

from our viewpoint...

## We briefly pause to reflect, remember

Americans paused briefly on Monday, Sept. 11, to reflect. Then they went to their jobs. To school. To shop. To visit. To do what they've been doing every day since the horror of Sept. 11, 2001.

We paused in different ways. A personal moment of silence. A visit to a church. A thought. Dwell not for those who died, but for those left behind. And for those who, in their heroic efforts after the twin towers came down in New York, are suffering the consequences of polluted air at what has become known as "Ground Zero."

The effects of that fatal attack continue these five years later as many hundreds, perhaps thousands, who hurried to the scene to help out are ill today. Seriously ill.

It is appropriate that we remembered those who died in the Twin Towers, at the Pentagon, and in a field in rural western Pennsylvania. Their deaths were the direct result of the attack, but our thoughts and our prayers rightfully need to include those who battled unknown environmental hazards in search for survivors at Ground Zero.

It was indeed disturbing to hear some Americans take to the airwaves and begin finger-pointing as to whom to blame for the Sept. 11 attacks. Some said it was our own government acting against its own people. Some blamed former President Bill Clinton. Some pointed to President George W. Bush.

The only people not blamed for anything were Adam and Eve, and that was surprising considering the vastness of the umbrella under which the finger-pointers herded in their troops of guilt.

It happened. And we have been dealing with it ever since. And yes, we are somewhat safer today than we were before 9-11. Critics aside, we are making headway in that department. We are being vigilant. We are giving up some things we'd rather not as a trade-off for our security. The attacks ushered in changes none of us could have imagined.

Five years have passed. Uneasy years, yes. But we have become stronger with each passing day. The lessons learned on Sept. 11, 2001, were tough, but served as a wake-up call. Nothing is a given. And we must be prepared, all of us, to make sure that nothing is taken away, either. — *Tom Dreiling*

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## Terrorist believe they have a message

In case you've been wondering what this war is all about, al-Qaida has thoughtfully issued a video explaining.

Osama bin Laden and his troops, it seems, are just looking out for our immortal souls. And you thought they were just a bunch of nut cases out to blow things up.

The 48-minute video features Osama's No. 2, Ayman al-Zawahri, and a young American the FBI believes has been training as an al-Qaida terrorist.

The American, Adam Yehiye Gadahn, 28, reportedly makes a long speech in the tape, his second with al-Zawahri. He explains how God sent the Prophet Mohammed to correct the "errors" in Judaism and Christianity.

In his introduction, al-Zawahri exhorts us to convert before it is too late:

"To the American people and the people of the West in general ... God sent his Prophet Mohammed with guidance and the religion of truth."

Gadahn warns American soldiers fighting "Bush's crusade" they're on the losing team: "Instead of killing yourself for Bush, why not surrender to the truth (of Islam), escape from the unbelieving army and join the winning side? Time is running out, so make the right choice before it's too late."

So there you have it. You thought it was about oil.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

But it's oh so much more than that.

And yes, the terrorist leaders may be nut cases, but they're dead serious about this. Like those two crazy cartoon mice, Pinky and Brain, they spend every day plotting how to take over the world.

They think it can be done. They have a vision of a Muslim paradise here on earth, where every knee bows to Mecca and every tongue acknowledges Allah.

It seems so silly, such a ... nuisance. A tiny army without a country, fighting the great powers of the world. Trying to dominate them.

Bin Laden and his cohorts don't represent a majority of Arab thought. Most Arab leaders believe in a live-and-let-live approach to world affairs. While they have their issues, they know we all have more in common than the things which separate us.

"We are all sons of Abraham," one said to me, referring to the three great religions based on "The Book."

## What's next for Cuba?



bill steigerwald

• newsmakers

Fidel Castro looks like he'll soon be joining his comrades Stalin and Mao in the communist hereafter.

After 47 years of abusing the Cuban people and wrecking their economy, Fidel — hospitalized, possibly dying or already dead — has "temporarily" passed his dictatorial powers to Raul Castro, his vice president and younger brother.

No one is sure what will happen next. But Frank Calzon knows as much about what's going in Cuba and in the Cuban community in Miami as almost anyone. No friend of Fidel, Calzon is executive director of the Center for a Free Cuba, which calls itself "an independent, non-partisan institution dedicated to promoting human rights and a transition to democracy and the rule of law on the island." I talked to the Havana-born activist Thursday by phone from his offices in Washington.

Q: Do think Fidel is really already dead?  
A: There's no way of knowing that. You don't have an independent media. You don't have a media stakeout. You don't have film of a wife going into visit him. You don't have the kind of coverage that allows Americans to answer questions like about their leaders when they are sick.

Q: When he dies, what do you think will happen in the short and medium runs?  
A: In the short term, something along the lines of what you have now, which is a military government. It's interesting that Fidel, in his letter, not only transferred power to Raul but issued specific orders mentioning a number of other generals, and they are hard-liners in Havana. That's immediate. After that ... it's going to be very tricky, because we don't know how many people among the leaders of the government think differently than what they have said until now.

Q: What would you like to see happen in Cuba?  
A: The Czech model — a transition to democracy along the lines of what happened in Prague. The emergence of a leader with the kind of ethical projection that Vaclav Havel has had. What Raul is looking for, however, is the North Korean model.

Q: How should U.S. policy treat this event?  
A: U.S. policy should be thoughtful and

careful and not be rushing to any decisions overnight. Secondly, I think the United States ought to reach out and make explicit to the Cuban people that the United States is not interested in controlling the destiny of Cuba, but that the United States is ready and willing to help with humanitarian assistance, with supplies, with know-how, if and when the Cuban people ask for it. And that's exactly what the administration has done.

Q: Can you compare Fidel the Socialist Hero with the real Fidel?  
A: Well, Fidel is not a socialist hero if one thinks of the socialism in Sweden or Europe. If we are talking about Soviet socialism, that's what he is. In that sense, he's more like Stalin. I think Fidel has more followers outside Cuba than inside Cuba.

Q: The real Fidel — is he ...  
A: The real Fidel has always put power ahead of everything. Ahead of his personal relationships, ahead of the well-being of the Cuban people. There is no reason for Cuba to be in such poor economic condition. Fidel could have easily said to Cubans on the island, "You get remittances from the United States. You use that money to buy seeds or machinery or to engage in trade." He would not do that, although that by itself will have a tremendous impact on economic recovery. He wants to control. He's running Cuba the way his father used to run his plantation. The old man used to pay his workers in tickets. They didn't get money. They would get these pieces of paper and they would go to the company store. That's what Castro is doing today.

Q: What is life like for the average Cuban right now?  
A: It's a nightmare. Again, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Hungarians, all those folks would understand it. Rationing after 40-some years. Despite the propaganda, when a child turns 7 he is no longer entitled to milk in the rationing system. The Cuban government has in place a sys-

tem of apartheid where Cubans cannot enter hotels, beaches, restaurants that are set aside for foreigners. That includes medical care. Cuba has a program called Servimed for "health tourism." They have all the medicine and any antibiotics they might need for foreigners but there are great shortages in Cuban hospitals and local pharmacies.

Q: The friends of Fidel would always argue that, "Yeah, but they have that free health care and free education."  
A: It's true that they have education but I'm not sure that it is free. Cuban teenagers go to high school in the countryside hundreds of miles away from their homes. Sometimes they don't see their parents for a couple of months. They go to school in the morning and they work 5 or 6 hours in the afternoon. So, I don't know how "free" that is.

As far as health care, yes, there are many doctors in Cuba. Fidel cares — for propaganda reasons — about having doctors. But the health care of the Cuban people is severely limited. If you have food shortages, how does that have an impact on health?

He also manipulates the health statistics. For example, Cuba, it is true, has a very low infant-mortality rate. But if you look at another page of the report you'll find out that Cuba has a very very high abortion rate. When a woman has a problem pregnancy, the Cuban government policy is to strongly encourage her to have an abortion. So if you kill all the sick people, of course, you have better health for the others.

Q: Has anyone ever talked about Cuba becoming the 51st state some day?  
A: That was discussed a couple of hundred years ago, but I don't think it has any appeal beyond just a very small number of folks. I don't think the United States is ready to take over a poor island like that. The experiment with Puerto Rico continues to be an experiment. I think it would be much better to have a free, democratic and independent Cuba with a Cuban-American community here that would certainly help Cuba. But there's no need or any desire for such a thing as statehood.

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