The Legacy of 9/11

On 11 September 2001 (known as 9/11 in America), terrorists hijacked four planes that were flying above the US. Two of them were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. Another was crashed into the Pentagon, the top military building in the capital city, Washington DC. The fourth plane crashed into a field, 80 miles from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The attacks shocked, and changed, the world.

The events of September 11 2001 have had far-reaching consequences. The attacks caused international outrage, and led to the US President George W Bush declaring a "war on terror" - America and its allies vowed to hunt down the leaders of al-Qaeda, the terrorist network behind the attacks, and bring them to justice.

The war in Afghanistan

At the time, a group called the Taliban were in charge of Afghanistan, and they allowed al-Qaeda to operate there. People thought the network's leader Osama bin Laden was hiding there, as well.

In October 2001, the US and the UK invaded Afghanistan to try and destroy al-Qaeda and bring down the government which protected its leaders. Troops from other countries became involved too. The Taliban were quickly driven out of the capital city, Kabul, but even today Afghanistan remains a dangerous place. British troops and forces from other countries are still there.

The war in Iraq

In 2003 the United States and Britain led an invasion of Iraq, overthrowing the government led by President Saddam Hussein. The American and British governments believed that, as well as being a threat to other countries, the Iraqi government was sympathetic to terrorists, including Al Qaeda. In Britain, there was much debate over whether this was true, and the invasion of Iraq was controversial.

Saddam Hussein's government was quickly overthrown. In the years that followed there was a great deal of violence in Iraq by groups who didn't think the foreign troops should be in Iraq, and different Iraqi groups fighting each other. Many thousands of Iraqi civilians died in the violence as well as thousands of foreign troops. The country has not yet recovered.

When he became President in 2008, Barack Obama announced that he would withdraw American troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. Violence has declined in Iraq but it still remains a dangerous country, and both America and the UK still have troops there.

Increased security

The September 11 attacks have also had a lasting impact on airline security, to try and make it more difficult for terrorists to get onto planes. Stricter searches are now made before people can board flights, and there are limits to what you can take on a plane as well.

1. What do you think the word 'legacy' means?

Think about what the whole article is about.

2. The consequences of the 9/11 attacks are described as 'far-reaching'. What does that mean?

Think about the two words 'far' and 'reaching' - why have they been put together?

3. Explain, in your own words if you can, what the 'war on terror' was described as.

Use the information in the article.

4. What three things happened as a result of the 9/11 attacks?

Look at the article, and think about how it is laid out.

5. Why was the invasion of Iraq 'controversial'?

What does controversial mean? What reason is given for this?

6. Explain, in your own words, the 'lasting impact' on airline security.

Read that part of the text carefully.

7. Who do you think this article is suitable for? Explain your answer.

This is a question about audience.

8. Why do you think this article was written?

This is a question about purpose.