



The view south from 13th and Clifton streets NW as smoke from the Pentagon attack billows across the skyline toward the Washington Monument. Federal and District government offices closed, and the city declared a state of emergency.

Workers Struggle to Get Home as D.C. Shuts Down

PENTAGON, From A1

The attack occurred as much of Washington was transfixed with horror by the destruction unfolding in New York. It triggered a day of office and school closings, panicked phone calls, wild rumor and extraordinary security in the Washington area.

Within an hour, the federal government closed its offices in the area, telling its 260,000 local workers they were free to leave, and many private businesses followed suit. That unleashed an army of homebound drivers upon downtown's streets, causing temporary paralysis that, once cleared, was followed by the kind of emptiness and silence usually reserved for snowstorms.

Cell phone networks stopped working as their patrons all tried to check on loved ones at once. Some school systems decided to send children home early, but even before they could be dismissed, parents showed up in droves to pick up their little ones.

Historian David McCullough, author of the best-selling book on President John Adams, was staying at the Hay-Adams Hotel downtown, where he climbed to a high point in the building to view the smoke rising across the Potomac River at the Pentagon.

"This is going to be a dividing point in history," said McCullough, who was turned away when he went to George Washington University Hospital to try to give blood. "If they still teach history 100 years from now, children will still be reading about this day," he said, adding, "We haven't seen such destruction on our own soil since the Civil War."

The U.S. Capitol Police provided additional protection to leaders of Congress. Siren followed siren as police vehicles raced through the city's streets. Cabs were full and sidewalks crowded, because many workers were fearful that the next logical target would be the Metro system. A man wept on a corner. A woman sat in a convertible at a stoplight, listening to the radio, and suddenly put her hands to her head. "Oh my God," she said.

At the White House, "everybody was just clearing out of there like crazy," said an employee of the communications office who asked not to be identified. "A mail cart was stopped in its tracks near the front door. The person pushing it just left it there. People were moving fast, running. . . . It was like, 'Get out of here!'"

Heavily armed Secret Service agents, some wearing paramilitary dress, swept through the streets around the White House. Officers unspooled yellow police tape around Freedom Plaza and elsewhere up and down Pennsylvania Avenue. Having just finished a tour of the Capitol, tourist Don Kaiser, of Georgia, found himself being told to get out, quickly.

"It started calm," he said, "but then people started running."

Some simply left jackets and sweaters on the floor. At both the Capitol and the Pentagon, there were fresh moments of fear that additional aircraft had been spotted. No other attacks came, although there were reports—all false—of a car bomb outside the State Department, a fire on the Mall and an explosion at the Capitol.

Portions of key arteries connecting the city and its suburbs, including the 14th Street bridge,



A person injured at the Pentagon is wheeled into the emergency entrance at Virginia Hospital Center-Arlington. In all, 36 patients were taken there.

were closed all day, creating massive backups. Amtrak and the MARC commuter railroad suspended service for a brief period, while Virginia Railway Express ran half its normal schedule once the Secret Service swept a key rail tunnel for explosives. Metro closed its Pentagon and National Airport stations and, worried about another possible air attack, held all its trains below ground for 15 minutes until the threat dissipated.

The National Guard lined K Street with armored cars and guards at major intersections throughout downtown. One officer said it was traffic control, though there were very few cars on the streets.

The plane that struck the Pentagon was hijacked after it left Dulles at 8:10 a.m. and was flown for about an hour before it dropped to treetop level. Whether Pentagon personnel had been placed on alert after the New York attacks was not known publicly, although D.C. police said they had been contacted by the FBI and Secret Service almost immediately after the World Trade Center assault.

At least four floors of the Pentagon collapsed, the debris of office life visible through a hole at least 35 feet wide. Casualties might have been worse if the portion of the Pentagon where the aircraft struck had not been recently renovated. Chief of Defense Protective Services John Jester said workers had not moved back into some of the renovated sections.

Stunned and often disheveled employees stumbled from the huge building and into the acrid smoke of what had been a perfect late-summer morning.

"People were yelling, 'Evacuate! Evacuate!' And we found ourselves on the lawn looking back on our building," Air Force Lt. Col. Marc Abshire said. "It was very much a surrealistic sort of experience. It was just definitely not right to see smoke coming out of the Pentagon."

One rescuer shouted, "We've got



Tiffani Williams, left, and Dawn Stanton worry about getting home to Prince George's County after being evacuated from their downtown office building.

people in there dying." On the ground, emergency medical technicians from across the region laid out mats on the grass for the wounded, set up intravenous lines and organized paramedics and Pentagon workers into teams of litter bearers. One of those helping reportedly was Rumsfeld.

As the televised scenes flickered across the region, school systems and parents began to react.

In Northern Virginia, extra security precautions were taken in every school district. All doors were locked and children were not allowed outside for recess, lunch or gym, said officials in Alexandria and Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun and Prince William counties. Students attending classes in trailers, which are on school grounds but not physically attached to the school, were sent to main buildings.

Parents were told they could pick up children at any time with proper identification. By 11 a.m., about 50 parents had arrived at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax to get their teenagers.

Some school officials said they were reluctant to dismiss classes

early. Buses would encounter the traffic gridlock from commuters returning from the District and the Pentagon area. They also said they didn't want to release students early because many have working parents.

Besides, said Kitty Porterfield, a spokeswoman for Fairfax public schools, "we figure this is the safest place for them to be."

In Maryland, Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D) declared a state of emergency but stopped short of closing schools, leaving that decision to local superintendents.

"Parents might be tied up in traffic and can't get home right away," a Glendening spokesman said. "He wants the individual school systems to decide when they actually close."

Schools in Montgomery County decided to close an hour and a half early and in Prince George's two hours early. St. Mary's County closed schools on a staggered schedule. Howard County closed a half-hour early, which was as quick as the system could get its buses to schools.

Calvert County decided to keep its schools open in part because parents, many of whom work for the

federal government, were having trouble leaving amid traffic problems in the District.

"We think that children are safer right where they are than to go home where there is no parent there," said a spokesman for the Calvert schools.

Downtown, some drivers seemed so eager to get out of the city that they nearly ran down pedestrians. District government offices closed, and the city declared a state of emergency, urging residents to get their cars off the streets to facilitate the movement of emergency vehicles.

"This is very scary," said Camille Pepir, a Department of Agriculture employee from Anne Arundel County who had been attending a training program downtown. "I am afraid to go in the Metro. I don't know which way to go or what to do."

Peyton Lawrimore, 22, clutched the hand of her boyfriend, Stuart Stone, as they hurried west along Pennsylvania Avenue. Lawrimore interned this summer at the New York Stock Exchange on the 29th floor of one of the World Trade Center towers and turned down a job there to come to Washington to work as a legal secretary.

"I have a lot of friends who are probably dead now," she said, wiping tears from her eyes. Lawrimore said her law firm, Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker, closed its Washington, New York and London offices after the terrorist attacks. The consulting firm where Stone works, at 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, closed too.

"I don't feel safe at all," Lawrimore said. "I'm from a little tiny city in South Carolina. I'd love to be there right now."

Tensions were high. When a small boom was heard at 10:10 a.m., pedestrians froze and anxiously searched the skies. Jenny Campbell, a graduate student preparing for a career in international development, stood in front of her office on 15th Street NW, looking dazed.

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"I can't feel anything," she said. "This is like those movies where it's the end of the Earth and the whole world blows up. I'm sick."