What We've Learned From 9-11, In Sixteen Years

Sixteen years ago, a group of radicalized Islamic terrorists hijacked four airliners and committed the most horrific act of terrorism in American history.

Two of those planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the third was flown into the Pentagon. The passengers of the fourth courageously wrested control of their airplane from the terrorists, preventing it from reaching its target. But they paid for their heroism with their life, as the jet crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside.

A total of 2,996 people died in the attacks on 9-11, with another 6,000 wounded. Both of the towers of the World Trade Center, which were 110 stories tall, crashed to the ground, as the heat from the burning jet fuel weakened the structural beams in the towers' cores.

The only saving grace was that the attack occurred early enough in the morning, that only a couple of thousand of the 50,000 workers and 200,000 daily visitors were in the towers at the time of the attack. Had the event happened midday, when the towers were filled, the travesty would have been much worse.

This event was a game changer for then-President Bush and for the nation as a whole. [The War on Terror](#) sprung from the ruins of those towers, as the government sought those responsible, especially Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist organization al-Queda.

Enough time has passed, that many have forgotten the lessons of that dreadful day, especially those on the left.

But while the liberal left is ready to forgive and forget, all but giving our country to the dangerous people that hurt our nation, there were many lessons to be learned that day; lessons that can be all too easily forgotten.

1. Terrorism is Alive and Well in the World Today

Before 9-11, terrorism wasn't an American problem. Rather, it was something that happened in other countries around the world. But we were untouched by it. Oh, we heard the occasional story about some horrific attack overseas, but we weren't all that concerned. After all, they weren't bothering us.

9-11 woke up our collective consciousness to the reality of international terrorism, especially terrorism fueled by radical Islam. No longer was it something that only happened to other people, it was something that happened here at home.

We had the proof. The twin towers were down, there were almost 3,000 people dead.

2. Radicalized Islam is the Most Dangerous Human Force there is

More than a realization of terrorism, we gained a realization of just how dangerous a religion Islam actually is. Up to that point, it was merely a quaint religion that was practiced by the Arab countries.

But 9-11 thrust Islam before our eyes, not as a world religion, but as a force for destruction. We had seen the evidence; Muslims killed.

If anything, radicalized Islam is more dangerous today, 16 years later. Islamic terrorist groups abound, growing every

day. There is even what is claimed to be a Muslim caliphate, created by [a terrorist organization](#), ISIS. Muslims are on the march and their clearly stated goal is to take over the world.

3. We Are Not Safe

Much of our collective complacency came from our belief that we were too big to fall, or rather, we're too big and too powerful for anyone to attack. But that proved to e a false hope, as al-Queda used our own arrogance against us.

The conventional wisdom of military planning doesn't apply to terrorism. They don't fight stand-up battles, army against army. Rather, they sneak around in the shadows, attacking civilians when they are unprepared to be attacked and avoiding a confrontation with police, military and any other armed force.

This means that none of us are safe, no matter where we are. It was proven on 9-11 and it's been proven over and over since then; the government can't protect us.

We have to be ready to [protect ourselves](#), or there won't be any protection to be found. Even then, protecting ourselves from something like 9-11 is beyond what anyone can do.

4. We Can Still Come Together and Support One Another

A few weeks before 9-11 I was watching a World War II documentary. Amongst the many thoughts that paraded through my mind was the question of whether the nation could ever pull together again, like we did during that war, with people reaching across political lines to support each other and the country. I concluded that we couldn't do it again.

But I was glad to see that I was wrong. 9-11 pulled the nation

together, in support of the victims, their families and the need to start the War on Terror. Never before had I seen Americans come together in such a way, standing for a common cause.

That question has reared its ugly head once again. Our political divide is greater than ever. Yet I have to believe that if our country were ever attacked in such an outrageous manner again, we would all come together, putting aside our differences in the common cause of healing our nation's wounds.

5. There Are Still Plenty of Heroes Around

If there was one thing that stood out on 9-11, it was the heroes that rushed to the tower, trying to save people's lives.

These public servants, in the police and fire departments, gave sacrificially of their time, their effort and in some cases, even of their lives, in order to save others. Firemen and other rescue workers from around the nation congregated on the Twin Towers, helping local emergency crews to dig through the rubble and save as many lives as possible.

While the thought of heroes has become obsolete in some people's minds, the need for heroes has not. The world we are living in isn't getting any safer, and as long as it is unsafe, there will be a need for heroes who are willing to put their lives on the line, in order to protect others.

Some of those heroes wear Army green, others wear police blue and still others drive around in big red trucks. But they are all heroes equally; people who put the lives of others before their own.

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6. Anything Can Become a Weapon

In the hands of a killer, anything can become a weapon. In this case, jet aircraft became weapons. Not military aircraft, armed to the teeth, but everyday airliners, used to haul people from point A to point B. But when those aircraft were in the hands of terrorists, they became weapons of mass destruction.

While terrorists and other killers are willing to use just about anything to wreck mayhem and death, the rest of us tend to play by the rules. This gives them a distinct advantage. A willingness to break the rules allows one to take ordinary objects and use them to kill and destroy.

Part of that is because they aren't concerned about getting innocent people killed; so they use innocents as human shields, hiding behind women and children to kill. When we try to retaliate, it's almost impossible to kill them, without killing those innocent victims.

In doing this, terrorists attempt to steal the moral high ground from those they are attacking. In many cases, it works,

especially considering that the majority of the mainstream media supports the terrorists. So, they report the human shield being killed, while willfully ignoring the civilian casualties that caused us to retaliate in the first place.

7. Air Travel is Essential to Modern Society and Must be Protected

For about a week after the attack, all aircraft, except military aircraft, were grounded, putting a complete stop to air travel and air shipments. This left people stranded all over the country, as well as putting a large dent in companies being able to conduct normal business operations.

Yet that really wasn't an unreasonable reaction to the attack. Before the government could allow airlines to resume their normal schedule, they needed to ensure that there weren't more terrorists trained and waiting to conduct a follow-on attack. Had they not put a stop to air travel, it would have been irresponsible and put the lives of countless more people at risk.

One of the results of this attack was in increase in [airport security](), especially in preventing people from entering concourses, unless they had a valid boarding pass and identification. While this has been an inconvenience, it has reduced the likelihood of a repeat attack.

But there's another part of this that is important, and that is the protection of the aircraft's cockpit. The passengers of United Airlines flight 93 showed us the way. That is, the passengers and crew took it upon themselves to fight the terrorists, literally sacrificing their own lives to protect others.

Granted, they would have died either way, but in this way,

they made their deaths worthwhile, rather than merely being more victims.

8. We Must Give Our Military and Police Whatever Support they Need to Stamp Out Terrorism

Terrorism is very much a part of the global landscape today. To protect ourselves, we must give our government and especially our military, the tools and support it needs to stamp out this global blight. The only other option is to allow the terrorists to win, and that clearly isn't an option worth considering.

The men and women of our military forces put their lives on the line for us, in order to protect our lives, our homes and our country. Each and every one of them has written a check to the government for their own lives, declaring that they are willing to lay down their own lives, if necessary, to ensure that others might live. How can we not support them?

Some have said that violence never solved anything; but they are wrong. Violence has solved many things throughout history. But sadly, many of those were solved in the negative, with evil people using violence to their own ends.

This is exactly what terrorists are trying to do. They won't stop because we speak nicely to them. They won't stop if we give them money. They will only stop when our military forces hunt them down and destroy them. Evil such as this must be stamped out, not tolerated.

9. Additional Police Forces, Homeland Security and Stealing Our Privacy isn't the Solution

It is impossible to create a perfectly foolproof security network, no matter how hard we try. There will always be holes

that terrorists and other criminals can capitalize on. Even in the old Soviet Union, which was oppressive of their own citizens, a very active criminal element existed. Smugglers were common, often buying off the border guards who were supposed to stop them.

Criminals will always find a way through security. So giving up our freedom in order to buy security is nothing more than a placebo. It might make some people feel more secure, but they aren't. Terrorists can still get through.

The only true security we can have is an armed population, trained and prepared to counter any terrorist activity on our soil. The sheriff's department where I live puts it this way; they aren't worried about having to respond to a terrorist attack, because they are sure that those of us who carry concealed will end the attack, before any of them can respond.

10. We Can't Let the Terrorists Win

If there's anything the United State of America stands for, it's freedom. We have been the light of freedom in the world for over 200 years, exporting our brand of government to other countries. While we are not perfect, we are the best hope of mankind. That cannot be lost.

While Muslim extremists are not the only terrorists out there, they make up more than 90% of the active terrorist organizations in the world. As such, they are clearly responsible for the vast majority of terrorist incidents. That is the terrorism we must fight against. It's not the only terrorism we face, but it is the largest threat.

Islam is totally contrary to freedom; it is all about submission to their god. Anyone who does not submit is to be killed or enslaved. Allowing the terrorists to win, condemns us and our children to these two possible fates.

Our freedom is hard bought, with the blood of patriots. Some of them died in the twin towers, 16 years ago. We must not let the freedom they bought us go.

Lest we forget.