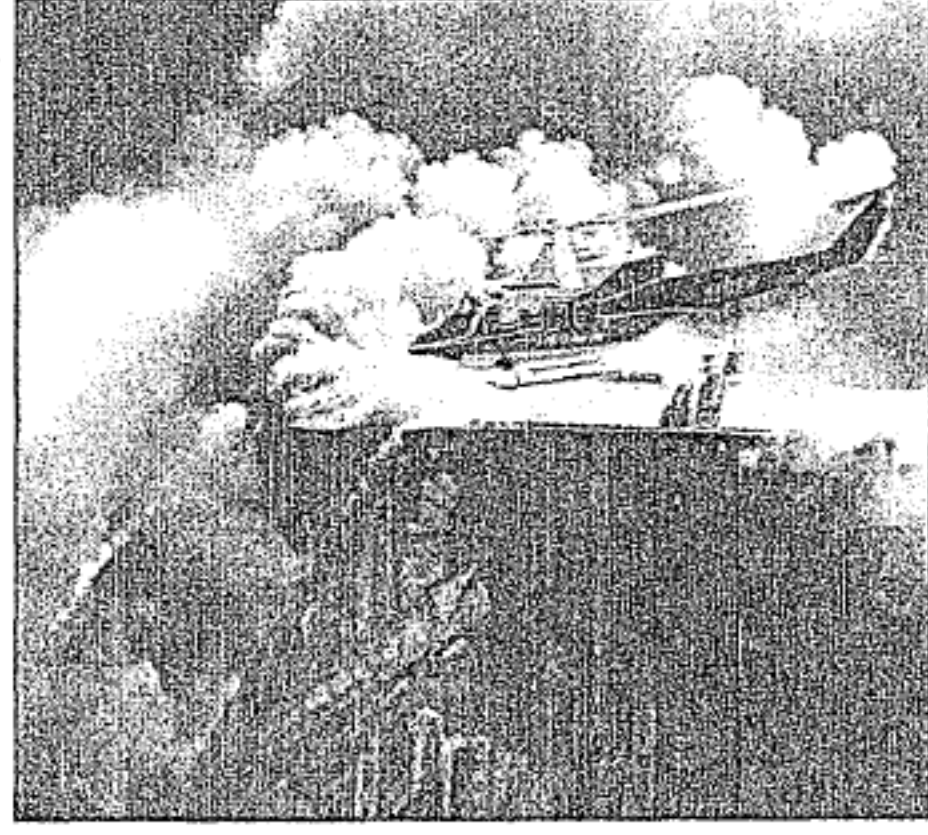




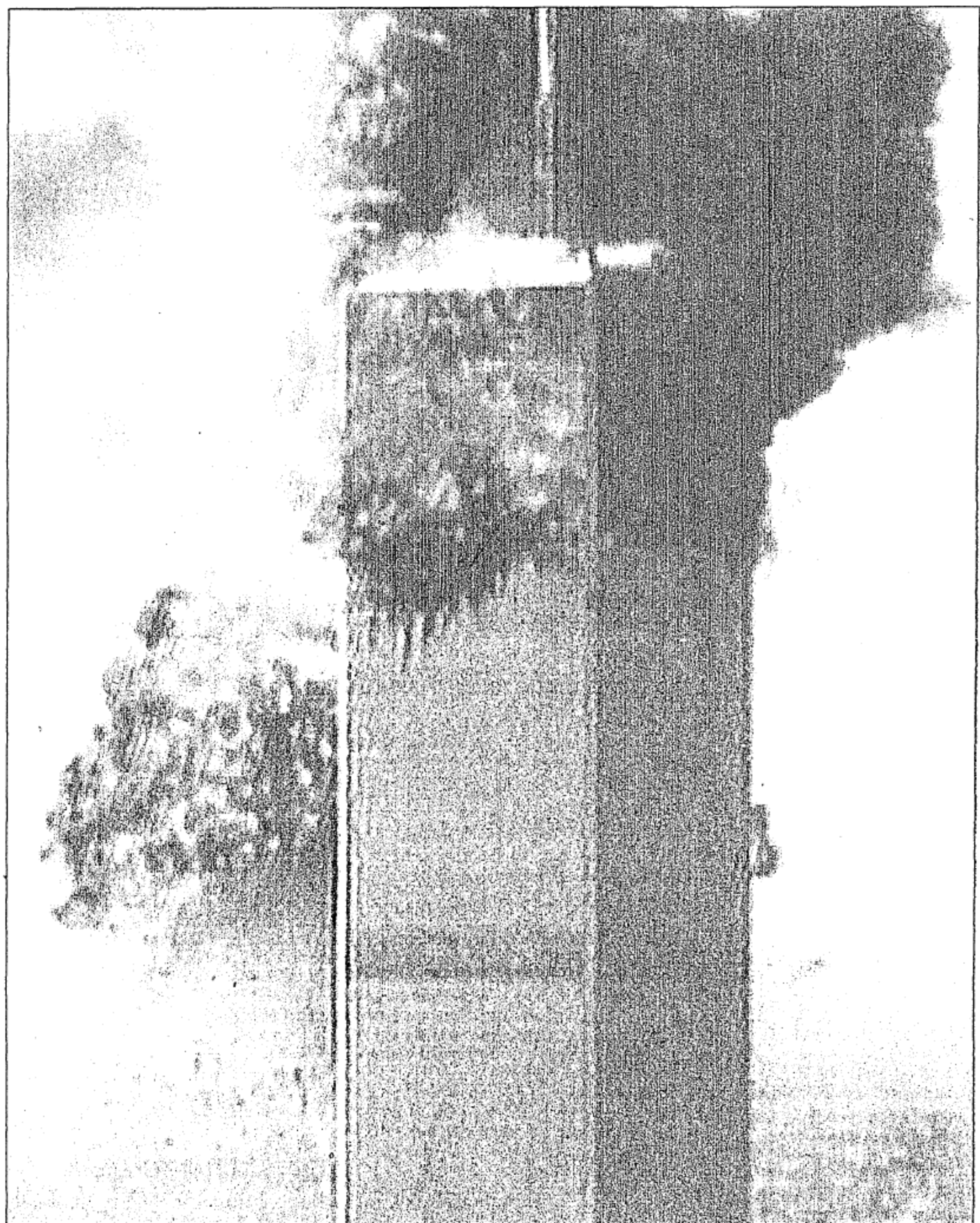
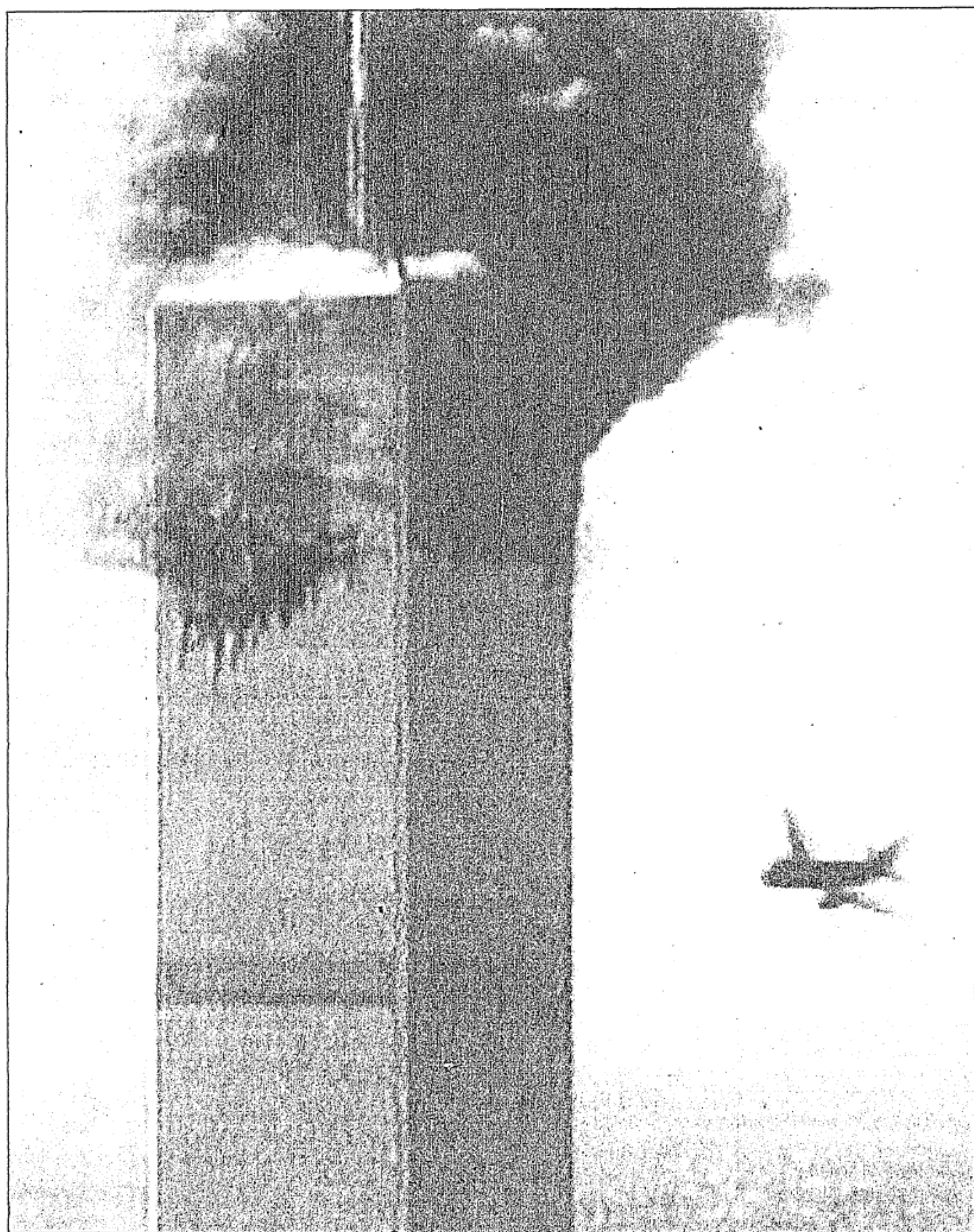
America awakes to Manhattan nightmare



Hijackers strike at might of Pentagon



War of the worlds



Smoke billows from Tower One as a fireball erupts from Tower Two (obscured by Tower One) of the World Trade Centre in New York after both were hit by hijacked airliners yesterday.

Huge death toll as terrorists crush heart of US

Ben Fenton and
Toby Harnden
in Washington

THE United States was on a war footing today after the most devastating terrorist attack in history.

Two hijacked passenger airliners yesterday crashed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Centre. Both towers collapsed with the loss of thousands of lives, sending out great clouds of thick dust that covered buildings and people in the streets. Lower Manhattan was evacuated and the New York skyline changed forever.

Minutes later in Washington DC, a third hijacked aircraft crashed into the Pentagon, the heart of America's military machine. A fourth, believed to be heading for the presidential retreat Camp David, crashed near Pittsburgh.

And late last night a 47-storey building, near the site of yesterday's outrage, collapsed.

The atrocity was meticulous in its co-ordination and horrifying in its effect.

A global television audience watched in disbelief as live footage showed the second plane hit the Trade Centre minutes after the first. Land borders were closed and airspace cleared of all but military aircraft as

US forces were put on "high alert".

Financial centres were paralysed when Wall Street closed indefinitely and shares plunged across world markets.

The Departments of Justice, State, Treasury, Defence and the CIA were all evacuated.

President George Bush was flown to a bunker in Nebraska.

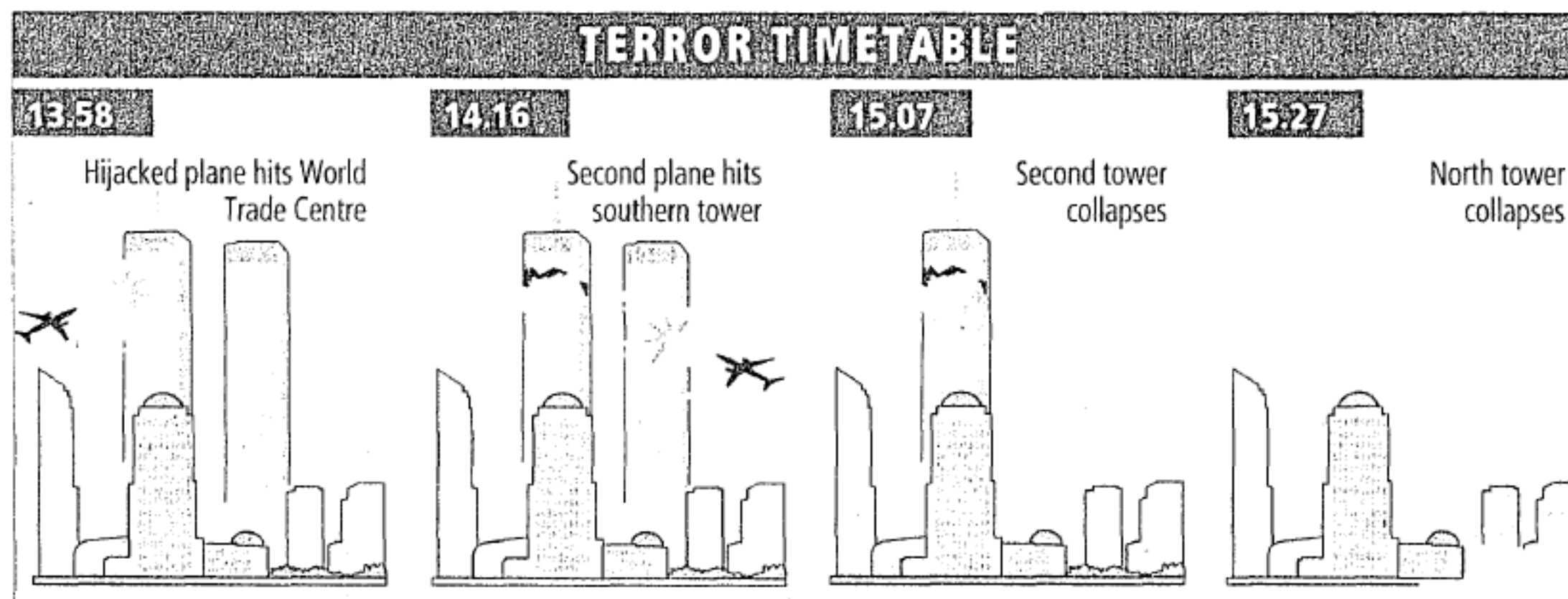
He pledged: "Make no mistake, we will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts." He later went on television to address the nation.

Authorities were trying to evacuate the World Trade Centre when its towers collapsed within minutes of each other. About 50,000 people work there and tens of thousands visit it every day.

Surrounding buildings and thousands of people in the streets below were covered in a thick coating of dust thrown up by the collapsed towers.

A total of 266 people were killed in the planes. Among the missing in New York were 200 firemen.

"I would not want to say what the death toll could be," Rudolph Giuliani, the mayor, said. "It will be a horrible number. I saw people dropping out of windows."



INSIDE: Terror strikes America:
The nightmare becomes reality
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Senior officers and hundreds of soldiers were feared dead in the Pentagon attack, which was carried out with a Boeing 757 hijacked shortly after it took

off from Washington's Dulles airport on its way to Los Angeles.

The rest of the Pentagon was immediately evacuated, but firemen were unable to

get into the area for more than three hours because of the intense heat from the crash.

The National Guard was mobilised in Washington and New York, and forces in the American capital were put on Threat Level Delta, the equivalent of a war alert.

In the skies above both cities, the only planes to be seen were F-16 and F-15 fighters scrambled for fear of yet more attacks.

At Norfolk, Virginia, one of America's main naval bases, five warships put to sea to protect the Atlantic coast and two aircraft carriers set sail for New York.

President Bush, in his address to a shocked American nation, called for calm and promised revenge on the perpetrators.

Members of Congress spoke of the outrages against their nation as an act of war.

Mr Bush, who was told of

the attacks as he read to primary school children in Florida, said: "Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward and freedom will be defended."

"Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts."

Dick Cheney, the Vice-President, and General Colin Powell, the Secretary of State, were collected by the Secret Service and taken back to heavily guarded quarters in the capital.

Leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives were taken to secure locations in case the attacks indicated a wider military campaign.

Attention for the atrocities immediately focused on Osama bin Laden, the multi-millionaire Islamic terrorist.

He is thought to be the only person capable of mounting such a well-planned attack, the most audacious in the history of international terrorism.

The attack caused jubilation in Iraq and among some radical groups in the Middle East, which saw it as revenge for America's support for Israel.

Islamic Jihad, responsible for many of the recent suicide bombings in Israel,

said: "The United States has provided a cover for these Zionist crimes."

"We are happy to see America suffer the pain and bitterness that our people feel." World leaders immediately condemned the outrages and offered help to America.

The extreme Islamic Taliban movement in Afghanistan, which has provided a home to bin Laden, denied responsibility.

Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, condemned the attacks and said he hoped the perpetrators would quickly be brought to justice.

"Osama is only a person," he said. "He does not have the facilities to carry out such activities. We want to tell the American people that Afghanistan feels their pain."

Within hours of the attacks many government buildings throughout America, including the White House, had been closed to the public.

Many familiar landmarks of American life closed also.

They included the Empire State Building, the Washington monument, Disneyland, the Kennedy Space Centre, the Sears Tower in Chicago, the Space Needle in Seattle. (© Daily Telegraph, London)



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Wet and windy, some sunny spells
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