



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – September 11th Commemoration

September 11th Commemoration U.S. Embassy Canberra

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Thank you for joining us here today to remember the events of September 11 and offer a moment of silence in honor of victims of the 9/11 tragedy and their families.

We are very grateful to our Australian colleagues, Minister Greg Combet who is here representing the Commonwealth of Australia Government, Air Marshal Mark Binskin, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Dennis Richardson, and our other distinguished guests. Thank you all for being with us.

Before the flag is set at half-mast and we observe a moment of silence, I'd like to offer a few words on the event that brings us together today.

There are certain terrible events in our lives where we all remember the exact date, just where we were when we heard the news, what we were doing, what we felt. In America, December 7, 1941 when Pearl Harbor was attacked. In Australia February 19, 1942, when Darwin was bombed. These are days when our collective confidence that our homes were safe, that we were safe, was shaken, when our faith in the world around us was tested. These days leave permanent scars on us as Nations and as people.

September 11, 2001 was such a day.

It has been nine years since that black day, nine years since thousands of innocent people – Americans, Australians, men, women and children simply going to the office, going to work, were deliberately killed by terrorists. Firefighters and first aid workers who tried to save the victims were killed as well. Entire families, entire communities, were shattered. Not only in America, but around the world.

Here in Australia, about as far away from Pennsylvania, New York and Washington as one can go on this earth, the victims left loved ones behind. Many Aussies lost friends in those places. Many in our mission did as well. One of our colleagues here mourns the loss of her father, who was killed in the towers 9 years ago.

We also know that America's and Australia's losses did not end on that day. Innocent lives have been taken in Bali and Mumbai and throughout the world. And in the fight to stop terrorism, we suffer new heart-aches. Today we all join the people of Australia in



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mourning the loss of Lance Corporal Jared MacKinney. A brave soldier who, like 20 other Australian diggers and over 1,000 Americans, gave the last measure of his devotion in Afghanistan to prevent an attack like this from ever happening again.

We are one today in remembering those we lost, and in honoring their memory.

But today, we also honor the spirit that says we will not give in to sorrow or to fear. From the moment the attacks occurred, we all recall that Australia's Prime Minister was there beside us in the White House. He and the Australian people lost no time afterwards in formally invoking the ANZUS Treaty and in promising America that Australia would be with us in the coming struggle. To this day, Australia remains true to its word.

So in honoring those who have passed, let us also honor the brave men and women who serve, the dedicated service members fighting tonight in lonely hills in Afghanistan, the members of our intelligence services who risk their lives to discover and stop attacks, the brave police officers who join us around the world in tracking down terrorists, and all of our friends around the world who in the face of terror and hatred have responded with the best of the human spirit – the quest for peace, and security, and love.

Let us always remember that the only way to extinguish darkness is with light. Let those who seek to frighten us see our solemn and unshakeable commitment to live together, to live freely, and to live without fear. It is for those of us who are living to rededicate ourselves to these values, and devote ourselves to shining the light of hope even in the darkest of places in this world.

Now I would like to invite the Honorable Minister Greg Combet to address us as the representative of the Commonwealth of Australia.

[Remarks by Greg Combet MP]

Members of the United States Marines, approach the flag pole and lower the flag to half staff.

[Marines lower the flag while the bagpiper plays Amazing Grace]

Now, please join me in a moment of silence

[Moment of silence]

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for coming today to share this commemoration with us. We ask for God's blessing for those who have died and for their families. Thank you.