

September 11, 2010 Memorial Speech

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United States Army Garrison
Brussels, Belgium

General and Mrs. Petersen, Colonel Roels, Commander Ziemba, Mister Burgmeister, Members of the Zaventem Emergency Services, Dedicated Members of the U.S. Armed Forces, Family and Friends:

Most days are meant to be lived in the present.

They are solely about what we are doing. What we have scheduled.

A busy day at work . . . picking up the kids at school . . .

But September 11 is different

It is not about what we are doing . . . it is about who we are . . . and what kind of planet we will live on.

It is meant to be lived not simply in the present, but in the past and even more so in the future.

It is meant to be lived in the past because it is about memories and honor.

We of course remember and honor all who died that day.

People who died not because of how old they were or how sick they were or what they did.

But simply because of whom they were -- Americans.

People whose only fault was that they were Americans who happened to work in a particular office building.

And people like Patrice Brault, a 31 year old Belgian, whose only fault was that he was a Belgian who loved America enough that he chose to work at Marsh & McLennon on Wall Street rather than remain in Anderlecht.

People whose only fault was that they were Americans or visitors to America who happened to board a particular flight in America.

We honor them all.

We honor their parents who lost children.

We honor their children who lost parents.

We honor them all, including victims of terror anywhere in the world, including right here in Europe.

And on September 11, we also so dearly honor those who lost their lives because they chose to serve their country.

Men and women whose office building was not a tower of trade in New York . . .

But a Pentagon of protection for us all near Washington D.C.

As to them, I can think of no better description of why we honor them than the lesson I learned from one of the heads of our American Battlefield cemeteries right here in Belgium;

He noted to me that for those buried in his cemetery

They remain each day on active duty. . .

And on each day that we fail to remember them . . . that we fail to honor them . . . they have served a day without a mission.

Every soldier is entitled to his mission.

We are that mission.

September 11 is indeed about the past.

But as time has passed, September 11 is no longer simply about the people whom we lost.

It is also about a style of life that is so much more difficult to hold onto.

A style of life that emphasizes individual liberty and privacy as well as collective security.

A style of life that gives people the benefit of the doubt first and asks questions later.

A style of life that uniformly celebrates our religious diversity and accepts religious differences with tolerance and even admiration.

So September 11 is not simply about the past, but even moreso about the future.

It is about not simply the planet that we live on,

But the one we will leave to our children.

It's about the future of our security, the future of our liberty and the future of our compassion.

And that is why we are here.

That is what we are doing in USAG and in Tri-Mission Embassy community.

That is what you have given your career to.

Because September 11 is also about you. . . and about all of our colleagues who serve our country and our planet in the U.S. military and in the State Department.

So when you are asked what you do for a career.

Don't say that you work in a consular section, or in buildings and maintenance or in an economic section of the Embassy.

Don't say you work at a certain base or for a certain command.

Tell them that you are preventing tomorrow's September 11.

That you are making the planet safer for our children.

And that you working to preserve a lifestyle of understanding and compassion well worth hanging onto.

Because those are our missions daily. Those are our duty.

Those who were buried this day deserve nothing less.

God bless and all the best.