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The Twin Towers, of the World Trade Center, on September 11, 2001. Image online via the U.S. National Park Service.

As the passengers of Flight 93 wrested control of the plane from the hijackers - and the President was returning to Washington aboard Air Force One (his plane) - the South Tower of the World Trade Center was in its final moments of life.

Five minutes before Flight 93 crashed in Pennsylvania, the South Tower (which was hit by the second plane) collapsed at 10:05 EDT. Hundreds of rescue workers, plus people trying to escape, were crushed to death.

Twenty-four minutes later, the North Tower also collapsed. A cloud of volcanic-like ash rushed through the streets of lower Manhattan as people fled for their lives. It was too late, however, for rescuers and people inside the building. They, like so many others in the South Tower, died on September 11.

Pondering the unbelievable tragedy, compounded by collapsing towers, artist Aurora Valero asks a question - "Are You Hopeful?" - in her painting which she donated to the Library of Congress (as part of the Exit Art Gallery Reactions Collection). Because of people willing to place themselves in harm's way, would-be victims could be hopeful because they had a chance to escape.



Some people survived. They survived because of miracles or heroes. Heroes like Rick Rescorla who made sure nearly all of Morgan Stanley's 2700 employees left the South Tower even while building announcements advised people to stay put.

Rescorla, then in charge of security at Morgan Stanley, was never one to follow advice he didn't trust. He knew what danger was - he had faced it in Vietnam. Because of him, thousands of people were not victims - as he was - of the terrorist plot.

The entire WTC complex was massively damaged. At 5:20 p.m. EDT, Number 7 World Trade Center (a 47-story building) also collapsed.

Chief Photographer's Mate Eric J. Tilford (U.S. Navy) took this aerial photo of the WTC complex on September 17, 2001. We see portions of the North Tower's outer shell leaning against the remains of 6 WTC (which suffered catastrophic damage from the falling North Tower). We also see remains of 7 WTC at the photo's upper-right.



At the time, although it was not well-publicized, officials feared that the Hudson River could flood the entire area if the WTC foundations caved in.

But what, exactly, caused the towers to fall?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-TOWERS-COLLAPSE-America-Attacked-9-11>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

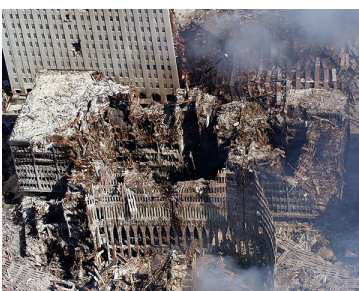
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-TOWERS-COLLAPSE-America-Attacked-9-11>

Media Stream



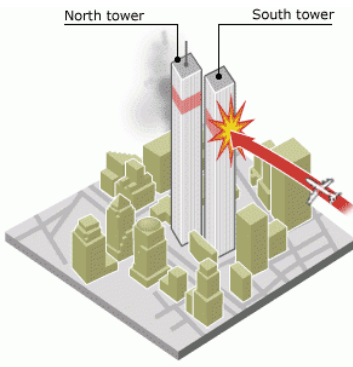
Are You Hopeful

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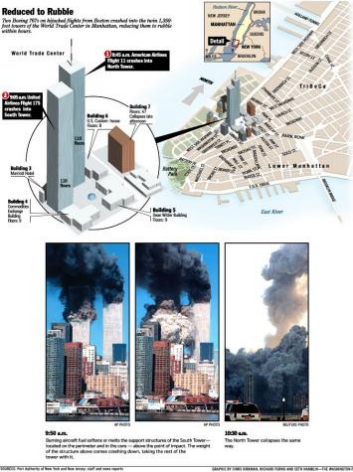
7 WTC Guttled

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September 11 - WTC, South Tower Attack
 Photo online, courtesy the BBC - "America's Day of Terror."

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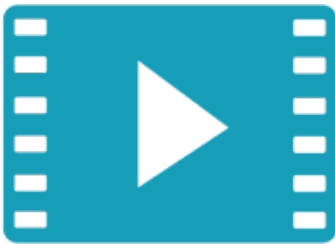


World Trade Center - Reduced to Rubble
 "Reduced to Rubble" graphics, online at the September 11 Archive.
 Original source of graphics and compiler of photos: Chris Kirkman, Richard Furno and Seth Hamblin of the *Washington Post*.

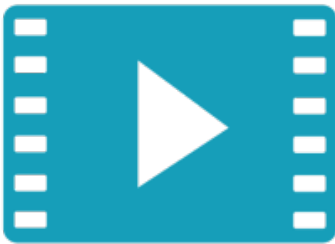
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South Tower Collapse - A "Pyroclastic Event" in NYC
 Video clip, from the September 11 archive.
 View this asset at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/South-Tower-Collapse-A-Pyroclastic-Event-in-NYC>



Air Force One - Exterior of the President's Plane
 Video tour of Air Force One, online courtesy FOX News via YouTube.
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Air Force One - Interior of the President's Plane

Video tour of Air Force One, online courtesy FOX News via YouTube.

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