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ANNIVERSARY from page 1A

Ultimately, this national anniversary has prompted a re-examination of the events which led to the attack and the responses initiated by America to that attack. It is also a date which is held in deep reverence by the many relatives, coworkers and friends touched by the unanticipated deaths which occurred that day.

On Sept. 11, 2001, 19 militant extremists hijacked four aircraft and carried out suicide attacks on targets inside the United States. Two of the hijacked planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon and the fourth plane crashed into a field in Shanksville, Penn.

These attacks killed 2,763 individuals.

As the events happened, the nation watched much of the attack on television, horrified as two passenger planes plowed into the twin towers, which completely collapsed soon thereafter.

The destruction was devastating, completely engulfing much of the financial district in New York City with toxic dust and debris. Hundreds of first

responders were trapped and crushed in the collapse, along with many of the employees of the financial companies housed in the towers.

Then-President George W. Bush was in Florida at the time of the attack and security concerns were so serious that he was shuttled around the country in Air Force One for hours before it was determined it was safe to return to Washington D.C.

ing the attack.

Intelligence services were roundly criticized for their collective role in the attacks and the lack of warning provided to the American people prior to Sept. 11, leading to new policies and oversight from Congress.

The first major military response to the attacks was the Bush Administration's decision to invade Afghanistan, which took place in late 2001. The Islamist group the Taliban were in

U.S.-supported government withstanding hundreds of deadly bombings from insurgents since Hussein's death. Public opinion eventually turned against the Iraq occupation.

The U.S. lost 4,487 service personnel in its war in Iraq, which ended in 2011. More than 25,000 Iraqi civilian deaths were also documented.

Now, after 20 years, the destabilization of the larger area of the Middle East is part of much discussion in light of continued instability in Iraq and the recent return of the Taliban to control of Afghanistan.

Today, U.S. President Joe Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden will visit all three sites which were attacked by terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001.

Biden released a statement earlier this week recognizing the impact the day had on America and on those who lost loved ones that day. He also signed an Executive order authorizing a review of FBI files related to the Sept. 11 attacks.

"We must never forget the enduring pain of the families and loved ones of the 2,977 innocent people who were killed during the worst terrorist attack on America in our history," Biden said. "For them, it was not only a national and international tragedy. It was a personal devastation. For 20 years, children have grown up without parents and parents have suffered without children. Husbands and wives have had to find a way forward without their partners in life. Brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, loved ones and friends have celebrated 20 years of birthdays, family gatherings and milestones looking at an empty chair at homes and with a hole in their hearts."

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— U.S. PRESIDENT JOSEPH R. BIDEN

In the following days, the impact of the attacks began to be felt — at times controversial, and clearly far reaching. Bush created the Department of Homeland Security soon after, to allow one integrated command structure to oversee the analysis of intelligence information gathered by a multitude of agencies. The department sought to coordinate and analyze intelligence after intra-agency confusion was found to be a major problem in prevent-

control of the country and refused American requests to extradite Osama bin Laden, which eventually led to an all-out invasion rather than the turnover of Bin Laden to American authorities.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001, and stationed troops in country until September 1 of this year. During its 20 years in the Middle East, the U.S. lost 2,455 troops, which turned out to be this country's longest war ever.

The second major military response to the attacks of Sept. 11 took place in Iraq, again acting primarily on information obtained from American intelligence services.

The United States invaded Iraq in 2003 with a force of 180,000 troops drawn from a combined U.S. military force and from a coalition of other nations. The invasion was initially successful, overturning Saddam Hussein's regime in less than a month.

That was the beginning of a turbulent partnership, with elements of the

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