



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Republic of Palau
Telephone: 587-2920/2990
Fax: 587-2911

Press Release

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The Outcome of 9/11: Triumph of the Human Spirit

By Ambassador Helen Reed-Rowe

September 11, 2011 is the tenth anniversary of the horrendous attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. It is also the tenth anniversary of the attempted additional mass terror attack, which was thwarted by the heroic actions of passengers and crew which resulted in the crash of their aircraft before it could be used as a weapon against other innocents. I have been greatly moved by the number of people in Palau who have already approached me about remembering this tragedy, and expressed an intention to participate in some act of prayer or remembrance of that tragic day.

September 11, 2001, the innocence of the world changed. Nearly 3,000 people from more than 90 nations were killed on that day. Their mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, wives, husbands and friends confronted losses that they will bear forever, while all across the United States and the world, people faced a new sense of fear and loss of security. Why did these innocent people die? Is anyone safe anymore?

Too many people have had to confront these same questions in too many places around the world. Yet, the human spirit has produced a defiant response to the grief and fear that terrorists had hoped to spread. From Bali to Beslan, Athens to Amman, Kigali to Kampala, Mumbai to Manila, and Lahore to London, we witnessed resilience and solidarity.

Speaking on the anniversary of the attacks in 2010, President Barack Obama encouraged us to "take inspiration from the victims and survivors of terrorism in every nation around the world, for their stories are more powerful and more enduring than that of terrorists."

That is the story behind two women, Susan Retik Ger and Patti Quigley, who lost their husbands on September 11 but found a new life's purpose helping widows in Afghanistan. Their nonprofit organization, Beyond the

11th, provides Afghan widows with the support and resources to rebuild their lives. Since their effort began in 2003, they have given grants exceeding \$600,000 for education and employment programs to nongovernmental organizations in Afghanistan. Two women who lost their husbands to tragedy found a way to help themselves by helping widows in Afghanistan find their own voices and the strength they need to help rebuild their country.

Ashraf al-Khaled's November 2005 wedding in Amman became a scene of tragedy after a suicide bomber detonated an explosive, killing 27 members of his wedding party, including both Khaled's and his wife's fathers. Khaled co-founded the Global Survivors Network to confront extremism ideology and took on a mission to meet with perpetrators and young would-be terrorists to challenge their assumptions. His story is told in the documentary "Killing in the Name," produced by Carie Lemack, whose mother was killed September 11 on American Airlines Flight 11.

Australian Peter Hughes suffered burns to 60 percent of his body and had to be resuscitated three times by medical personnel after the 2002 Bali bombings. It took him two years to recover. He still struggles with his injuries. But he found his strength and now runs the Peter Hughes Burn Foundation, which provides assistance to burn survivors and helps them overcome physical trauma and emotional pain.

Glenn Winuk, a New York lawyer and former volunteer firefighter, died while trying to help victims in the World Trade Center. His brother Jay and friend David Paine honored his memory by launching a campaign to establish September 11 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance, an initiative which led to the law that President Obama signed two years ago. Last year, 11.5 million people — including the president and First Lady Michelle Obama — participated in the day of service, helping charitable organizations and community groups.

New Yorker Jeff Parness started the "New York Says Thank You Foundation," a group of firefighters and other volunteers who offer service to other communities to help them rebuild from disaster. This year, on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, the foundation expects 300 volunteers to meet in the state of Georgia and rebuild a barn for a foundation that uses animals to inspire disabled youngsters and seniors. Parness' business partner, Hagay Shefi, was killed at the World Trade Center.

On October 5, 2009, a suicide bomber killed Gul Rukh Tahir and four other Pakistani staffers at the United Nations World Food Programme in Islamabad. Gul's husband, Tahir Wadood Malik, reached out to friends

and survivors of violence to establish the Pakistan Terrorism Survivors Network. That international network works to help survivors overcome trauma and rebuild their lives.

Martine Wright lost both her legs in the July 2005 London subway bombings. She spent nine months in a hospital overcoming her injury and learning to walk again with prosthetic limbs. Refusing to merely adapt to her disability, she is now a contender for the 2012 Paralympics in volleyball.

These demonstrations of shared resilience and generosity have put the lie to the perpetrators' empty claims. They failed and will soon be a footnote of history.

In the Middle East, where people of many countries are demanding and delivering political change, the false prophets of terror are nowhere to be seen, their ideologies ignored and scorned openly by the young people who will determine the future of their own societies.

The 10th anniversary of September 11 is a moment where all societies can reflect on the enduring strength of the human spirit. In doing so, we send a unified message: Terrorism will not prevail. It has no religion. It has no country. It has no justification. It has no future. We will be vigilant, but around the world we will pursue our lives with confidence, not fear.

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