

Utah National Guard HISTORY HIGHLIGHT



September 2023

September 11th Terrorist Attacks, UTNG Response

“The attacks on America brought the war home to us. No component of the American military establishment is better situated to contribute to winning the war against terrorism than the Army and Air Guard.” Major General Brian L. Tarbet, 2001.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, 19 members from an Islamist extremist group known as al-Qaeda carried out coordinated attacks against the United States. Their weapon of choice were hijacked airliners used with deadly effect.

Among their targets, the World Trade Center Twin Towers were struck first by two aircraft, each crashing into a different tower. The towers ultimately collapsed from the damage sustained and killed 2,753 people. Shortly after, another aircraft impacted the Pentagon, the headquarters for the Department of Defense, resulting in the death of another 184 people. A fourth hijacked aircraft never made it to its intended target. The passengers on Flight 93 fought back and the aircraft crashed into a field not far from Washington, D.C. In total, 2,977 people lost their lives that day from the attacks.

9/11 brought the nation together as few events in history has. Flags were flown across the country as citizens showed their support and unity, not only to bring those responsible to justice, but for the those lost and for the ongoing recovery efforts. On the evening of September 11, President George W. Bush said, “terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.”

The national response from the 9/11 attacks was swift. The United States found itself on a battlefield vastly different from ones previous and the Utah National Guard was well suited to play a vital role in this new fight.

For the Global War on Terrorism, the adversary was elusive. Highly adaptive, and specialized units became enormously in demand. Following combat operations, efforts to rebuild and stabilize regions previously used for terrorist agendas were hallmark to the national strategy.

An Air National Guard KC-135 prepares to give fuel to F-16s near the Golden Gate Bridge as part of Operation Noble Eagle. Aircrews from the 191st Air Refueling Wing conducted similar ONE missions regularly to help protect U.S. airspace.



300th Military Intelligence Brigade (Linguist)

The Utah National Guard received its first tasking only hours after the attacks on 9/11. The first call came for aid from the FBI for assistance in translating incoming intelligence.

Just a few weeks later, 21 voice interceptors from the 142nd Military Intelligence Battalion (Linguist) were deployed to various locations around the U.S. to use their specialized language skills to identify and exploit enemy communications.

In the following months, members of the 300th MIB (Linguist) would deploy to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to support Joint Task Force 170 in interrogations, and also to Uzbekistan and Afghanistan to support intelligence operations.

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Numerous units and members of the Utah National Guard supported state and national response efforts after the attacks. Some of the more notable contributions directly following the attacks came from the 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade (Linguist).

On September 25, 2001, Soldiers from the 19th SFG(A) were tasked with providing increased security at the Salt Lake International Airport. The mission was to support Operation Noble Eagle in conjunction with giving the public renewed confidence in the air transportation system. During the nine-month security mission, two events bare recognition.

Staff Sgt. Paul Chancy saw a food service truck catch fire. Chancy quickly retrieved the fire extinguisher from his vehicle, and swiftly put out the fire before the fire department arrived. His actions saved the driver from potential injury and saved the truck from further damage.

Chancy was awarded the Utah Army National Guard Service Medal for his quick reaction. Additionally, Sgt. Dan Nerhing noticed suspicious behavior of a vehicle driving through the airport roads. After staying back and observing for few moments, Nehring approached the vehicle and its occupants. Before he neared, it sped off. Nehring recorded the license plate and reported the incident to the FBI. Months later, the report led to the arrest of three individuals on the FBI watch list as well as several of their accomplices.

The events of September 11th became a catalyst for action. For the Soldiers and Airmen of the Utah National Guard, it was a rallying cry as they deployed in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom for years following.

Sources: UTNG Global War on Terror History Report, 2011; National 9/11 Museum and Memorial, 2023

Members of the 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) perform assigned security missions at the Salt Lake International Airport shortly after the 9/11 attacks.



Aerial view of the Pentagon after a hijacker flew American Airlines Flight 77 into the southwest corner on September 11, 2001, killing 184 people. After the attack, a massive American Flag was draped over the side of the building near the impact point.