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Senate Floor Speech on Joint Resolution 22 Condemning 9/11 Attacks

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Madam President,

We meet here today to express our outrage, even though words cannot express the sorrow and anger that fills our hearts. But we must express these feelings on behalf of...the families and friends of thousands of innocent victims, many of whose identities we do not yet know, and on behalf of our entire nation.

Madam President,

Our young people must wonder why the United States, who they're taught is the beacon of hope and liberty for the world -- why we, of all countries, should be the world's main target for such savagery.



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I would suggest it's because that those teachings to our young people are true. It's because our history and the principles on which our country was founded goes against the trend of thousands of years of human history.

Madam President,

Those things indeed go against thousands of years of unfortunate human history, thousands of years of might makes right, of rulers and dictatorships of all shapes and forms, of religious intolerance, and of subjugation. We have shown the world that it doesn't have to be that way. And today's tyrants and would-be tyrants cannot afford to let that example stand.

But stand it will.

If this giant, America, has been sleeping, as some say, it has been awakened again, and will not rest until an example has been made of those who would murder our innocent citizens and tear at the very fabric of our national existence.

Part of a great nation's responsibility for keeping peace in the world is the threat it would pose to those who would upset that peace. Therefore, we must act as a deterrent to outrageous activity when our interests are involved. And America's response on this matter should set a lasting example [of] what happens to those who unleash bloody attacks, especially upon our own soil.

The time for carefully measured, pin pick responses to terrorist activities has passed. But we in this Body and in the House do not have the luxury of simply expressing our outrage and demanding retribution. We, along with the President, set policy. And we must quickly reconcile ourselves to some things that we must do.

Since our victory in the Cold War we have become complacent in the notion that the most significant danger to our nation has passed.

We see it in our military budget.

We hear it in our rhetoric.



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We see it in our debates over which threat to our country is most probable, even though yesterday's events should remind us once again how faulty such predictions can be. We attempt to decide with precision what the chances of...a missile attack by a rogue nation, or by a terrorists versus a suitcase bomb versus a biological attack versus a cyber attack.

Surely we must now realize that the world's number one target, the United States of America, must protect its citizens from all of these possibilities. While protection can never be complete, who's going to decide which...vulnerability we're going to allow to remain open?

The old Soviet threat has been replaced by new ones that are in many ways more dangerous and more insidious. We have been warned about this repeatedly -- by the Hart-Rudman Commission, the Gilmore Commission, by the Bremer Commission, and by experts in numerous committee hearings.

Surely now we will listen.

Surely now we will resist the temptation to continue to squeeze out more (quote) "peace dividends" (end quote) from the Cold War, which place our defense requirements in a secondary position to our domestic wish lists. And surely we will reanalyze the -- the wisdom of America contributing to the proliferation of militarily useful technology simply because we want the sales. It's my belief that this is what we did as late as last week with the passage of the Export Administration Act.

If we play short term considerations, our desire for profit or our desire to maintain record-high surpluses above our own national security, we will become much more vulnerable to the potential [of] experiencing other days like yesterday.

Historians tell us of another democracy that, after major military success, cut its military budget, turned inward, failed to react to provocation in hopes of maintaining peace -- a nation whose leaders followed the popular demand for more butter and fewer guns, and who felt that if worse came to worse technology would bail them out, and that treaties with dictators would substitute for defenses.

That country was England -- after World War I. And those policies contributed to causing the biggest war in the history of the world.



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And we must not make a similar mistake.

We cannot alter the past, but we can affect the future.

I sincerely urge that we keep these things in mind as we consider our appropriations bills, and especially as we consider what monies are necessary to keep this country safe.

It is not only the right and necessary thing to do. It is the only real tribute we can pay to our citizens who have so recently paid such a dear price simply for being Americans.