

Nation Shuts Down As It Absorbs Shock Of 'Darkest Day'

By JOEL ACHENBACH and WILLIAM BOOTH
Washington Post Staff Writers

America shut down yesterday. Disney World closed. So did the Liberty Bell. So did the Sears Tower in Chicago, the Coca-Cola headquarters in Atlanta, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and the Transamerica pyramid in San Francisco. So did the world's largest shopping mall, in Minnesota, and all 3,700 Starbucks coffee shops in North America. The pennant races in baseball were suspended—all games canceled. The only planes left in the sky were military jets.

"I just can't believe something like this can happen in the United States," said Adele Randolph, an elderly woman wandering the evacuating terminal at Los Angeles International Airport. "I'm just in a daze."

Big cities and small towns recoiled at the news. At the mail processing center in Zanesville, Ohio, about an hour east of Columbus, postal worker Michael Mitchell and his co-workers immediately went to the large metal doors at the loading dock and secured them with heavy chains and a padlock. No one was taking any chances.

"The mall closed down. You know it's big time here if the mall closes," Mitchell said.

A country whose biggest political problem had seemingly been a dwindling budget surplus suddenly found itself at war with a ruthless, invisible enemy. There were rumors of hijacked planes still in the air. The TV images were horrifying, and they wouldn't stop. In the United States Capitol, there were police officers shouting "Run! Run! Run!" as staffers sprinted from the building in fear of another kamikaze attack. The chaos reverberated from coast to coast—people raced to schools to get their children, then hung by the phone to learn the fate of distant loved ones.

In Oklahoma City, a city familiar with terrorism, about 300 people had the same idea soon after the story broke—they lined up to donate blood. Over in Tulsa a different situation erupted: Long lines for gasoline, and rumors that prices would hit \$5 a gallon.

Heather Cypret, who spent an hour getting her car filled, called the scene "just insane." Energy company executives took to the airwaves to calm the citizenry.

No sooner had the day of terror begun when the White House phone lines lit up with furious Americans. Grown men were weeping as they demanded retaliation, according to two phone bank volunteers. One summarized the general reaction: "Do something now. Do it swiftly. Don't be moderate. Get bin Laden."

"We knew this was coming, we just didn't know when," said Regina Johnson, an insurance agent in Chicago whose office closed down soon after the attacks began. "The first thing that jumped in my mind is World War III."

Los Angeles officials urged citizens to avoid retaliation against other residents because of their ethnicity. Police cruisers were stationed outside some area mosques. In Richmond, Bishop Walter F. Sullivan warned that Americans should not let anger turn into a desire for ven-

geance. "We cannot allow terrorists to succeed in robbing us of our humanity," he said.

In downtown Atlanta, Bill Carrilo, a junior at Georgia State University, stood with his fellow students around a TV set. "We dropped a bomb on Hiroshima, on Iraq, on Libya. In Central America, we have been active parts of coups," he said. "It was only a matter of time."

Another student, Sabrina Fridus, scrambled to reach her father, who works at the Pentagon. She couldn't get through.

"It's scary. It's so scary," she said tearfully. "This is not something that is supposed to happen."

In the Los Angeles area, Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm and the Los Angeles County Fair all closed their doors, as did universities and ports. Pop star Madonna canceled her Los Angeles concert. The Latin Grammys called off the ceremony planned for live television Tuesday night.

The nation's second-largest city seemed numbed, and fearful, braced for another attack on the West Coast, already staggered in recent years by riots and earthquakes. FBI agents, wearing bulletproof vests and toting automatic rifles, surrounded federal offices and court-houses. Law enforcement went into "full tactical alert" and caravans of police cruisers escorted bomb squads from site to site to check for explosives.

On the streets, a number of people offered the same observation: How it was just like a movie, only real, and much worse.

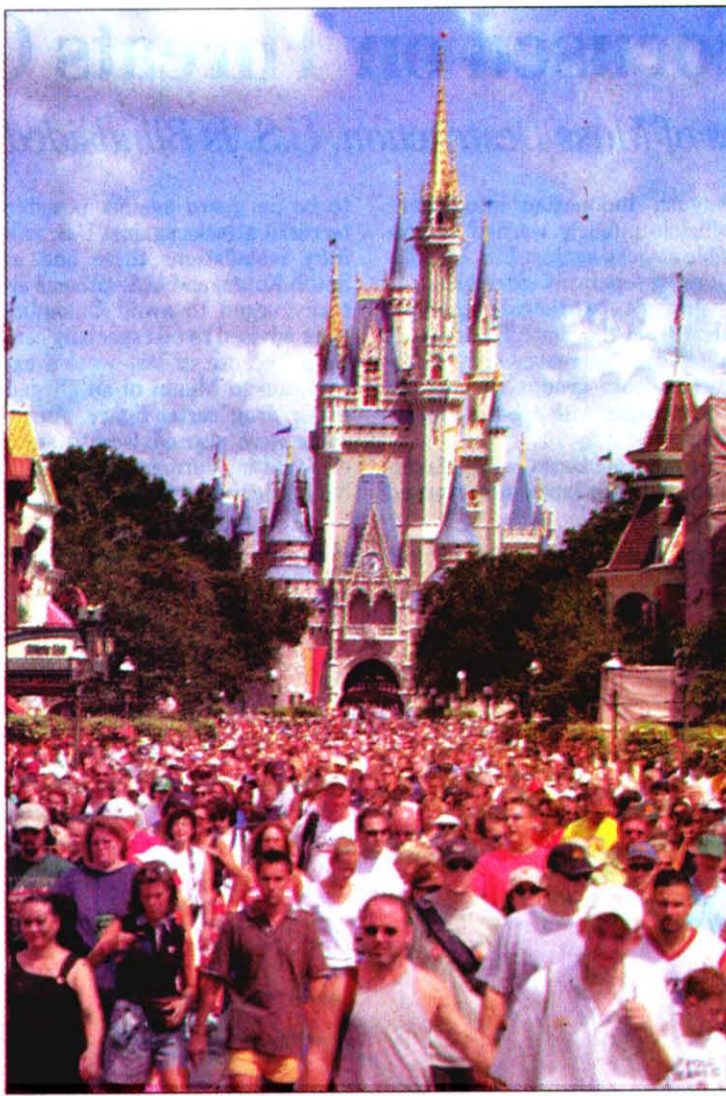
Travelers evacuated from the Los Angeles airport—where three of the hijacked planes were originally headed—were taken to nearby hotels. At the Marriott, dozens of the stranded stood in the hotel bar, not drinking, not eating. They didn't speak much. The silence was funereal. It would have been comparable to a church, except there was no minister to lead the flock. Instead they looked up at the wall-mounted TV sets.

"You sit here and you look at this and you say how can any human being, no matter what race you are or where you live, be such a murderer," said Paul Graham, head basketball coach at Washington State University, who had been en route to Seattle.

Some human pursuits couldn't be repressed. In Las Vegas, the Stratosphere and Eiffel towers—two eye-grabbing structures that loom over the Strip—were closed. Gamblers still tried their luck in the casinos, however. In the sports betting parlors, big screens didn't show the usual sports results but rather flashed the terrorism news from the East Coast.

TV networks stopped showing commercials. Cable sports networks switched their coverage to news networks. The shopping networks QVC and ShopNBC decided to go completely dark, as did many movie theaters.

The day of horror and tragedy did give one Texan a brief lease on life. Texas Gov. Rick Perry announced that he was granting a stay of execution to Jeffery Eugene Tucker, a truck driver sentenced to die for gunning down a man in 1988. The governor cited the closure of the U.S. Supreme Court, which handles last-minute appeals in capital cases.



Thousands file down Main Street to leave the Magic Kingdom at Disney World in Orlando, after officials announced the park would close.

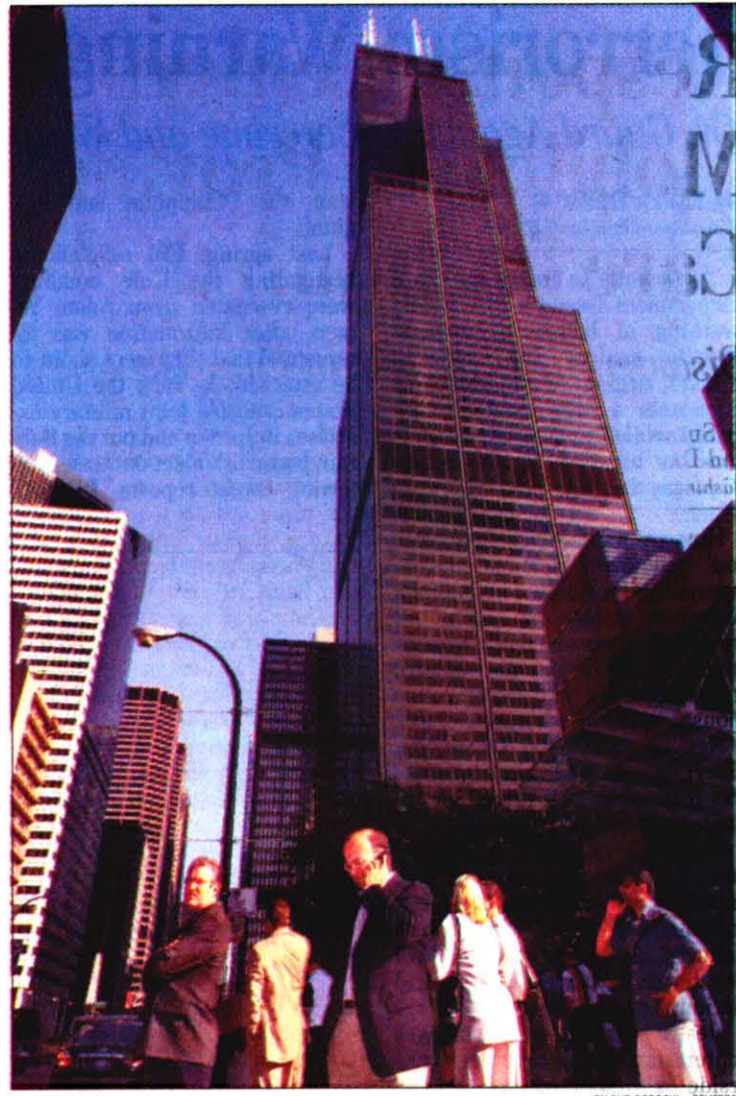
Tucker had been scheduled to die at 6 p.m. Central time in Huntsville.

Not only was the nation's air traffic shut down, so were Greyhound buses. The company suspended operations in the Northeast and at all bus stations across the country that are within a mile of federal office buildings. The company last night said it was resuming operations in some affected areas. The U.S. Postal Service continued to deliver mail but wouldn't guarantee that express packages would arrive anywhere on time. The Kennedy Space Center in Florida, meanwhile, secured four space shuttles, using precautions

similar to those used in the face of a hurricane.

Grade schools around the country didn't close, for the most part, but many parents retrieved their children early. By 10:30 a.m., more than a dozen parents had shown up at Ludlum Elementary School in South Miami, asking that their children be released. The parents nervously gathered around a television set in the office, watching news reports as school personnel located their children.

At another elementary school in Miami Shores, parents showed up in droves, taking away more than 100



Workers mill around outside the Sears Tower, a downtown Chicago landmark, which was evacuated after the terrorist attack in New York.

students. "We didn't discourage them," said school office worker Marie Zamor.

In Huntsville, Ala., Yvonne Smith spent an hour just trying to find an open gate to get to her home inside the Army's Red Stone Arsenal. Smith, 33, an accountant whose husband is stationed in Honduras, learned that the base had gone to Threat Con Delta.

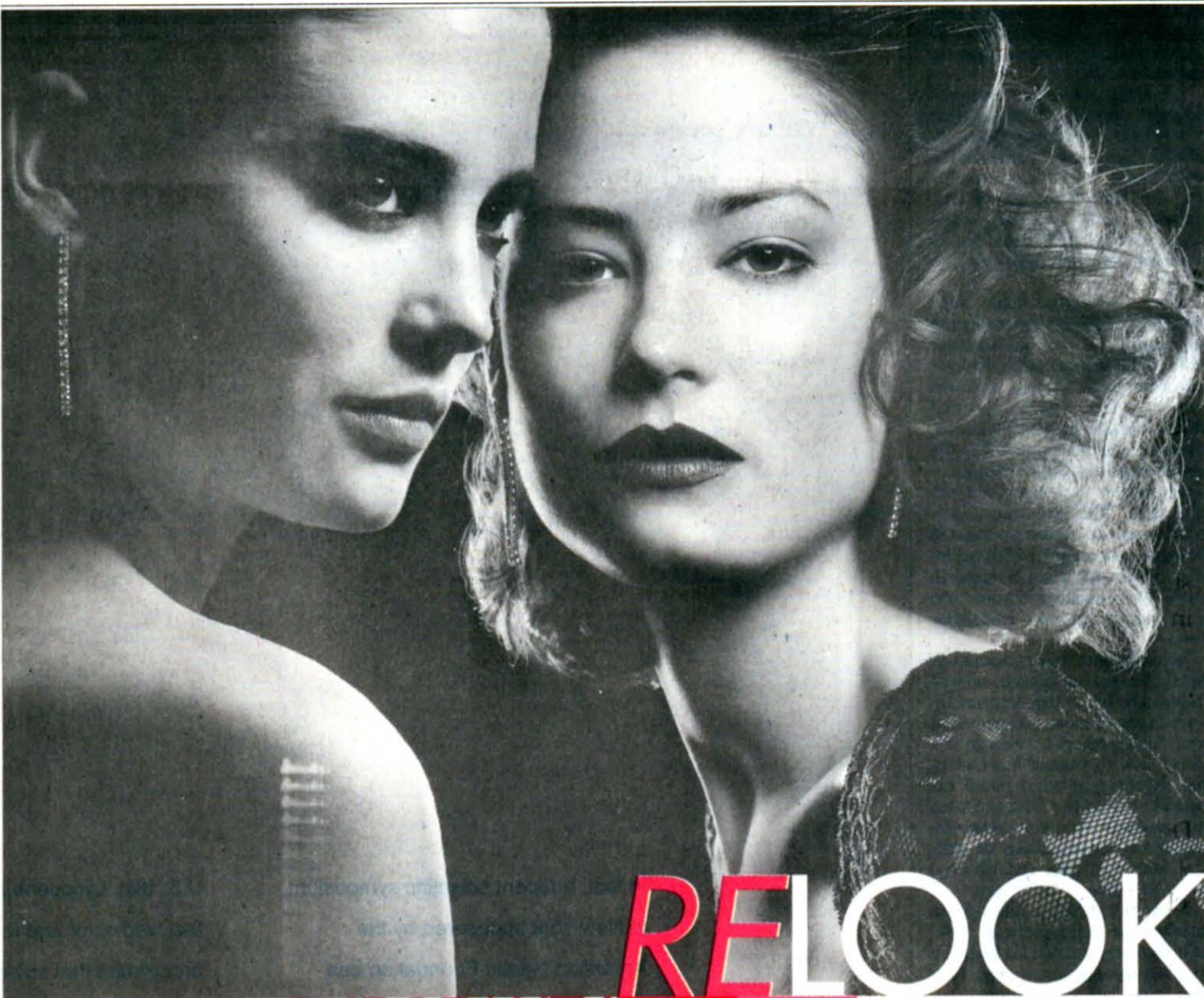
"We've been stationed all over the world, and we never have experienced Delta before. I never imagined anything like this before," she said.

In Clover, S.C., Eddie Henderson, 49, a US Airways employee on his

way to the airport, said he felt an urge to hunker down and gather his family close.

"I think things will never be the same. They just can't be," he said. His parents had rushed to withdraw cash from a bank machine. Then they had gone to the store to buy extra groceries. They were ready for the long haul. Henderson said his own instinct was to protect his home, protect his property. What had happened this day, he said, was even worse than the Kennedy assassination.

"This," he said, "is the darkest day in America."



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