



(U) 9/11 Recollections

FROM: SIGINT Communications
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(U) We asked readers to share their 9/11-related stories (see the [call for input](#))... Here are some recollections of that time:

(U) On 9/11 2001, I was vacationing in the west of Ireland, giving my wife a welcome respite from having cared for her elderly mother since early summer. Just before 2pm Irish time, we stopped for lunch at a pub in the little village of Cong which was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the making of "The Quiet Man" starring John Wayne. As we entered, we were met by stony silence and everyone there was staring at the television, many with tears streaming down their cheeks. For a moment, I looked at what appeared to be a scene from an Irwin Allen disaster movie before the horrible reality set in.

(U) We set out back to Dublin as soon as we could, returning to my brother and sister-in-law's home across the street from the American embassy. For the next several days, I bore witness to scenes of support and sympathy that did not get the attention they deserved back in the States. Irish families drove to Dublin and Shannon airports bringing food and blankets to stranded travellers and in many cases taking these strangers into their homes. My many calls to Aer Lingus trying to get back home and to work were always met with kindness and concern despite what must have been a maddening time for the operators.

(U) But the greatest moment came that Friday. While the rest of the European Union declared two minutes of silence as a symbol of solidarity with America, the Republic of Ireland closed for an entire day. Every shop, every restaurant, every pub was closed. Radio and television broadcast nothing but news and commentary about America's tragedy and, for the first time in history, the Irish Times was not published. All day Friday, I watched an endless line of ordinary Irish people outside the American embassy queued up to sign books of condolence which swelled from two to ten and to leave messages and mementos of support. Firefighters from every county in the republic arrived to form a procession in honor of their American brothers who perished, culminating in the laying of a wreath on the embassy grounds.

(U) The line continued through the night and all day again Saturday into Sunday and Sunday into Monday until the books were closed on Tuesday. There was still a small line after midnight Saturday as I waited my own turn to sign the book. Horrid as the events of 9/11 were, I was honored to witness firsthand, the response of the Irish people who lost many of their friends and relatives at ground zero and who felt such a kinship with America that they were willing to literally shut down their nation in a show of support and respect.

-- Dennis St. John

(U) I remember coming in on Sept.12, the day after. It was eerily quiet, with all flights in and out of BWI cancelled and very little traffic in and around the campus. As I passed a guard in the parking lot, I heard a solitary jet fighter above me, but I couldn't see a thing. I remarked about it to the guard, who explained that it was an Air Force jet, one of many that had been laid on to do extra reconnaissance in the DC area. Although I felt safer knowing that, a chill still went up and down my spine.

-- [REDACTED]

(U) On 9/11, I happened to be on vacation in Krakow, Poland. That evening, I walked past the U.S. Consulate. There was a small crowd just standing silently in front of the consulate, and the

sidewalk outside the building was full of flowers, candles, and handwritten prayers left by the local people. Their expression of solidarity with us helped to ease the grief that I was feeling at the time. It was a very moving experience that I will never forget.

-- [REDACTED]

(U) I remember standing before our front gate at Bad Aibling Station [in southern Germany], which was closed, with many flowers and candles lit day and night. It was a beautiful expression of friendship and of hope for the future.

-- [REDACTED]

(U) Thanks to all who submitted their stories. We may revisit this topic later this year on the fifth anniversary of 9/11. -- the editor

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