**Post 9-11: A Long Road**

September 11th 2001 was arguably one of the worst terrorist attacks in the history of the United States. Since the attacks the United States has undergone major changes from a governmental standpoint. These changes have majorly impacted the way U.S. citizens live their daily lives. Many restrictions have been put in place that limit some of the civil liberties that were enjoyed prior to the terrorist attack. These changes typically come from governmental regulations and/or government policies that impact the daily life of its residents.

Many New Yorkers and Pentagon officials claim that the morning of September 11th 2001 started as many others. These sites did not have any prior knowledge indicating that a major attack would take place. The people heading to work, and flying on the affected airliners, did not have any advance warning that at 8:46 the United States would be attacked and that the events of that day would have cascading consequence for whole country. After the onset of the first attack, the pentagon and another World Trade center building were subsequently hit by a plane. This is in conjunction with a fourth plane crashing in Pennsylvania. At the end of the attacks headed by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, the United States would see a death toll towering over 3,000 people who included over 400 police and firefighters[[1]](#footnote-1).

Since that day the United States worked overtime in trying to come up with policies that would help to limit the chance of another attack occurring. One of the first major policies was enacted by congress shortly after the attacks. The Patriot Act would be put in place in order to free up some of the restrictions that many claimed prevented the United States from gaining inside knowledge of the attack. The Patriot Act would allow the government to use prior permissions granted to the prevention of mob type activities for the prevention of terrorism. It would allow such acts as roving wiretaps. This type of wire tap yields fewer restrictions and is not limited to one type of device being tapped. The wire tap instead virtually follows the person and taps multiple devices that may be used. The Patriot Act also allowed for the punishment of different types of attacks. Most of the changes outlined in the Patriot act would give the United States more leeway in punishment and investigations of suspected terrorists of which they did not have in the past.[[2]](#footnote-2)

With the onset of new rules and regulations it was only natural for the United States to create a new division to handle the influx of intelligence. Within days of the attack President bush authorized the development of the Department of Homeland Security. In 2002 the department would officially be made part of the cabinet and the director would be in charge of multiple organizations that were previously under different jurisdictions. The initial purpose of the streamline was due to the lack of communication that existed prior to the 9/11 attacks. Some claim that this lack of communication helped lead to a communication breakdown that eventually caused the death of many. The current mission of the department is to protect the people of the United States and to prevent future attacks to our national security.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The attacks on 9/11 affected not only the government but also the citizens of the United States. The efforts by the Bush administration to go after the perpetrators of the attacks created a need and a desire for military personnel. Recruiting offices all over the United States saw an uptake in people wanting to join the ranks of the different branches. Periodic increases in recruiting are to be expected. What was unique about this increase were the reasons why people were joining. Recruiters typically claim that most people join for the chance to either have a full time job or for money for college. For three years after 9/11 this was not the case. People were joining so they could fight and defend the nation that they care for.[[4]](#footnote-4) The influx of joining for nationalistic or patriotic reasons was something that had not been seen in a while. This is not to say that those who joined prior were not motivated by the patriotism. The difference lies in the fact that for the new recruits, patriotism was the overriding factor.

Those joining the military and going to war were doing so to protect the freedoms that we have come to love. These liberties were granted to the citizens through the constitution and have been solidified over the years through enormous amounts of case law. The attacks on 9/11 brought about much needed change. The issues with changes in national security lie in the fact that they have the ability to threaten the long standing civil liberties of the people. Some of the biggest changes came within the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Given the fact that the terrorist used airliners for the attack, the TSA was put on the front line for national protection. This protection has caused major uproar and has had critics from all extremes. Some people think more needs to be done to protect our citizens while others feel that the TSA and other agencies have crossed a major line by infringing on the rights that make this country what it is today.

There is balance that needs to be maintained when dealing with government changes. National security and civil liberties need to be weighed against each other in order to maintain the democratic principles that we were founded on. Since 9/11 the government has had their work cut out for them in doing just that. The changes made to our policies and procedures have reduced some of the freedoms that we had enjoyed but in turn have gone to great lengths to keep up safe from terroristic attacks.

A Long Road Since 9/11

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1. **9/11 Facts.** www.history.com [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **The U.S. Patriot Act: Preserving Life and Liberty,** U.S. Justice Department. <http://www.justice.gov/archive/ll/highlights.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Homeland Security**, <http://www.dhs.gov/mission> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Daniel, Lisa. Department of Defense. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=65272> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)