

# THE 9/11 ATTACKS: TEN YEARS LATER

## *How have our lives been changed?*

### Did you know . . .

The war in Iraq was not sanctioned (supported) by the United Nations, so Canada did not join the United States in this mission.

### Reading Prompt

In this section we will examine some of the impacts the 9/11 attacks have had on nations and individuals. As you read this section, consider the following quotation from columnist Rosie DiManno in the May 3, 2011, issue of the *Toronto Star*: “Sometimes it’s difficult to remember what the world was like before bin Laden provoked what came to be known as the ‘war on terror.’ How many billions have been spent? How many lives—on all sides—sacrificed to one man’s figment of fundamentalism? How many civil liberties abraded? How many security inconveniences imposed on ordinary people?” As you read, ask yourself: How many of these consequences of 9/11 have impacted my life?



Your teacher may choose to have you complete a Multiple Consequence Web Diagram while working on this section. The diagram can be downloaded from <http://newsinreview.cbclearning.ca/worksheets/>.

### Thousands of Lives, Billions of Dollars

The war on terror that DiManno refers to has resulted in two major international actions led by the United States: the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The U.S. and its allies went into Afghanistan in 2001 when the Taliban leadership refused to surrender Osama bin Laden, identified as the man behind the 9/11 attacks and several other Al Qaeda terrorist attacks against Americans abroad. These armed conflicts have been costly.

Canadians have lost 155 military personnel in Afghanistan to date. While actual figures are hard to establish, hundreds of fighters have been killed on both sides. Even greater has been the number of civilians killed in the conflict. At least 9 759 civilian lives were lost between 2007-2010 alone. Disturbingly, the worst year for civilian deaths was 2010, after eight years of allied operations ([www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/aug/10/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics](http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/aug/10/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics)).

Even more costly in human life has been the war in Iraq. Iraq now has its own government, and the U.S. and allied military presence is nearly gone,

but violence continues. Nearly 4 500 U.S. troops were killed since war began in 2003—as well as about 500 other coalition troops.

Estimates of the number of Iraqi civilians killed vary widely, from over 100 000 to over one million. The Iraq Body Count Project has a database indicating a minimum of 102 344 civilian deaths from violence between 2003 and August 2011 ([www.iraqbodycount.org/database/](http://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/)).

The war on terror has also had an enormous monetary cost. *Foreign Affairs* reported that, “United States primacy was also damaged by the unexpected cost of the protracted wars, recently estimated by Congressional Research Service to be \$1.3-trillion dollars and mounting . . . [Defence] spending climbed from \$304-billion in 2001 to \$616-billion in 2008, even as the United States budget went from a surplus of \$128-billion to a deficit of \$458-billion” (September/October 2011). Add to this the approximately \$1-trillion spent on creating the Homeland Security apparatus. Clearly, the war on terror had a huge impact on the difficult financial circumstances in which the United States finds itself today.

## Quote

"Bin Laden's most obvious effect on America may be this: A generation has grown up with no memory of ever walking unchecked onto an airplane, or of greeting an air traveller at the gate. The institution of security to eliminate soft targets has cost billions and changed the face of the nation." — Peter Grier (*The Christian Science Monitor*, May 7, 2011)

During the same period Canada also greatly increased its military spending, which is currently ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the world. Between 2000 and 2011 defence spending more than doubled—from \$10-billion to \$21.8-billion. A large part of this increase was to support an expeditionary force to Afghanistan, Canada's major military contribution to the war on terror.

## Civil Liberties

Many have argued that the greatest impact of 9/11 has been on individual civil liberties in the United States and around the world. Stephanie Findlay and Nicholas Kohler sum up that view in *Maclean's*: "Most insidiously, bin Laden's triumph permitted an unparalleled curbing of civil liberties across the Western world. The USA Patriot Act, made into law in the weeks following the attacks, gave law enforcement agencies unheard-of authority to eavesdrop on telephone, e-mail and other communications, boosted international intelligence gathering, and heralded an era in which suspected terrorists could be shipped to third-party countries for torture-enhanced interrogation. The Canadian Anti-Terrorism Act, passed in December 2001, introduced similar measures here, and newspapers began reporting on no-fly list snafus snagging unlucky namesake children and other innocents. Those like Maher Arar were unluckier still when they found themselves on the wrong side of the war on terror" (May 16, 2011).

Maher Arar is a Canadian citizen born in Syria who came to Canada with his family when he was 17. In 2002 he was detained by U.S. authorities for interrogation on suspicion of connections to Al Qaeda. He was deported by the United States government to Syria, where he was imprisoned and tortured

until he made a false confession. He returned to Canada in 2003; in 2006 a commission of inquiry cleared him of all terrorism allegations. The Canadian government settled a lawsuit with Arar for \$10.5-million in compensation for his suffering.

One of the most contentious attacks on civil liberties in the United States is the infamous no-fly list, which contains the names of 12 000 people who are forbidden to fly in a plane within or entering the United States. Another 460 000 are on a watch list, which means they require special screening before they are allowed to board.

Documents obtained when bin Laden's compound was raided indicate that Al Qaeda was planning a major attack on a railway system in the United States. Authorities are now considering bringing in similar no-travel restrictions for the entire Amtrak rail system.

## Tightened Security

Billions of dollars have been spent around the world to tighten security, especially at airports and places where large numbers of the public gather. Some of the security measures airplane passengers now face are both humiliating and inconvenient, and they include:

- Full electronic body scans
- Random pat-downs by airport security personnel
- Removal of all footwear at check-in for flights to the United States
- Restrictions on liquids and gels that can be brought onto the plane in hand luggage or purses
- The need to provide one piece of government-issued photo identification, or two pieces of non-government photo ID at check-in

As a result, check-ins at major airports now take considerably longer than before security was tightened, and passengers can expect to spend many additional

hours at airports waiting in line. And although these delays cause many to be frustrated, most travellers feel that the improved security measures are worth the hassle.

Canadians are now required to show a passport when crossing the border into the United States. Line-ups at many border crossings are more lengthy, and inspections much more common than in the past. The trucking industry, in particular, finds the number and length of inspections cut deeply into its bottom line.

### **Anti-Muslim Sentiment**

9/11 had a significant impact on attitudes toward Muslims in the United States,

Canada, and other parts of the West. According to a *Washington Post* poll published on September 9, 2010, only 37 per cent of people in the United States said they had a favourable opinion of Islam (*The New Republic*, November 1, 2010). Most recently anti-Muslim sentiment has been demonstrated in the attempts to block the construction of a Muslim community centre, called Park 51, near the former site of the World Trade Center. Opponents argue that at best it shows “insensitivity” on the part of the Muslim community to build there, while proponents argue that it should be built because most of the centre will be open to the public and will be used to promote dialogue with other religions.

### **For Discussion**

1. With a partner or in a small group discuss the notes you made while you read this information in response to the reading prompt that asked you how many consequences of 9/11 have affected your life.
2. Canada has had one terrorism scare—the 2006 case of the “Toronto 18” (for more information read the March 2010 issue of *News in Review*). How likely do you think it is that a terrorist act will occur on Canadian soil? What might motivate such an act?
3. How would you respond to a pollster asking whether Park 51 should be built in its proposed location?
4. One of the biggest political quarrels involving civil liberties in the United States has been over the use of torture while interrogating suspected terrorists. Despite its prohibition by international law, terror was often used at the detention centre at Guantanamo Bay. Is the use of torture ever justified by circumstance?