

confesses to have planned September 11 attacks and said he also planned attacks on Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and other sites.

In May of 2007, six men were arrested and charged with plotting to attack soldiers at Fort Dix, NJ.

In June of 2007, four men were charged with plotting to blow up jet fuel in a residential neighborhood near JFK Airport in New York.

It is quite clear that it is imperative this Nation continue to be vigilant and keep these terrorist groups off balance, to keep our homeland and our allies secure.

I believe as the years go by, history will view the efforts of the U.S. Government favorably in keeping its citizens safe after the attacks on September 11, 2001.

President Bush made a bold decision. He took decisive action. A reorganized intelligence community that Senator BOND talked about was put in high gear and has dramatically improved our intelligence concerning terrorist groups. We were not where we should have been. We are still not, but we are dramatically improved. The FBI has dramatically changed its mode of operation from mere investigation after an attack to preventing further attacks. Unprecedented cooperation with and assistance from State and local law enforcement has raised our defensive capabilities and our intelligence-gathering networks manifold. It is tremendous the improved relations we have with State and local law enforcement, and there are many more of those officers than there are Federal officers.

For 7 years, we may thank the Lord and the hard work of so many that this Nation has remained free from terrorist attack. Will it continue? We may all pray that it will, but we know we remain at risk. We know for decades to come there will be some in this world who are willing to even give their lives to attack free nations around the world.

We must remain vigilant. We must not forget what we have done wrong in the past, how we refused to recognize the reality of the threat, as the 9/11 Commission so clearly reported. But we must also not forget how going on the offensive, destroying the bases of operation of the radical Islamic networks, of attacking their military infrastructure, of attacking their soldiers, of capturing thousands and killing thousands of their operatives has made us safe and have put the terrorists on the defensive.

Despite what some say, these efforts have gained worldwide support. The terrorists are losing support throughout the world. Al-Qaida made Iraq the central front against the United States and poured people into that country. But they made a bad decision to challenge the magnificent, courageous, and lethal U.S. military.

Recent reports have declared that al-Qaida in Iraq has been decimated. There may still be some left, but the

power of that network that 2 or 3 years ago existed has been decimated today, most experts say.

So let's remember what we have done right. Also, we must keep these efforts up because it may well take decades before we will be victorious in this effort. If we remain firm, if this Nation continues to be smart, determined, and dedicated, their doom is sure. This group cannot defeat us. They may succeed with an attack here, they may succeed with an attack there, but if we have the will, if we have the courage, if we have the maturity, if we have the determination to remember those heroic people who started this war defending this very Capitol Building, who gave their lives in Pennsylvania for us—and we will honor their memory and honor the memory of those in New York City and honor the memory of those in the Pentagon and on the ship, the USS *Cole*—we will honor them by being firm, being faithful. We will be successful.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

#### SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 9/11 ATTACKS ON AMERICA

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 7 years ago today 19 people conspired to kill nearly 3,000 people in our country. It was by far, as we know, the most deadly civilian attack ever carried out on American soil. The images and sounds from that fateful morning continue to haunt us. As we continue to mourn those lost that day, today flags fly at half-staff in their honor. They were men, they were women, they were children, they were people of various nationalities and faiths. They were firefighters and police officers and emergency medical services personnel. They were investment bankers and convenience store clerks. They were attendants and pilots.

Four of the victims were Ohioans: Wendy Faulkner from Mason; William David Moskal from Brecksville; Christina Ryook from Cleveland; LTC David Scales from Cleveland.

We should remember these names represent lives cut needlessly short. We should remember the families who will forever miss them. We should remember the EMS personnel, the police officers and firefighters who responded to the attack when these names represented perfect strangers—perfect strangers whose circumstances met the simple criteria first responders use to determine when to take action: Someone needs help.

Hundreds of first responders risked and, in many cases, sacrificed their own lives to save others. So many of them died, so many of them were injured, so many of them have suffered illnesses as a result of their actions.

First responders in Ohio and all across this country continue to stand at the ready every day, ready to protect our families, ready to protect our

communities at a moment's notice, and every day in this country they are there when buildings burn, when accident victims need treatment, when expectant mothers go into labor unexpectedly, when citizens need rescue. When other civilians are running away, they are running in.

It is nearly impossible to see today's date and not think back on the attacks of 7 years ago. But let's be sure to do more than to recount the images, the sounds, and the conversations that define our own personal experience of September 11.

Let's also remember and honor the heroic first responders, the innocent victims, and the victims' families left behind. Let's never, Mr. President, forget.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning 7 years to the minute since the terrorist attacks on the Nation, I attended the inauguration and dedication of the Pentagon Memorial. There have been countless personal memorials over the years. The Pentagon Memorial is America's first national memorial to those who died on that heart-breaking day. It is a beautiful, peaceful patch of land on the very spot where American Airlines flight 77 smashed into the west wall of the Pentagon. In that quiet place, there are 184 stainless steel benches, one bench for each of the 184 innocent victims who died at the Pentagon and on that plane that struck it 7 years ago today.

Thousands of people were at that ceremony this morning marking the dedication and opening of the Pentagon Memorial. They, of course, included the President and Vice President, the Cabinet, leaders in Congress, top military leaders, scores of Members of Congress, along with the survivors of the Pentagon attack and rescue workers who were the true heroes of the day. Most poignantly, we were joined by hundreds of husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, friends of the loved ones who perished at the Pentagon.

While 9/11 comes once a year, for 9/11 families, every day brings painful reminders of what and whom they have lost. Their pain is still heartbreaking.

It was the families of the Pentagon victims who spearheaded the effort to create the Pentagon Memorial. We all hope they can find some measure of peace and comfort in their fine work in the creation of this memorial.

Yesterday afternoon I had a chance to visit in my office with a man with a small company near Chicago, IL, who worked for over a year to finish and polish the 184 stainless steel benches that make up the Pentagon Memorial. He lives and works in Elk Grove Village in Arlington Heights, and his name is Abe Yousif.

Abe came to America 29 years ago from Iraq. Abe's beautiful wife Angela moved to America 27 years ago, also

from Iraq. The 23 employees of their little company, many of them are immigrants, too, from Mexico, Bosnia, and many other countries.

For more than a year, they have worked for this day when there would be an official opening of this Pentagon Memorial. Their job was to take these raw metal benches, 184 of these benches, and polish them as smooth as glass. Abe calculated for me the amount of time he and his employees put into this work. They worked nearly 17,000 hours grinding and polishing these stainless steel benches, transforming them into perfectly uniform, flawlessly smooth memorials.

Abe and his workers hoped that by making each bench perfect, they might be able to give something back to a country that has given them so much. They hope that the calm, clear lines of their work might bring a sense of healing to a wounded nation and bring some beauty to a place scarred by tragedy.

Many people will look across this memorial. They will see these finely polished stainless steel benches and assume somewhere there was a machine that just churned them out. No, it was the hard work and sweat of Abe Yousif and his employees who took this on not just as another project but as a project of love.

When I think of 9/11, I recall, as every American does, what I was doing. I was just a few steps away from here in the Capitol Building in a meeting of the Democratic leadership with Senator Tom Daschle. The meeting had just started when we heard about the planes crashing into the World Trade Center in New York.

As the meeting continued, Tom was handed a note that we were going to have to evacuate the Capitol. We looked down The Mall toward the Washington Monument and saw black, billowing smoke coming from across the river. We didn't know what happened. We thought perhaps a bomb had been detonated. In fact, it was American Airlines flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon causing so many deaths of so many innocent people.

We evacuated and raced to the yard outside the Capitol, people milling around not knowing where to turn. We heard the sonic booms from jets that were being scrambled and wondered if there were detonation of bombs or something worse. We just didn't know.

One of the staffers I had at that time was Pat Sargent. Pat is an officer in the U.S. Army. Occasionally, the Army will detail some of its professionals to work on Capitol Hill for a short time. Pat was terrific, one of our best employees. But he had a special interest in the Pentagon that day because his wife Sherry, also in the U.S. Army, was working there.

When Pat heard about the smoke and damage at the Pentagon, he raced out to catch the last commuter bus that runs between Capitol Hill and the Pentagon, the last one to make it across

the bridge. He was desperate to find his wife.

He went there, and there was a sea of humanity, of people who evacuated the Pentagon lined up on the hills around it. He searched and searched until he finally found her, and she was safe. That was the good news of the day, along with the tragedy that so many of her fellow workers had died.

Sherry had been in the room near the spot where that plane crashed. She lingered for a moment to watch the scenes of New York on television while some of her fellow workers went back to their desks. Those workers perished when the plane crashed into the Pentagon. She was spared.

Of course, they appreciate the heroism of those who responded, and all the memorials that were given to this country, but I want to give a special tribute to Pat and Sherry and their daughter Samantha for their dedication to this country. You see, when Pat left my office, he continued to serve in the U.S. Army. He is in Iraq today in a command position with major responsibilities for the medical care of our troops and the people of Iraq. He is a true American hero, as is his wife. They have given so much to this country.

I thank the Lord that they were spared that day; that they were able to continue in their service to the country, along with so many others, but I do remember those who worked right alongside her who were not so fortunate. That is what our gathering was about today. Every year on September 11 we remember the horror and shock of that day and the grief that followed. But we remember something else. We remember the tremendous sense of unity that enveloped our Nation.

Buck O'Neill was a man who was legendary in the Negro League as a baseball player. Of course, in those days, a Black man couldn't make it to the majors. He became a scout for the Chicago Cubs and signed, among other people, Hall of Famers Ernie Banks and Lou Brock. In 1962, he became the first African-American coach in Major League Baseball history. He wrote a newspaper column. He has passed away now, but he wrote a newspaper column about a year after the 9/11 attacks, and he said:

One thing about it is, the attacks brought us together. For a little while there after September 11, it didn't matter if you were Democrat or a Republican. It didn't matter if you were white or black. Yeah. We were Americans. We gave blood. We gave money. We cried. We all cried. That's the America we can be. This is a wonderful country.

He remembered from his youth some hateful things that were done to him because of his race. He said:

When I was a young man, I used to see the way hate ripped this country apart. A man would hate me just for the color of my skin. I didn't feel angry. I felt sorry for that man. I wanted to say to him "Don't you know how great America would be if we could all just get along?" That's what I saw after September 11. We all got along. I wish we could hold on to that feeling.

There were strong emotions today at the Pentagon, I am sure in New York, in Pennsylvania, and across the Nation as we remembered the seventh anniversary of 9/11. But let us remember 9/12. Let's remember this Nation when it did come together with its allies around the world, the strength that we felt here at home, and the projected strength we felt around the world. Those days can return, and they should return. It is up to each and every one of us, whether we are elected officials or people going to work every day to raise a family, to do our best to make that spirit of coming together after 9/11 return.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate those whom we lost on September 11 of 2001, to remember how our Nation responded to the pain we felt that day with a towering display of heroism, and to urge us to rededicate ourselves to making sure we never have to experience terror on our soil again.

That day, the families and friends of nearly 3,000 Americans got the worst news imaginable, and almost 700 of them were from my home State of New Jersey. They were from all walks of life. We lost mothers, fathers, and children. Brothers lost their sisters, neighbors lost their friends. Today in New Jersey, you can go from town to town—from Englewood to West Windsor, Toms River, Mantua, and Hoboken—and you can see a ceremony in each one. Families in those towns are laying flowers on the gravestones and monuments and holding tightly one more time onto the pictures of the ones they lost.

So many communities were affected in so many ways, not the least of which was the American community. It felt as if it was a day when there were no borders between us. Terrorists tried to engulf us in the smoke of fear and hatred. For a moment, we felt like the whole world went dark. But the light of heroism burst through. Individuals rushed into burning buildings risking their lives to save others, strangers opened their homes to help people they didn't even know, and men and women all over the country rushed to give whatever they could to help those in need.

It was a day when we learned the meaning of Oscar Wilde's words when he said: "Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground." It was a day when it didn't matter what part of the country you came from, what your family background was, or anything else. It was a day when we all stood together as Americans. People from all over the world said: We are Americans today.

There was a time when the events of September 11, 2001, gripped us so strongly that our minds couldn't focus on anything else. Yet 7 years later, we

have to talk about the dangers of forgetting. We have to talk about the dangers of forgetting, because 7 years later our obligations have not gone away.

Our obligations have not gone away to those whom we lost, and to their families and those who survived the attacks but came away injured. For them, it has been a long and heroic struggle to get by and find some sense of normalcy. People who ran out of burning buildings, the firefighters, EMTs, and other rescue workers who ran in, all breathed thick air as they were saving lives. Today, they are reminded of what they have to face with literally every breath they take. We think about them very deeply today, but those heroes triumph every day. Their supply of courage has never run out, and we can never walk out on them.

So not forgetting means caring for those whom we lost, and their families, and remembering them. But it also means caring for those who were made ill because of the attacks. Not forgetting means supporting all the heroes, paid and volunteer, who risked their lives to save others. Not forgetting means securing our ports, chemical and nuclear plants, so we don't have to experience another horrendous tragedy in the future, getting Federal grant money to our communities based on the risks they face, getting firefighters the funding they need for new equipment and increased personnel, and making sure our first responders can talk to each other during an emergency. And let's be very clear: Not forgetting means destroying the terrorist network that planned the attacks and bringing those responsible to justice.

Today, September 11 of 2008, we remember what has been lost, and we find strength in what we still have. No amount of time can ultimately heal what has been seared into our hearts and minds since September 11, 2001. But those wounds continue to drive us to make sure that no New Jerseyan, no American ever has to experience them again. If we come together now, as we did on one of the darkest days of our history, then I believe our future can be filled with security, prosperity, and hope. On this day in which we remember that darkest day, we can see the light and our brightest days are yet to come.

Once again, my thoughts and prayers go out to the 700 New Jerseyans who were lost on that fateful day, for their families who live with this for the rest of their lives and for which this day has an incredible resonance in their lives far beyond what anyone can imagine. But for votes here in the Senate, I would be in New Jersey today, and I wanted to take to the floor to let them know that we are one with them on this most sacred day.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all

time for morning business be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. Morning business is closed.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 3001, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3001) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities for the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 5290, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 5291 (to amendment No. 5290), of a perfecting nature.

Motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report back forthwith, with Reid amendment No. 5292 (to the instructions of the motion to recommit), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 5293 (to the instructions of the motion to recommit the bill), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 5294 (to amendment No. 5293), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previous order with respect to the prohibition on a motion to proceed remain in effect during today's session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we had an announcement yesterday by the Secretary of Defense on the procurement question for the tanker for the U.S. Air Force that is very disturbing and disappointing to me. Basically, the history of that was that the Secretary and the U.S. Air Force had evaluated the two competing bids and had selected the Northrop team's bid as the best aircraft and best buy for the country.

The GAO, Government Accountability Office, reviewed that and said the Air Force had made errors. I did not think great errors, but they said there were errors and they ought to review the process. The Secretary of Defense said he, in effect, was disappointed those errors had occurred and he personally would take the process under the Department of Defense's jurisdiction and he would direct individuals to evaluate the two bids and to make a decision on what the best aircraft would be and the best buy for the American warfighter.

Remember that the Air Force had declared that replacing the 50-, 60-year-old tanker fleet was their No. 1 priority in the entire U.S. Air Force. For those of us who know about the Air Force and know how much they like fighters and those kinds of aircraft, for them to say that was a significant thing. So we were proceeding along that path. Secretary Gates said he was going to do it fairly and objectively, and he would do his best to complete the process by the end of the year. So his announcement yesterday that they could not complete it at the end of the year, that there has been controversy about this, and that he would, therefore, put it off and cancel the bid process and let the next Congress and next President deal with it was a bad mistake. It was contrary to what he had said in the country needed to be done a few months ago.

I think this is a matter he made a mistake on. I respect Secretary Gates. I was pleased when he stood up and said: We need this tanker. We need to get this done. We are going to get it done. I am personally going to be responsible to ensure it is done right and fair. Then, to walk away from that, and to leave the impression the reason that occurred was because of a political brouhaha going on, and Members of Congress fussing here and there and making comments was doubly disturbing.

My view has always been the Department of Defense ought to pick the best aircraft, and I thought they had when they chose the plane they did. I will note the aircraft Northrop Grumman/EADS had offered was 16 years newer than the aircraft Boeing had submitted, it would have much more capabilities, and was a better aircraft. That is what it was, and that is how it was selected. The Northrop team submitted a very frugal bid, and even though it was an aircraft that had more capabilities, it was very competitive or lower on price. So I thought we were heading in the right direction.

I will note for the record I was involved in this early on. When Senator McCain questioned a lease agreement that was entered into with the Boeing company, he felt something was not healthy there and he objected. It was going to release 60 of these aircraft. They had not been bid. It was a sole-source contract. It did not go through the Armed Services Committee. But it was actually done through the Appropriations Committee without the