

September 25, 2001

Ron Paul speech in the House of Representatives

Mr. Speaker:

Last week was a bad week for all Americans. The best we can say is that the events have rallied the American spirit of shared love and generosity. Partisanship was put on hold, as it well should have been. We now, as a free people, must deal with this tragedy in the best way possible. Punishment and prevention is mandatory. We must not, however, sacrifice our liberties at the hand of an irrational urgency. Calm deliberation in our effort to restore normalcy is crucial. Cries for dropping nuclear bombs on an enemy not yet identified cannot possibly help in achieving this goal.

Mr. Speaker, I returned to Congress 5 years ago out of deep concern about our foreign policy of international interventionism, and a monetary and fiscal policy I believed would lead to a financial and dollar crisis. Over the past 5 years I have frequently expressed my views on these issues and why I believed our policies should be changed.

This deep concern prompted me to seek and receive seats on the Financial Services and International Relations Committees. I sought to thwart some of the dangers I saw coming, but as the horrific attacks show, these efforts were to no avail. As concerned as I was, the enormity of the two-prong crisis that we now face came with a ferocity no one ever wanted to imagine. But now we must deal with what we have and do our best to restore our country to a more normal status.

I do not believe this can happen if we ignore the truth. We cannot close our eyes to the recent history that has brought us to this international crisis. We should guard against emotionally

driven demands to kill many bystanders in an effort to liquidate our enemy. These efforts could well fail to punish the perpetrators while only expanding the war and making things worse by killing innocent non-combatants and further radicalizing Muslim peoples.

It is obviously no easy task to destroy an almost invisible, ubiquitous enemy spread throughout the world, without expanding the war or infringing on our liberties here at home. But above all else, that is our mandate and our key constitutional responsibility- protecting liberty and providing for national security. My strong belief is that in the past, efforts in the US Congress to do much more than this, have diverted our attention and hence led to our neglect of these responsibilities.

Following the September 11th disasters a militant Islamic group in Pakistan held up a sign for all the world to see. It said: AMERICANS, THINK! WHY YOU ARE HATED ALL OVER THE WORLD. We abhor the messenger, but we should not ignore the message.

Here at home we are told that the only reason for the suicidal mass killing we experienced on September 11th is that we are hated because we are free and prosperous. If these two conflicting views are not reconciled we cannot wisely fight nor win the war in which we now find ourselves. We must understand why the hatred is directed toward Americans and not other western countries.

In studying history, I, as many others, have come to the conclusion that war is most often fought for economic reasons. But economic wars are driven by moral and emotional overtones.

Our own revolution was fought to escape from excessive taxation but was inspired and driven by our desire to protect our God-given right to liberty.

The War between the States, fought primarily over tariffs, was nonetheless inspired by the abhorrence of slavery. It is this moral inspiration that drives people to suicidally fight to the death as so many Americans did between 1861 and 1865.

Both economic and moral causes of war must be understood. Ignoring the importance of each

is dangerous. We should not casually ignore the root causes of our current fight nor pursue this fight by merely accepting the explanation that they terrorize us out of jealousy.

It has already been written that Islamic militants are fighting a "holy war"- a jihad. This drives them to commit acts that to us are beyond comprehension. It seems that they have no concern for economic issues since they have no regard even for their own lives. But an economic issue does exist in this war: OIL!

When the conflict broke out between Iraq and Iran in the early 1980s and we helped to finance and arm Iraq, Anwar Sadat of Egypt profoundly stated: "This is the beginning of the war for oil." Our crisis today is part of this long lasting war over oil.

Osama bin Laden, a wealthy man, left Saudi Arabia in 1979 to join American- sponsored so-called freedom fighters in Afghanistan. He received financial assistance, weapons and training from our CIA, just as his allies in Kosovo continue to receive the same from us today.

Unbelievably, to this day our foreign aid continues to flow into Afghanistan, even as we prepare to go to war against her. My suggestion is, not only should we stop this aid immediately, but we should never have started it in the first place.

It is during this time bin Laden learned to practice terror; tragically, with money from the US taxpayers. But it wasn't until 1991 during what we refer to as the Persian Gulf War that he turned fully against the United States. It was this war, said to protect our oil that brought out the worst in him.

Of course, it isn't our oil. The oil in fact belongs to the Arabs and other Muslim nations of the Persian Gulf. Our military presence in Saudi Arabia is what most Muslims believe to be a sacred violation of holy land. The continuous bombing and embargo of Iraq, has intensified the hatred and contributed to more than over 1,000,000 deaths in Iraq. It is clear that protecting certain oil interests and our presence in the Persian Gulf help drive the holy war.

Muslims see this as an invasion and domination by a foreign enemy which inspires radicalism.

This is not new. This war, from their viewpoint, has been going on since the Crusades 1000 year ago. We ignore this history at our own peril.

The radicals react as some Americans might react if China dominated the Gulf of Mexico and had air bases in Texas and Florida. Dominating the Persian Gulf is not a benign activity. It has consequences. The attack on the USS Cole was a warning we ignored.

Furthermore, our support for secular governments in the moderate Arab countries is interpreted by the radicals as more American control over their region than they want. There is no doubt that our policies that are seen by the radicals as favoring one faction over another in the long lasting Middle East conflict add to the distrust and hatred of America.

The hatred has been suppressed because we are a powerful economic and military force and wield a lot of influence. But this suppressed hatred is now becoming more visible and we as Americans for the most part are not even aware of how this could be. Americans have no animosity toward a people they hardly even know. Instead, our policies have been driven by the commercial interests of a few. And now the innocent suffer.

I am hopeful that shedding light on the truth will be helpful in resolving this conflict in the very dangerous period that lies ahead. Without some understanding of the recent and past history of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf we cannot expect to punish the evildoers without expanding the nightmare of hatred that is now sweeping the world.

Punishing the evildoers is crucial. Restoring safety and security to our country is critical. Providing for a strong defense is essential. But extricating ourselves from a holy war that we don't understand is also necessary if we expect to achieve the above-mentioned goals. Let us all hope and pray for guidance in our effort to restore the peace and tranquility we all desire.

We did a poor job in providing the security that all Americans should expect. This is our foremost responsibility. Some members have been quick to point out the shortcomings of the FBI, the CIA and the FAA and claim more money will rectify the situation. I'm not so sure. Bureaucracies by nature are inefficient. The FBI and CIA records come up short. The FBI loses computers and guns and is careless with records. The CIA rarely provides timely intelligence. The FAA's idea of security against hijackers is asking all passengers who packed

their bag.

The clamor now is to give more authority and money to these agencies. But, remember, important industries like as our chemical plants and refineries do not depend on government agencies for security. They build fences and hire guards with guns. The airlines have not been allowed to do the same thing. There was a time when airline pilots were allowed and did carry weapons, and yet this has been prohibited by government regulation set to go into effect in November.

If the responsibility had been left with the airlines to provide safety they may have had armed pilots or guards on the planes just as our industrial sites have. Privatizing the FAA, as other countries have, would also give airlines more leeway in providing security. My bill, HR 2896, should be passed immediately to clarify that the federal government will never place a prohibition on pilots being armed.

We face an enormous task to restore the sense of security we have taken for granted for so long. But it can be done. Destroying the evildoers while extricating ourselves from this unholy war is no small challenge. The job is somewhat like getting out of a pit filled with venomous snakes. The sooner we shoot the snakes that immediately threaten us, the sooner we can get safely away. If we're not careful though, we'll breed more snakes and they'll come out of every nook and cranny from around the world and little will be resolved.

It's no easy task, but before we fight we'd better be precise about whom we are fighting and how many there are and where they are hiding, or we'll never know when the war is over and our goals are achieved. Without this knowledge the war can go on for a long, long time, and the war for oil has already been going on for more than 20 years. To this point, our President and his administration have displayed the necessary deliberation. This is a positive change from unauthorized and ineffective retaliatory bombings in past years that only worsened various conflicts.

If we can't or won't define the enemy, the cost to fight such a war will be endless. How many American troops are we prepared to lose? How much money are we prepared to spend? How many innocent civilians, in our nation and others, are we willing to see killed? How many American civilians will we jeopardize? How much of our civil liberties are we prepared to give up? How much prosperity will we sacrifice?

The founders and authors of our Constitution provided an answer for the difficult tasks that we now face. When a precise declaration of war was impossible due to the vagueness of our enemy, the Congress was expected to take it upon themselves to direct the reprisal against an enemy not recognized as a government. In the early days the concern was piracy on the high seas. Piracy was one of only three federal crimes named in the original Constitution.

Today, we have a new type of deadly piracy, in the high sky over our country. The solution the founders came up with under these circumstances was for Congress to grant letters of marque and reprisal. This puts the responsibility in the hands of Congress to direct the President to perform a task with permission to use and reward private sources to carry out the task, such as the elimination of Osama bin Laden and his key supporters. This allows narrow targeting of the enemy. This effort would not preclude the president's other efforts to resolve the crisis, but if successful would preclude a foolish invasion of a remote country with a forbidding terrain like Afghanistan- a country that no foreign power has ever conquered throughout all of history.

Lives could be saved, billions of dollars could be saved, and escalation due to needless and senseless killing could be prevented. Mr. Speaker, we must seriously consider this option. This answer is a world apart from the potential disaster of launching nuclear weapons or endless bombing of an unseen target. "Marque and reprisal" demands the enemy be seen and precisely targeted with minimal danger to others. It should be considered and, for various reasons, is far superior to any effort that could be carried out by the CIA.

We must not sacrifice the civil liberties that generations of Americans have enjoyed and fought for over the past 225 years. Unwise decisions in response to the terror inflicted on us may well fail to destroy our enemy, while undermining our liberties here at home. That will not be a victory worth celebrating. The wise use of marque and reprisal would negate the need to undermine the privacy and rights of our citizens.

As we work through this difficult task, let us resist the temptation to invoke the most authoritarian of all notions that, not too many years ago, tore this nation apart; the military draft. The country is now unified against the enemy. The military draft does nothing to contribute to unity nor, as the Pentagon again has confirmed, does it promote an efficient military.

Precise identification of all travelers on all our air flights is a desired goal. A national ID issued by the federal government would prove to be disastrous to our civil liberties and should not be considered. This type of surveillance power should never be given to an intrusive overbearing

government, no matter how well intentioned the motives.

The same results can be better achieved by the marketplace. Passenger IDs voluntarily issued by the airlines could be counterfeit-proof; and loss or theft of an ID could be immediately reported to the proper authorities. An ID, fingerprints, birth certificates, or any other information can be required without any violations of anyone's personal liberty. This delicate information would not be placed in the hands of the government agents but could be made available to law enforcement officers like any other information obtained with probable cause and a warrant.

The heat of the moment has prompted calls by some of our officials for great sacrifice of our liberties and privacy. This poses great danger to our way of life and will provide little help in dealing with our enemies. Efforts of this sort will only punish the innocent and have no effect on a would-be terrorist. We should be careful not to do something just to do something- even something harmful.

Mr. Speaker, I fear that some big mistakes could be made in the pursuit of our enemies if we do not proceed with great caution, wisdom, and deliberation. Action is necessary; inaction is unacceptable. No doubt others recognize the difficulty in targeting such an elusive enemy. This is why the principle behind "marque and reprisal" must be given serious consideration.

In retaliation, an unintended consequence of a policy of wanton destruction without benefit to our cause, could result in the overthrow of moderate Arab nations by the radicals that support bin Laden. This will not serve our interests and will surely exacerbate the threat to all Americans.

As we search for a solution to the mess we're in, it behooves us to look at how John F. Kennedy handled the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. Personally, that crisis led to a 5-year tour in the US Air Force for me.

As horrible and dangerous as the present crisis is, those of us that held our breath during some very tense moments that October realized that we were on the brink of a world-wide nuclear holocaust. That crisis represented the greatest potential danger to the world in all of human history.

President Kennedy held firm and stood up to the Soviets as he should have and the confrontation was resolved. What was not known at the time was the reassessment of our policy that placed nuclear missiles in the Soviet's back yard, in Turkey. These missiles were quietly removed a few months later and the world became a safer place in which to live. Eventually, we won the cold war without starting World War III.

Our enemy today, as formidable as he is, cannot compare to the armed might of the Soviet Union in the fall of 1962.

Wisdom and caution on Kennedy's part in dealing with the crisis was indeed "a profile in courage." But his courage was not only in his standing up to the Soviets, but his willingness to re-examine our nuclear missile presence in Turkey, which if it had been known at the time would have been condemned as an act of cowardice.

President Bush now has the challenge to do something equally courageous and wise. This is necessary if we expect to avert a catastrophic World War III. When the President asks for patience as he and his advisors deliberate, seeking a course of action, all Americans should surely heed his request.

Mr. Speaker, I support President Bush and voted for the authority and the money to carry out his responsibility to defend this country, but the degree of death and destruction and chances of escalation must be carefully taken into consideration.

It is only with sadness that I reflect on the support, the dollars, the troops, the weapons and training provided by US taxpayers that are now being used against us. Logic should tell us that intervening in all the wars of the world has been detrimental to our self-interest and should be reconsidered.

The efforts of a small minority in Congress to avoid this confrontation by voting for the foreign policy of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and all the 19<sup>th</sup> century presidents went unheeded. The unwise policy of supporting so many militants who later became our armed enemies makes little sense whether it's bin Laden or Saddam Hussein. A policy designed to protect America is wise and frugal and hopefully it will once again be considered. George Washington, as we all know, advised strongly, as he departed his

presidency, that we should avoid all entangling alliances with foreign nations.

The call for a non-interventionist foreign policy over past years has fallen on deaf ears. My suggestions made here today may meet the same fate. Yet, if truth is spoken, ignoring it will not negate it. In that case something will be lost. But, if something is said to be true and it is not and is ignored, nothing is lost. My goal is to contribute to the truth and to the security of this nation.

What I have said today is different from what is said and accepted in Washington as conventional wisdom, but it is not in conflict with our history or our constitution. It's a policy that has, whenever tried, generated more peace and prosperity than any other policy for dealing with foreign affairs. The authors of the Constitution clearly understood this. Since the light of truth shines brightest in the darkness of evil and ignorance, we should all strive to shine that light.