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Remembering 9/11

Although it's been 14 years, most everyone remembers where they were when they heard the news of the terrorist attacks of September 11.

America was shocked by the surprise terrorist attacks that hit New York and Washington, D.C, and killed more than 3,000 people. The attacks were carried out by Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network, al Qaeda, and came by air, using hijacked passenger aircraft that crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, the Pentagon, and a field in Shanksville, PA after passengers on that flight overcame their hijackers and averted even more casualties.

The attacks of 9/11 thrust us immediately into a war in Afghanistan, seeking out bin Laden and al Qaeda, as well as the Taliban who harbored them. That war has now spanned 14 years.

After the initial shock of the attacks, America responded with unity and resolve to support each other and answer the call to defend America.

Since September 11, 2001, more than 32,000 Wisconsin soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsman have served the Global War on Terror in combat, security, support, and logistical roles.

9/11 changed America. We are more vigilant and alert. Our resolve is still strong. Our young men and women still proudly serve and sacrifice.

As we remember the horror of September 11, 2001, we should remember those who stood afterward in support of their country, whether it was at home or abroad providing essential support to see America through a dark time.

Those who served after 9/11 know what sacrifice means and what their country needed of them – they met the task at hand and served honorably – knowing in most cases that when they signed up to serve they would be going to war.

As we mark this solemn anniversary, let us remember what happened that morning, but also remember what happened after when America pulled together as one, unified nation.

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(John A. Scocos is the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. He is an Iraq War veteran.)