

Transcript

Speaker 1

Just warming up.

Speaker 2

Come on, Stretch.

Speaker 1

Come on. Come on, Stretch.

Speaker 3

Come on, Stretch. Let's go. That was his nickname for me. And so I put down my cup of coffee and, I guess, my notepad and took off and caught up with him, and off we went.

Speaker 1

He runs a 5K in 22 and a half minutes.

Speaker 4

I called him Stretch because he was very tall. He was a really good runner. And I think we ran about four miles, pretty good pace, as I recall.

Speaker 3

It was really a surreal experience. There was a Secret Service agent running right behind us and another on a bicycle with a submachine gun in front of us. And I knew there were agents scattered about out there to protect him.

Speaker 5

Bush found out Stretch Kyle had been an NCAA all-American cross-country runner. And then he was, I can't believe I invited him to go running for me. Bushes are very competitive. They don't let the grandkids beat them at checkers. So here he is inviting somebody who he thinks is going to beat him, and that's what he was preoccupied with.

Speaker 6

When I think about that day, I remember it as an ordinary Tuesday. I was at my desk at the National Security Council.

Speaker 7

On the morning of 9/11, I was in Lima, Peru. of all places. I was in my office at the White House initially. Ordinarily, we began every day, the president and I did, with taking a

brief from the CIA. We didn't do that on 9/11 because he was out of town. He was in Florida.

Speaker 3

How far did you go altogether?

Speaker 1

Four and a half.

Speaker 8

Four and a half mile.

Speaker 1

He spurred me on to new heights. I knew he'd come back and brief you all, so...

Speaker 3

There you go. He held his pace from the moment we left.

Speaker 1

Thank you, sir. Are we talking about tax cuts? Not right now.

Speaker 5

And I remember saying to him, When you get back from the run, we'll do the CIA briefing, and then we're going over to the Emory Book of School, and it should be an easy day. It's.

Speaker 8

Tuesday, September 11th. It's primary day, and the polls are open in New York City. Giants lose their opener in Monday Night Football in Denver. Yankees and Red Sox washed out. Abrams says Hurricane Erin remains well offshore.

Speaker 9

We'll have sunshine today, the high 80 going down to 60 tonight, 78 with sunshine tomorrow.

Speaker 10

What I remember most about the morning of September 11th, it was absolutely spectacular weather. Warm, not humid, skies were clearer. You know, that kind of good weather gives everybody a little burst of energy.

Speaker 3

You know, one of those late summer days, the humidity of August is gone. It doesn't yet feel like fall. You're right sort of on the cusp of those two seasons. I never to this day sit around in weather like that where I don't think back to that day.

Speaker 4

9/11 would become a date to remember. The job of a president is to protect the American people from harm. And some presidents don't need to worry about that, and some do. And it turns out I was one that did.

Speaker 11

It was 8 o'clock. The president just come back from running and had just showered. His hair was wet. He was reading the newspaper. He was in a very good mood. Andy Card was there.

Speaker 5

He was full of himself. He was kind of walking with the George W. Bush strut. He beat Stretch Kyle, and he talked about how well he did on his run, and he was all sweaty, and he was really in a good frame of mind.

Speaker 4

Got dressed and got briefed by Mike Morrell. He was the primary briefer from the CIA, and, you know, he had good knowledge and judgment.

Speaker 11

And then he asked me, Is there anything interesting today in the book? There was absolutely nothing in the briefing about terrorism. It was focused primarily on what was happening in the West Bank and the Gaza.

Speaker 5

Nothing jumps out at me from that briefing that would have indicated that there was an attack that was imminent. In fact, it was already starting to be carried out. We just had no clue.

Speaker 11

30, the briefing was over, and I went down to take my place in the president's motorcade to Booker T. Elementary School.

Speaker 3

The Secret Service agent we were with had left his two-way radio open. And over it, we heard someone say that Condoleezza Rice was waiting on a secure line to talk to the president when he got to the school. And we all kind of looked at each other. The mood

in the van changed. Nobody knew what was going on, but suddenly there was this palpable element of tension in the air.

Speaker 12

As the motorcade pulled into the school in Sarasota, my pager went off. The message was that airplanes flown into the World Trade Center. No additional information, nothing else to report.

Speaker 9

My assistant calls from the West Wing and says we don't know if it's commercial or private prop or jet. That's all the details she had. So I went over, and the president was 10 feet away or so, and I walked over and told him, and he had a quizzical look on his face and said, Get more details.

Speaker 4

I thought it was pilot error. I couldn't imagine anything other than a lousy pilot getting lost. In other words, it was an accident.

Speaker 13

A plane apparently has crashed into the World Trade Center in New York. We go live now to New York in our Robin Walensky.

Speaker 14

We turned on the televisions in the office, in the Solicitor General's office. The commentary was confused. People did not know what had happened. When they did speculate that it was an airplane, they speculated that it maybe was an accident.

Speaker 10

Smoke is billowing out of the building from the upper floors of Tower 1. You can see the smoke for miles and miles. The plane actually seems to be in the building.

Speaker 14

I immediately began to have this sense of dread. My wife, Barbara, was scheduled to get on a plane that morning. What about her airplane? Where is that plane?

Speaker 12

The president was shaking hands with the school principal and school leaders as he got to the elementary school. He finished shaking hands and went into the holding room. There are secure phones set up in that holding room. It's protected by the Secret Service. It's set up everywhere the president goes, and Condi Rice, the National Security Advisor, was on the phone.

Speaker 6

My assistant came in and said, a plane is at the World Trade Center. And I said, well, that's a strange accident. And I called the president. Initially, we thought maybe a small plane of some kind. And he said, well, keep me posted.

Speaker 5

He'd been told that a small twin engine prop plane crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center. You know, that's a horrible accident. I was concerned, but I did not think of it as a national security threat, and I didn't think that it should disrupt the president's day.

Speaker 15

The first thing that comes into a Secret Service agent's mind, is the president in any danger here? Is there direction of interest toward the president any way whatsoever? The decision was made that the president's not in any danger at this moment, so we decided to take him on into the classroom. and allow him to go on with the event.

Speaker 16

I remember when he came in, even as a seven-year-old, you know who the president is, right? And I remember like even feeling like that young feeling like kind of like starstruck and giddy, like I'm going to Disney World or something. I think we all felt like that, like you could hear like little second-grader gasps and I put my hand over my heart, like I, you know, when you think about patriotic things when you're You do the Pledge of Allegiance every day, and I literally put my hand over my heart. Get ready to read.

Speaker 2

These words the fast way. Get ready. Made. Yes, made. Get ready. Made.

Speaker 7

He had major plans for reforming the education field. This was early in our administration. We'd been in office since January. The platform we ran on was pretty much a domestic platform. We didn't do much by way of talking about the foreign policy situation.

Speaker 2

Get ready to read all these words on this page without making a mistake. Look at the letter at the end and remember the sound it makes. Get ready. Cut. Yes, cut.

Speaker 13

I asked my communicators if they could find a television. And at about one minute after 9, they came back in with a television set. So we brought CNN up. I was calling the

White House Situation Room to talk to my senior duty officer. So I was chatting with him on the handset and watched the television as the rest of the country was watching the television at 9.03 when the second aircraft impacted into the second World Trade Center tower. And literally, I thought my heart stopped.

Speaker 11

When the second plane hit, there was an audible gasp of air in the room. Some people put their hand on their chest. It was two realizations, right? One, the immediate death toll, and then the fact that this was an attack on America.

Speaker 2

Get ready. Smile. Yes, smile. Sound it out. Get ready. Smile. What word? Smile. Yes, smile.

Speaker 11

The other thing going through my mind at that moment was, what are the chances of a plane coming and crashing into school where we were at?

Speaker 2

Get ready. More. Yes, more. Get ready.

Speaker 15

It hits me as I'm standing there next to the president to the left, that the president's the only one that doesn't know the second plane has hit the building.

Speaker 5

I had to deliver a message that the president didn't expect to hear and was almost unbelievable. But it also, literally, was the message he had to hear, whether he wanted to or not.

Speaker 2

Read these words the fast way. Get ready...

Speaker 4

Andy Card comes up to my -- behind me and says, Second plane is at the second tower. America's under attack. And I'm watching the child read. And then I see the press in the back of the room beginning to get the same message I just got. And I could see the horror etched on the face of the news people who had just gotten the same news. During a crisis, it's really important to set a tone and not to panic. And so I waited for the appropriate moment to leave the classroom. I didn't want to do anything dramatic. I

didn't want to lurch out of the chair and scare the classroom full of children, and so I waited.

Speaker 3

I was studying him intently, and his mouth was kind of drawn and tight. And there was almost, for just a brief moment, sort of a startled look in his eyes, and also a weightiness to him, if you will. I could tell he was really focused on trying to get through that event.

Speaker 17

You're literally seeing the mindset of the President of the United States play out on TV. Everything about what he thought he was about as a president It's changing right in front of you. We hear about the great wartime leaders, Churchill, Roosevelt, others, days, if not weeks, to process and gird themselves for what was ahead. This is all happening in real time.

Speaker 5

Then I went back into the holding room. The first thing I said was, get the FBI director on the phone, get a line open to the vice president, get a line open to the White House Situation Room, get the crew back on Air Force One. We're going to have to get out of here. And to Dan Bartlett, I said, get some remarks written for the president.

Speaker 18

Andy Card wanted to make sure that the president communicated with the American people. That was very important to him. What was important to me was to remove the president from a known location. I mean, if somebody was able to plan flying into the Twin Towers, they were certainly able to figure out where the president was on a particular day. He could be a sitting duck.

Speaker 8

Thank you all.

Speaker 17

This was a mad scramble to pull together as much information we could in order for the president to say enough to demonstrate that he's got his arms around what's unfolding. And none of us had this playbook. It's not like we, you know, there's a thing they say, Okay, this is happening now. Crack this open, and it's gonna give you the playbook of how to deal with this.

Speaker 7

Wasn't there?

Speaker 13

I asked the president, With whom would you like to speak to first? And I said, Sir, I have the vice president.

Speaker 7

That first conversation mainly dealt with, are we gonna describe it as a terrorist attack? And he and I both agreed that, I think we said, an apparent terrorist attack. And that sort of set the stage from everything that follows from that.

Speaker 4

To me and Dick Cheney, it was pretty obvious that this was a well-organized attack to severely damage our country.

Speaker 14

I was in the office. My assistant came in, said Barbara's on the phone. She told me immediately that her plane had been hijacked. People had used box cutters to somehow capture the airplane and the crew. She said, Ted, what can I do? And then the line went dead. President Bush, he knew Barbara. She was on television just two days earlier defending him.

Speaker 6

President Bush is right. Kids have got to learn to read or they're lost.

Speaker 19

This is what he ran on, and this education issue is the centerpiece of his agenda.

Speaker 14

I called the Crisis Management Center at the Justice Department and reported that there was another plane. My wife was on it. It had been hijacked, and then there's nothing else I could do.

Speaker 8

This is John Thomas, ops manager. I think we need to let everybody know this right away. American 77 was just west of Charleston, West Virginia, and disappeared off our radar scope. We now believe that aircraft may have been hijacked. But with the World Trade Center, we could have another loose aircraft out there somewhere.

Speaker 12

Everybody was working the phones trying to ascertain what was happening. Typically at a time of hot breaking news, The press has access to a lot of things that the government doesn't because the press has cameras everywhere, and the government, particularly

in 2001, doesn't. So what TV stations are now broadcasting on the air is really important information. A rebroadcast came on. Dan Bartlett is pointing, and the president is whipped around. And you can feel the tension as people were stopping working the phones to look all of a sudden for the first time for us. about the aircraft hitting the World Trade Center.

Speaker 4

It was unbelievably sad and horrific. There was just total disbelief, and we went from a very calm, beautiful day to one in which our world changed dramatically.

Speaker 8

United 93, that traffic speed is one o'clock, 12 miles east on 370. Negative contact, we're looking at United 93. You got United 93? Like you descended there. United 93, Verify, 350. You have United 93, South of Shark. We hear some funny noises.

Speaker 15

We're trying to get him. You have him.

Speaker 8

No.

Speaker 4

In a time of crisis, you have to say something. In other words, there's always a void. And into that void comes, in this case, what turned out to be a psychological tsunami. I mean, people all across the country just in disbelief and shock and horror. I saw that firsthand when I went into an auditorium full of unsuspecting parents and students who expected me to say, You've got a wonderful reading program. And I said, We're under attack.

Speaker 1

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a difficult moment for America. Today, we've had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country.

Speaker 8

This is the Air Traffic Command Center, the TMO on duty in the West area. I need to have all traffic management units do an inventory of all airborne traffic, ensure that you do not have any aircraft that are not accounted for.

Speaker 1

And I've ordered that the full resources of the federal government go to help the victims and their families and to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act. Terrorism against our nation will not stand. And now if you join me in a moment of silence...

Speaker 8

Calling Cleveland, Senator, you're unreadable. Say again slowly. United 93 may have Bomb on board. Can you give me any additional information as to why you believe there may be a bomb? Because he's screaming that on the frequency. OK, very good.

Speaker 1

May God bless the victims, their families, and America. Thank you very much.

Speaker 15

We have got to leave Sarasota and get the president to a safe place. We're going to get to the plane as quickly as we can because the safest location for the president at this time, until we know what's going on, is to get him up in the air. We immediately went to the motorcade. The call was made, we're gonna go at a high rate of speed. We're gonna shut the intersections down with physical barriers to make sure suicide attacks, everything is not a concern.

Speaker 4

It really hit me when I was in the limousine heading out to Air Force One. I mean, I was immediately surrounded by serious protection.

Speaker 9

We were going like the bat out of proverbial hell. And I looked to my left, and I realized we were bracketed by four police cars, two in front and two in back, you know, sort of covering our flanks. I said to the Secret Service, What was that all about? And he said, We were worried about a car bomb intercepting the motorcade, and we wanted to cause the bomb to go off 15 or 20 feet further away and give the president a greater chance of survivability. Sort of a sobering moment.

Speaker 8

HSID is coming out here. Can I help you? Our latest report, aircraft VFY six miles southeast of the White House. Six miles southeast of the White House? Yep, six southwest.

Speaker 18

It was still quiet in the airspace as far as we knew. But we knew something was untoward. So I put my radio on and I just walked out the door and I put my earpiece in

and I heard inbound plane to the White House and I heard that twice. So I went to click on the mic, but I heard him say, get him down, get him down.

Speaker 7

While I was sitting there like that, and there were other people in the room, the door burst open.

Speaker 20

And we just got started, and the Secret Service came in and picked up the not small vice president. Literally picked him up, pulled him over his desk.

Speaker 7

Put one hand, his right hand, on my belt and back, the other hand on my shoulder, and literally picked me up and moved me towards the door.

Speaker 20

And left myself and my colleagues there, to which I said, what are we, Chuck? Liver.

Speaker 6

When the Secret Service wants to escort you under those circumstances, they don't actually escort you. They sort of pick you up, and they kind of carry you. So I remember being levitated toward the bunker.

Speaker 7

If he's moving like that, I better follow. I didn't have much choice anyway. Jimmy took me out into the hallway, down the stairs in the West Wing. When we got down to the bottom, there was a message that had come in from the tower at Dulles Airport, west of Washington. that it indicated there was a plane headed at a very high rate of speed towards Washington. They thought the target may well be the Lighthouse.

Speaker 8

Go for 06, traffic is 11 o'clock and five miles northbound, fast moving, pipe and altitude unknown. Can you estimate an altitude? Looks like he's at no altitude right now, sir. Go for 86, thank you, descent and main team 2000.

Speaker 6

I went into the Situation Room to try to reach the national security principles. They said George Tenet, the CIA director, had already gone to a bunker. And they said, we can't reach Secretary Rumsfeld. His phone is just ringing and ringing and ringing. And we looked on television and a plane hit the Pentagon. And that was the real shock. The Twin Towers were shocked enough, but seeing that hole in the Pentagon. Then I called the

president, and he said, I'm coming back. And I did something I had never done before and would never do again. I raised my voice, the President of the United States, and I said, Stay where you are. We're under attack.

Speaker 10

Okay, all units responding over to the Pentagon. You need to be careful of possible terrorist attacks.

Speaker 4

And it was at that moment that I realized we were at war. You know, the first plane was an accident, the second one was an attack, and the third one was a declaration of war.

Speaker 8

Oh, my goodness. We're looking at a live picture from Washington, and there is smoke pouring out of the Pentagon.

Speaker 14

I'm sitting in a government office two miles from the Pentagon, and then I knew that my greatest fears were true. It was a helpless feeling that this astonishing, inexplicable, incomprehensible thing had happened to this country, and that my wife, Barbara, was on one of those planes. It was a dreaded sense of horror.

Speaker 8

Stand by. Everybody stand by. There's a command sign on our request as soon as possible. They want all aircraft on the ground, all aircraft, regardless of destination, land as soon as possible. We're looking at pictures here now, looking at Washington, we're seeing from the Executive Office Building, which is being evacuated now along with the White House, we're seeing columns of smoke across the river at the Pentagon rising.

Speaker 19

I remember it just looked chaotic watching it from home. I was on the phone with my chief of staff who ran my office at the White House, and she said, Karen, I've got to go. They're telling us to run. And I said, Well, then go.

Speaker 7

The assumption was that one of the targets might well be the White House. And the Secret Service told everybody to evacuate.

Speaker 8

Everybody back. Everybody back. Let's go, folks. This is the real thing. Let's go.

Speaker 16

Everything just kept escalating. The intensity and the volume of the voices kept escalating. The calls for us to get moving, to get out, to get out. Scatter, scatter, please go home. I remember making eye contact with a woman who was part of the Secret Service, and I remember her screaming at me, take off your heels and run.

Speaker 3

That 747 is not looking right. 12 o'clock. He's turning on.

Speaker 16

When people were saying there were planes above us when we were running out, That was where things were very scary, because you had seen what the planes did in New York. I remember thinking, I can't believe that this is happening. This is something that happens in a book or a movie. This doesn't happen. And how is it happening? And I'm part of this.

Speaker 3

He's circling. He's coming back, people. He's coming back.

Speaker 20

The streets of Washington. There were cars stopped in the middle of the road, still running, doors open, people were running everywhere. There was smoke. It was Mad Max.

Speaker 15

As the president arrived at the airport, we began to get intel that Air Force One could be a target. So there's no chances it could be taken.

Speaker 10

There was an incredible push to get everybody on the plane as quickly as possible. They are yelling at us, move it, move it, move it, to board more quickly.

Speaker 13

The scene at the aircraft was chaotic. It was nuts. there were Secret Service, state police, airport police.

Speaker 11

I was right behind Andy Card. They went through Andy Card's bag. They moved to go through my briefcase filled with classified information, and I let them. I wasn't going to argue at that point.

Speaker 3

I do remember actually feeling scared as I ran up the steps and having the disjointed thought, I've never been scared being with a president before.

Speaker 4

I remember getting Air Force One, and I remember some of the Air Force personnel greeting me at the door, and they were shaking badly. And I remember hugging, I think her name was Tina, and said, we're going to deal with this, and it's going to be OK. And I just needed to settle in and collect my thoughts. And I thought it was very important to pray for those who were suffering. Prayer can be very comforting. It can be comforting to those who pray and comforting to whom the prayers are directed.

Speaker 15

We then began to get intel that there also could be someone at the end of the runway that could be a threat, someone with a Stinger missile or some kind of high-powered rifle even.

Speaker 21

The Air Force stewards came around and said, Sit down and buckle up. This is going to be a rough ride out of here.

Speaker 22

The decision was made to go ahead and rotate to counter the threat at the end of the runway and to max perform the aircraft. So we used full power. The plane was extremely light, minimal passengers. The goal was to get airborne, move away fast.

Speaker 13

My seat was 20 yards or so away, and I'm standing there, and I'm the only one who's not seated with a seatbelt. So I'm standing there with the president. And the engines just screamed, and we were screaming down the runway. And I'm going, this is unbelievable. The plane doesn't take off like this. And I put my foot against the president's desk and my backside against the bulkhead or the desk and just pressed myself in there, taking off at an angle that I never want to experience that again. I went partially weightless. I mean, I was-- I was petrified.

Speaker 22

That's when Jacksonville lets us know that there's an unidentified aircraft above us descending into us. Now I'm accelerating as fast as I can go to get out of that area. And that's when we're being told that no, its transponder is off, it's not talking to the controllers. So at that point, we need to find out exactly what their intentions are. So I ask to make a turn, see if he's following us. Shortly after that, Jackson will let us know

they're now in contact with them. They are no longer a threat. And we continue, we make the turn, and we head back on a straight line, back to Washington, D.C. at this point.

Speaker 5

It was a very emotional experience for everybody. I tried to be cool, calm and present for what was going on, and I wanted to be a non-anxious presence to the president. But some people were hyperventilating or what are we going to do in kind of contagious with fear? And I didn't want that to infect the decision-making process that the president was going to have to go through. So we did keep some people away.

Speaker 17

Andy Carr, the chief of staff, now is trying to create an environment around the president to bring out the best in the president to start making some decisions. And so any time you got into the president's office it felt like you were in the epicenter of a hurricane. It was like the air was still.

Speaker 4

I was just trying to gather information so I could then begin to make rational decisions. In 2001, the communications weren't all that good. I mean, lines were dropping, particularly on Air Force One.

Speaker 12

We had real problems aboard Air Force One that day with the communications equipment. The phone that was supposed to connect the president to the vice president and others in the bunker below the White House kept conking out. I remember the president holding the phone out in endless frustration, where the phone just didn't work. And so we would not have full-time communications. TV reception. Air Force One didn't have satellite TV. And so we could get TV coverage as we would fly over cities where the ground-based antenna put out sufficiently strong, powerful enough signal that we could pick it up at 40,000 feet in the sky.

Speaker 4

As we're going through these different local TV zones, and it would be on, it'd be flickering. What was eerie about it is that it wasn't a constant picture.

Speaker 12

The TV came on, we were all riveted to it because we were getting new, fresh information. Take two.

Speaker 2

Take two and two.

Speaker 11

1.

Speaker 10

This is as close as we can get to the base of the World Trade Center. You can see the firemen assembled here, the police officers, FBI agents, and you can see the two towers.

Speaker 2

A huge explosion now raining debris on all of us. We better get out of the way! Oh, ****!
Oh, man.

Speaker 3

Oh, ****! Close your eyes. I got you.

Speaker 5

There was no noise on the Air Force One except the plane flying.

Speaker 4

I was horrified. And it was sickening.

Speaker 9

We were all transfixed. You know, all you could do was watch in horror, and nobody said anything. And just the thought of all the deaths that could have taken place in that one instant.

Speaker 8

Say what you want, man. Say where you are.

Speaker 2

Chopper five on three.

Speaker 17

What I saw was a man who was doing his level best to keep all the various emotions in check. The one emotion that I think became harder and harder for him to keep in check was anger. This brewing of, you think you're going to get away with this?

Speaker 23

There has been a claim of responsibility that has come in this morning. Reuters says it has come in from a Palestinian group. Again, there's no confirmation of that. The FBI is looking into reports of hijackings prior to the plane crashes in New York.

Speaker 11

A group called the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine took public credit for what had just happened. And the president asked me what I knew about this group. I told the president that long-standing, long-existing anti-Israeli group, they do not have the capability to do what just happened. As I was walking out of the president's office, he said to me, Michael, I want you to call George Tenet, the director of Central Intelligence, and I want you to tell George that I want to be the first to know if he learns anything about who did this.

Speaker 4

Since we're in Texas recording this, I can get away with this, one thing on the to-do list was to kick their ***. And, you know, I didn't know who they were yet. But I knew if we were under attack, my job as president was to protect the country. And there was no doubt in my mind that we had the resources and the team to do just that. I'm commander in chief, I wanted to be at the center of the action. You know, I wanted to go home to DC.

Speaker 18

And I said, we can't do that. There's no way we're going to take them into an unsecured area. And until we can secure the White House in DC, we're going to have to go someplace else. And I suggest that we go west, not east.

Speaker 4

All of a sudden, I feel the plane turning away from northeast. And I called Andy, said, Andy, you know, let's get to D.C. He said, It's highly recommended we don't.

Speaker 5

I told the president, We're gonna go to Box Till Air Force Base, get a little more information of what's going on. But the president was adamant that he wanted to go back to Washington. He was telling me, I am the president of the United States. We are going back to Washington, D.C. And I said, You don't want to make that decision right now. I don't think you want to make that decision right now. I think we have to know more. And he said, I am making the decision right now.

Speaker 7

I had a conversation with the president, and my recommendation was to him that he not come back yet. Washington was under attack, as well as New York, and that it was

important for the two of us, the president and vice president, to stay separate. handy card on the plane and me on the phone pretty well persuaded him, you know, not yet, not yet, because we just didn't know.

Speaker 18

We were just very happy that the president agreed not to really force the issue to go back to Washington, D.C., and that when we went to Barksdale, it would give us a chance to regroup, and we could put a plan together on what we were going to do.

Speaker 8

56865 Cleveland Center. Roger, and I have a question for you. We have Boeing 757. Can you see him up there, sir, and tell me an altitude if that's able? Southeastbound. We've got him. He's behind us and only about 1,000 feet above us.

Speaker 24

The principal anxiety in the bunker was how many planes were still out there that had been weaponized by terrorists and were headed for other targets around the United States, and how do we deal with it? Because we had no idea.

Speaker 7

Plane going here and a plane going there. I had reports that a car bomb had gone off at the State Department. There's a lot of information flying around, and a lot of it's not valid.

Speaker 8

OK, what's he doing now, sir? It appears that he might be turning a little to the north. Is that concurred? That's concurred. Looks like he's rocking his wings.

Speaker 24

We heard about Flight 93 fairly early on in the bunker because it had clearly been hijacked. or at least was off course, and was headed toward Washington, D.C.

Speaker 8

Keep rocking back and forth. Thank you, sir.

Speaker 17

The transponder had been turned off, so we knew nothing about the plane. Couldn't tell what was going on. They were just following the white blip on the radar screen. So essentially, we were flying by the seat of our pants at that point.

Speaker 24

I was sitting right across from the vice president when the military aide came in and reported that another flight was headed south toward Washington, and it was presumed to be a hijacked flight. He asked the vice president for permission for military aircraft to engage this commercial jetliner.

Speaker 7

I believe that's when I said take it out.

Speaker 3

That's when the vice president used a very military term, take the track. Everybody in the room knew what that meant. Shoot down that aircraft.

Speaker 24

I remember around the table, there was a silence as people absorbed the order that had just been given.

Speaker 7

I got on the phone and talked with the president, got his approval that that's what we wanted to do.

Speaker 4

You know, we didn't know how many more planes were in the sky, how many were hijacked. I made the decision. Was I happy about it? No. But was I comfortable in making the decision? Yes.

Speaker 3

United 9-3, have you got information on that yet?

Speaker 8

Yeah, he's down. He's down? Yes. When did he land? Because he had information-- He did not land. Oh, he's down? Yeah, somewhere up northeast of Camp David.

Speaker 3

One of the watch standards came in, said the track has been eliminated. And the vice president said, The plane's down? And he said, The track's been eliminated.

Speaker 8

The vice president looked at me and he said, Did we take that track?

Speaker 7

And I said, I don't know. We had every reason to believe that, in fact, we had taken down that aircraft.

Speaker 8

Now people are gathering in large groups. In fact, in one corner, I saw a group of people actually holding hands and praying. As I stand on the Manhattan bridge, which is closed, it is open to pedestrian traffic. Some people are walking across, but there's just no way for them to... As I look out, something is... I can't... Is that the building going down? Is that the second building of the World Trade Center? Yes, that is the second tower. That is the second tower.

Speaker 20

It was unfathomable, and it was terrifying. My brain could not process what I was seeing. And it just seemed impossible that that structure of such an amazing engineering feat could just-- it didn't-- implode even. It just melted.

Speaker 24

That was a searing moment. Here we were at the center of power of the United States government. We're watching on TV as a massive office building collapses entirely, killing what we presumed would be hundreds if not thousands of people. And there was nothing that could be done from the center of power, of the greatest power on Earth.

Speaker 8

You can imagine the mood on Air Force One coming back this way as to all of these things that are unfolding, the President being informed that the Pentagon has been hit. Now the Twin Towers in New York at the World Trade Center are down.

Speaker 4

To see the towers fall, it was an unbelievably emotional moment. But the president can't be consumed by sadness. The president needs to deal with the sadness, but to move forward in a determined fashion to deal with the enemy. And so the diplomatic wheel started to move. The military began to think about how to bring justice. Everybody started doing their job, CIA trying to gather more information.

Speaker 15

We started receiving intel information that Air Force One was a target.

Speaker 4

There was a call into a switchboard that said Angel's next, and Angel was the code word for Air Force One.

Speaker 12

A shiver goes through everybody. Who's got the code word for Air Force One? So when Air Force One's pilot, Colonel Tillman, heard about this, he posted at this base of the steps that lead up to the cockpit an Air Force security officer. with instructions that no one is to go upstairs. Think about that. The inner sanctum of the inner sanctum, and the pilot is worried that someone in the president's circle could try to conduct an inside job and take down Air Force One.

Speaker 15

Once we found that the president was a target, we take no chances. We've taken all the weapons away, we believe, right? I mean, we've done everything we can to, but you never know. The president's in the front of the aircraft. You have staff and Secret Service in the center of the aircraft, and the media and all the guests are on the back of the aircraft. So we had the agents come up to the front and stand close to the president's cabin and make sure no one could come up to the front of the aircraft. Even your most senior White House staff members were not allowed to come up there unless the president called them up there.

Speaker 22

We're trying to figure out exactly how we could be attacked. At this point, it was to assume the worst case. Somehow we were going to be attacked airborne, so we had to be ready for it.

Speaker 8

Air Force One is filing a random route, by the way. OK. We don't know where they decided to go, but they still don't have a fighter escort. They still do not? That's correct. Holy cow.

Speaker 17

In that moment, there was a bullseye on us, and We certainly don't know the scope of this entire attack. We don't know if we're in the beginning of it, the middle, or near the end of it. Most people would say one of the safest places you'd ever feel would be with the President of the United States. It was the first time that really came under question. You're like, Maybe this is not the best place to be.

Speaker 22

And then all of a sudden we get this radio call. Flight of two F-16s, we are your cover. And you know, that was the greatest feeling ever because they're our folks and they're coming up and they're joining on the wing.

Speaker 21

I was kneeling on one knee, my, you know, arm on the ledge beneath the windows looking out. I'm sure people think that Air Force One's followed by fighter planes all the time, but very rarely in the United States. And I mean, that really hit home. It just wasn't, it just wasn't something that, you know, it contemplated, you know, why does Air Force One need a fighter escort?

Speaker 12

It turns out it was a terrible series of errors. The caller never used the word angel, they said Air Force One is next. One of the intelligence officers did what came routine to them. They used the word angel and passed that down to the bunker underneath the White House where the vice president was, who passed it up to the president saying, Angel is next. The amount of information that is wrong when you are in a moment of crisis, the filters are down, people let information through just in case, is staggering.

Speaker 8

We have a report now that a large plane crashed this morning in western Pennsylvania, a Boeing 767 jet. We don't know if this is somehow connected to what has gone on in New York and Washington.

Speaker 7

First reports we got back was that there was a plane down on the Pennsylvania line, and there was a belief that, in fact, it had been taken out as a result of the orders that had been given, and that was Flight 93.

Speaker 6

I remember the vice president being on the phone with the Pentagon saying, you must know whether or not you engaged a civilian aircraft. And they kept saying, we can't confirm, we can't confirm.

Speaker 17

The Pentagon must have scrubbed that question every which way to make sure we were getting the right answer. Finally, we were told no, we did not shoot it down.

Speaker 7

As it turned out, the passengers on board were able to move more quickly and effectively than we could. They were enormously courageous and saved hundreds of lives.

Speaker 4

It turns out '93 was either headed to the Capitol or the White House. And one of the greatest acts of courage in the history of the United States was Todd Beamer and

people rushing the cabin and, you know, sacrificing their own life to save the lives of a lot of people. And I still marvel at that kind of character.

Speaker 23

Jim Kelstrom, former official of the FBI in the New York office, is on the air. Jim, what do you think?

Speaker 8

Well, my first thought is with the tremendous casualties, and the death toll is just overwhelming. It's a day that 50 years from now our children will be taught about when we went to war on American soil with terrorism.

Speaker 23

I realized, by the way, just as you mentioned it, something else is very important at the moment. And again, I don't mean to say this in metadramatic terms. Where is the President of the United States? The President of the United States led-- I know we don't know where he is, but pretty soon the country needs to know where he is.

Speaker 9

We arrive at Barksdale. They were in a nuclear test room, so they were already, you know, locked down. No unessential personnel, no civilians, everything as if they were in wartime footing.

Speaker 15

Got all these aircraft. all on the tarmac at the ready. They're all loaded up with weapons. It looked like we were getting ready to evade another country.

Speaker 4

When we landed, I thought we were coming out of the Dr. Strangelove set on the movie.

Speaker 9

First of all, they made the president leave the plane from the belly. And the reason was, if there was a sniper, that would make it a more difficult shot. And remember, we got off of the aircraft, and the entire command structure, the Eighth Air Force, met us at the base of the steps.

Speaker 5

We get to the commander's office, and we go in there, and he had very good communications. We communicated back to Washington, D.C. The conversations back are really to understand what other intelligence are we seeing? What else should we know? And are any of our enemies trying to take advantage of this?

Speaker 4

This is a period of great uncertainty. And As we began to heighten our defenses, we wanted to make sure that the Russians understood we weren't aiming any weaponry at them.

Speaker 7

I was concerned that the Soviets had an exercise underway that day, and we didn't want to have them misunderstand what was happening over here.

Speaker 6

If we alert our forces and the Russians alert theirs and we alert and they alert, it's not long before you're actually at a state of war when things just start to happen.

Speaker 20

A lot of this defense business is automatic. It's built to minimize human error, and that obviously has the tandem effect of excluding humans when they need to be inserted into the process.

Speaker 6

So I had a phone call with President Putin, and I said, Mr. President, our military forces are going to be going up on alert. And he said, don't worry. Ours will be coming down. We've canceled exercises. And I remember thinking, or almost chuckling to myself, of course you know that our forces are going up on alert. You can see it. But recognizing right at that moment that the Cold War was truly over, Putin had reacted in the right way.

Speaker 4

Had a lot to do. In a crisis of this magnitude, it's essential that leadership continually try to reassure the people. And I don't think you can overdo it in the immediacy of a crisis. And so, therefore, it was essential that I speak on a regular basis as we gathered facts.

Speaker 3

I was looking at him with a reporter's eye, but also as an American.

Speaker 1

I want to reassure the American people the full resources of the federal government.

Speaker 3

I found myself looking at his face as much as I was listening to the words. And I think that was probably true of most of the people in that room, reporters or not.

Speaker 1

Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts.

Speaker 3

I won't say he looked haunted, but the severity of what was happening registered clearly on his face.

Speaker 1

We will show the world that we will pass this test.

Speaker 4

God bless. This was not a very well-lit environment. It couldn't have been very reassuring when I'm speaking from an ill-lit room. And so I was looking for another opportunity to speak later on in the day.

Speaker 23

ABC's Ann Compton is on the telephone.

Speaker 10

Frankly, Peter, I thought the president not only looked grim, very solemn, but his eyes looked somewhat red. Let me know if we're being taken out of here. We may be scrambled out of here. Are we leaving? Okay. Peter, we are leaving. Where are you going, Annie? Peter, I have no idea. They have not told us--.

Speaker 23

Off you go, Ann, thanks very much.

Speaker 4

I remember getting Air Force One. I mean, they shut those doors quick. And we're airborne. I wanted to go back to Washington. And there were some objections.

Speaker 5

He was telling me, We're going back to Washington, DC, and kind of ordering me. And I'm saying, I really don't think you want to make that decision right now. Again, which I had repeated over and over and over and over to him. Boy, he got angry with me. He got very, very angry with me.

Speaker 4

I might have chewed him out a little bit.

Speaker 1

But I wanted to get home.

Speaker 4

And I was being told by the security apparatus that it's unsafe.

Speaker 15

We all know as supervisors that you've got to be able to tell the president no. I remember him saying almost immediately, I'm not gonna run from these guys. He wanted to fight, you know, he was ready to fight.

Speaker 17

Yeah, he was fit to be tied. And he basically acquiesced more than approved.

Speaker 5

The most important thing is that we were then able to go where we could have even better security and communication.

Speaker 9

Offutt Air Force Base is an hour and 15 minutes north, and there are facilities there that will allow us to bring together all the important officials of the government together in a secure video conference in order to arrive at what must be done next. Now, the president was not happy about this and made it clear that, you know, this was their last dodge, so the quicker the better.

Speaker 23

How the president now spends his time today, what he is seen to do is absolutely vital, not just to the country, but to him.

Speaker 2

Well, it's critical time for him. He said that the nation is being tested. The new president is being tested as well. The main thing he has to do for most Americans is communicate to them that he's in charge, that he intends to take control of this situation, and as he said, hunt down the people who are responsible for it and punish them.

Speaker 4

I saw how America is reacting, and, you know, I'm really not a very angry person. But I was angry that people killed Americans. But you can't make rational decisions when you're angry. And I made some big decisions. having taken the advice of a very smart group of people.

Speaker 24

From the bunker, we needed to figure out what we could do to help prevent anything further from happening. But the government was not well prepared for this moment. The bunker itself was antiquated. The furniture and technology were probably at least 20 years old.

Speaker 20

The communication devices down there were inept. If we had a screen, we couldn't tell what was going on outside because if we had our visual, we had no sound. If we had sound, we had no visual. And it was terrifying. The country didn't know what was going on and we didn't know. It's a very scary time.

Speaker 24

I remember the commander of the bunker facility pulling me aside when the oxygen in the bunker started to get dangerously low because there were too many people.

Speaker 20

Everybody started dozing off. I'm like, something is wrong here. Well, we had exhausted our oxygen and we were breathing in our own CO₂ and such. We were like poisoning ourselves.

Speaker 7

We ended up having a lot of people leave, go someplace else. We didn't need you in that site.

Speaker 11

President asked to see me in his office alone, he said. President then looked at me and said, Michael, who did this? And I told him that I had not seen any intelligence that would take us to a perpetrator, so he was going to get my best estimate, right, not finally finally analyzed intelligence. And he said, I understand the caveat. Now move on. It's a very kind of George Bush thing to do. So I said, Mr. President, there are two nation states who have the capability of doing this, Iran and Iraq, but neither one of them has anything to gain. And both of them have everything to lose from doing something like this. So I don't think it was one of them. I told him that I thought, when we got to the end of the trail, we would find al-Qaeda and we would find bin Laden. And I told him, Mr. President, I am so confident in that, that I would bet my children's future on it. Then he just sat there for some period of time, almost five minutes, to the point where I was feeling a little uncomfortable.

Speaker 4

Mike is a smart guy. I trusted his judgment. And we didn't have full information yet as to who had done it. And I thought, if it's al-Qaeda, what do we need to do to bring them to justice?

Speaker 1

So my job changed.

Speaker 4

Let me rephrase that. My job became crystal clear.

Speaker 15

When we got to Offutt, one of the first things the president said is, I want to go back to Washington right now. So the idea was, let's go down into the bunker, get briefed. But it was on his mind from the moment he arrived, I want to go back to Washington.

Speaker 4

I was determined. And the course of the day, I became more and more determined. Determined, meaning I was ready to lead and ready to defend this country. All we need to do is gather enough facts to gather information and ready to take action.

Speaker 23

Dan Compton, who's been with the president all day, is on the phone from Nebraska. We don't want to lose her if we can have her. Annie, can you hear me?

Speaker 10

Yes, Peter, I can.

Speaker 23

What are you doing in Nebraska?

Speaker 10

Well, we didn't know where we were till we landed. President Bush is here at the home of the Strategic Command, and he has disappeared down the rabbit hole, Peter, down through a red brick small building down into an underground bunker where the president is going to chair a National Security Council meeting by teleconference.

Speaker 6

He was really kind of caged, you know. Here he was at off at Air Force Base, and all of this was going on, and he couldn't get back, and that was the sense I had of his frustration. He couldn't be where he needed to be.

Speaker 11

George Tenet, the director of CIA, my boss, was on the screen and was briefing the president about information that we had uncovered. just in the last few hours.

Speaker 5

Did we know it was al-Qaeda? We thought we did. The CIA director confirmed that we did.

Speaker 6

George said, we know that al-Qaeda did this. He said, Mr. President, we'll confirm in the morning, but we know. And the president said, how do you know? And that was when George said those manifests had people who were on our watch list.

Speaker 11

The president turned around and looked at me, and I could tell by the look on his face that he was saying, I thought I told you that I wanted to be the first to know. And it was a look of disappointment in me.

Speaker 19

President Bush practically came through the television screen, and he said, We are at war against terror, and from this day forward, this is the priority of our administration. That was the first thing he said to all of us.

Speaker 24

He was certainly feeling the pain of the moment. He had a demeanor of seriousness and gravity that I had not seen before.

Speaker 4

I did need to make sure that they knew who was in charge. I'm not suggesting anybody was peeling off, but teams function better when the leader in this case, asserts himself. And I wanted them to know that we needed a plan to deal with it and that everybody had a role to play.

Speaker 24

I remember him saying to the FBI director, Your job just changed. You're accustomed at the FBI to catching the bad guys after a crime is committed. Your job is now to prevent the terrorists from launching another attack. The president was quite clear-eyed and determined about the dramatic change that was overtaking his presidency.

Speaker 11

I called George Tenet's executive assistant, and he told me the information that CIA had developed on al-Qaeda that day was embargoed from leaving the building. And I said in

a very loud voice and with some swear words, Embargoed from the President of the United States, long pause at the other end, And I said, Just send it to me right now, and I slammed the phone down.

Speaker 13

When the president had heard all the information that he was presented and he was done asking questions, he stood, he slapped his hand on the table, and he says, We're going home.

Speaker 4

I decided to go back to Washington. And the idea was to give a speech to the nation. And You know, giving a speech to the nation from a bunker in the middle of Nebraska was not my vision of leadership. I said, if I'm going to give a speech to the nation, it's going to be from Washington, D.C., and I'm coming home.

Speaker 17

We got to really speak to the nation. But you're communicating not just to the American people. You're communicating to adversaries and the enemy. And the world was watching. The sooner we could bring some clarity to the types of decisions others were gonna have to make, the better.

Speaker 10

On the way back, there was this sense that the worst is over. And the president came back on Air Force One, stopping first in the Secret Service cabin, thanking them, patting him on the shoulder. And he stopped at the door to the press cabin. He waved away our reporter's notebooks, didn't want to be quoted. We knew he was going to give a major address when he got back. And he said, We're going to get those thugs.

Speaker 4

It was a day full of a lot of sadness. And I knew that mother and dad would be worried about how I was feeling. And I finally found them, and mother got on the phone. And I said, Mother, where are you, by the way? She said, We're outside Milwaukee. And I said, You gotta be kidding me. What are you doing there? She said, You grounded our plane. And so, that's a typical mother. And was I concerned about him? You bet, but once I knew they were safe, I was fine.

Speaker 15

The president felt a sense of relief, a sense of I'm excited to get back to Washington. I think a lot of folks felt a sense of relaxation that it was over, and I felt like I don't know if we really know what's going on, right? I mean, we feel that way, that it's over, but do I really know the whole terrorist event's over? Nothing's told me that's the case, right?

Was this all part of their plan, right, to get us back to Washington so that the second wave couldn't happen?

Speaker 2

There we go.

Speaker 15

Here it goes.

Speaker 10

****.

Speaker 8

There are people down there.

Speaker 3

That's going to come here, isn't it? How could that sucker was going to go?

Speaker 11

That's coming here.

Speaker 3

A third World Trade Center building has now collapsed. The 47-story building #7, CBS News correspondent Cami McCormick is there.

Speaker 8

Screaming. People started running, panicking, because it looked like just a wall of dust coming for us.

Speaker 11

When we got on the plane, the CIA headquarters securely faxed a package of materials to Air Force One. There was a piece of intelligence that had been provided to us by a European intelligence service that said that what happened that morning was the first of two waves of attacks. against the US homeland. The president had just gone through the worst attack on the United States in American history. And here his intelligence briefer showing him a piece of intelligence that suggested that there might be a second wave coming at us. He didn't say anything that suggested that this hit him hard, but I could tell just by the look on his face.

Speaker 4

I spent a lot of time worrying about further attacks, a lot. We felt pretty secure. And all of a sudden, a group of killers was able to penetrate our so-called defenses and kill 3,000 people in one moment's notice.

Speaker 19

The president and I had talked as he was flying home from Nebraska. He knew he would need to address the nation. And so he had talked with me about what he wanted to convey.

Speaker 9

We were thankfully occupied for most of the time working on the speech. Most of the time that we were talking about it was like, how much in that paragraph, you know, is the balance correct? Do we need a little bit more reassurance or a little bit more war? And so that was the-- and it's literally being fought out over three words in paragraph six on page two.

Speaker 17

And it's at this time where Colonel **** Tubb, who is the White House doctor, he kind of went around all of this and was giving us these pills.

Speaker 13

And he says, it's Cipro, just take it. Cipro is a prophylactic against anthrax. We had to be ready for everything.

Speaker 17

So I take the pills. I kind of looked around and I said, I didn't see anybody else take all the pills. And so I looked down and I picked it up and it says, take one pill each day for the next seven days. I had just taken all of them. And I said to myself, I went, you dumb, ***. You just killed yourself. I literally thought I'd just killed myself. Obviously, I came out the other end of this okay, and so it became a recurring joke about me attempting to OD on Air Force One on 9/11.

Speaker 8

With an extraordinary piece of information on the Pentagon crash. Our understanding is that Barbara Olson was on the plane, a frequent commentator on CNN and the wife of Solicitor General Ted Olson.

Speaker 9

When word is broken on the media that Barbara Olson has died, Ted Olson's wife, it was the one moment where it was sort of hard to keep it together. It was so personal.

Speaker 5

Most of the people who worked in the White House knew Ted Olson and Barbara Olson.

Speaker 17

I remember Harriet Myers was a good friend of hers. And when we learned the news, with all the things going on, saw the president walk over and put his arm around Harriet Myers to comfort her in her moment of grief.

Speaker 14

I went to bed that night, around midnight, and there was a note on the pillow from Barbara. Ted, I love you more than I ever thought it possible. Happy 61st birthday, and know that I am thinking of you as you read this. Sleep well, and I will celebrate with you on Friday. All my love, Barbara.

Speaker 12

We land at Andrews Air Force Base. The routine was to get off of Air Force One, get on Marine One. There's always a sense of aura, delight. Not anymore. You could actually feel just cold, hard tension.

Speaker 21

The Secret Service wanted the president to drive in a motorcade and not fly. They were afraid that Marine One was too dangerous.

Speaker 17

There was a palpable sense of fear in the air.

Speaker 5

We'd fly at treetop level zigzagging, because it would be harder for a Stinger missile to find us, I guess. And we zigzag and we go down to the Potomac River, and you see the smoke billowing out of the Pentagon.

Speaker 4

It was a surreal moment because the Capitol was vacant, except for military checkpoints on major thoroughfares. And the Pentagon was smoldering in the background. It was a war zone. It's an image I'll never forget. Man, I was a wartime president, and I was heading into the zone.

Speaker 12

The president looked out his window, and he said, The mightiest building in the world is on fire. That's the 21st century war you just witnessed. He said it out loud to no one in particular. He was collecting his thoughts.

Speaker 4

This was a different kind of war. In the past, America had fought war against nation states that had a capital. They had army, standing armies or navies. In this case, we were at war with a shadow state.

Speaker 19

I just remember seeing the helicopter land and him get out and walk across the yard.

Speaker 20

This man is carrying the weight of the world, the weight of the world literally on his shoulders.

Speaker 4

When you speak from the Oval Office, it's a big deal.

Speaker 21

Presidential addresses to the nation typically have a little bit more time, days to be put together, and this had to be done in hours. There were pretty tense moments getting ready for the address to the nation, clearly tired and stressed out, people trying to figure out what the next steps were.

Speaker 6

At any moment, it looked as if there might be another attack on the United States of America.

Speaker 17

The country was still in shock, and there was a real struggle or tension about, is it reassurer-in-chief or commander-in-chief? Do we need to start hitting the war drums?

Speaker 9

The speech had, I think, at the beginning had a little bit more reassurance than he wanted, and he wanted a little bit more steel, which is what it got.

Speaker 7

President basically has to set the tone, and George Bush did. He knew what he wanted.

Speaker 17

Two minutes.

Speaker 3

I remember thinking, oh, gosh, I was in that office, the Oval Office, three days ago, and wow, the curtains are the same. Carpet is the same. Nothing's the same.

Speaker 1

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices, secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors.

Speaker 6

There were certain things that we felt he had to say immediately, things that he wouldn't get a second chance to say. And the Bush Doctrine, if you harbor a terrorist, will treat you as a terrorist, was one of those things. We understood that this was bold, that it had implications. And so I took the sentence out and took it to him, and I said, Do you want to say this? And he said, Yes, I have to say it now.

Speaker 1

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

Speaker 24

The inclusion of the Bush Doctrine in the president's speech was an open question in the minutes before the speech was given, because it's a very big deal for the United States to announce that if you're harboring terrorism, you are now an enemy of the United States.

Speaker 7

Killing thousands of Americans more than we lost at Pearl Harbor, this was an act of war. I was a guilty party. I wanted to be as aggressive as necessary in order to achieve our objective, and that was to keep the country safe. That's more of a hard case than some of my State Department friends. Do we want to really get into war with Afghanistan just to go after these guys? And we had some diplomatic things that we tried that we ought to give the Afghans time to produce al-Qaeda so we can lock them up. War is not something you want to get into if you can avoid it. But we tend to be an aggressive nation, especially when we have been aggressed against.

Speaker 6

When I'm asked about some of the things we did with speed, I want to say to people, What would you have done? No, we didn't have time for a lot of consultation about how we were gonna handle it.

Speaker 8

You had to make decisions very quickly on that day, and there must be a line between decisiveness and impulsiveness.

Speaker 1

Well, that's right.

Speaker 8

Do you think it was ever crossed?

Speaker 1

No.

Speaker 4

I think I knew what was necessary to protect the country. The decision to say that if you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as a terrorist, that's not an impulsive decision, that's a logical decision.

Speaker 1

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world. Thank you. Good night. And God bless America.

Speaker 8

Okay, thank you very much.

Speaker 3

All right.

Speaker 1

Sad day.

Speaker 19

We had decided that he needed to go to New York. You know, people need to see during times of crisis, they need to see their leaders. They need to see their leaders in the midst of their pain, in the midst of the city with them.

Speaker 3

As we approached New York, probably five, eight miles out, the cabin of that helicopter became filled with this awful, awful smell. You know, burnt plastic, burnt rubber, and human bodies.

Speaker 5

No one says a word, and the pilot circles that pillar of smoke. And we can look down and see the rescue workers. And then we go over and we land down by Wall Street.

Speaker 3

We were the first group that had been down to ground zero other than emergency services personnel. It was almost like Pompeii. A sandwich cart abandoned, covered with this dust, sandwiches still in it, meals still sitting on tables from several days before. It was just like everything had been frozen in time.

Speaker 4

It was like going into hell. I mean, all your senses were pulsating negatively. There was a fog. There's a stench of death, you know, sloshing through water. It was really, really overpowering. And decided to, you know, shake hands and thank the first responders that were lining the way down into the pit. And I'm looking at the bloodshot eyes of people who've been up all night long trying to find their loved ones. And there was an air of revenge.

Speaker 19

We had not planned for the president to speak at Ground Zero, but it became clear that the rescue workers needed to hear from him.

Speaker 8

Stay here. Stay. Don't move. I want you all to know that America today, America today is on bended knee.

Speaker 1

In prayer for the people whose lives were lost here, for the workers who work here.

Speaker 4

I started, you know, people praying for you, we care for you, you know, they didn't want to hear that. And, you know, I was a seasoned political figure. If you pay attention, you end up understanding how a crowd feels. I mean, it's just one of the -- it's a vibe. And, you know, I started kind of surfing on their psychological waves they were creating. And guys started screaming, I can't hear you, and that's when I just ad-libbed.

Speaker 8

I can hear you. I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you.

Speaker 1

And the people... And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.

Speaker 21

That was an amazing unscripted moment that really captured the mood of the country, which was sadness, but also anger. You know, they're gonna hear from all of us soon. You know, that was... People wanted to hear that.

Speaker 5

That speech at Ground Zero galvanized America's interest and its commitment.

Speaker 3

Nobody knew then where this was going to end up. But one way or another, we were going into battle as a nation. How, where, and what that would be, how long it would take, how big or how small the effort would be were the things that nobody knew.

Speaker 17

There's a sense that the whole exercise of being a president is character building. It's not. It's character revealing.

Speaker 12

You are who you are. Whatever you've got in you will come out in a moment of crisis.

Speaker 4

I'm not much of a navel gazer. I guess you could say I'm a man of action, and I acted.

Speaker 11

The next morning, the head of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center, Cofer Black, and I were chatting with the president, and a State Department official came up, and the president just listened, and the State Department official walked away, and the president said to Cofer and me, **** diplomacy, we're going to war.

Speaker 7

I don't think there was any question about it, that we gave everybody a chance to avoid a war. And they said no. And that's when Bush said, Let's do it. USA.

Speaker 1

USA.

Speaker 7

USA! USA! USA.

Speaker 4

I made some big decisions, starting with the big thought of America being in war. And those decisions were not made out of anger. They were made with a goal in mind, which was to protect the American people. I think I was right.

Speaker 8

And do you think your actions after 9/11 made the world a safer place?

Speaker 4

You know, there weren't any other attacks in America. We'll let the historians sort all that out. Let me just say this, I'm comfortable with the decisions I made.

Speaker 8

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