



**Mayor Mike Bodker Remarks
Patriot Day
Sept. 11, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Patriot Day is a time of remembrance and a time of reflection. Fourteen years ago today, extremists attacked the United States in an attempt to break our will, and to send a message to the world that we are weak. The fact that we have gathered today is just one in an endless number of examples that they failed.

Nearly 3,000 lives were lost this day including innocent civilians, who were intentionally targeted; brave first responders from various law enforcement agencies and fire departments, who rushed into danger without any regard to their own safety as they always do; and members of our military, who were at work in the defense of our nation.

Included in the loss of civilian lives were more than 370 foreign nationals from more than 90 countries, excluding those who committed this crime.

I think all of us can remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when we heard the news that two airplanes flew into the Twin Towers. When the second airplane struck the South Tower, I believe we were all convinced at this point that this was an act of terror and that our nation was under attack.

Our nation quickly moved to a wartime footing to pursue those responsible and, at the same time, we began the process of healing and moving forward.

Most of those responsible have either been captured or killed, the international community is taking a more proactive approach with taking the fight to extremists around the world, and both the World Trade Center complex in New York City and the pentagon have been repaired and are physically better than they have ever been.

However, for the survivors and families and loved ones of those who were either killed or injured, the pain of this horrific day can never be repaired. And it is important that we do not forget those who were directly impacted by the events of 9/11, and nor should we forget the heroics of those who risked their lives for others.

For many of the first responders and those in the immediate area where the Twin Towers collapsed, they face long-term health concerns from the dust they ingested or from other related injuries. Also, post-traumatic stress that so many deal with each day, as a result of what they witnessed and lived through, is another painful health issue with which they must contend.

So today we remember those who experienced the attacks in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania and we reflect on who we are as a nation and the impact of this day.

Immediately following the attack of Sept. 11, our nation once again showed the world its strength through our ability to quickly move forward with our lives undeterred by terrorism; through our swift military response in Afghanistan 26 days following the attack; and through our ability to unite and grow stronger in the face of adversity.

Adversaries throughout our history have failed to learn that our will - our freedom - are unbreakable. They do not understand that one cannot defeat something that one cannot touch. Our spirit, our mindset, and our will form the foundation of our strength. Crisis energizes us to move forward, not shrink in the face of a threat.

The current adversarial group, which is comprised of extremists, will ultimately fail. Their narrative is hollow and their actions are unjust. They continue to be denounced by religious scholars and clerics around the world.

It is important that you do not allow yourselves to inadvertently feed into their narrative that this is a religious struggle. It is not. No religion validates their actions. They have wrapped a religious brand around their extremist ideology and they use this to recruit the disenfranchised and the under educated.

Their brutality has moved the world into action and they face stiff opposition everywhere they operate. The voices against violent extremism are louder than they have ever been and the volume continues to grow. The numbers of nations pursuing and killing them across borders is unprecedented.

They are violent extremists and they are in the extreme minority when placing in context the population they claim to represent. Make no mistake, they will continue to be a threat for the foreseeable future, but the nations of the world will prevail in this fight.

While extremists will continue to grab headlines with their acts of murder, rape, and theft, it is important to not equate this with their ability to successfully achieve their ultimate objective. They are not even close to achieving success, and they have not learned anything from Sept. 11, 2001.

We will never forget those who were lost on this day fourteen years ago. Their legacies will live on. And long after the global community has defeated violent extremists, we will continue to gather in a free and secure nation, as we do each year, pray the way we choose, and remember those who were murdered, those who survived, and remember what we stand for.

Thank You.