



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich's Remarks to commemorate the bombing of Darwin

Australian American Association Bombing of Darwin 68th Commemorative Service

(As prepared for delivery – February 19, 2010)

Thank you Rick, and thank you to the Australian American Association of Darwin.

On behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, it is an honor for me to be joining you here at the very location where 68 years ago many Australian and Americans bravely fought to protect Darwin and Australia's freedoms from an aerial onslaught.

Over 200 lives were lost during the Imperial Japanese bombing raids: Americans and Australians alike. This included 2/3rds of the crew from the USS Robert E. Peary when it sunk in Darwin's Harbour.

The Australians and Americans who stood on this ground or fought from the harbor demonstrated a heroism and devotion that we honor today. And for those who survived they formed a deep bond among our nations.

We are bound by their loss, but we are also bound by the loss of something else that day, a sense of innocence. We wake up every day assuming our homes are secure and that just as we were safe yesterday, we are safe again today. But on February 19, 1942, that believe was shattered. That day Australia suffered its first attack on its own soil. And thereafter, Australians could never feel the same way.

We share that same terrible scar that comes from having our homeland attacked and our homes violated. Australians remember this day just as the United States can never forget December 7, 1941 or September 11, 2001.

The events surrounding the bombing of Darwin left indelible pain, but it also summoned something great in us. It cemented the ongoing relationship between our two countries as allies and friends.

Since that time, we have worked together to defend our shared values in many theaters of war.



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While the threats to freedom have changed and evolved in the many decades since the Second World War, our combined resolve to face each new challenge remains fierce and steadfast, that this will never happen again.

So I thank you today for honoring the Americans who gave their lives for our freedom, and I thank you for allowing me to honor the brave Australians who also made this ultimate sacrifice. We are grateful to the, and we will never forget them.