



United States Department of Defense

Speech

On the web:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020912-secdef1.html>

Media contact: media@defenselink.mil or +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: public@defenselink.mil or +1 (703) 428-0711

Arlington National Cemetery Funeral Service for the Unidentified Victims of the Attack on the Pentagon

Remarks by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Arlington National Cemetery, September 12, 2002.

I am grateful to be here, with you, to convey my condolences and the condolences of the Nation for the sudden and grievous loss you suffered on September 11th of last year.

Those we honor today died here at home -- not on a faraway battlefield. They died within view of this cemetery.

Yet they did die on a battlefield – and that battlefield tells us a great deal about the war we are in – the first war of the 21st Century.

Their attackers said they died because they were Americans.

Put another way: They died because they were part of a nation that believes in freedom. They died because they lived according to a generous creed of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" - and not the twisted views of those who use a noble religion to try to mask their will to power.

We also know that those we honor here today died because of an institution that is a symbol of this generous creed and way of life. A symbol of military power, to be sure, but of power used to right wrong, to do good, to help achieve a more perfect day when nations might live in peace.

But until that time comes, the events of Sept 11th remind us that the forces of freedom are locked in a new type of struggle with those who oppose all that our freedom represents. As President Bush stated,

our task is to provide the response to aggression and terror, to lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future.

We have no other choice—the advance of human freedom now depends on it.

While there is nothing any of us can do to bring those loved ones back, we can celebrate who they were, how they lived their lives, and remember how their lives were lost - in a struggle dedicated to the eternal truth of freedom and the human spirit.

All this is important to remember. But those of you here today, who have lost loved ones, know that sometimes this too is hard.

When this ceremony is over, you may look again at the memorial, note the names that are special to you, take a final moment - have a last word, or look, or prayer. Then turn and leave this place, feeling again the emptiness, thinking again of a "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" of an irreplaceable, seemingly endless loss.

And you might say again, what so many times this year you may have said to yourselves... that we can be grateful for the time we had with them, that we must trust in a loving God who holds them close and affords them now the greatest of peace and joy.

You might say to yourselves they would have wanted us to remember that life goes on, and that we must live each day for them, as for ourselves. You may remind yourselves that the memories, so hurtful now, will one day turn beautiful and bring solace and comfort.

All this is hard. But all this is true.

Your grief is great. Your love is stronger.

A love seen so many times this last year. A love of who they were -- your family members and friends; and, yes, your fellow-Americans.

Everywhere I have gone the families of those we honor and remember today have said, "Do not forget." The President and the American people and our young men and women in uniform have heard you.

And so, today, we honor the 184 patriots who died at the Pentagon last September 11th. We remember, with special love, the five whose remains were not recovered, and their families and friends who were denied the peace that comes with placing loved ones in their final place of rest.

This day these five join the unknown of wars past, even as we pursue the war that is still unfolding.

Known and unknown, those resting here were bound in brotherhood by their heritage.

Soldier and civilian alike, they were dedicated to the cause of freedom.

Young and old, their lives -- and their deaths -- gave birth to a new pride and patriotism that has rekindled the flame of freedom across our land.

They will be remembered. We will not forget.

Know that your country shares your sorrow; mourns your loss, and prays that God will comfort you.

May God grant them, and you, his loving peace.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020912-secdef1.html>