



Speeches & Testimony

Director Tenet's Statement to CIA Workforce About Terrorist Attacks

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September 12, 2001

Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet spoke to the CIA workforce this afternoon about yesterday's terrorist attacks. Here are excerpts of his remarks:

Good afternoon.

Yesterday, the entire American people—joined by men and women around the globe—recoiled in horror at the barbaric acts against our country.

In my hometown of New York, at the Pentagon, and in the skies over Pennsylvania, the bloody hand of evil struck again and again, stealing thousands of innocent lives.

As the devastating toll of terror comes into focus, we are sure to find among those who were lost friends, colleagues, and others we hold dear.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims, with those searching and caring for them, and with those who mourn them.

I urge all of you to take the time to think of brothers and sisters that we, as Americans, have lost and to pray for those who survive them.

The images of fire and destruction are forever etched in our minds. And in our hearts, amid the numbing shock, there has been profound grief and renewed resolve.

As President Bush said last night, the search for the sponsors of these unspeakable acts has already begun. Our Agency is among the leaders of that search.

The fight against those who use the weapon of terror to menace and murder is necessarily hard. The shield of fanaticism—wielded by those ready to forfeit their lives to achieve their twisted dreams—is not easily pierced.

But it has been pierced before, and it will be pierced again.

Though we did not stop the latest, terrible assaults, you—the men and women of CIA and our Intelligence Community—have done much to combat terrorism in the past.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of American lives have been saved by the brave men and women of our Counter-Terrorism Center, our Directorate of Operations, our analysts, our scientists, our support officers—all who work relentlessly every day against this difficult target.

I know that together, we will do even more in the future.

The response yesterday—from our Counter-Terrorism Center, the Ops Center, Global Support, our entire Security Staff, and many, many others—was absolutely magnificent. Today, I am—as I always have been—very, very proud of all the men and women in this organization.

The important thing for us now is to do our job. To run to ground a vicious foe—one without heart or pity. A foe who has killed Americans, but who hopes in vain to kill the ideals and values that define all of us as Americans.

The terrorists behind these atrocities—and those who give them shelter and support—must never know rest, ease, or comfort. The last word must not be theirs.

For the future must belong to the champions of freedom, not its enemies. That is our aim—today, tomorrow, always.

This is a time for us to come together. To bring all our talents to bear in a steely determination to do what we are called to do—protect our fellow citizens.

It is our turn again to step up to a challenge, and to meet it as we meet all challenges: With commitment and courage.

Put some spirit in your step, square your shoulders, focus your eyes...we have a job to do.

Many years ago, Winston Churchill—a giant of democracy—recalled his reaction on hearing the news of another surprise attack on America, this one at Pearl Harbor:

There were, he wrote, "many, not only in enemy countries [who] might discount the force of the United States. Some said they were soft, others that they would never be united. They would fool around at a distance. They would never come to grips. They would never stand blood-letting."

But, Churchill concluded, "I had studied the American Civil War, fought out to the last desperate inch. American blood flowed in my veins. I thought of a remark which Edward Grey had made to me more than thirty years before—that the United States is like 'a gigantic boiler. Once the fire is lighted under it, there is no limit to the power it can generate.'"

Indeed there is not.

I thank you all very, very much for your hard work. May God bless you all.

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