

know what was happening; we just knew we had been ordered to get out of the building.

Of course, we all have memories of what took place that day. I was the assistant leader, as was Senator Nickles from Oklahoma. Senator Lott was the Republican leader, and Senator Daschle was the Democratic leader. We were taken in helicopters from the west front of the Capitol to a secure location. When I was taken to the west front of the Capitol, the scene was eerie to say the least. There were lots of people in black uniforms trying to create order out of confusion. Without going into a lot of detail, we went to a location, and the Vice President was there. He met with us and kept us informed as to what was going on with the President. We spent the day there and then came back to the west front of the Capitol, where all Members of Congress gathered. BARBARA MIKULSKI, for lack of anyone having a better suggestion, said: We should sing “God Bless America.” She got the song started, and that was extremely memorable.

We are going to have a ceremony in a few minutes out front, and I will talk a little bit there. The four leaders have been asked to talk out there.

We did have a moment of silence regarding the more than 3,000 people who were killed in New York, Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon. In addition to those 3,000 people who were taken from us permanently, thousands of other people were injured, some of them permanently injured. Some of them have missing legs, some are blind, and some suffer from paralysis. So we raise our voices today in celebration of America’s spirit and perseverance. May we never forget 9/11.

It is also worth mentioning that on this day we also honor what took place a year ago in Libya, where one of our stellar Ambassadors was murdered along with three of his brave colleagues. They were all killed in Libya. Our country remains committed to seeking justice for them and every American victim of terrorism, and that is what the debate of Syria is all about—terrorism.

Before I began the caucus yesterday, when the President came, my introduction to the President was a film that was created by Senator FEINSTEIN and others. It is about 12 or 13 minutes long, and it shows what went on in graphic detail with the brutal chemical weapons attack in Syria where these children were left to die. Remember, these poisons get the little kids first.

Senator DURBIN has a Palestinian on his staff. We all know Reema. She does the whip count for Senator DURBIN and for me. I had her listen to the film. I watched it and she listened so she could give me some idea of what people were saying there. They were yelling. It was so sad. Mostly they were praying. It was very, very sad to see people holding little babies and saying: Breathe, breathe. They couldn’t

breathe. We could see the perspiration on some of them. They dumped water on them—anything to give them some relief. The video showed rows of dead people. Hundreds of them were little children. Some of them were dressed in their play clothes, little fancy, colorful T-shirts.

Even as we pay tribute to America’s tradition of freedom for every citizen across the globe, an evil dictator denies its citizens not only their right to liberty but also their right to live. The Asad family is pretty good at killing people. The New York Times had an article over the last 24 hours about his dad, because of the failed assassination attempt, killing 30,000 people he thought needed to be killed—30,000. That country, Syria, denies its citizens the right to liberty, but even more significant the right to live.

Yesterday I showed the video at the caucus. No one wanted to see it. I didn’t want to see it again. It was all I could do to glance up. I had already seen it. Those visions will always be in my mind. I showed my Senators a video of this: little boys and girls and grown men with their eyes crusted, frothing from the mouth. It was such unspeakable scenery. They were convulsing, writhing, spasms from the poison gas he used to murder his victims. It was hard to watch, but it confirmed all of our conviction that the United States must not let the Syrian regime go unpunished for using something that is outlawed. Those weapons are not to be used in a war, let alone used on a bunch of innocent people.

Yesterday the President spoke to two caucuses. He spoke last night and made a compelling case for military action against the Asad regime. As the President said, we have to send an explicit message not only to Syria but the rest of the world. Remember—who has more chemical weapons than Syria? Only one country—North Korea. Think about that. If they get away with this, what is North Korea going to do? Then are we going to have a marketplace for purchasing chemical weapons? The use of chemical weapons by anyone, any time, anywhere, including the battlefield, should not be tolerated.

Preventing these weapons from being used is not only in our own national interests, but it is in the interests of the world. Diplomacy should always be the first choice. That is who we are as a country. So we have been asked to temporarily suspend consideration of the Syria resolution to allow for these conversations to take place around the world.

Tomorrow our Secretary of State is meeting with the Russian Secretary of State, Mr. Lavrov, to explore in fact if this is a legitimate proposal. Talking and action are two separate things. So what the Republican leader and I have spoken about—and we will talk more about it today—is to see what we can do to give the President the time and space our country needs to pursue these international negotiations. We

will report back at a later time. America must remain vigilant and ready to use force if necessary, and Congress should not take the threat of military action off the table.

I want to spend a little time talking to Senator MENENDEZ, the chair of the committee. I want to talk to other Senators who are trying to work something out on their own, and I will do that.

Leaders in Damascus and Moscow should understand that Congress will be watching these negotiations very closely. If there is any indication this is not serious—that it is a ploy to delay, to obstruct, to divert—then I think we have to again give the President the authority to hold the Asad regime accountable. So it is our determination not to let Asad’s atrocities go unanswered. How we answer is a question we will continue to pursue. But it is very clear that we wouldn’t be where we are today—even my friend, the junior Senator from Kentucky, today said the reason we are having the possibility of a deal is because of the President threatening force.

It is interesting. Asad has even denied, until just recent hours, ever even having had chemical weapons. So it is in Syria’s power to avoid these strikes, but that will require swift and decisive action on the part of the Asad regime to relinquish these weapons. We need a diplomatic solution to succeed, but saying we want one doesn’t mean it will happen. So he must quickly prove the offer to turn over Syria’s chemical weapons is real and not an attempt to delay.

All eyes are on the Russian President, President Putin. We all know he was formerly head of the KGB. We all know about the KGB. He is the President of that very big country. We are also grateful that even though relations aren’t perfect with Russia, they are OK—so much better than they have been prior to the breakup of that massive country, the Soviet Union.

We hope Russia is a productive partner in these negotiations. Any agreement must also assure it is possible to secure these chemical weapons in spite of the ongoing civil war, to keep those stockpiles out of the hands of terrorists.

In short, I am happy we have some conversations going to see if this can be resolved diplomatically. I certainly hope so.

I apologize to my counterpart, the Republican leader, for taking so much time.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING 9/11

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 12 years ago more than 100 Members of

Congress from both parties stood together on the Capitol steps to show our sympathy, solidarity, and resolve. Those of us who were there will never forget it. Later this morning Members will gather on the same steps to remember once again those who died and to recommit ourselves to our national ideals—together. Our Nation always pulls together in difficult moments; 9/11 showed us that. It is important we remember it.

I look forward to joining congressional leaders and others out on the same steps shortly, on this day that has rightly become a very solemn one throughout our country.

We remember today all those who were killed as well as the families they left behind. We remember them with renewed sorrow. We remember all who lost their lives or who have been injured in the line of duty defending our freedoms since 9/11.

Today, we remember the resolve we shared on a clear September morning 12 years ago.

In the days and months that followed the attacks of 9/11, we did not cower. We took the fight to the terrorists, while here at home we opened our doors, our wallets, and our hearts to those around us. We persevered. We maintained what was and is best about our country. And, together, we will continue to do so as long as this struggle continues.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now be in a period of morning business for debate only until 2:30 p.m. with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING 9/11

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in a few moments we will recess to gather on the steps of the Capitol. It is an annual event that commemorates 9/11. The leaders have spoken to their memories of that day, and I associate myself with their remarks and the sadness we all feel as we reflect on the lives lost, some 3,000 Americans—to this blatant act of terrorism.

We can all recall that moment. I can recall looking down the Mall toward the Washington Monument and watching the black smoke billowing across the Mall from the Pentagon because of the deadly crash there that took the lives of passengers on that plane and innocent people working in defense of America. That was a moment that will never be forgotten.

Over the weekend there was an indication of a new memorial in New York City that will commemorate 9/11 as

well, and soon it will be open as a lasting tribute to not only those who fell and the families we grieve with, but also to the paramedics and first responders who did such a remarkable and courageous job that day.

SYRIA

It is in keeping with that theme that we reflect today on what the majority leader told us. We had a visit yesterday from the President of the United States who spoke directly to the Senate Democratic caucus and Republican caucus luncheons answering questions from Senators. The President came to speak to us about the situation in Syria, about the use of chemical weapons, the deadly impact it has had on innocent people, and the obvious breach of norms of civilized conduct which the world has agreed to for almost 100 years.

The President made it clear that we have a chance now, an opportunity for a diplomatic solution because of the suggestion of the Russians that the Syrians come forward, surrender their chemical weapons, submit to inspections, and have real enforcement. Nations around the world are working with the United States to craft a resolution for the United Nations to consider. I am hopeful and I pray they will be successful. If that occurs, the President will have achieved his goal without the use of military force, which is something he made clear to us yesterday that he hopes to pursue—achieving his goal without the use of military force. Over and over again yesterday he told us: I am not a President who looks forward to the use of military force. I don't want to do it unless I have to. I believe that, because I know the man. I have known him for many years and I know what is in his heart.

However, we have to acknowledge the obvious. Had the President not raised the prospect of military force, this conversation on an international level would never have occurred. It was the President's leadership, even without majority support among the American people, that precipitated this action by President Putin, and I hope it will lead to a diplomatic solution. It is where it should be—in the United Nations. It was only the threat of veto by Russia and China and the Security Council which kept President Obama from turning to the United Nations first. But we have a chance, and I pray it is successful.

We will now move forward with other items on the Senate agenda very quickly, as we should, and still the possibility that if this diplomatic effort fails, we will have to return to this critically important debate about the future of Syria.

It is important to recall, though, even after the chemical weapons are gone—and I pray that happens with diplomatic efforts soon—there will still be a civil war in that country that has claimed 100,000 lives over the last several years. The sooner that comes to an end, the better. The humanitarian cri-

sis on the ground in Syria is terrible, but the impact on surrounding nations is awful as well.

Last year I visited a refugee camp in Turkey where Syrians, fearing for their lives, moved by the thousands into Turkey. I reflected on the generosity and compassion of the people of Turkey, accepting 10,000 people in one of these refugee camps, providing for them shelter and food and medical care and education for their children. It was an amazing humanitarian gesture on their part.

Then we go to the nation of Jordan. Jordan is overrun with refugees from the Middle East, and it has created serious economic challenges for that country and threats to political stability. The sooner this war ends in Syria, the sooner normalcy comes to the Middle East, the better for Jordan and the better for the entire region. So we pray that occurs soon.

This has been a rough few weeks as we have considered chemical weapons in Syria. As Senator REID said yesterday, the objects and visions we saw on this film and video—the victims of these chemical weapons—remind us of how horrible this is. When those who turn to weapons of mass destruction are not held accountable, there are more innocent victims.

I hope we can solve this issue on a diplomatic basis. We will stand down now in terms of any congressional effort until that effort in the United Nations has a chance to reach fruition, and I pray it will.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

REMEMBERING 9/11

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise to speak in morning business to remember 9/11, 2001, a day every American citizen and every citizen in the world remembers. They remember where they were. They remember what they thought. And they remember the tragedy we all watched on television that day.

It is appropriate that on every 9/11 of every year we pause for a moment and pray for the victims of that tragedy and their families, that we remember what happened on that day, and that we commit ourselves to see to it that it never happens again.

It is important that it not just be a memory. It needs to be a seminal moment in our lives that allows us to never forget the tragedy of what I believe is the first battle in the greatest war between good and evil. Terrorism is the ultimate enemy of freedom, liberty, and democracy, and it is something we must stand up to and never cower to.

Sometimes people ask me: What can I do? What can I do on 9/11, 2013, to remember those who died, to remember those who saved lives, and to remember what happened? I say there are three important things for us to always do.