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## Nightmare in America

By Christine Lyall  
Terra Staff Writer

MIAMI (Sept. 14, 2001) -- As images of the toppled twin towers at the World Trade Center in New York City played across a bank of TV screens at a Best Buy outlet here, Travis Thomas just wished the nightmare would end.

"You feel like you're just waiting to roll over and for the alarm clock to go off," said Thomas, 30, of Hollywood, Fla. "You want to wake up and have this be over. And then you realize that you aren't waking up -- and it's real."

Thomas was among a handful of Miami citizens who stopped at the Best Buy outlet to watch the TV screens. He and many others simply had to see for themselves the terrifying images that would accompany the news they heard on their car radios.

"I thought it was a hoax at first," said Thomas. "I didn't think something like this could happen in America. You see the movies and you hear about all different scenarios, but you just don't think that a group would be that bold and sophisticated to get within our borders and do something this devastating."

Shock, disbelief and horror ripped through the United States Tuesday as the news of terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington, D.C., and rural Pennsylvania unfolded. In Miami, the adopted home of largely Latin American immigrants and a popular vacation spot for world travelers, Thomas' sentiments were not unique.

"I think it's horrible for a country like this to have an attack like this," said Dora Bages, 64, a resident of Miami originally from Venezuela. "So many innocent people have been killed who have nothing to do with politics. It's an act of cowardice.

"I think this country should be more aware of the enemies it has around the world," said Bages, agreeing with the notion that perhaps the United States had become a bit too complacent about its sense of national security. "But this country doesn't deserve (this). This is a country that has opened its doors to the whole world, and it doesn't deserve this."



People watch in horror  
(Terra)



Volunteers give blood  
(Terra)

Dori Skalt, a 21-year-old Israeli visitor, watched the news of the airplane crashes through the window of Procam Inc., a home-theater store in downtown Miami.

"It's like in Israel, only everything is a lot bigger and a lot scarier," she said. "We were just in the twin towers just two weeks ago, and we took pictures. It's just amazing that there are no twin towers now."

When the news broke that Palestinian terrorists might have played a role in the attacks, Skalt worriedly – and knowingly -- shook her head.

"No one needed this, no one. But now maybe people will see that we cannot make peace with these maniacs," she said. "I mean, look at that."

The footage was indeed terrifying and surreal as a passenger airplane sliced through the top of a World Trade Center tower only moments after another commercial flight had done the same thing. Then, less than an hour later, reports surfaced of a third airplane crashing into the Pentagon, while the WTC towers toppled before Americans' horrified eyes. A fourth airplane then went down just outside of Pittsburgh. All of the flights were domestic.

The events played out like a high-tech disaster movie or a violent video game. In the meantime, everyone everywhere could be seen talking on their cell phones, tuning in to radios or gathering around communal TV sets.

#### **Call for blood**

Despite the devastation, some people felt a call to roll up their sleeves and serve their fellow man, much to the delight of Fabio Gomez, a blood center recruiter for the Red Cross Community Blood Mobile.

"We received an emergency phone call at about 9:30 a.m., telling us that because of the incidents in New York, their blood bank needs an incredible amount of blood supplies," said Gomez. The blood mobile therefore parked along a downtown Miami sidewalk close to a store where TV screens broadcast the news of the attacks.

While South Florida is presently going through its own blood shortage crisis, the Red Cross will allot a certain percentage of its blood supply to go straight to New York City, said Gomez.

"This is a real event, so people can see with their own eyes that there is a need," he said. "There has been good response. We've had better response than I would have expected if, unfortunately, this had not happened."

Among those donating blood were Skalt and a young woman visiting from Brazil, 21-year-old Ana Karine. Yet another donor was 39-year-old Miami resident Linda Mulhall.

"I just heard on the news that they need blood in New York City, so I'm here to donate," said Mulhall. As she waited to give her blood, she shared her thoughts on the terrorist attacks.

"I'm shocked. But I'm more shocked about the lack of security on our U.S. planes, our flights. That scares me more than anything," she said. "I'm

actually a very liberal person, but I feel very vengeful and that scares me because I don't like feeling that way.

"I feel very anti-Arab, and I don't like that," said Mulhall. "It's frightening."

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