

Xinhua General News Service

September 10, 2011 Saturday 8:10 PM EST

Roundup: Traces of tragedy live on decade after 9/11 terror attacks

SECTION: WORLD NEWS; Science & Technology

LENGTH: 860 words

DATELINE: by Matthew Rusling WASHINGTON Sept. 10

A decade after the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States that killed nearly 3,000 people and sparked two major wars, traces of the event continue.

It is true that Al-Qaida mastermind Osama bin Laden is dead and the organization has been hobbled. Topping the list of people's concerns is now jobs and the economy -- a far cry from the weeks and months after 9/11 attacks, when Americans' fears of further terror attacks were palpable.

But while the United States has in many ways moved on, the event in some ways continues to impact the country at home and abroad.

The United States and its allies have over the last decade tightened the screws on al-Qaida, hitting the organization's finances and pummeling its leadership, leaving it reluctant to recruit new talent for fear of disclosing the whereabouts of its top lieutenants.

While analysts say al-Qaida is unlikely to mount the same type of attacks that it was capable of a decade ago, Islamic militants have turned to homegrown terrorism -- often the radicalization of Americans through the Internet -- as a way to deal with its handicap. But while attacks by such individuals would likely comprise small arms and homemade bombs, they can still be deadly.

The 2009 shootings in Fort Hood, Texas, are one example: U.S. Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan, suspected of being influenced by radical Islamic ideology, allegedly killed 13 people and injured 29 others.

THE MILITARY FRONT

On the military front, it has been a decade since U.S. bombers began pounding Afghanistan, as the Taliban, which had previously governed the war torn country and harbored al-Qaida, was told to hand over members of the terror group or suffer the consequences.

Later in Iraq, the administration of former U.S. President George W. Bush opened a hornet's nest. What was supposed to have been a quick and decisive regime change resulted in a years-long battle against insurgents and a civil war. That resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi

civilians and nearly 5, 000 U.S. troops, impacting Iraqi and American families permanently.

The war also came at a cost of at least 1 trillion U.S. dollars, which the United States will be paying off for years to come.

Fast forward to 2011, and the United States is still dealing with the war in Afghanistan. U.S. President Barack Obama is in the midst of pulling out of the war ravaged country, but has not yet set a clear deadline for removing every last troop.

Moreover, thousands of families from dozens of nations lost loved ones during the 9/11 attacks, and their lives will be permanently altered.

The war also left Iraq, the major regional counterweight against Iran, politically and militarily weak. Many analysts have said Iraq will become a proxy state of Iran, although some also disagree and argue that Iraq can stand on its own two feet.

A SHIFT IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND THEN A REVERSAL

In response to 9/11 attacks, former U.S. President George W. Bush shifted U.S. foreign policy to focus on defeating al-Qaida, a non-state actor, and some analysts have criticized his administration for neglecting other U.S. foreign policy concerns during that period.

Now, Washington is in the midst of re-balancing to a more traditional foreign policy focused on other states, instead of non- state entities, said Gary Hufbauer, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute of International Economics.

Christopher A. Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the **Cato Institute**, said the No. 1 U.S. goal was to disrupt the al-Qaida and to render another 9/11-style attack impossible.

In that respect, the U.S. fight against terrorism has been successful, as bin Laden is dead and his terror cells were severely disrupted, he said.

The U.S. focus on terrorism has also made it less likely that governments will openly harbor terrorists as the Taliban did in the late 1990s, he said.

Still, it is premature to declare al-Qaida dead, he said, and the United States should continue to put pressure on the group.

AMERICANS WAR WEARY SOMETIMES

While U.S. public opinion turned against the war in Iraq and Americans have tired of the war in Afghanistan, the level of war weariness depends on the conflict, according to Steven Kull, political psychologist with the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland.

"When things go badly, Americans don't like it," he said.

One case in point is the recent U.S. military intervention in Libya. While a slight majority stood against U.S. involvement a few months back, that changed when rebel forces took the capital Tripoli.

Indeed, a CNN poll conducted after rebels moved into Tripoli found that 54 percent of all Americans now favor U.S. military action in Libya, up from 35 percent the previous month.

Kull added, however, that those Americans who felt they were misled by what many saw as cooked intelligence that led to the war in Iraq are likely to be more cautious about U.S. military actions in the future.