

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Balbir Singh Sodhi, an Indian immigrant who was killed September 15 in Mesa, AZ, in a suspected hate crime.

Remarks to Central Intelligence Agency Employees in Langley, Virginia

September 26, 2001

Thank you all very much. Well, George, thank you very much, and thanks for inviting me back. [Laughter] There is no question that I am in the hall of patriots, and I've come to say a couple of things to you.

First, thanks for your hard work. You know, George and I have been spending a lot of quality time together. [Laughter] There's a reason. I've got a lot of confidence in him, and I've got a lot of confidence in the CIA, and so should America.

It's important for America to realize that there are men and women who are spending hours on the task of making sure our country remains free; men and women of the CIA who are sleeping on the floor, eating cold pizza—[laughter]—calling their kids on the phone, saying, "Well, I won't be able to tuck you in tonight," because they love America. And I'm here to thank everybody who loves America in this building. And I want to thank you for what you're doing.

We are on a mission to make sure that freedom is enduring. We're on a mission to say to the rest of the world, "Come with us—come with us; stand by our side to defeat the evildoers who would like to rid the world of freedom as we know it." There is no better institute to be working with than the Central Intelligence Agency, which serves as our ears and our eyes all around the world.

This is a war that is unlike any other war that our Nation is used to. It's a war of a series of battles that sometimes we'll see the fruits of our labors, and sometimes we won't. It's a war that's going to require cooperation with our friends. It is a war that requires the best of intelligence. You see, the enemy is sometimes hard to find; they like to hide. They think they can hide, but we know better.

This is a war that not only says to those who believe they can disrupt American lives—or for that matter, any society that believes in freedom lives—it's also a war that declares a new declaration, that says, if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist; if you provide safe haven to a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist; if you fund a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist.

And in order to make sure that we're able to conduct a winning victory, we've got to have the best intelligence we can possibly have. And my report to the Nation is, we've got the best intelligence we can possibly have, thanks to the men and women of the CIA.

The cooperation with Capitol Hill is unique and, I hope, lasting. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the work of Senator Daschle and Senator Lott, Speaker Hastert and Leader Gephardt. There's deep concern amongst Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill to do what's right for America—is to come together to provide the necessary support for an effective war.

And that includes making sure that the CIA is well funded, well staffed, has got the latest in technology. I believe we can work together to make sure that that's the case. After all, as America is learning, the CIA is on the frontline of making sure our victory will be secure.

I intend to continue to work with Congress to make sure that our law enforcement officials at home have got the tools necessary—obviously, within the confines of our Constitution—to make sure the homeland is secure; to make sure America can live as peacefully as possible; to make sure that we run down every threat, take serious every incident. And we've got to make sure, as well, that those who work for the Nation overseas have got the best available technologies and the best tools and the best funding possible.

There is a good spirit in Capitol Hill because Americans want to win. They want to win the first war of the 21st century. And win we must. We have no choice; we can't relent.

Now, there's going to be a time, hopefully in the near future, where people say, "Gosh, my life is almost normal. September 11th is

a sad memory, but it's a memory." But those of us on the frontlines of this war must never forget September 11th. And that includes the men and women of the CIA. We must never forget that this is a long struggle, that there are evil people in the world who hate America. And we won't relent.

The folks who conducted the act on our country on September 11th made a big mistake. They underestimated America. They underestimated our resolve, our determination, our love for freedom. They underestimated the fact that we love a neighbor in need. They underestimated the compassion of our country. I think they underestimated the will and determination of the Commander in Chief, too.

So anyway, I was sitting around having coffee with George and Michael. [*Laughter*] I said, "I think I'd like to come out to thank people once again. I'd like to come out to the CIA, the center of great Americans, to thank you for your work."

I know how hard you're working. And I hope all the Americans who are listening to this TV broadcast understand how hard you're working, too. You're giving your best shot, long hours, all your brainpower, to win a war that we're going to win. And I can't thank you enough on behalf of the American people.

Keep doing it. America relies upon your intelligence and your judgment. America relies upon our capacity to work together as a nation to do what the American people expect. They expect a 100 percent effort, a full-time, no-stop effort on not only securing our homeland but to bringing to justice terrorists, no matter where they live, no matter where they hide. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

Thank you very much. May God bless your work, and may God bless America. Go back to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. in the headquarters building lobby at the George Bush Center for Intelligence. In his remarks, he referred to George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Muslim Community Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

September 26, 2001

The President. It's my honor to welcome to the White House my fellow Americans, Arab-Americans, Americans who are Muslim by faith, to discuss about the current incident that took place, the aftermath of the incident, and what our country is going to do to make sure that everybody who is an American is respected.

I have told the Nation more than once that ours is a war against evil, against extremists, that the teachings of Islam are the teachings of peace and good. And the Al Qaida organization is not an organization of good, an organization of peace. It's an organization based upon hate and evil.

I also want to assure my fellow Americans that when you pledge allegiance to the flag with your hand on your heart, you pledge just as hard to the flag as I do; that the outpouring of support for our country has come from all corners of the country, including many members of the Muslim faith. And for that I am grateful.

I appreciate the contributions of time, the contributions of blood to help our fellow Americans who have been injured. And I'm proud of the Muslim leaders across America who have risen up and who have not only insisted that America be strong but that America keep the values intact that have made us so unique and different, the values of respect, the values of freedom to worship the way we see fit. And I also appreciate the prayers to the universal God.

And so, thank you all for coming. I don't know if you all remember, the imam led the service at the National Cathedral. He did a heck of a good job, and we were proud to have him there. And I want to thank you very much for the gift you gave me, Imam, the Koran. It's a very thoughtful gift. I said, "Thank you very much for the gift." He said, "It's the best gift I could give you, Mr. President." I appreciate that very much.

Q. Mr. President—
Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. Thank you all very much. Thank you all.