

# Socrates Café

Wednesday, May 16 18, 2018

*Our Socrates Café is a place and time for us to get together to exchange thoughtful ideas and experiences in order to learn by pondering the questions and opinions of others.*

*All political, economic and social points of view are welcomed and encouraged.*

*The only ground rule is that we will be polite to those opinions that differ from our own.*

## **What is the Impact Today of 9/11 on American Politics?**

At 8:46 AM on September 11, 2001 five al-Qaeda terrorists crashed American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center's North Tower. At 9:03 AM a second group of terrorists crashed United Airlines Flight 175 into the South Tower. Both towers collapsed within two hours.

At 9:37 AM a third plane, American Airlines Flight 77 flew into the Pentagon. A fourth hijacked flight, United Airlines 93, was kept from reaching its target, either the Capitol or the White House, due to the heroism of its passengers who fought the four terrorists. The plane ultimately crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The multiple attacks caused the deaths of 2,996 people and injured more than 6,000 others.

The result of the terrorism was a massive outpouring of domestic accord. Many relief funds were set up to assist victims and their families. American flags were flown on homes and cars. The President and Congress worked together to develop plans for the continuity of government. The United States enacted the Homeland Security Act which created the Cabinet level Department of Homeland Security and passed the USA PATRIOT Act which gave sweeping power to detect and prosecute terrorism and related acts. The United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court oversaw expanded U.S. government powers to seek and obtain information on citizens and non-citizens. Military action was taken to destroy the roots of the terrorists in Afghanistan and ultimately to invade Iraq in search of weapons of mass destruction.

Since that time, the country has seen a pull-back from the unity that followed 9/11. The PATRIOT Act has been reduced in scope. The gathering of intelligence on citizens has been legally curtailed. Significant efforts to close Guantanamo military prison have gone on for years. Interrogation techniques that were legal at the time became illegal and significantly interfered with the CIA Director confirmation hearings for Gina Haspel.

What lessons did we learn from 9/11? Have they been forgotten or are we simply back to the dynamic tension between partisan groups that has ebbed and flowed since we became a nation? What, if anything, has been the lasting impact of September 11, 2001?

*Robert M. Rubin*