

# 18 YEARS LATER, AMERICA VOWS TO ‘NEVER FORGET’ 9/11

*Posted on September 11, 2019 by Tyler Barker*



NEW YORK (AP) — Americans commemorated 9/11 with solemn ceremonies and vows Wednesday to “never forget” 18 years after the deadliest terror attack on American soil.

Victims’ relatives assembled at ground zero, where the observance began with a moment of silence and the tolling of bells at 8:46 a.m. — the exact time a hijacked plane slammed into the World Trade Center’s north tower.

“As long as the city will gift us this moment, I will be here,” Margie Miller, who lost her husband, Joel, said at the ceremony, which she attends every year. “I want people to remember.”

After so many years of anniversaries, she has come to know other victims’ relatives and to appreciate being with them.

“There’s smiles in between the tears that say we didn’t do this journey on our own, that we were here for each other,” she said.

Elsewhere around the country, President Donald Trump laid a wreath at the Pentagon, saying: “This is your anniversary of personal and permanent loss.” And Vice President Mike Pence was scheduled to speak at the third crash site, near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.



The nation is still grappling with the aftermath of 9/11. The effects are visible from airport security checkpoints to Afghanistan, where the post-9/11 U.S. invasion has become America's longest war.

Earlier this week, Trump called off a secret meeting at Camp David with Taliban and Afghan government leaders and declared the peace talks "dead." As the Sept. 11 anniversary began in Afghanistan, a rocket exploded at the U.S. Embassy just after midnight.

The political legacy of the 9/11 flowed into the ground zero ceremony, too.

After reading victims' names, Nicholas Haros Jr. used his turn at the podium to tear into Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota over her recent "Some people did something" reference to 9/11.

"Madam, objectively speaking, we know who and what was done," Haros, who lost his mother, Frances, said as he reminded the audience of the al-Qaida attackers.

"Our constitutional freedoms were attacked, and our nation's founding on Judeo-Christian values was attacked. That's what 'some people' did. Got that now?" he said to applause.

Omar, one of the first Muslim women elected to Congress, has said she didn't intend to minimize what happened on Sept. 11, and she accused critics of taking her words out of context.

Haros' remarks weren't the only political message to draw applause at ground zero. So did Debra Epps' plea for tighter gun laws.

"This country — in 18 years, you would think it had made changes to bring us to more peace. However, gun violence has gone rampant," said Epps, who lost her brother, Christopher.

The anniversary ceremonies center on remembering the nearly 3,000 people killed when hijacked planes slammed into the trade center, the Pentagon and the field in Pennsylvania on Sept. 11, 2001.

All those victims' names are read aloud at the ground zero ceremony by loved ones — now, quite often, ones too young to have known their lost relatives.

"Uncle Joey, I wish I got to know you," Joseph Henry said of his uncle and namesake, firefighter Joseph Patrick Henry.

Others made a point of spotlighting the suffering of firefighters, police and others who died or fell ill after exposure to the smoke and dust at ground zero.

A compensation fund for people with potentially Sept. 11-related health problems has awarded more than \$5.5 billion so far. More than 51,000 people have applied. Over the summer, Congress made sure the fund won't run dry.

The sick gained new recognition this year at the memorial plaza at ground zero, where the new 9/11 Memorial Glade was dedicated this spring.

Sept. 11 has become known also a day of service. People around the country volunteer at food banks,



schools, home-building projects, park cleanups and other charitable endeavors on and near the anniversary.