**The Pentagon**

**From The Black Vault Encyclopedia Project**



A pre-9/11 view of The Pentagon, looking east with the Potomac River and [Washington Monument](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Washington_Monument&action=edit&redlink=1) in the distance. South Parking is in the foreground; the Heliport side where [American Airlines flight 77](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=American_Airlines_flight_77&action=edit&redlink=1) struck it is on the left.



1945 map of the [Pentagon road network](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Pentagon_road_network&action=edit&redlink=1), including present [Route 27](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Route_27_(Virginia)&action=edit&redlink=1) and part of the [Shirley Highway](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Shirley_Highway&action=edit&redlink=1)

**The Pentagon** is the headquarters of the [United States Department of Defense](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/United_States_Department_of_Defense). Those who work within its walls often simply call it **the Building**. As a symbol of the US military, "the Pentagon" is often used [metonymically](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Metonymy&action=edit&redlink=1) to refer to the Department of Defense rather than the building itself.

The building was dedicated on January 15, 1943. It is the highest-capacity low-rise [office building](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Office_building&action=edit&redlink=1) in the world and one of the [world's largest buildings](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=World%27s_largest_buildings&action=edit&redlink=1) in terms of floor area. Located in [Arlington, Virginia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Arlington,_Virginia&action=edit&redlink=1), it houses approximately 23,000 military and civilian employees and about 3,000 non-defense support personnel. It has five sides, five floors above ground (plus two basement levels), and five ring corridors per floor. Despite 17.5 miles (28 km) of corridors, it takes a maximum of seven minutes to walk between any two points in the building.

At five acres (20,000 m²), the central plaza in the Pentagon is the world's largest "no-[salute](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Salute&action=edit&redlink=1), no-[cover](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cover_(military)&action=edit&redlink=1)" area (an area excepted from normal rule that, when out of doors, U.S. military personnel must wear hats and salute superior officers). The open space in the center is informally known as "[ground zero](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ground_zero&action=edit&redlink=1)," a nickname originating during the [Cold War](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cold_War&action=edit&redlink=1) when it was thought of as the most likely target of a [nuclear missile](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nuclear_missile&action=edit&redlink=1). At the center of this plaza is the "Ground Zero Cafe," a snack bar.

Just south of the Pentagon are [Pentagon City](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Pentagon_City,_Virginia&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Crystal City](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Crystal_City,_Virginia&action=edit&redlink=1), extensive shopping and high-density residential districts in Arlington. [Arlington National Cemetery](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Arlington_National_Cemetery&action=edit&redlink=1) is to the north. The [Washington Metro](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Washington_Metro&action=edit&redlink=1) [Pentagon station](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Pentagon_(Washington_Metro)&action=edit&redlink=1) is also located at the Pentagon, on the [Blue](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Blue_Line_(Washington_Metro)&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Yellow Lines](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Yellow_Line_(Washington_Metro)&action=edit&redlink=1).

**History**

**Construction**



Northwest exposure of the Pentagon's construction underway, [July 1](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=July_1&action=edit&redlink=1), [1942](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1942&action=edit&redlink=1).

Prior to the construction of the Pentagon, the [War Department](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Department_of_War&action=edit&redlink=1) (now the Department of Defense) was housed in a series of "temporary" buildings erected during [World War I](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=World_War_I&action=edit&redlink=1) which nearly covered the [National Mall](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Mall&action=edit&redlink=1). Ground was broken for the Pentagon on [September 11](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=September_11&action=edit&redlink=1), [1941](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1941&action=edit&redlink=1), with construction completed in approximately sixteen months at a cost of $83 million.

During the early years of [World War II](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=World_War_II&action=edit&redlink=1), with construction supervised by the future [Manhattan Project](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Manhattan_Project&action=edit&redlink=1) supervisor [Leslie Groves](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Leslie_Groves&action=edit&redlink=1), 680,000 [tons](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ton&action=edit&redlink=1) (620,000 [tons](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Tonnes&action=edit&redlink=1)) of [sand](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sand&action=edit&redlink=1) and [gravel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gravel&action=edit&redlink=1) were dredged from the nearby [Potomac River](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Potomac_River&action=edit&redlink=1) for the new building, which were then processed into 435,000 cubic yards (330,000 m³) of [concrete](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Concrete&action=edit&redlink=1) and molded into the pentagon shape. Very little [steel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Steel&action=edit&redlink=1) was used in its design due to the needs of the war effort.

Its unusual shape results from the fact that its originally intended site, [Arlington Farms](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Arlington_Farms&action=edit&redlink=1), fronted on Arlington Ridge Road and the [Arlington Memorial Bridge](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Arlington_Memorial_Bridge&action=edit&redlink=1) approach, which intersected at an angle of approximately 108 degrees (the angle of a [regular pentagon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_pentagon&action=edit&redlink=1)). President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Franklin_D._Roosevelt&action=edit&redlink=1) had it constructed at its current location because he didn't want the new building to obstruct the view of [Washington, D.C.](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Washington,_D.C.&action=edit&redlink=1) from [Arlington Cemetery](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Arlington_Cemetery&action=edit&redlink=1).

**Peace protests**



Military police keep back [Vietnam War](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&action=edit&redlink=1) protesters during their sit-in on [October 21](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=October_21&action=edit&redlink=1), [1967](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1967&action=edit&redlink=1), at the mall entrance to the Pentagon.

During the late [1960s](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1960s&action=edit&redlink=1) the Pentagon became a focus for peace protests against the [Vietnam War](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&action=edit&redlink=1). In one of the better known incidents, on [October 21](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=October_21&action=edit&redlink=1), [1967](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1967&action=edit&redlink=1), some 35,000 anti-war protesters organized by the [Youth International Party](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Youth_International_Party&action=edit&redlink=1), or "[Yippies](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Yippies&action=edit&redlink=1)," gathered for a demonstration at the Defense Department (the "March on the Pentagon"), where they were confronted by some 2500 armed soldiers. Various peaceful protests ensued that subsequently typified "[flower child](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Flower_child&action=edit&redlink=1)" behavior in the eye of the public. The Yippie leader, [Abbie Hoffman](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Abbie_Hoffman&action=edit&redlink=1), subsequently declared their intention of levitating the Pentagon 300 feet by means of meditation, wobbling it once in mid-air in order to exorcise evil spirits. Several Yippie members maintain to this day that they were briefly successful in this endeavor.

**Renovation**

Since 1998, the Pentagon has been undergoing a major renovation, known as the [Pentagon Renovation Program](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Pentagon_Renovation_Program&action=edit&redlink=1). This program, scheduled to be completed in 2010, involves the complete gutting and reconstruction of the entire building in phases to bring the building up to modern standards, improving security and providing greater efficiency for Pentagon tenants.

**September 11, 2001**



Security camera image of the moment that the Pentagon was hit on 9/11



The damaged section of the Pentagon in October 2001.

Sixty years to the day after groundbreaking on the Pentagon, the [September 11, 2001 attacks](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/September_11,_2001_attacks) occurred. [American Airlines Flight 77](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/American_Airlines_Flight_77) crashed into the building, causing part of it to collapse and killing 125 people in addition to the 64 aboard the plane. For pictures and graphics showing the damage in the impact see this briefing Video of the events occurring just minutes after the attack was recorded by TSgt Robert Stenberg.

[Contractors](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Contractor&action=edit&redlink=1) involved in the Pentagon Renovation Program were also charged with the task of rebuilding the damaged section of the Pentagon following the attacks. This additional project was named the "Phoenix Project", with the goal of having the outermost offices in the damaged section occupied again by [September 11](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=September_11&action=edit&redlink=1), [2002](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=2002&action=edit&redlink=1). Part of the renovation involved adding improved security features, including [walls](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Wall&action=edit&redlink=1) and [windows](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Window&action=edit&redlink=1) with greater [blast](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Explosion&action=edit&redlink=1) resistance.

The aircraft struck on the edge between two sections—one of which had just finished being upgraded. An initial analysis suggested that the section's improvements had saved lives, enabling more people to evacuate. Repairs included demolition of the damaged areas, complete rebuilding of the area that had previously been renovated, and reconstruction of the shell of the unrenovated section. The first Pentagon tenants whose offices were damaged in the attack began moving back in on [August 15](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=August_15&action=edit&redlink=1), [2002](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=2002&action=edit&redlink=1), nearly a month ahead of schedule.

Before the September 11, 2001 attacks, an [escalator](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Escalator&action=edit&redlink=1) ran from the Metro station to the Pentagon lobby. After the attack this escalator was blocked off and later removed as part of the Pentagon Renovation Program.

**Tours**

In 1976, the Pentagon began offering guided [tours](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Tour&action=edit&redlink=1) to the general public, as part of the [American Bicentennial](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=American_Bicentennial&action=edit&redlink=1). Tours for the general public were suspended after the September 11, 2001 attacks, and are now only available on a pre-arranged basis to [veterans](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Veteran&action=edit&redlink=1) and other groups.

**Facts & figures**

**Overall**

* Construction began [September 11](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=September_11&action=edit&redlink=1), [1941](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1941&action=edit&redlink=1), and coincidentally the building was hit by a plane exactly 60 years later on September 11, 2001.
* Construction completed [January 15](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=January_15&action=edit&redlink=1), [1943](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1943&action=edit&redlink=1)
* Total cost of project (including outside facilities): $83,000,000

**Land**

* Total land area: 583 acres (2.4 km²)
* Location: 38.870863N, -77.055917E
* Cost: $2,245,000
* Area covered by Pentagon bldg.: 29 acres (117,000 m²)
* Area of center court: 5 acres (20,000 m²)
* Access highways built: 30 miles (48 km)
* Overpasses and bridges built: 21

**Parking**

* Parking space: 67 acres (270,000 m²)
* Capacity (vehicles): 8,770

**Main building**

* Cost of building: $49,600,000
* Gross floor area: 6,636,360 ft² (620,000 m²)
* Cubic contents: 77,015,000 ft³ (2,000,000 m³)
* Length of each outer wall: 921 ft (280 m)
* Height of building: 77 ft 3.5 in (24 m)
* Number of floors, plus mezzanine and basement: 7, 5 above ground, 2 below
* Total length of corridors: 17.5 mile (28 km)

**Numbers**

* Stairways: 131
* Escalators: 19
* Elevators: 13
* Rest rooms: 284 ("It was constructed with twice the number of bathrooms needed for the number of employees - segregated Virginia required separate facilities for "white" and "colored" persons.")
* Fixtures: 4,900
* Drinking fountains: 691 (*See "Rest rooms" above*)
* Clocks installed: 4,200
* Light fixtures: 16,250
* Windows: 7,754

**Trivia**

* Even though the building itself is located in Virginia, it has a Washington, D.C. mailing address and its own [zip codes](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Zip_codes&action=edit&redlink=1) shared with no other building (20350). The building is assigned [six](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=List_of_ZIP_Codes_in_District_of_Columbia&action=edit&redlink=1) ZIP Codes, one for each department: [Army](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Army&action=edit&redlink=1), [Navy](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Navy&action=edit&redlink=1), [Air Force](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Air_Force&action=edit&redlink=1), [Marines](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Marine_Corps&action=edit&redlink=1), [Joint Staff](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff&action=edit&redlink=1), and [Secretary of Defense](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Secretary_of_Defense&action=edit&redlink=1).

**References**

**External links**

[Template:Commons](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Template:Commons&action=edit&redlink=1)

* [The Pentagon website](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pentagon/)
* [Rewards for Justice](http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/english/acts_of_terror/index.cfm?page=Hijack)
* [Great Buildings Online - The Pentagon](http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/The_Pentagon.html)
* [United States Department of Defense website](http://www.defenselink.mil/)
* [Pentagon Renovation Program](http://renovation.pentagon.mil/)
* [The District of Columbia: Shaping Northern Virginia](http://www.virginiaplaces.org/regions/16dc.html)

[Template:Mapit-US-hoodscale](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Template:Mapit-US-hoodscale&action=edit&redlink=1)

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