

September 11 Memorial Speech

September 11, 2009

Most days are solely about what we are doing.

They are meant to be lived in the present.

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

But September 11 is different

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

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

In the past, as it is about memories and honor.

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

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

And people like Patrice Braut, 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 & McLennan on Wall Street rather than remain in Anderlecht.

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

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.

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

But a Pentagon of protection for us all.

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

He noted to me on a recent visit

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 September 11 is even more so about the future.

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

But the one we will leave to our children.

For on September 11, the only thing more disturbing than thinking about those murdered . . .

Is thinking about those who did the murders . . . Those who do acts of terrorism anywhere on this planet.

And that is why we are here.

That is what we are doing in Embassy Belgium.

That is what you have given your career to.

Because September 11 is first and foremost about you. . . and about all of the colleagues in the State Department.

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.

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

That you are making the planet safer for our children.

Because that is our mission daily. That is our duty.

Those who were buried this day deserve nothing less.
I now would ask you to observe a moment of silence.