

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Says U.S. Is a Stronger Nation After 9/11 Attacks	1
U.S. Treasury Department Fights Terrorism by Killing Its Funding	2
Muslim Americans Lead Blood Drives to Honor 9/11 Victims.....	2
The Earth Stringband's Bluegrass Is Made to Travel.....	3
Statement on Mosque Attacks in West Bank	4

President Obama Says U.S. Is a Stronger Nation After 9/11 Attacks

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington -- President Obama led Americans in marking the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on New York and Washington, saying the perpetrators had failed to undermine the unity, character and values of the United States, and that Americans "refuse to live in fear."

Obama used his weekly address from the White House September 10 to tell Americans that a decade after the attacks, their country is stronger and that al-Qaida, which carried out the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, "is on the path to defeat."

"We've shown that America doesn't hunker down and hide behind walls of mistrust. We've forged new partnerships with nations around the world to meet the global challenges that no nation can face alone. And across the Middle East and North Africa, a new generation of citizens is showing that the future belongs to those that want to build, not destroy," the president said.

On September 11, the president and first lady Michelle Obama were joined by former President George W. Bush and Laura Bush, and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg at a ceremony on the site of the World Trade Center, where family members and friends of those who were killed in the attacks read out the names of the victims and paid homage to their loved ones.

The president used to the occasion to read a passage from Psalm 46 from Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

"We will not fear, even though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though its waters roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with its swelling," Obama said.

Former President Bush read from a letter President Abraham Lincoln wrote in 1864 to Mrs. Lydia Bixby, who had lost five sons in the American Civil War:

"I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save," Bush read to the audience. "I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

Mayor Bloomberg described the day of the attacks as a time when "the morning turned into the blackest of nights."

"Since then, we've lived in sunshine and in shadow," he said. "And although we can never un-see what happened here, we can also see that children who lost their parents have grown into young adults, grandchildren have been born, and good works in public service have taken root to honor those we loved and lost."

Following the memorial service in New York, the president attended a wreath-laying ceremony near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where passengers that were hijacked on Flight 93 and diverted toward Washington rose up against their captors and forced the plane to crash in a rural field rather than reach its intended target.

Vice President Biden spoke at the site of the crash September 10 with former President Bush and former President Bill Clinton where a memorial was dedicated to the passengers.

"None of them asked for what happened. They didn't ... board that plane to fight a war," Biden said. "But when they heard the news, when they found out what happened in New York, they knew that they were going through ... something more than a hijacking. They knew it was the opening shot in a new war."

The vice president quoted poet Maya Angelou, saying that despite the wrenching pain of history, it cannot be un-lived, but "if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

"We are not here to unlive history. We are here to honor those whose courage made history and is going to inspire generations of Americans to come," he said.

"Know with certitude that there is not a single, solitary tragedy that America cannot overcome. There is not a single moment of hardship that cannot be transformed into one of national strength. The seeds of doubt, planted by those who wish to harm us, will instead grow into flowering meadows like this one where we stand in today," he said.

Speaking at the Pentagon on September 11 where American service members and passengers on Flight 77 died when their plane slammed into the building, Biden said al-Qaida and other extremists still fail to appreciate "the true source of American power," which is that "as Americans we draw our strength from the rich tapestry of the American people."

The perpetrators "never imagined that the 3,000 people who lost their lives that day would inspire 3 million to

put on the uniform, and harden the resolve of 300 million Americans," he said.

Biden said the United States is marking the anniversary of the attacks with memorials to honor, to remember and to heal "because that's what this is ultimately about."

He said those who died at the Pentagon were already heroes to their loved ones before the attack, and told the assembled family members and friends that "my prayer for you is that 10 years later when you think of them ... that it brings a smile to your lips before it brings a tear to your eyes."

U.S. Treasury Department Fights Terrorism by Killing Its Funding

Washington -- In the decade since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the United States has made enormous progress in countering extremists by cutting off their sources of financial support.

On September 8, the U.S. Treasury Department welcomed current and former senior U.S. counterterrorism officials, national security experts and private sector leaders to discuss the accomplishments of the United States and the international community in combating the financing of terrorism and to examine how best to adapt and refocus efforts in the coming years.

The conference, "Ten Years Later: Progress and Challenges in Combating Terrorist Financing Since 9/11," provided a forum to discuss the current conditions of terrorist financing and stimulated discussions about innovative responses to combating the threat of terrorism."

In opening the conference, Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner said the department's strategy in combating the financing of terrorism has meant "donors, financial institutions, and facilitators across the world are no longer free to fund and facilitate terrorism with impunity. The pool of money for terrorism is shrinking, and it has grown harder and harder to hide and move funds." Today, he added, "al-Qaida struggles to secure steady financing. It can no longer rely on a thick Rolodex and a simple bank transfer."

"As we sharpen our efforts to combat new sources of terrorist funding, we will continue efforts to stay ahead of new ways terrorists store and move money," said Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen. These include looking at emerging trends in how terrorists raise money, exploit new technologies and rely on informal methods of moving money.

The U.S. Treasury Department is the only finance ministry in the world with an office of terrorism and financial intelligence, according to a summary of the forum posted to the department's website September 9. This dedicated unit continues to play a leading role within the United States government and the international community to deprive terrorists and would-be terrorists of their financial support.

"What started as an analytic niche a decade ago has evolved into a full-blown community of financial intelligence experts today, and whose work directly supports the president's national security agenda," John Brennan, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, said in a keynote address to the forum.

Also attending were National Counterterrorism Center Director Matt Olsen, State Department Counterterrorism Coordinator Daniel Benjamin, U.N. Counterterrorism Executive Directorate Director Mike Smith and U.N. Coordinator of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Implementation Monitoring Team Richard Barrett, as well as former U.S. officials from the Bush administration, including former Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey and former Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Frances Townsend.

Muslim Americans Lead Blood Drives to Honor 9/11 Victims

By Jeff Baron | Staff Writer

Washington – In commemoration of a day on which thousands of Americans lost their lives, many Muslims – and others – are leading blood drives.

"The whole idea of needles and watching blood come out is something that I get a little queasy about, but hopefully, inshallah, I'll do it today," said Qudus Malik, a Washington patent lawyer and first-time blood donor who volunteered to help with a Muslims for Life blood drive.

The event, on September 7 in the lobby of a U.S. House of Representatives office building, was one of 236 Muslims for Life blood drives nationwide – among thousands of Muslim service projects – to mark the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. Malik called it "a way for us to show solidarity with all the innocent lives lost and all the families affected."

His group's other goal, he added, is to show Americans "that Muslims are just like people of any other faith: that these are peaceful people, and a very, very small minority of extremists are hijacking the agenda of Islam." Unfortunately, he said, for many Americans, "their first

real introduction to Islam came through the acts of these barbarians."

Among those who turned out to donate was Representative Jackie Speier, a Democrat from California, who called the blood drive "a very powerful statement."

"As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11, I think it's very important for us to be introspective and find ways to express our continuing pain and sorrow for those who lost loved ones in a solemn and sober way that also has a positive result," she said. "I can think of nothing much more positive than giving a pint of blood for those in need."

Few of the blood drives involve members of Congress and TV cameras. Amjad Mahmoud Khan, a spokesman for the national effort, said the largest event was at a professional baseball game in Philadelphia. "It was amazing, but we raised 1,100 bags of blood in one night," he said. "And these were people who aren't Muslim coming and just really supporting us that whole day at the game."

In many cases, other community groups – including members of churches and synagogues – have joined the Muslims for Life effort as partners in the blood drives, Khan said. That sort of cooperation is one of the goals of the Muslims for Life campaign, said Malik. "The Quran says that you should cooperate with others in doing good. Our hope is, and our goal is, to try and find different avenues to do that," he said.

A day before the congressional event and 20 miles (32 kilometers) to the west in a Virginia suburb, a drive at George Mason University strained the capacity of a bloodmobile and collected blood from more than 100 students. The organizers reflected the diversity of the university campus: Muslims for Life, the predominantly African-American Omega Psi Phi fraternity and Operation Smile, which raises money for surgery to correct cleft palates in children in developing countries.

Sophomore Sonia Foroudestan was there for Operation Smile. "We're making the George Mason community stronger and also encouraging people to sign up for the club and come support us in other events on campus," she said. "We're helping out two other organizations today in their cause and hoping that they'll come help us later on."

Ibrahim Chaudhry, a third-year student who organized the Muslims for Life effort at George Mason, called it "a really, really humbling experience." He said it was so successful that he is trying to organize a second blood drive on campus by the end of the month.

The Earth Stringband's Bluegrass Is Made to Travel

By Mark Trainer | Staff Writer

Washington – "I'm excited to hear their folk music," said Stash Wyslouch, guitarist and vocalist with The Earth Stringband, anticipating the group's upcoming travel to Asia.

"We're interested in sharing cultures," added Andy Reiner, the group's fiddle and violin player. The Earth Stringband is traveling to Laos, Thailand, Burma, Timor-Leste and South Korea as part of The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad, a U.S. State Department program that fosters cultural exchange with music audiences worldwide.

As part of this exchange, The Earth Stringband will offer bluegrass, a distinctly American form of folk music incorporating a fiddle style from Appalachia (a mountainous region in the eastern United States), along with blues and gospel derived from the American slave tradition.

But while the music's roots are American, Wyslouch is confident its appeal will travel. "I think it's totally universal," he said. "The violin is present in almost every culture, and at this point the guitar is almost everywhere. I'm not worried about it translating at all."

"One thing on the schedule while we're in Burma is a workshop with people who play violins, guitars and basses," said Reiner. "These are three of the instruments we use, and I really want to hear what they'll be playing." But Reiner intends to give something back as well: "I'm pretty sure we'll be able to make an impact on them. We'll definitely turn them into a giant fiddle band."

Wyslouch and Reiner are joined by Sam Grisman on bass and Eric Robertson on mandolin. Although the band came together at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, the musicians bring together diverse geographical and musical influences. Grisman grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, where he started playing professionally at the age of 12. Robertson was raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, and his mandolin playing weaves in elements of rhythm and blues and country music.

Wyslouch and Reiner both grew up in Lexington, Massachusetts, and share a musical background not often associated with the folk stylings of bluegrass: They played in the same heavy metal band. "I think the heavy-metal aspect still really comes out in the way we play bluegrass in terms of the intensity," said Wyslouch.

Reiner, who played electric fiddle in the metal band, added that Wyslouch "is the foremost acoustic metal guitar player in the world."

On the eve of the Asian trip – which will take the band farther from home than they have ever been before – Reiner said his excitement is informed by an experience at the Berklee College of Music, when an instructor brought a group of Mongolian musicians to work with students.

“We sat down in a circle,” Reiner remembered. “They couldn’t say ‘hello’ or ‘please’ in English, and we couldn’t speak a single word of their language – yet they started playing their music and we were able to join in and create something together without talking about it. That deep musical connection brought us together in a way that absolutely nothing else could.”

Statement on Mosque Attacks in West Bank

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson
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STATEMENT BY VICTORIA NULAND,
SPOKESPERSON

Mosque Attacks in the West Bank

The United States strongly condemns the dangerous and provocative attacks on the mosques in the Palestinian villages of Yatma on September 8 and Qusra on September 5. Such hateful actions are never justified. Those responsible should be arrested and subject to the full force of the law.

We note that the Israeli government likewise condemned the attacks and instructed law enforcement authorities to act vigorously to bring those responsible to justice.

We urge all parties to avoid the potential for escalation. Violence will not advance, but will impede, the hope for peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on acceptance and respect.

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