

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

This month we will be observing the tenth anniversary of one of the most tragic events in U.S. history, an event that affected us all. It is an appropriate time to honor the victims of terrorism and also those who have spent much of the last 10 years protecting our country from terrorist attacks. It is also a time to take stock of what we have learned and how we can remain safe and strong.

The tragedy of 9/11 was felt not only in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, but across the country and around the world. This country is a nation of immigrants, and so it was that citizens from more than 70 countries died in the terrorist attacks that day. The shock and grief we experienced then has been shared by many others throughout the world in the wake of similar deadly mass attacks in places such as Mumbai, Madrid, London, Beslan, Jakarta, Norway, and recently, the Nigerian capital of Abuja. So one thing we have learned is: we are not alone in our grief, and we can join with others in our resolve to combat terrorists and prevent such tragedies. In working to detect, dismantle and defeat terrorism plots, therefore, we are forming stronger alliances with those who share our commitment to peaceful co-existence and individual liberty. Those alliances are being forged both at home and abroad, and must include Muslim Americans, many of whom have been important partners in the fight against terrorism.

In the last 10 years, more than two million Americans, including some members of this office, have served in war zones overseas in an effort to keep our country safe. Many of them, and millions more in intelligence and law enforcement agencies, were inspired to serve their country by the events of September 11th. Al Qaeda may not yet be defeated, but thanks to the hard work of those men and women, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks is dead, his organization and its allies are depleted and on the run, and we are safer now than we were then.

One thing we have learned is that our nation's greatest weapon against terrorism is its resilience. Our political and legal systems are far from perfect. Some debates over how to safeguard the nation have been heated. But we have emerged from the shock of the 2001 attacks and their aftermath without succumbing to fear, intolerance, and bigotry. While we are continuing to use the justice system to aggressively pursue terrorists – in 2009 and 2010, the Department of Justice charged more defendants with serious terrorism offenses than in any two-year period in history – we have reaffirmed our commitment to the rule of law, and to the protection of civil liberties. Terrorists succeed where isolation, hatred, and division prevails. We are safest and strongest when we are united around those democratic values that we share as Americans.