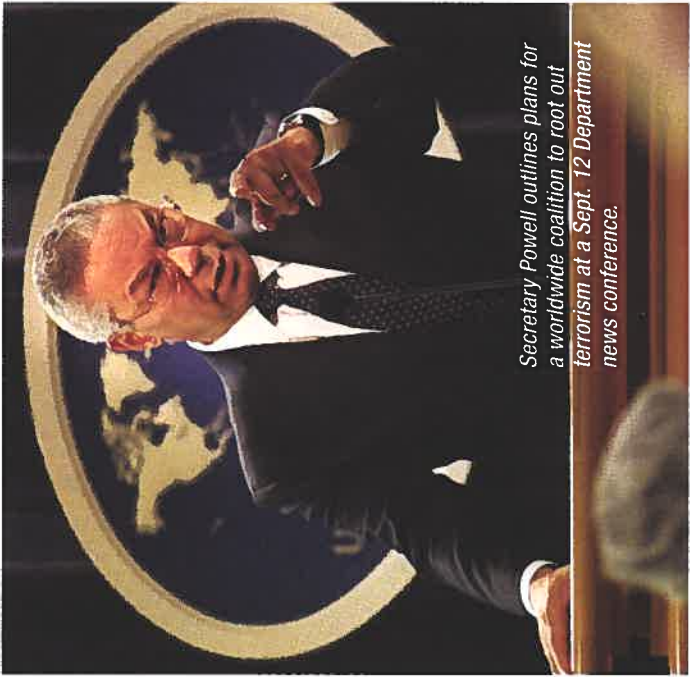


Department Responds: Here And Abroad

By Paul Koscak

Terror struck home Sept. 11
In what will undoubtedly be America's Second Day of Infamy, terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners and crashed two of them into the World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon and another into the Pennsylvania countryside.
In response, the State Department activated an emergency plan specifically written for such calamities and convened the Counterterrorist Task Force to work around the clock from the Operations Center.

"The task force is activated anytime national security is affected," said task force director Tom Martin.
The group, which numbers about 20, coordinates and forwards information among government agencies and other groups. It handles inquiries and supports the Secretary with communications and travel arrangements.
"Each task force is different, depending on the issue," Mr. Martin said. The task force can be rapidly formed after an



Secretary Powell outlines plans for a worldwide coalition to root out terrorism at a Sept. 12 Department news conference.

Heesoon Yim/AP Photos

'They're Attacking Us Too'

State Survivors Recall Crash Scene

When Frank Light accepted a detail to the Pentagon to work on counterterrorism, he didn't expect the real thing.

As terror struck home Tuesday, Sept. 11, the Foreign Service officer was just concluding a hastily called meeting in response to the World Trade Center attacks.

"We were discussing possible DoD support to other agencies dealing with the incidents in New York," he said. When the second tower was hit, a meeting with senior counterterrorism staff was called for 10 a.m.

Before that meeting took place, terrorists also struck the Pentagon.

"There was a rumble, like thunder, and it rocked us," recalled Mr. Light. "And in our office, you can't hear thunder."

The jetliner that crashed into the Pentagon killing an estimated 200 people, smashed into the side of the building where Mr. Light was working. Because he worked in



Cedric H. Rudisill/DOD/Getty Images

FBI agents, fire fighters, rescue workers and engineers work at the Pentagon crash site on Sept. 14.

the second innermost ring on the second floor, the blast didn't reach him. But the smoke did.

At first, he said, business continued. Staff worked at their terminals. Others answered the telephones. Soon, smoke wafted through the door.



Eduardo Di Bala/AP Photos

Argentine police stand guard at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires as security was strengthened at American missions around the world in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C.

emergency. Members are selected for their experience and expertise as the emergency dictates.

Meanwhile, Secretary Colin L. Powell began carrying out the President's call to form a coalition of nations committed to stamping out terrorism. During his first three news conferences following the terrorist attacks, the Secretary reported having contacted dozens of foreign leaders, including Yassar Arafat.

"As President Bush said, the planners and perpetrators of the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon committed acts of war against America and all that we stand for," the Secretary said.

Secretary Powell described the effort as "a comprehensive, systematic and sustained campaign to break the back of international terrorism—its leaders, its actors, its abettors and its networks."

As an added precaution, Diplomatic Security advised posts to convene emergency evacuation committee meetings to review security measures and "enlist local government and police security support." The directive ordered posts to remain at "the highest state of alert" although intelligence at the time indicated that terrorists were not targeting American facilities overseas.

"We left it up to each post as to what action to take," said Andy Laine, Diplomatic Security spokesman. "Some shut down for the day to look at the situation."

All told, about 50 embassies closed Tuesday. Director General Ruth Davis and Dr. Cedric Dumont, director of Medical Services, issued a joint statement offering employees guidance on coping with the tragedy.

"Continuing to work in supporting the Department's mission and the ideals of our democracy gives us a sense of purpose, demonstrates our control over our lives while providing us with a sense of normalcy and predictability."

While acknowledging that people respond to traumatic events differently, they encouraged employees to discuss their feelings with colleagues, friends, counselors or religious leaders.

Medical Services is offering to help employees deal with the crisis. For more information, call 663-1903, or drop by SA 1, H246. ■

The author is a writer-editor for State Magazine.

meated the air. He said the evacuation went surprisingly well as employees were moved as far away as Crystal City.
"There were rumors that other planes were headed for us," he added.

John Sullivan, a Foreign Service officer on loan to the Pentagon's Peace Keeping and Humanitarian Assistance office, was watching the wrenching tragedy unfold in New York City on CNN. "We were trying to imagine what those people were going through," he said, recalling the reaction among his colleagues. "What would it be like to have an airplane crash into your building?"

In a few minutes they found out. John heard an explosion, felt a shudder and learned an airliner hit the Pentagon just 100 yards from his office.

"At first we thought it [the sound] might be from somewhere else in the city," he said. "Then the alarm went off. The evacuation of thousands of people on our side of the building was surprisingly orderly and took just a few minutes."

As employees gathered in the north parking lot, Mr. Sullivan said, police warned everyone to get as far from the building as possible because "a second attack was imminent."

"Later that day, playing with my daughters became the most important thing I ever did," he added. ■