-2A, B-52H, F-15E, F 16C/D, and the U.S. Navy's F-14D and F/A-18C/D.

As in past conflicts since DESERT SHIELD, AFMC utilized the Combat Mission Needs Statement (CMNS) process to “rapidly provide solutions to unforeseen, immediate, and sometimes theater-specific needs during armed conflict....” In late February 2002, with combat operations in Afghanistan drawing down, HQ USAF terminated the CMNS program. AFMC's three air logistics centers (ALC) accelerated depot maintenance and other sustainment activities to better support the warfighter. This included returning five C-130 aircraft to the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) 30 days ahead of schedule. Another initiative established



Firefighters raise flag at ground zero.

a “Logistics Response Cell” within the HQ AFMC Battle Staff to provide combat commands with a direct contact to coordinate logistical support issues. The GWOT also stimulated ongoing efforts to drastically reform the DOD and USAF acquisition systems—the war’s spiraling costs making these efforts even more important than ever before.

By the time Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) began on 19 March 2003, the U.S. had already been at war for 18 months executing OEF operations. OIF started with an intensive air assault featuring nearly 70-percent precision guided munitions. Described as the “most deliberate, disciplined, and precise air campaign in history”, OIF also provided field commanders with lightning quick air support. Clearly, AFMC had done its job in previous years to create and support this impressive offensive capability.

The 11 September 2001, story is expansive, as are the actions of all US military branches to include the Air Force. AFMC’s post 9/11 story is relatable to many. More relatable are the stories of those who experienced 9/11 and the aftermath and for a time, while assigned to AFMC, our communities personnel’s story is part of our AFMC story. Following are brief experiences of those assigned to AFMC today:



Hay bales covered with tributes from the families of the passengers and crew formed an early, informal memorial even as the FBI recovery work and search for evidence continued at the crash site. NPS

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## 9/11 Experiences

It was a Total Force experience as the attacks took place while I was at my civilian workplace. Within a few days I was mobilized for a year of active duty where we initially focused on deploying the first aviation and engineering units out of the US to execute Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and then led home station ops through Operation NOBLE EAGLE.

Mark Slominski, P.E., Maj Gen, Mobilization Assistant to the Commander, AFMC

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I was on my 2-week training with the Ohio Air National Guard 178th Wing. I was a maintainer for the F-16 we were flying training missions at Alpena Training Center in Michigan.

We had just launched the jets for the morning, and we heard over the radios all flying for the day was canceled. We immediately thought we had crashed an aircraft. We turned on the news and saw what was happening. The aircraft came back and we were told we needed to load them up with whatever we had and get them back in the air to fly patrols. I changed a broken UHF radio on one aircraft who was having problems on the way back. The UHF radio was needed to communicate with any aircraft in the sky. The pilots were given directions to take out anyone flying around. However, we were on training, so we didn't have full up rounds – just training tracers and dummy munitions. We spent the next week flying patrols and covering 24-hour operations – whether we were flying or on alert.

Daniel Adducchio, AFMC/A4/10

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I was TDY to DC for a class that week. We were in an office park about 4 miles south of the Pentagon. The attack on the Pentagon obviously ended class in the late morning. Since my hotel was right next to I-395 I ended up spending about an hour standing on the sidewalk on the overpass watching the evacuation of the district, smoke rising from the Pentagon, and the last aircraft landing at Reagan (under fighter escort). Later that day was the challenge of finding someplace to eat since the police closed a lot of larger gathering areas.

Class resumed the next day. I was glad I drove because I already had a way home. Not very exciting compared to others, but I was there.

Wesley Carter, AFMC/A2OA

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On September 11, 2001, I was living and working in Washington, D.C. as a museum curator with the Navy's Naval Historical Center, located at the Washington Navy Yard. I actually drove right past the Pentagon on my way to work just as the first New York World Trade Center tower was hit. Like everyone else, what started as a normal workday became busy and chaotic, changing to new priorities, trying to coordinate with family through dropped cell signals, and navigating our way home past the burning Pentagon.

In the weeks and months that followed, my job took on a very unique mission. I worked closely with other military historians and curators to document the attacks. We went inside the recovery camps, property screening areas, and eventually the Pentagon crash site itself to collect and preserve artifacts from the event.

Since I experienced the day first-hand in D.C. and spent the aftermath preserving that history—and am now based right here in the Dayton area—I thought this might be a great fit for



what the reporter is looking for.

Mark Wertheimer, NMUSAF/MUC

I was stationed at Lackland AFB, Texas, serving as the NCOIC of Security Police Investigations at the time of the attacks. September 11th fell on a physical training day. Having just cleaned up from PT, I was driving to my office from the opposite side of the base when I turned on the radio. The Tom Joyner Morning Show, typically a station for music and light entertainment, abruptly broke its programming to announce that an aircraft had slammed into the World Trade Center in New York City. Moments later, the broadcasters announced a second strike. In that instant, I knew we were under attack and these strikes were no longer accidents.



Base security increased substantially after the September 2001 attacks (Wright-Patterson AFB)

The Medina Annex, where our gym was located, is separated from the main base by several miles. By the time I reached one of the Lackland gates, traffic had ground to a frustrating halt. The gates had been locked down as a precaution against possible follow-on attacks targeting military installations. It took at least two grueling hours to get through. Command eventually decided to filter traffic in carefully, recognizing that the personnel trapped outside were desperately needed to assume duties inside.

When I finally reached my squadron, the mobilization was already in full swing. We immediately transitioned to emergency manning, pulling 12-hour shifts with zero time off for the undetermined future. Most of my active investigations were suspended for the time being. I was reassigned to a flight, reinforcing base law enforcement patrols, responding to emergency calls, and manually screening the surge of vehicles and personnel trying to gain entry to the base.

After about a week of operations, another Master Sergeant and I were assigned to man the police desk at the Base Command Post. We split the 24-hour cycle, working in 12-hour shifts. We relieved each other in a 'ground hog day' kind of loop—drive home, eat, sleep, shower, go to work, repeat.

I got the night shift, which I didn't mind, and it offered a nice break from the daytime chaos

for the most part. During those quiet hours, I could eat my sad tuna sandwich without offending anyone. The post was typically staffed by only two or three of us, with the others usually glued to their monitors. My primary duty was managing the phones and routing critical notifications. I counted myself lucky; my counterpart on the day shift had to operate with the Wing Commander and the entire base leadership packing the room, watching his every move, every day. I was walking out usually as the brass was walking in.

Lets' not forget this was around the same time that the white powder anthrax scare started. Mail-borne anthrax attacks targeting Congress and the media were ramping up, so the base was on alert for suspicious substances.

One evening, a panicked call came in from the dental clinic. Staff had discovered a white powder on the floor and feared sabotage. They demanded a police response. I immediately

instructed our responders to establish a secure exterior perimeter and wait for fire personnel in protective suits to investigate. I was determined to avoid a "Blue Canary" scenario—the law enforcement slang for cops who rush into a toxic environment untrained and unequipped, only to succumb like canaries in a coal mine. It happens far more often than people realize. A chlorine leak at a pool facility is a common one. Ultimately, it was determined the substance was merely plaster of Paris used for dental molds, left behind by a careless worker who failed to clean it up.



In the 1970s, the DoD developed a base decal as part of a vehicle registration program. With this sticker on a vehicle anyone could enter an installation. After 9/11 stickers were still required but, IDs were checked as well. The Air Force ended the requirement in August 2007. Red=airmen, yellow=NCO, green=civilian and blue=officer.

In another instance, we received frantic calls from base housing residents reporting suspicious white powder spilling from envelopes in their mailboxes. The packages bore no return addresses. An investigation revealed an incredibly poorly timed marketing campaign by a laundry detergent company that had sent out free laundry powder samples. Their timing could not have been worse, and it was, unsurprisingly, the immediate end of that campaign.

The tragedy of that day struck close to home. One of my young airmen mentioned that his aunt worked for the Navy at the Pentagon, and the family was waiting in agonizing silence for news. A couple of days later, he returned with the devastating confirmation that she had perished in the attack. I immediately offered him emergency leave to go with his family, but he declined. He preferred to stay on duty, perhaps finding solace in the long work hours.

Eventually, the emergency manning subsided and we transitioned into a 'new normal' and the heightened realization the world had changed forever. Shortly after, I was transferred to the Headquarters Air Force Security Forces Center. As the Law Enforcement Superintendent for the Air Force, writing new policy became one of my primary responsibilities.

If you ever wondered who did away with the mandatory military vehicle decals affixed to windshields, you can blame me. I realized those decals made our service members and their families easily identifiable targets for off-base attacks, terrorist or otherwise. Because we had transitioned to 100% physical ID card checks at every gate, the practice of waving a vehicle through based on a sticker was obsolete anyway. Our Security Forces Director agreed and after undertaking the needed coordination, we officially retired the decals. The other military branches resisted the change at first, but they eventually followed our lead.

Gloria Ornelas, SAF/NMUSAF/MUD

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On 9/11, I was assigned at Andrews AFB (89th AW) and worked at the MPF. We watched the towers being attacked and burning on TV in the Customer Service lobby in the MPF. We typically processed about 100 customers per day at the MPF customer service section and the lobby was full.

As the determination was made that it was an attack vs. an accident, the base went to FPCON Delta and the entire base was ordered to shelter in place. This included all the civilians as the rumors of attack had included Andrews/Air Force One among potential targets.

I was assigned to "guard" the main entrance to the HQ building and ensure that no one left or entered the property. I was challenged by multiple civilians but informed them that the SF on the installation were utilizing all necessary force to stop people coming and going on the installation and they were to remain in the building until the order to allow them to depart was given.

Eventually, the 89th Wing created a plan to allow dependents to return from school and off-base employment along with allowing the civilians to depart for their home. The gates of the installation were continuing at Delta and were downgraded to Charlie the following morning.

(9/12) I volunteered for a detail to perform casualty assistance at the Pentagon/Crystal City on the following day as a representative of the AF. We drove in A government vehicle to Bolling AFB to pick up additional team members and I noted the mounted M-60s and Humvees postured for defense of the installation. We proceeded to Crystal City and gathered in a local hotel. Driving in to the city you could see the smoke plume from the pentagon attack.



Deploying base personnel to worldwide locations became a major 88th Air Base Wing activity.

Ultimately, we had no AF dependents come into our casualty benefits briefing room but assisted our sister services as they received multiple dependents within their briefing rooms.

After the attack and a short time passed, I was asked to assemble a group of enlisted members to re-enlist at the Pentagon to celebrate the USAF birthday. This ceremony would be officiated by the Sec Def (Rumsfeld) and he or Gen Powell would perform the re-enlistment ceremony. The ceremony went off without an issue and the group we provided re-enlisted in front of the damaged section of the Pentagon. Days passed and life returned to semi-normal. I found out shortly after, my son's scout master was killed in the attack. (Navy member) His wife brought their son's to the Scout meetings as normal, but all were affected by his absence. Eventually, a new "normal" was created and life continued. Then I was notified, I would be deploying...

John Haley, AFMC/A3OR

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Something that will always stay with me. I was attending HS in Falls Church, VA, sitting in my senior English class when we learned of what was happening. I got out of class and that's when we were all alerted of what had unfolded at the Pentagon. I immediately tried calling my mom to see if she had heard from my dad. My dad was an AD ARMY JAG officer and had an office at the Pentagon, Crystal City, & Ft. Belvoir and we didn't know where he happened to be that day. I left school, got home and with the rest of the world, watched what unfolded that day. It would be hours later that we finally got a hold of him. Turns out, he had been in





SrA Michael Crane kisses his son prior to deployment.

the Pentagon that day but was tasked to drive a 2-Star GO to Ft Belvoir for a meeting. If you look at the impact site and count two windows to the left, that is where my dad's office was located.

In the days following 9/11 I had learned of other school mates that were in the same boat my mother and I were in and we had learned a classmate had lost his mother in one of the Twin Towers.

Kimberly Pritchett, OM and Travel Planner to the AFMC Commander

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I was a junior in high school at Beavercreek. I was in my 4th year of the Explorers program with the local fire depts. I remember the principal getting on the PA system and saying something had happened. My next class was

a government class, and we watched as the second tower was hit. I called my father and step-mother who were stationed active duty at Scott AFB. Dad had just retired and Mary was moved from her desk job out, to back fill SF for base lock down. And then called my mother who was here at AFMC headquarters and had been sent home early due to base closure at Wright Patt. The actions of that day pushed me to continue with the fire dept (23yrs now) and eventually, after losing friends in combat and stop loses, into the AF as a security forces member assigned to the 445th SFS and a deployment to Afghanistan.

Mark Murphy, NMUSAF/MUO

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I was working in ASC/YW (Training Systems Product Group) in Area B, Building 32, at the time. I remember word spread immediately after the first plane hit the WTC – soon we were all crowded into the front office watching the news on the TV. A lot of people felt the odds of this being an accident were very slim. After the second plane hit the WTC, it was obvious to the world that this was no accident. A short time later, we were told to go home. Like everyone, I wondered what was going to be targeted next. I was a Contracting Office and had a couple of contracts that needed to go out before the end of the fiscal year. After a few days at home, my team was given the go-ahead to go into the office but just long enough to complete the mission-essential contract award actions and then go straight back home. I didn't feel un-

safe – Security Forces had noticeably increased defensive measures – but it felt surreal being on an empty base on a workday. My team went TDY for a program management review, barely a month after the attacks. I’ve never seen airports so quiet in the middle of the day before – the tension was palpable. Yet at the same time, it felt good to be going back to our normal activities, too.

Ryan Evans, AFMC/SB

I was a Supply Officer assigned to HQ US Air Force at the Pentagon as Chief, Supply Warfighting Policy & Operations Support Team. I was at my desk in a vault area of the fourth floor working on a slide deck for an upcoming Air Force Supply Wartime Policy Working Group meeting when I heard animated conversation in the civilian deputy’s



9/11 Memorial at Pentagon, Washington D.C..

office. I walked down to investigate and found out an aircraft had crashed into one of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center. As we stood watching the footage on a TV in the office, we heard that a second aircraft crashed into the other tower. We were sure at that point that both crashes were premeditated and wondered out loud how we would respond. As the lead for supply warfighting policy my thoughts turned to how I would be responding.

I returned to my desk to work on the briefing. A few minutes later I heard a brief ‘whoosh’ sound followed by a dull thud. The building shook briefly. One of my colleagues yelled “Let’s get the hell out of here” and we all filed out of the vault. The squawk box in our hallway was broadcasting an emergency message, but it was unintelligible. Although we had never practiced evacuation procedures, the evacuation from the building was very orderly.

As we exited the building and into the main parking lot toward Crystal City/Pentagon City, we saw a plume of black smoke to our right and detected a sickening odor similar to an electrical fire with burning rubber. We followed our instincts and walked straight across to the other side of the parking lot and gathered on the grass. As we saw others from our organization, we called them over to join us so we could be prepared for an accountability check. Our

biggest concern at that point was the potential for a follow-up attack. Leadership apparently had the same concern, so we were told to make our way to the Pentagon City Mall and await further instructions.

We'd evacuated quickly and left essentials behind. My flight cap, car keys, and BlackBerry phone were in my briefcase in the office. On the way to the mall, I remember someone holding up a cell phone and asking if anyone wanted to call home. I took her up on the offer, but the phone lines were at capacity, and it took several minutes to reach my wife. She confirmed that an aircraft had flown into the building. In the mall, people were gathered around any TV they could find to catch up on the news. After an hour or so (I think) we were told to make our way home any way we could, but the blue/yellow line Metro heading to the Pentagon and beyond was shut down. I arranged for my wife to pick up a colleague and me at King Street Station and we took the Metro there.

We drove back into Arlington to drop off my colleague. I remember how eerily quiet it was without the normally heavy midday air traffic at Reagan-National Airport. I also remember being stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic on Route 1 in Alexandria when an aircraft approached. People started jumping out of their cars, preparing to find cover from another attack. We later learned that it was a senior leader in the Bush administration returning to DC.

Our leadership used the recall roster to notify a handful of us to return to work a couple days later. I remember 'hot bunking' with CE folks in Crystal City for a couple days; we had the afternoon/evening shift. When we were called back to the building it was the beginning of the transition to camouflage uniforms—Battle Dress Uniform (BDU)—as the duty uniform. I recall the smell of burnt rubber in our office areas. The impact site was near one wedge to the north. My Service Dress Coat had to be dry cleaned to remove the odor and dust. We spent several days in the Command Center in the basement before we could return to the office area. It was the beginning of even longer days at the Pentagon as we planned the response and the supply concept at locations we'd never heard of...and mostly couldn't pronounce.

Joseph Codispoti, AFMC HQ AFMC/A4/10/A4RX

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I was in the seventh grade, sitting in my first class of the day – science. Mrs. Riazzi was in the middle of her lesson when the classroom phone rang. She froze. Her face, her body—completely frozen. The only thing moving seemed to be her eyes, darting back and forth.

Eventually, she stopped leaning against the wall and turned around so her back was facing us. My classmates whispered in confusion. We had never seen her act this way. Looking back, I think she was trying to find the words to describe what she learned – and then figure out how to relay that information to a room full of 12- to 13-year-olds. As an adult now, twenty-five



Warfighter training intensified after 9/11.

years later, I can't imagine the weight of the responsibility she must've felt on her shoulders in the moment.

Then she turned on the classroom TV. The first tower was in flames. I don't think we comprehended what we were watching. I simply remember everyone staring at the screen. Some of my

classmates seemed to understand the significance of the Twin Towers, perhaps because they had been there or knew more about New York City. Most of us were just confused; intrigued, but unsure of what on earth was happening. The voices of the news reporters were frantic. No one had answers. No one seemed to know exactly what had happened.

And then we saw it live. A dark object crept in from the side of the screen – like something out of a nightmare. I remember it so vividly. It looked like a plane, but I don't think our minds could fathom what it was about to do. I could hear the stress growing in the newscasters' voices. That's what I remember most. I don't even remember what the classroom sounded like at that point. I remember Mrs. Riazzi standing there, staring up at the TV in total shock.

Then the second plane hit. Until that moment, we didn't even fully understand that an airplane had caused the destruction we were already watching. Suddenly, there was no question that something unimaginable was happening. And there was so much we didn't know yet. In those moments, we didn't see First Responders gearing up or people on the streets running for their lives. We didn't yet know that other planes had been hijacked, that the Pentagon would be hit, or that the passengers and crew aboard Flight 93 would fight back and sacrifice their lives for the greater good before their plane crashed in Pennsylvania. All we knew was that one tower was burning and we didn't know why until we witnessed the plane crash into



the second tower.

I remember the panic the most. It was terrifying to watch and hear everything unfold in real-time. We were still in the days of AOL – there was no social media feed to refresh and no endless stream information in the palm of your hand. Just the television news and that was more than enough. We watched alongside the reporters as they tried to understand what was happening themselves.

It wasn't until later that we saw the other images that have since become inseparable from September 11: President Bush receiving the news while sitting in an elementary school classroom, his expression changing as he tried to maintain his composure; people running through the streets as an enormous cloud of debris chased them; first responders rushing toward danger as everyone else tried to escape. We saw our fellow Americans in total anguish. We saw people falling from the towers. We eventually heard recordings and final messages from people aboard the planes.

But that morning, sitting in seventh-grade science, we knew almost none of it. We stayed in our first period class for the duration of September 11, 2001. There were no bells, no changing classes, and no lessons. If you packed a lunch, you left the room to get it and came back. School lunches were delivered to the classrooms. It felt as though we were frozen in time. We sat and watched the footage of the Towers as they burned. We watched them shake. We watched as the first tower collapsed and completely covered New York City in dust and debris. We watched in devastation as the second tower collapsed. We watched everything.

I remember sitting in my seat, scared and overwhelmed, and eventually I just bowed my head in prayer. A few classmates joined me, and together we silently found comfort where we could.

As strange as it may sound, I am grateful that I witnessed that day as it happened. Watching it did not change the outcome of September 11, but seeing it unfold gave me an understanding of its magnitude that I have carried with me ever since. I remember the fear, the heartbreak, and the uncertainty. But I also remember the extraordinary sense of unity that followed. Americans were grieving together. Whatever differences existed among us, there was an overwhelming understanding that our country had been attacked and that thousands of innocent people had lost their lives. At 12 years old, I couldn't possibly understand all the political, military, and global consequences that would follow. I only knew that the world felt different after that day. And in many ways, it was.

September 11 played a major role in shaping the woman I became. Its repercussions are

countless—from the way we travel and think about security to the way an entire generation came to understand terrorism, war, sacrifice, and service. More personally, it helped root in me a deep appreciation for this country and for the people willing to protect it. Now, as a mother, that part carries even more weight. I want my daughter to grow up understanding that the freedoms she inherits did not come without sacrifice. They have been defended, protected, and, throughout our history, died for.

I was a seventh grader when I watched September 11, 2001 unfold from a science classroom. Twenty-five years later, I can still see Mrs. Riazzi standing in front of that television. I can still see that plane enter the screen. I can still remember bowing my head. And I will never forget.

Lara Sarver, AFMC/A1D

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The morning of 9/11 started with the 90th Missile Wing (Wyoming) already in 24 hours ops due to multiple weapons being stolen from a Missile Alert Facility storage locker belonging to an SRT. This event was eclipsed by events soon to unfold. Within minutes of the first plane hitting, the base was shut down. Many SF members (and the whole base) had kids at school, minimal information was available, so one can imagine how all were concerned about their children. No one could leave the base, so parents were frantically calling friends and family to pull their kids out of school.

My wife finally contacted a friend off base who picked up the kids. Additionally, the commander directed (the AF) a 100% recall. All members were accounted for except one SF NCO who had gone hunting in out in the Wyoming wilderness. I had to tell him what was going on days later when he finally called in. It was a conversation and reaction I will never forget.

Our youngest son, who at the time of 9/11 had no clue what was going on, as he was 14 months old, much later in his life when he realized what happened on 9/11, he wept.

Jack Waid, AFMC/HO

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I woke up that morning to get the kids ready for school, out the door and onto the bus. A few minutes later Jack called and asked me where the kids were. I told him they were on bus on their way to school. He told me to turn on the TV as it was easier than him explaining what was going on. I am pretty sure I saw the second plane hit on live TV.

Jack told me he did not know when he would be home, but we needed to get the kids out

of school. Well, this was a problem as the base was shut down. I had to figure out how to get the kids somewhere safe off base. I contacted a family friend who agreed to pick them up until we could leave the base. This time came about 6 pm. We had a brief window to leave the base to do what we had to do.

Our daughter told me that she figured she would be leaving soon because all the military kids were leaving school. One by one her class was emptying out. In the end the day was a blur and we as a family settled into a steady state of Jack working long hours and hardly being home.

Jamileh Waid

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On September 11, 2001, I was a student in Beavercreek, Ohio. After the first plane struck the North Tower, teachers across the school turned on their televisions. I was in second-period science when we watched the second plane hit the South Tower live on the news. From that moment on, nothing else mattered and it was all anyone could talk about. Shortly after the third plane struck the Pentagon, the uncertainty gave way to a terrible clarity: we were under attack.

In Beavercreek, that realization carried its own weight.



Beavercreek, Ohio 9/11 memorial.

The 1964 crash of a Martin RB-57D in the Beavercreek High School parking lot was still part of local memory, and the emotional residue of the Cold War had not yet fully disappeared. In those moments, some of us wondered whether we were supposed to shelter under our desks, just as we had been taught in drills. It sounds almost absurd in retrospect, but that was the atmosphere of the day; confusion, fear, and the sudden feeling that the unthinkable was no longer distant.

Growing up in Beavercreek, the sight of airlifters, fighters, and bombers was a regular part of life. It was so common it might have become forgettable if not for the roar of engines that so often interrupted our games of kickball, tag, and cops and robbers. What was so incredibly eerie was that during our trip home from school, we could not hear a single plane in the sky.

Later that afternoon, I was glued to the television in my living room when two explosions rattled the neighborhood. As good Midwesterners did whenever something out of the ordinary happened, we ran out into the street. Along with my neighbors, I looked north toward the base. What greeted us were two F-16 Fighting Falcons ripping across the sky on their way to support Air Force One as it traveled from Offutt to Andrews. While we were still discussing the sonic booms, a large aircraft took off from the air force base heading east. It turned out to be one of the local C-141s on its way to McGuire, carrying supplies for the victims of that morning's tragic events.

In 2011, the City of Beavercreek was granted a piece of the North Tower, and it was dedicated on the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Since then, I have made my way each year to Beavercreek Memorial Park to read the names of those lost. I sit and mourn, offer my respects, and reflect on what that day meant to our nation, our community, and our friends and family.

President Bush said it well on December 11, 2001: "In time, perhaps, we will mark the memory of September the 11th in stone and metal -- something we can show children as yet unborn to help them understand what happened on this minute and on this day. But for those of us who lived through these events, the only marker we'll ever need is the tick of a clock at the 46th minute of the eighth hour of the 11th day. We will remember where we were and how we felt. We will remember the dead and what we owe them. We will remember what we lost and what we found."

Cory Knapp, AFMC/DSR



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