



France 24 International News

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Commemorations for the eighth anniversary of the 9/11 New York terrorist attacks take place today while work rebuilding "Ground Zero" remains "embarrassingly" stalled.

Almost 3,000 people were killed when two airliners, piloted by al-Qaeda terrorists, smashed into New York's iconic World Trade Center skyscrapers, the Twin Towers.

US President Barack Obama will pay tribute to the victims in a speech at the Pentagon, where a third hijacked plane, American Airlines Flight 77, crashed. He is also due to meet with relatives of the 184 people killed on the ground and aboard Flight 77 when the plane crashed.

Vice President Joseph Biden and NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg will attend commemorative events in New York at Ground Zero, when every name is read out and moments of silence mark key events, such as the impact of the two hijacked planes, and the collapse of the towers.

Rebuilding at zero

But despite a deep desire to properly remember the tragedy, the financial crisis and legal wrangling have slowed rebuilding work to a snail's pace.

"New Yorkers should be embarrassed by the failure of government officials to have successfully rebuilt Ground Zero," Barry LePatner, a construction lawyer, told the AFP.

"The only conclusion that can be drawn from a careful study of their actions at this important site is an attitude that the public be damned."

Five new skyscrapers are planned, with a park and memorial in the middle, and a transport hub.

But many now think that there is no market for all five towers.

For now, the site strikes casual observers as merely a large hole, although work on foundations of several key elements is well underway and the frame for the future Freedom Tower is rising.

A poll last week by Quinnipiac University found that two thirds of New Yorkers think even the memorial will not be ready in time for the 10th anniversary in 2011.

"We're getting fed up with the continual lack of progress at Ground Zero. And we think it's important that there be some signs of movement this year," Maurice Carroll, director of the university's polling institute said.

According to the poll, 25 percent of New Yorkers said the slow pace made them "ashamed", the highest number to give that answer since the question was first asked in 2006.