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Updated: 14 Jan 2003



AMERICAN FORCES INFORMATION SERVICE

NEWS ARTICLES

Pentagon Open as Rescue Work Continues

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 12, 2001 -- The Pentagon is open for business even as urban search and rescue teams comb the area a hijacked jet rammed into Sept. 11.

Federal Emergency Management Agency and military engineer teams entered the Pentagon in search for survivors. Fire still burns in the roof of the five-sided building.

The incident commander, Fire Chief Ed Plaughter of Arlington County, Va., told reporters today he has no idea how many casualties there might be in the terrorist attack. On Sept. 11, he had said the number of dead could be as high as 800, but noted it was a "very rough estimate."

Thousands of Pentagon employees streamed into the building today to report for work. The smell of smoke pervaded even the undamaged areas. Of the building's 10 corridors, the area from Corridors 2 to 6 are closed. Offices are doubling up in the undamaged areas.

[Video: Even on Day 2, a veil of smoke continues to obscure the gaping hole in the Pentagon caused by the crash of a hijacked commercial airliner Sept. 11, 2001. Video by Gerry J. Gilmore.](#)

"First and foremost, the Department of Defense is open for business," Pentagon spokeswoman Torie Clarke said during a morning press conference today. "We're operating and functioning very well.

Clarke said the department's priorities are to care for the injured and the dead and their families. Pentagon officials are also working closely with the president and the national security team to "ensure the safety of the American people and our men and women in uniform around the world," she said.

Pentagon officials are also working closely with law enforcement and intelligence agencies to determine who was responsible for the attacks in New York and here and what the U.S. response will be.

DoD has set up a Pentagon Family Assistance Center at the Sheraton Crystal City Hotel at 1800 Jefferson Davis Highway in Arlington, Va. "This will fold into one place all the family assistance efforts for the department," said David Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. This is the place for all family assistance -- civilian and military. Officials asked families not to go to the Pentagon for information.

DoD will release a phone number once it is established. Chu emphasized that once it is available, the number would be just for the families, and asked that friends not call the number and tie up the lines. He said specialists in dealing with such tragedies are manning the center. Local chaplains, social workers and medical personnel have been augmented by personnel from Norfolk, Va. These people dealt with the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the destroyer USS Cole last October.

Hundreds of firefighters are still working to extinguish the blaze in the Pentagon roof. Fire officials said the construction of the Pentagon has contributed to this "very stubborn blaze." The Pentagon's roof consists of a layer of masonry, topped by wood, topped by slate. The officials said the fire has been hard to control because it has ignited the wood and is traveling between the concrete and slate layers. Firefighters are bringing in experts and special equipment to deal with the blaze.

The Army is the executive agent for military assistance for the disaster. All services are cooperating in providing some security, medical aid and some search capabilities. Some 2,800 Virginia, Maryland and District of Columbia National Guardsmen have been called up to help with the disaster.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is meeting with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell and the rest of the national security team.



A chain-link fence cordons off the damaged area of Pentagon near the heliport as fire and rescue workers and FBI and other crime scene personnel attend to their work Sept. 12, 2001. Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore.



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Arlington County (Va.) police block off streets south of the Pentagon Sept. 12, 2001. Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore.

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