

The Speech Bush 41 Should Have Delivered on 9/11

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My fellow Americans:

This morning terrorists hijacked four American flagged airliners. They crashed two of the airplanes into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, and one into the Pentagon, near Washington, D.C. The fourth hijacked airliner crashed into a field in northwestern Pennsylvania.

Approximately an hour after being hit, the World Trade Center towers collapsed, killing thousands, including many rescue workers. At the Pentagon, hundreds died.

Rescue efforts continue in both New York and at the Pentagon, where fires still burn in the damaged section of the building.

But most of the Pentagon escaped damage, and both military and civilian personnel there continue to discharge their duties. Our system of military command and control is intact and fully operational. From our own shores to the farthest reaches of the Earth, our military forces are on alert and ready to engage and repel all enemies that approach.

No attacks have occurred since mid-morning. Another attack at this time is unlikely. Common sense, however, mandates vigilance. Armed fighter aircraft now patrol the skies above New York City, Washington, D.C., and other vital areas, and all civilian aircraft were grounded this morning. We will lift the grounding order as quickly as we can, but we cannot lift it until the most exigent security concerns are addressed.

At this moment, we do not know who attacked us, or why. But we will find out — and when we do, we will unleash our nation's full might and fury upon those who murdered, and helped murder, so

many today. That I promise. Let neither friend nor foe doubt the outcome of our campaign against the authors of these crimes against our nation and humanity.

What I cannot and will not promise is that terrorism will never again visit our nation. Dangerous currents of zealotry and malice flow throughout the world, currents that will, on occasion, send waves of violence against our shores. But terrorist attacks are rare events. It is an objective fact that Americans are much more likely to be injured or killed by automobile accidents than by terrorist attacks.

Therefore, as we begin our response to today's attacks, let us remember a great truth about America: we can be defeated only if we defeat ourselves.

The terrorists intended to spill American blood, and they succeeded. But their ultimate goal was frightening us into surrendering our freedoms in exchange for the illusion of greater safety. Their definition of victory is an America that reacts to today's attacks not by remaining true to its principles, but by abandoning its freedoms for the false security of a police state. They hope to panic us into committing national suicide.

That will not happen. That is not how Americans confront adversity.

In the days to come, each of us, every man, every woman, every child, will be called upon, just as our fathers, and their fathers and families, were called upon in times of national need to make the sacrifices necessary to defend our nation and the freedoms we cherish. We are in this together, all of us. And together, we will prevail.

Thank you and good night.