

**MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF THE WAR ON TERROR**
by Christopher Preble

"WE MUST REMAIN VIGILANT."
August Pfluger discusses how 9/11 has
shaped his service in the military
and on the Hill



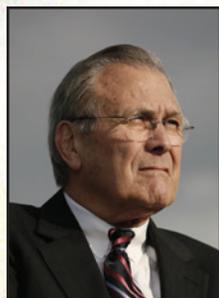
The Rippon Forum

September 2021
Volume 55, No. 4

Twenty Years Later...

THE LESSONS OF 9/11

**With essays by Jim Inhofe, Michael McCaul, Joni Ernst, Ann Wagner,
Andrew Garbarino & Michael Chertoff**



Plus:

A MEETING TO REMEMBER

**On September 11, 2001, 10 members of Congress joined Donald Rumsfeld
for breakfast in his private dining room at the Pentagon.
This is their story.**

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The Ripon Forum

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Volume 55, Number 4

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In this edition

On December 7, 1961, President John F. Kennedy appeared at the AFL-CIO Convention in Miami, delivering a speech that opened with his calling attention to the solemn anniversary the nation was marking that day.

"I suppose really," Kennedy began, "the only two dates that most people remember where they were were Pearl Harbor and the death of President Franklin Roosevelt. We face entirely different challenges on this Pearl Harbor. In many ways the challenges are more serious, and in a sense long-reaching, because I don't think that any of us had any doubt in those days that the United States would survive and prevail and our strength increase."

Today, of course, the two dates that most Americans of a certain age remember are Kennedy's own death two years later and the attacks of September 11, 2001. And as America marks the 20th anniversary of what many have called the younger generation's Pearl Harbor, it is fitting that we stop what we are doing and remember the nearly 3,000 lives that were lost on 9/11, and the many thousands more that have been lost on the fields of battle in the years since.

At the same time, it is also worth pausing to reflect how the September 11th terrorist attacks changed America. In this edition of *The Ripon Forum*, we attempt to do just that with a series of essays that examine the lessons that were learned on that fateful day. Those writing for this edition include U.S. Sen Jim Inhofe, the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Michael McCaul, the Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Michael Chertoff, the former Secretary of Homeland Security under President Bush. Also writing are three other leading voices on homeland security and national security — U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, U.S. Rep. Ann Wagner, and U.S. Rep Andrew Garbarino, who grew up less than 60 miles from where the Twin Towers once stood.

Two themes stand out in their essays. The first theme is that when it comes to lessons learned from 9/11, President Biden has not learned many. The consensus is that the President's decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan has increased the risk we face from a terrorist attack. At the same time, the haphazard nature of the withdrawal has decreased the trust and confidence that other nations have in us. In short, the decision is a disaster that has left the American people less secure and damaged America's reputation around the world.

The second theme that emerges from their essays is that the country needs to pull together like it did after 9/11 and that unity is one of the best weapons we have in confronting the threat of terrorism, whether that threat is from overseas or here at home. Citing the 9/11 Commission, which investigated many of the failures that made the September 11th attacks possible, Chertoff also makes an explicit appeal to members of Congress to get behind a similar investigation today. "I call on our elected officials," he writes, "to support the January 6th Commission with the same unity and sense of purpose that was present in the aftermath of 9/11."

On the morning of 9/11, 10 Republican members of Congress joined Donald Rumsfeld for breakfast in his private dining room at the Pentagon to discuss the threats facing America at that time and the importance of keeping our country secure. The meeting ended with Rumsfeld being handed a note informing him that a plane had struck a building in New York. The group returned to Capitol Hill a little more than 30 minutes before another plane hit the Pentagon. In this edition of the *Forum*, we talk to six of those who were in the room that morning, and tell their story for the first time.

After 20 years of waging war against terrorism, Christopher Preble of the Atlantic Council examines whether America is winning the war. Former FBI agent and current University of Michigan Professor Javed Ali looks at the rise of homegrown terror in the United States and the threat it poses today. Andy Weber and Nicole Teran of the Council on Strategic Risks assess the threat of bioterror in this age of COVID-19 and what the U.S. needs to do to keep the American people secure. And in the latest Ripon Profile, first-term Congressman August Pfluger of Texas discusses his service in the military, his new career on Capitol Hill, and how the attacks of September 11, 2001, affected both.

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition of *The Ripon Forum*, and welcome any comments or questions you may have.

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A Meeting to Remember

On September 11, 2001, 10 members of Congress joined Donald Rumsfeld for breakfast in his private dining room at the Pentagon. This is their story.

by LOU ZICKAR

Meetings are a dime a dozen in Washington. Most are forgettable. Many are avoidable. And some seem to have no purpose at all. But occasionally, a meeting comes along that is forever remembered by those who attend it.

Twenty years ago, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld hosted such a meeting in his private dining room at the Pentagon. In a read ahead memo written by Powell Moore, Rumsfeld's head of legislative affairs, the meeting was described as an opportunity for the Defense Secretary "to seek the continued support and active promotion of Department priorities by House Republicans who have supported your efforts."

Ten Republican lawmakers would join him for breakfast. The group would discuss not only the annual National Defense Authorization Act which was scheduled to be debated on the House floor that week, but Rumsfeld's broader goal of strengthening and transforming the military so it was more agile and better able to meet 21st century threats. And yet looking back on it two decades later, what ultimately made this meeting so memorable for those who attended it was not the issues at hand but the day they were discussed.

The meeting was held on September 11, 2001.

In the room

"It was a beautiful day," John Hostettler recalled, when asked recently to paint a picture of that morning and his thoughts heading into the 8:00 am meeting. Hostettler was representing Indiana's 8th Congressional District at the time. Elected as part of the "Republican Revolution" class of 1994, he was a member of the Armed Services Committee and, as the read ahead memo to Rumsfeld noted, served as Vice

Chairman of the Terrorism Subcommittee. "I was pretty hopeful with regard to this breakfast," he said.

John Shimkus struck a similar note looking back on the day.

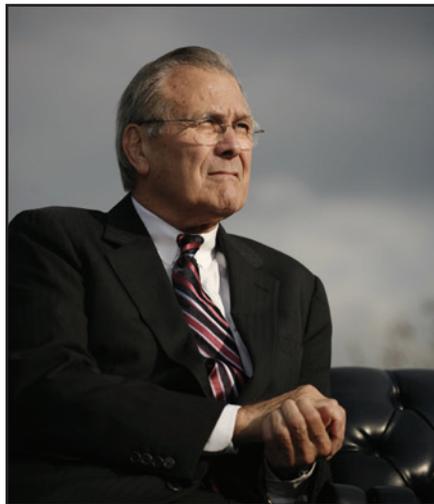
"It was a crisp, clear September morning," he observed. Shimkus was then serving his third term as the Representative from the 20th District of Illinois. A member of the Energy & Commerce Committee, he was also a West Point graduate who spent six years in the Army and was serving as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve at the time. "I have a military background, so I think I was invited because of that and because I supported the military."

He had met Rumsfeld before, and, he noted, was from Rumsfeld's home state. "I had been with the Secretary a couple of times, and he's all business," he said. "He's also an Illinoisan, so we bantered about Illinois a little."

For Mark Kirk, going to see Rumsfeld — or "Rummy," as he called him — was like "old home week." Kirk was also from Illinois, and had been elected the previous November to represent the same area of the state that Rumsfeld represented

when he served in the House in the 1960s. A member of the Armed Services Committee who would later be elected to the U.S. Senate, he was also, like Shimkus, a military veteran, having served as an intelligence officer in the Navy and Navy Reserve. Like Shimkus, he also remembered Rumsfeld's business-like approach to the meeting that morning.

"Rummy was always completely in command,"



"Rummy was always completely in command. To be there having breakfast in the Secretary's private dining room was quite an honor."

Kirk said. “To be there having breakfast in the Secretary’s private dining room was quite an honor.”

For Mac Thornberry, it was also the second time he would be meeting with Rumsfeld at the Pentagon that year. A member of the Armed Services Committee and leader in the same kind of military reform effort that both the Defense Secretary and the President were pushing, Thornberry — who had represented the 13th District of Texas since 1995 — had joined Rumsfeld in May for a news conference in the Pentagon briefing room to discuss the increasing importance of space in military and intelligence affairs. He viewed the September 11th meeting as a continuance of that discussion.

“I remember the topic was about what people at the time were calling military transformation,” the Texas Republican recalled. “It was reform of the military. President Bush — or then-candidate Bush — had given a speech at the Citadel about military reform. I think this was Secretary Rumsfeld bringing together some potential congressional allies to push forward on that effort, which was something I was very interested in.”

Chris Cox — who had represented the Orange County region of California in the House since 1989 and was also serving as Chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee at the time — had a similar recollection.

“The purpose was to discuss the need to rethink our defense strategy as we prepared for that year’s DOD authorization bill and the annual defense appropriations bill,” he stated. “Both President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld were intent on redesigning the Pentagon to adjust to the post-Cold War threats. After the fall of the Soviet empire and America’s victory in the Cold War, they believed America faced different and new challenges.”

According to Cox, Rumsfeld touched on these challenges during their discussion in remarks that would soon prove to be remarkably prescient.

“The message was essentially, ‘We live in a dangerous world, and the threats we face are constantly evolving,’ the California Republican recalled. “He had no doubt that, perhaps sooner than later, we would be faced with a significant event. And while the nature of the attack might be a surprise, he said the fact that it will happen should not be.”

Roger Wicker also attended the meeting at the Pentagon on September 11th and said he remembers that moment distinctly.

“He was talking about the fact that Americans needed to be aware of what a dangerous world we live in and that — even though it was a time of peace — we still needed a strong military.” Wicker, who represented the 1st District of Mississippi at the time and would go on to be elected

to the U.S. Senate seven years later, also recalled someone in the meeting asking the Defense Secretary what it would take to convince the American people that the nation needed a strong defense, and that Rumsfeld replied simply, “It may take an event.”

But perhaps the most memorable moment of the meeting for those still in the room occurred toward the end. At least some of the House members had already left to go back to Capitol Hill. Those who remained remembered an aide entering the room and giving Rumsfeld some startling news.

“An aide came in and said a twin engine aircraft had hit the World Trade Center,” Kirk recalled. “For those of us who are complete history buffs, we remembered when a twin engine B-25 accidentally hit the Empire State Building in 1945.”

“What I remember,” Thornberry said, “is somebody bringing him a note, and then he said to the group something about a plane hitting a building in New York. I think our conversation continued for a little bit more, and then

they either came in with another note or just whispered in his ear and basically said this situation in New York is pretty bad.”

“The Secretary’s military aide handed him a note,” Cox stated. “So we watched him read it, and then he politely but abruptly informed us of what had happened. A plane had crashed into the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. There was no more to

the report than that. And so there was no reason to think it wasn’t an accident, possibly involving a small plane because such things have been known to happen. But it was enough to prompt a quick end to our meeting.”

Aftermath

The members who had left the meeting earlier learned the news in other ways. John Shimkus and John Hostettler heard it from Congressman John Mica of Florida, who had also attended the meeting and received a phone call from an aide as they were preparing to board a shuttle to return to the Hill.

“Mica had already received one other call about the first plane into the tower,” Shimkus recalled. “And as we were loading onto the van, he got a call saying the second tower had been hit.”

“All of a sudden, he kind of gets ashen-looking,” Hostettler said. “We look over and say, ‘John, what’s the matter?’ And he said a second plane had just struck the other tower.”

Of course, what the group didn’t realize was that there were other planes, as well, one of which would hit the Pentagon a little more than a half hour after they left.

“What I remember is somebody bringing him a note, and then he said to the group something about a plane hitting a building in New York.”

“When I walked into my office,” Hostettler said of his return to the Hill, “my staff is watching the TVs. And one of my staff members looks at me and points to the TV and says, ‘Weren’t you just there?’ I look at the TV screen and see black smoke coming out of the Pentagon.”

Cox would end up with his own view of the devastation. After driving back to the Rayburn Building in his own car, he turned around and got back on the highway to head home.

“By the time I reached I-295 and began to head south, the third plane had just hit the Pentagon,” he recalled. “I couldn’t believe the sight. It was immediately apparent that something huge had happened. There was enormous black smoke that engulfed not only the Pentagon, but also much of the Washington skyline; dark and spreading clouds that obscured the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Monument, making it look as if the whole city had been attacked. It reminded me of scenes from movies like Independence Day.”

Wicker would recall that later in the day — after he had gone to his office in the Longworth Building to send his staff home and then returned to his condo in Alexandria — he could see ashes floating in the air from the Pentagon. “We were that close,” he said.

The Mississippi lawmaker would also observe something else.

“I’ve looked over the flight pattern of the plane that hit the Pentagon,” he said. “It took off from Dulles. I am supposing the al-Qaeda leadership that planned the attack intended for these four events to happen simultaneously. The hijackers allowed the plane that took off from Dulles to go much further. It got as far as Ohio. If they had gained control of the plane sooner, they would have crashed into the Pentagon while we were there.”

After returning to his office in the Cannon Building and then being evacuated by the Capitol Police, Thornberry remembers the difficulty he had reaching his wife Sally as he tried to make his way home.

“I had a Blackberry, and all of the circuits were full so you couldn’t make a local call,” he said. “Sally was at work, I didn’t know where the kids were, but I could call back to Texas. I could make long distance calls. I could not make local calls. So I would call my chief of staff in Ama-

rillo, and then she would call back to Sally and relay messages back and forth. I had her tell Sally to stay at work because the traffic was such a mess. When she finally got home and turned into the cul-de-sac that afternoon, every single house had their American flag out, which was one of the most moving parts for her.”

One of the most moving parts of the day for John Shimkus was later that night, when he joined a group of Republicans and Democrats on the steps of the Capitol to sing God Bless America.

“I still get chills thinking about it,” he remarked.

For Mark Kirk, the events of the day conjured up a different emotion.

“I remember being really angry that we were being chased out of our Capitol and thinking I was going to dedicate my service in Congress to making sure this never happened again,” he said.

Twenty Years Later

When asked to look back at the resolve and unity displayed in the days and weeks following 9/11 and compare it with the political environment on display today, those who attended the meeting at the Pentagon that tragic morning were unified in their belief that things had changed for the worse.

“I didn’t really think that politics could get any more divisive,” Hostettler stated. “But I was wrong. It’s a sad situation. That’s the only

word I can use to describe it.”

“We would be fools to be so divided as we have been,” Kirk observed. “Being divided is a luxury of peacetime.”

“The political environment is dramatically more partisan,” Thornberry stated, “which leads you to wonder if we could come together again if the situation required. I think you can argue that we’ve got a lot of situations that do require it, but we’re not doing very well at coming together to deal with them.”

“Unfortunately, partisanship is deeper now than at any time certainly in my life,” Cox said, “and probably it has not been so seriously a drag on the nation’s functioning since Reconstruction.”

As for the current threat environment facing America and how it has changed over the past two decades, those in the room with Secretary Rumsfeld on the morning of



“The hijackers allowed the plane that took off from Dulles to go much further ... If they had gained control of the plane sooner, they would have crashed into the Pentagon while we were there.”

September 11th expressed strong opinions in that regard, as well — especially with the Taliban once again in control of Afghanistan.

“If you had interviewed me 10 days ago, the answer might have been different,” Wicker stated. “It’s hard for me to answer that question except in the context of what has happened. Our Commander in Chief has made a series of grave mistakes in terms of leaving Afghanistan. And just when you think it can’t get worse, you realize it can get worse.”

“I think we basically have good intelligence now. But you have to know how to act on it. And in this case, our Commander in Chief ignored the overwhelming weight of advice he was getting from military people who know what they’re talking about.”

Kirk concurred.

“With the defeat in Afghanistan,” he said, “I think the threats we face have gone significantly upwards. The entire Jihadist world now think they can defeat us. This

decision to be defeated in Afghanistan makes another 9/11 much more likely.”

Thornberry struck a similar note.

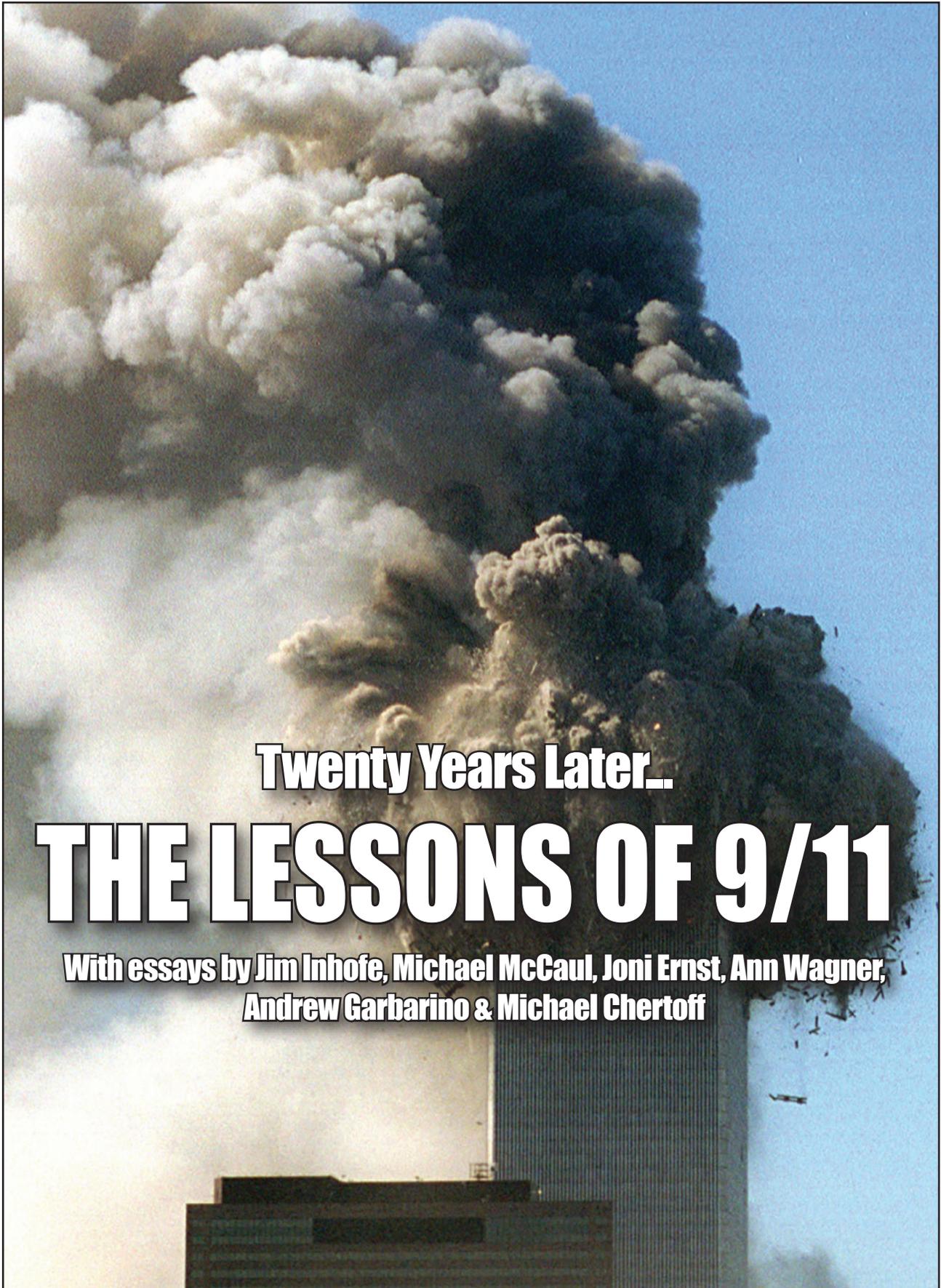
“I think it is a great mistake to assume that we are past the threat of terrorism,” he declared. “Certainly, the events of recent days should rekindle the intelligence collection and the preparedness for the kind of terrorist attack that we saw on 9/11, because I promise they haven’t given up.

“We’ve just been incredibly successful — thanks to the military, the intelligence community, and law enforcement — at preventing a repeat of 9/11. But it’s not because they gave up or they have quit trying. And so now they will have a safe haven again from which to operate. And I think that a terrorist threat is still very real to us for us.” **RF**

Lou Zickar is the Editor of The Ripon Forum. He previously served as an aide to U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry, and was on his staff on September 11, 2001.

The lawmakers who joined Rumsfeld for breakfast the morning of 9/11 returned to the Pentagon at his invitation on Sept. 10, 2004. The group is shown here with the Defense Secretary as he addresses the press outside the building. Those pictured include (left to right): Roger Wicker, Mac Thornberry, Randy "Duke" Cunningham, Chris Cox, John Shimkus, Kay Granger, Mark Kirk, Robin Hayes, and John Mica. (Photo credit: U.S. Dept. of Defense)





Twenty Years Later..

THE LESSONS OF 9/11

**With essays by Jim Inhofe, Michael McCaul, Joni Ernst, Ann Wagner,
Andrew Garbarino & Michael Chertoff**

We Cannot Create a Safe Haven For Terrorists

By leaving Afghanistan, we are doing just that

by JIM INHOFE

Over the recent days and weeks, it has become painfully clear that President Biden's decision to hastily withdraw from Afghanistan is a disaster and has made America more vulnerable than even before September 11, 2001.

We all warned that a total troop withdrawal in Afghanistan that ignored conditions on the ground was going to be a disaster, and it has been — an utter and humiliating debacle that has caused irrevocable harm to both our security and the welfare of Afghan women and children. It's even worse because President Biden had another option that he ignored: a small footprint in strategic locations to fight terrorists and protect America. Now, under President Biden's failed leadership, we have abandoned our allies and our partners and put this nation at risk.

President Biden's decision allows, and even accelerates, Afghanistan returning to the conditions that permitted the 9/11 terrorist attack to happen in the first place. Because of him, Afghanistan will, once again, become a petri dish for international terrorists. Leading up to 9/11, the Taliban harbored, aided, and abetted Al Qaeda, and that's what they've continued doing for the last 20 years. There is no reason to believe they will behave differently now. Either the Taliban is fully in charge and actively enables terrorists who want to attack America and the West, or the Taliban is not fully in control and terrorists take advantage of the security vacuum. Either way, international terrorists have a much freer hand, and we have no counterterrorism

partner to work with on the ground.

It is a shameful abandonment of not only a critical military mission, but also our partners and allies. The only beneficiaries of American weakness are our adversaries.

I've seen comparisons of this moment to what happened in Saigon nearly 50 years ago. This is worse. The Saigon image is a symbol of U.S. retreat and abandonment of its responsibility. The Kabul image is all of that and more. The U.S. exit from Kabul is enabling the return of the very terrorists who sheltered the 9/11 attackers. The image of U.S. planes abandoning Afghan civilians is now a symbol of American weakness, around which every Islamist terrorist group on the planet will rally. Saigon was a victory for global communism, but it didn't become a destination for communists. The same cannot be said for Afghanistan, which will once again become both a major safe haven for jihadis and their rallying cry of success.

It is unclear to me why the Biden Administration chose this path in Afghanistan. There were

other options, and we already learned this lesson the hard way in 2011 when we left Iraq and allowed ISIS to flourish. What's more, our strategy of a small economy of force effort on the ground works: examples of successful continued presence persist in Syria, Kosovo, and the Sinai.

I imagine the White House saw the political polling on Afghanistan and sold it as a way to try to portray that they succeeded where former President Trump could



President Biden's decision allows, and even accelerates, Afghanistan returning to the conditions that permitted the 9/11 terrorist attack to happen in the first place.

not. But President Trump was smart; he listened to his advisors and kept a small but effective footprint in Afghanistan to conduct counter-terrorism missions and bolster the confidence of our Afghan partners. He read the same polls, but prioritized national security over political expediency.

Now, America's security, America's reputation, and our Afghan partners have been weakened. The responsibility for this strategic disaster, and this humanitarian crisis, is squarely on President Biden.

This is bigger than just a Saigon moment; this is the moment his failure to lead condemned Afghan women and children back to the Stone Age. This is the moment he put America's security at risk because of political optics.

What is happening in Afghanistan now was

There were other options, and we already learned this lesson the hard way in 2011 when we left Iraq and allowed ISIS to flourish.

foreseeable and preventable. As I wrote in June, the President could have left a small contingent of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. This would have given our Afghan partners what they needed to prevent the Taliban from taking over. Yes, Afghanistan would have been far from perfectly stable. But Al Qaeda operatives would still be in prison, billions of dollars of U.S. equipment would not be in Taliban hands, thousands of American citizens and Afghan allies would not be fleeing for their lives, and Afghan girls would not be forced to wonder whether

their education was about to end forever. I could go on, but I don't have to. Sadly, the history books will. **RF**

Jim Inhofe represents the state of Oklahoma in the U.S. Senate, where he serves as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

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We Cannot Be Complacent in the Face of New Threats

by MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

After the Cold War ended, a sense of calm fell in the West. We had defeated the Soviet Union and felt invincible. The concept of security was historically under the pretense of war — one fought against nation-state adversaries. We did not think about unconventional enemies or the threats they posed.

At the same time, al-Qaeda was gaining strength and had thrived in a power vacuum of instability and chaos in Afghanistan. They were well-funded, with modern weaponry and a sophisticated communications system, and they had the Taliban providing them safe haven. With the Taliban in control, Afghanistan was the perfect breeding ground for terrorist organizations — and the perfect place for al-Qaeda to plan and launch an attack against the United States.

We failed to imagine what terrorist organizations were capable of — or the “unknown unknowns,” as Donald Rumsfeld described years after September 11th. For those reasons, many in our intelligence community underestimated the capability of al-Qaeda. That over-confidence and complacency would lead to the deadliest attack on U.S. soil since Pearl Harbor.

That evening, like many Americans I sat with my family in stunned mourning. Earlier that day, the entire world watched in horror as 19 terrorists killed nearly 3,000 people. They didn’t target a military base in a distant country. They targeted U.S. civilians on American soil. They hit symbols of our democracy and our financial might.

Like many Americans, I couldn’t believe a small group of individuals could launch such a devastating and deadly attack. How could something like this happen to the most powerful country in the world? What was this new enemy we were facing? And how

could we defeat them and ensure this would never happen again? We would need a new approach to stop future attacks posed not only by al-Qaeda, but other terrorist entities.

President George W. Bush began to take steps to reduce our vulnerabilities by updating our military operations and intelligence community efforts.

He also sought to eliminate the bureaucratic walls that discouraged intelligence and law enforcement agencies from sharing information that were a direct cause of the September 11th attacks. That’s why he established the Department of Homeland Security, whose sole duty was to protect the homeland against foreign threats. These moves were meant to make us more responsive and able to identify threats before we were hit again. And while we have sadly not been able to stop all attacks, we have not seen another attack on the scale or scope of September 11th since.

In addition, we needed to eliminate the threat posed by al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden. President Bush demanded the Taliban hand over bin Laden or risk the full might of the U.S. military. They refused, and Operation Enduring Freedom began on October 7, 2001. The goal was never nation building,

as President Biden and his team now claim. It was simply to find the terrorist mastermind who murdered almost 3,000 people on American soil. But in order to achieve that goal, we had to defeat the Taliban and help to establish a more peaceful Afghanistan where we could conduct a search for bin Laden.

Over the next 20 years, we helped do exactly that. We worked with the Afghan people as they built their country’s economy and established a democracy. We trained their military to be able to defend against



20 years after the horrific attacks of September 11th, we are once again facing an Afghanistan that will serve as a safe haven for terrorists.

attacks. And we encouraged Afghan women to step out of the shadows and take their rightful place in their country. Our service men and women also successfully completed countless missions to stop terror threats from reaching our shores – it is because of their service and sacrifice our homeland is safe and secure.

In other words, we gave the Afghan people hope. But over the last month, that hope was shattered.

Now, American citizens are trapped inside a country run by a violent and murderous terrorist organization. President Biden broke his promise to get our Afghan partners to safety and has weakened our standing in the world. And 13 brave American service members lost their lives. All because of the failed leadership of President Joe Biden.

As we investigate how President Biden allowed this to happen and why he ignored bipartisan pleas to evacuate our partners and secure our embassy

personnel, it is critical we also plan for the long-term fallout the President’s failures may cause.

Because now, 20 years after the horrific attacks of September 11th, we are once again facing an Afghanistan that will serve as a safe haven for terrorists. I predict we will soon face the threat of attacks emanating from the country targeting American soil and our allies.

Despite all these circumstances, I am also confident the American people and the American spirit will rise to the occasion — just as we did after September 11th. We joined together — united in a shared cause. And I believe that sentiment and spirit will continue to live on as we face new challenges as a nation.

RF

I am confident the American people and the American spirit will rise to the occasion — just as we did after September 11th.

Michael T. McCaul represents the 10th District of Texas in the U.S. House of Representatives. He serves as the Republican Leader of the Foreign Affairs Committee.



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We Cannot Change the Past, but We Must Learn From It

by JONI ERNST

Twenty years ago, on a bright, clear-skied September morning, our nation was attacked.

Many of us probably remember where we were on that fateful, horrific day. I know I do.

That morning, I was at home in Red Oak, Iowa with my nearly two-year-old daughter. We weren't watching TV at the time, until my neighbor Wanda called and told me to turn it on. I instantly saw the horrible events unfolding right in front of us—and those images will forever be burned in my mind.

The second phone call I got was from my Iowa Army National Guard unit. "Captain Ernst, we're doing a 100 percent accountability check. We need you to stay by the phone all day, so we know how we can get ahold of you."

It was an experience many of us had never felt before—the terrifying shock of knowing that the country we love and our fellow Americans were under siege.

Lessons Learned

Before 9/11, Osama bin Laden told the world al-Qaeda was at war with America. It's clear now that we were not adequately prepared to address al-Qaeda's threat to our country, and prevent the attack from happening in the first place.

We cannot change the past, but we must learn from it.

As a combat veteran who commanded troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I had the honor of serving alongside a number of brave women and men who risked life and limb in defense of our nation. For the past 20 years, the servicemembers who have served in the Global War on Terror have taken the fight to the enemy so that our homeland would be saved from further attacks.

For two decades, these troops have succeeded. They led the response to 9/11, caught Osama bin Laden, and kept foreign terrorists off our shores.

The haphazard withdrawal from Afghanistan has left many of these heroes feeling as though their sacrifices were all for naught, their efforts continuously erased with every passing day under a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

There is now a void in Afghanistan that the Taliban and

other violent extremist organizations are primed to exploit. As we've already seen, these bloodthirsty terrorists — the same terrorists that sponsored Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the attacks on our homeland 20 years ago — will stop at nothing to imperil the lives of American citizens and our Afghan allies.

It is absolutely imperative that we remain vigilant to the potential consequences of the rushed pullout from Afghanistan.

The American people know that what happens over half a world away can have a direct impact on their safety. With our adversaries emboldened, the Taliban reinvigorated, and the threat of violent extremist organizations looming large, we must remain clear-eyed about the persistent threats jeopardizing our national security. American lives are hanging in the balance. We simply cannot afford to let our guard down.

Never Forget.

Our adversaries sought to tear us apart with their cowardly acts on September 11, 2001. But instead, they brought us together as Americans. When our nation and the entire world seemed to stop on 9/11, firefighters, police officers, first responders, and ordinary citizens rushed into danger and courageously put their lives on the line to save countless others.

In the days that followed 9/11, America made a pledge to never forget the sacrifice of these selfless heroes — and the nearly 3,000 victims who lost their lives in the attacks. We also must

never take for granted all that our military men and women have given in the fight against terrorism over the last 20 years.

It truly cannot be said enough: I am forever grateful for the brave Americans who answered the call to protect our nation, their families, and those who still carry the burdens of war.

We will never forget. That is our sacred promise. **RF**

Joni Ernst, the first female combat veteran elected to the Senate and a former commander in the Iowa Army National Guard, is the junior senator from Iowa and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.



It is absolutely imperative that we remain vigilant to the potential consequences of the rushed pullout from Afghanistan.

We Must Always Honor Our Commitments to Our Allies and Friends

by ANN WAGNER

Twenty years ago, millions of Americans watched in shock and grief as the world changed forever. Our nation mourned the unimaginable loss of thousands of our countrymen in the deadliest attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor, and we resolved that the United States would never again experience a 9/11.

In service of this objective, the United States made immense sacrifices. American servicemen and women, including my eldest son, Raymond, deployed to the other side of the world to ensure the Taliban understood they could not under any circumstances allow Afghanistan to serve as a haven for terrorists bent on attacking the United States. Because of the courage of these men and women, vulnerable populations became safer, and women and girls won markedly improved rights to work and go to school — a remarkable consequence of our mission to deny a homeland for terrorists.

In addition, the United States took a long, hard look at the critical weaknesses that left us vulnerable to attack by al-Qaeda and undertook serious efforts to correct its shortcomings. U.S. intelligence agencies knew well before September 11, 2001, that Osama bin Laden was determined to strike the United States, but failed to share information effectively and work in tandem to prevent an attack. Today, the United States has restructured its intelligence community and interagency processes to facilitate closer teamwork and more seamless information sharing.

We have also revolutionized our counterterrorism capabilities, at home and abroad. The Department of Homeland Security was established for exactly this purpose in 2002, and counterterrorism became a key mission of law enforcement agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. military and intelligence agencies developed the ability to find and eradicate terrorist threats at their source. These capabilities were only won through long years of hard work, courage, and sacrifice by U.S., coalition, and Afghan forces.



President Biden’s ill-advised, disorganized, and dishonorable flight from Afghanistan makes the world, and America, less safe.

Our immense achievements are difficult to square with the tragedy unfolding in the wake of the Biden Administration’s catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan. The fall of Afghanistan was undeniably a colossal failure of intelligence, planning, policy, and leadership. How can Americans trust President Biden’s promise that “over-the-horizon” counterterrorism capabilities will keep them safe when the Administration appears to have spectacularly misunderstood the reality on the ground? How can our allies, who have fought bravely alongside us for two decades, retain faith in our resolve to defend them as well as ourselves?

President Biden’s ill-advised, disorganized, and dishonorable flight from Afghanistan makes the world, and America, less safe.

Our coalition allies stood with us against the Taliban because our homeland, not theirs, had been attacked. They asked the United States for more time to safely withdraw their troops and personnel, and the Administration ignored their pleas. As our work to contain and combat the

influence of the People’s Republic of China grows ever more urgent, it is imperative we demonstrate to the world that we stand in lockstep with our allies. Anything less hands China and Russia an opportunity to paint the United States as an uncertain and unreliable partner.

Even more concerning is the heightened terror threat and tragic casualties resulting from the chaotic U.S. withdrawal. Contrary to the President’s assertions, al-Qaeda has not vanished from Afghanistan. The United Nations reports that

significant numbers of al-Qaeda fighters and extremists, including much of al-Qaeda's leadership, remain in the country. As both the Defense Intelligence Agency and U.S. Treasury have documented, these terrorists retain close ties with the Taliban and enjoy their protection. It is almost a foregone conclusion that the Taliban will allow al-Qaeda and ISIS the space and impunity to again use Afghanistan as a staging ground for attacks on U.S. targets.

By the admission of President Biden's own CIA director, William Burns, the spy network painstakingly built during U.S. and coalition forces' service in Afghanistan will wither away in our absence, leaving us effectively blind to terrorist threats emanating from the country. And we cannot simply relocate our counter-terror forces to a nearby country to ensure we retain the ability to attack terrorist threats at their source. The United States has not operated a base in Central Asia since 2014. Other powers in the region, Pakistan most egregiously, have demonstrated that they prefer to work with China, Russia, and even the Taliban over the United States.

How can our allies, who have fought bravely alongside us for two decades, retain faith in our resolve to defend them as well as ourselves?

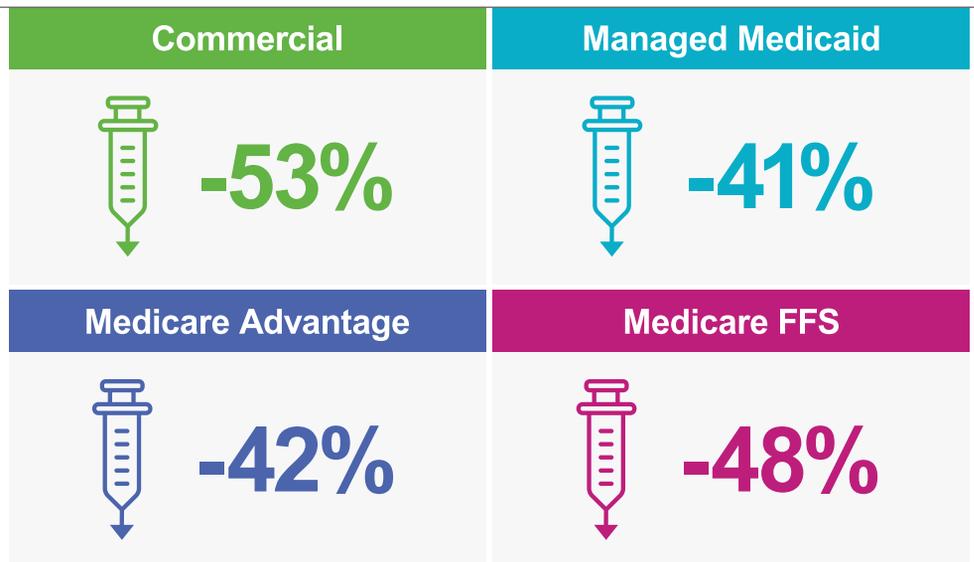
I fear the current Administration has forgotten the most important lesson of 9/11: the necessity of sending the clear and unequivocal message to our adversaries that attacks on the United States, its people, and its allies will be met with forceful consequences. Instead, President Biden communicated that saving the lives of American citizens and the brave Afghans who fought alongside us mattered less than meeting a deadline set by the Taliban.

As Vice Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I am working with my colleagues to send the messages that the Administration will not. The United States does not tolerate threats to the American people, and we will always honor our commitments to our allies and friends.

RF

Ann Wagner represents the 2nd District of Missouri in the U.S. House of Representatives. She serves as the Vice Ranking Member on both the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Committee on Financial Services.

Immunization rates for teens and adults have fallen dramatically during the pandemic...



We must act quickly to stop the spread of vaccine preventable diseases.

Avalere Health compared adolescent and adult vaccine billing patterns in commercial, Medicaid managed care (due to variability across states in billing requirements for vaccines provided through the Vaccines for Children program, this analysis may not fully capture adolescent vaccine utilization in the Managed Medicaid market), Medicare FFS, and MA markets from January-August 2019 to vaccine billing patterns during the same months in 2020 (e.g., March 2019 to March 2020), represented as a percent change between years. Between 2019-2020, aggregate vaccine claims submitted between March-August decreased by 53% (Commercial), 41% (Managed Medicaid), 42% (Medicare Advantage) and 48% (Medicare FFS).

Source: Avalere Health. Aggregate Changes for All Vaccine Products Across Markets. Adolescents and Adults, 2019-2020.

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We Must Never Again Underestimate Our Enemy

by ANDREW R. GARBARINO

September 11, 2001, is burned into the memory of every American who experienced that day. I vividly remember watching the second tower fall live on television as I stood less than 60 miles away in my high school's teachers' lounge surrounded by stunned teachers and classmates.

In moments like that, it's difficult to process how this could happen, but in the nearly 20 years since, we have had time to examine what went wrong and what we need to do differently. That is why it is so disturbing to find ourselves, just days from the 20th anniversary of this horrific attack, watching the Taliban once again rise to power in Afghanistan. It seems we haven't learned from the lessons of the past and that we have a lot of work to do to prevent attacks like what occurred on 9/11 from happening again.

To understand where we are today, we must first go back to where we were in the months and weeks leading up to the 9/11 attack. At the core of the matter was a fatal intelligence error. Security officials in the top tiers of government failed to see al-Qaeda as a serious threat. The 9/11 Commission Report outlines numerous indicators of a plane hijacking attack like the one executed on that fateful day, alongside the reasonable logic to explain the unlikelihood of such an attack. In the end, we were wrong. We underestimated our enemy and Americans paid the price with their lives. Hindsight is 20/20. However, this is a mistake that we cannot repeat if we hope to prevent future attacks.

Securing the Homeland is the most critical American imperative. As a member of the Homeland Security Committee and Ranking Member of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee, I take this responsibility as my most solemn duty. In order to do so, we must update our thinking of what constitutes a national security threat to match the ever-changing threat landscape. The face of terror has evolved to one that is more complex. I believe that

cyberattacks are the preeminent threat of our time, as we have seen recently in the countless intrusions perpetrated by cyber criminals sponsored by foreign adversaries across every sector – from government institutions to the energy sector, and even our local school districts. That is why I have worked closely with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to introduce legislation to strengthen our cyber preparedness. Homeland security is not a political issue. It affects all Americans so we must work together as Americans, not as partisans, to protect our nation.

As we face increasing cyber threats from foreign adversaries, we must not let our guard down when it comes to physical threats. Over the course of this year, we have seen a record number of illegal border crossings. There are known gang members and individuals on the terrorism watch list who are exploiting the Administration's weak policies. In July 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported over two

hundred thousand apprehensions at the border – the highest in over two decades. Since January 2021, over eight thousand of those arrested at the border were convicted criminals. This influx creates a dangerous threat to our national security. Addressing the crisis at our southern border must be the utmost priority for Congress.

As we watch the Taliban return to its seat of power in Afghanistan and the ongoing crisis at our Southern border, we must be prepared for imminent terror attacks. The Director of National Intelligence reported in April 2021 that ISIS, al-Qaeda, Iran, and its militant allies continue to plot terrorist attacks against U.S. persons and interests. If we cannot stop the influx of illegal crossings, it will seriously damage our ability to prevent terrorist organizations from breaching our country to execute deadly attacks on American soil.

In the 20 years since the 9/11 attack, our intelligence and homeland

security community has made great strides to improve our security posture, but in many ways America is under greater threat than ever. The situation in Afghanistan has made this painfully clear. We cannot let up our vigilance, we cannot underestimate our enemies, and we cannot afford to forget the lessons of the past lest we be forced to have the same reflections 20 years from now about a yet- to-be-seen attack against Americans. **RF**

Andrew R. Garbarino represents the 2nd District of New York in the U.S. House of Representatives. He serves on the Committee on Homeland Security and is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Innovation.



As we watch the Taliban return to its seat of power in Afghanistan and the ongoing crisis at our Southern border, we must be prepared for imminent terror attacks.



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We Need to Be Unified Against All Threats, Both Foreign *and* Domestic

by MICHAEL CHERTOFF

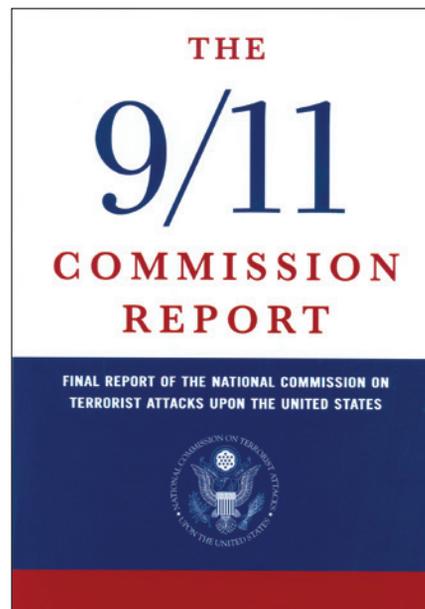
On September 11, 2001, 19 terrorists executed a horrific plan to hijack aircraft and turn them into guided missiles that destroyed the World Trade Center, damaged the Pentagon, and killed approximately 3,000 people. In carrying out their plot, the terrorists exploited vulnerabilities or gaps in several security systems that were intended to protect our borders and our aviation system. Among these weaknesses were the lack of a sufficient program to collect and analyze information about foreign travelers coming to the U.S.; insecure identification requirements for passengers boarding flights domestically; a largely privatized passenger and baggage screening process at the airports; and, no real security on board the aircraft itself.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the United States worked tirelessly to confront the new reality that our country faced. The most noticeable and consequential investments included enhanced screening of people and cargo traveling into the U.S. by air, sea, rail, and land. We also made successful improvements in our ability to share information across law enforcement agencies. The Department of Homeland Security implemented the Law Enforcement Information

Sharing Initiative which improved how local, national, and international agencies share information. Proof of the enhancements in our information sharing capabilities is evident in the 2006 thwarted plot to detonate liquid explosives aboard airliners bound for the United States and Canada from Great Britain. By working closely with our overseas counterparts and the joint cooperation of U.S. intelligence agencies monitoring the threat, a large-scale attack was foiled, and hundreds of lives were saved.

During the past decade the U.S. remained largely focused on the threat posed to our homeland by global terrorism and the coordination of large-scale attacks by Jihadists. However, in recent years a newer threat has emerged, that of domestic terrorism. These attacks are perpetrated by our own citizens with a desire to inflict major harm. In its October 2020 Homeland Threat Assessment, the Department of Homeland Security stated that “Ideologically motivated lone offenders and small groups pose the most likely terrorist threat to

the Homeland, with Domestic Violent Extremists presenting the most persistent and lethal threat.” There is no clearer manifestation of this threat than the events that unfolded on January 6th. Led



The 9/11 Commission report allowed for a bipartisan examination of the failures that contributed to the execution of the most devastating act of terrorism our country has ever seen.

by paramilitary groups like the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys and communicating by way of encrypted messaging, they launched an attack on the U.S. Capitol and the very foundation of our nation's democracy. But the question we must ask ourselves is how did we get to this place and what precipitated a mob's attempt to overthrow the results of a Presidential election?

The seeds of January 6th grew out of a prolific spread of disinformation. In 2020, Americans grappled with the public health crisis of COVID-19, civil unrest not seen since the 1960s, and a contested presidential election. Surrounding all these events was the spread of untruths on the airwaves and online. Millions of Americans were daily consumers of conspiracy theories and lies culminating in a call to the United States Capitol on January 6th to right a series of perceived wrongs, the greatest of them being that Joe Biden did not legitimately win the 2020 election. Significantly, some of our elected officials have exploited this disinformation to promote distrust of our political institutions, thus undermining our unity.

The 9/11 Commission report allowed for a bipartisan examination of the failures that contributed to the execution of the most devastating act of terrorism our country has ever seen. It also paved the way for many reforms that undoubtedly saved lives, streamlined intelligence gathering and sharing, and kept America safe from another attack of proportionate scale. In stark contrast, the January 6th Commission has lacked bipartisan support from the outset, has been besieged by political infighting, and most recently has seen threats from lawmakers against telecom and social media corporations that cooperate with the investigation. I call on our elected officials to support the January 6th Commission with the same unity and sense of purpose that was present in the aftermath of 9/11. Without a definitive account

of what occurred, trust in our government is further eroded and we're more likely to see a repeat of what transpired.

The vast majority of domestic terrorists in recent memory have used the internet to consume and post their extremist views and connect with a network that shares their ideology. Effective utilization of open-source intelligence will increase our ability to circumvent a planned attack as well as study the online behavior of anyone that espouses hateful philosophies. We need to do a better job of working with social media companies to detect and handle extremist content while also remaining cognizant of foreign actors that further spread disinformation through online platforms.

We also need to empower the Department of Homeland Security to work with fusion centers around the country on how to conduct thorough intelligence analysis. State and local agencies are our first line of defense against domestic extremists. In addition, we need a streamlined mechanism for state and local agencies to escalate suspicious activity.

But let me emphasize that as we secure our nation against domestic extremist violence, we must not ignore the continuing threat of international terrorism. Our departure from Afghanistan may

embolden groups like ISIS-K or al-Qaeda. Thus, we must continue to maintain and upgrade our foreign intelligence collection capabilities and our border and infrastructure security. We do not have the luxury of contending with only one threat at a time. As President Biden has made clear, however, we have the will and determination to defend against all these threats.

RF

Michael Chertoff is a former Secretary of Homeland Security and Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of The Chertoff Group.



I call on our elected officials to support the January 6th Commission with the same unity and sense of purpose that was present in the aftermath of 9/11.

Measuring the Effectiveness of the War on Terror

by CHRISTOPHER PREBLE

Within days of the September 11th attacks, President George W. Bush previewed what the United States would do in response. In an address before a joint session of Congress on September 20th, he promised to “direct every resource at our command,” including diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement, and every necessary weapon of war – to the destruction and defeat of the global terror network.

There would be additional loss of life, and there would be setbacks. It would not be “one battle, but a lengthy campaign,” and he asked Americans for their “patience in what will be a long struggle.”

Though the long struggle of the war on terror has not ended, we now know some of the costs. A conservative estimate published in November 2019 by Brown University’s Watson Institute for Global Affairs put it at \$5.4 trillion already spent, and another \$1 trillion projected into the future – mostly for the care of veterans wounded in post-9/11 military operations. And that is only the amount borne by U.S. taxpayers; others around the world have paid an even heavier price. All told, estimates of the number killed range from 770,000 to 801,000, at least 312,000 of those civilians. In the nearly two years since that report was published, many thousands more have died in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere.

If one had asked President Bush, or the tens of millions of Americans watching in September 2001, if they would

be willing to pay such costs, and inflict such pain and suffering, in exchange for preventing a repeat of the 9/11 attacks, some surely would have said yes. The desire for vengeance was palpable. The United States had suffered one of the most traumatic incidents in its history. The measures taken would have to be *visible*. The American people – and the world – needed to know that acts of terrorism on U.S. soil would not be tolerated, that retaliation would be swift

and severe. And, in the process, the terrorists would learn the futility of their enterprise – or die trying.

The more visible parts of the war on terror involved every branch of the U.S. military. Everything from bombings to targeted killings aimed to degrade terrorists’ ability to organize, recruit, and train. On a much larger scale, the United States launched the war in Afghanistan to dislodge al Qaeda and punish the Taliban for harboring them. And, just 18 months after the 9/11 attacks, the Bush Administration initiated a war in Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

Within a few months, the man at the forefront of the Bush administration’s counterterrorism efforts

evinced some doubts. Noting that “we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror,” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wondered, “Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are



Armed Taliban fighters stand next to a Mullah, a religious leader, speaking during Friday prayers at the Pul-e Khishti Mosque in Kabul on September 3, 2021.

In 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wondered, “Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?”

recruiting, training and deploying against us?”

In the years since, it seems, no U.S. official has managed to answer this critical question.

Domestic counterterrorism measures may have prevented some terrorist plots here in the United States, but the military components of the war on terror were intended to dismantle and destroy al Qaeda and other organizations with global reach. By that metric, authors A. Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner observed, the war had clearly failed. The number of Islamist-inspired foreign terrorist organizations more than tripled from 2000 to 2015, and the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities also rose, and especially in the countries where the U.S. military had been most active.

The most consequential of the post-9/11 military campaigns, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, cost trillions of dollars and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. But the precipitous collapse of Iraqi security forces to ISIS in 2014, and of Afghan security forces to the Taliban in 2021, are merely the latest reminders that armed nation-building rarely succeeds.

In the case of Afghanistan, in particular, there were unique complications associated with coordinating operations with allies, and with the corruption of local partners. Meanwhile neighboring states, especially Pakistan, refused to cooperate with the United States – and often actively undermined U.S. strategy.

Nearly 20 years after the start of the U.S. war, it is reasonable to wonder whether the entire undertaking was actually essential to defeating terrorists. Tragically, it might actually have made the problem worse.

“Contrary to the intentions of the U.S. government,” Thrall and Goepner conclude, “as the war on terror has expanded, it has led to greater levels of terrorism.”

Meanwhile, fear of terrorism has remained stubbornly high throughout nearly all of the post-9/11 period; only recently have more proximate threats to human life and well-being begun to command greater attention. For example,

notes RAND’s Michael Mazarr, the U.S. government is now also focused on stopping large-scale cyberattacks, ransomware events, and malicious disinformation. And, since March 2020, Americans have also grown more worried about a disease that, at its height, killed more people in one day than died on 9/11. In retrospect, some of the money spent on wars, airline passenger screening, or mass surveillance might have saved more lives if it had gone instead to public health.

Some worry that the investment of vast military resources to fight terrorists and non-state actors has been a costly distraction from a far more important task: competing with major nation states such as China and Russia. To be sure, in the period when the United States was expending considerable blood and treasure chasing terrorists around the world, other countries were focused mostly on internal improvements that better position them to address the most urgent threats of this century, from climate change to infectious disease. But the United States retains vast military capacity, despite the setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, and U.S. allies and partners also have ample capability and considerable will to defend themselves. And the most important elements of the contest between the United States and China will not be fought by militaries.

We can and should lament the costs and consequences of the two decade-long war on terrorism, even as we understand the impulse to avenge the losses on that horrible September day.

But policymakers owe it to future generations to learn from past mistakes and commit to avoid the most egregious errors as they craft more effective policies to advance security and prosperity. **RF**

Christopher Preble is co-director of the Atlantic Council’s New American Engagement Initiative and the co-editor, with Benjamin Friedman and Jim Harper, of Terrorizing Ourselves: Why US Counterterrorism Policy Is Failing and How to Fix It.



Christopher Preble

**In the years since, it seems,
no U.S. official has managed
to answer this critical
question.**

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From Unity After 9/11 to the Threat of Homegrown Terror Today

by JAVED ALI

With America marking the 20th anniversary of the tragic events on September 11, 2001, it is a good time to examine how the terrorist threats facing our nation have evolved since that time, and the steps being taken to keep the American people secure.

Clearly, President Biden's recent decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan and the chaos that has ensued raises concerns about whether that country will once again become a safe haven and training ground for terrorists now that the Taliban are once again in control. Those concerns are justified.

Indeed, this past April, the Director of National Intelligence reported that, "ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and Iran and its militant allies continue to plot terrorist attacks against U.S. persons and interests, including to varying degrees in the United States." The DNI also reported that, "Despite leadership losses, terrorist groups have shown great resiliency and are taking advantage of ungoverned areas to rebuild." Based on recent events in Afghanistan, those same concerns have reportedly been amplified by the military.

The question now is whether Afghanistan will once again become one of those ungoverned areas and a launching pad for attacks against the West or the United States. The fact that U.S. policymakers even need to consider that possibility is profoundly disappointing, not only to American taxpayers who have spent over \$2 trillion training a military and propping up a government that have both collapsed, but also to American troops who have risked and

sacrificed their lives over the past 20 years.

And yet as we look back on 9/11 and, in particular, as we remember the unity and how our country came together in the weeks and months following the attacks, we must also acknowledge how the terrorist

threats we face have evolved since that time. Today, the threats Americans face do not just solely come from terrorists overseas. Increasingly, they also come from domestic terrorism here at home. In fact, as the Center for Strategic and International Studies recently reported, the number of terrorist attacks and plots in the United States in 2020 "reached its highest level in at least a quarter century, with 94 percent of incidents committed by individuals with a domestic-focused grievance (as compared to 5 percent inspired by a Salafi-jihadist ideology)." And unlike the period after 9/11, we are politically polarized making it increasingly harder to find common ground to address the changing threat environment.

Earlier this year, I penned an essay that said the United States was experiencing a "5th Wave of Rebel Terrorism" based on recent attacks, plots, and developments in the domestic terrorism front. This "wave theory" of terrorism was

coined in 2002 by UCLA political scientist David Rappaport, who assessed that four previous waves of terrorism stretching back to the 1880s had contributed to different types of threats occurring over different time spans, both at home and abroad. Interestingly, his did not include a "far-right" wave of terrorism but



Javed Ali

Today, the threats Americans face do not just solely come from terrorists overseas. Increasingly, they also come from domestic terrorism here at home.

looking at events in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s leading up to the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995 by anti-government extremist Timothy McVeigh and his accomplice Terry Nichols, one could argue that this phenomenon was significant. In the years following Oklahoma City and because of 9/11, far-right terrorism in the United States waned for at least a decade if not longer, until beginning to pick up steam in the late 2000s and then continuing into the 2010s. In my 5th Wave essay, I argued that several developments in the mid-2010s suggested this threat was on the increase, and by 2020 the brazen plot to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th seemed to further underscore this trend.

In this current threat environment, attack plots can manifest from small, organized groups to individuals acting on their own with no formal guidance or direction. Further complicating efforts to understand and counter domestic terrorism threats is the legal and policy framework in the United States that makes it very difficult to separate

the line between Constitutionally-protected activity like the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and right to bear arms, and that which crosses over into criminal action, either at the Federal, state, or local level.

In recognition of the shift in the threat and need for action, the Biden Administration earlier this summer released the country's first-ever national strategy on this topic, and a range of new programs and initiatives to meet this threat. The strategy is organized around four pillars and calls for an increase in intelligence analysis and information-sharing, new approaches to prevent radicalization, steps to detect and disrupt terrorist plotting, and measures to confront the key drivers that fuel grievances and resentment.

While there is no single effort that will provide all the solutions to address this complex threat, one that spans the boundaries between the public and private spheres is the role of the Internet and social media. Earlier this year, I offered a roadmap that could make it more difficult for violent extremists to exploit the online world. Because social media sites are owned and operated by private companies with varying degrees of attention and focus on how their platforms are being used, increasing collaboration, sharing best practices and resources, and harmonizing policies and standards could raise costs and shape things in a more positive direction — without triggering government intervention or regulation.

Twenty years after the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks, the United States is clearly at an inflection point with respect to the threat of terrorism. The Taliban are once again in control of Afghanistan, and terrorist groups, although weakened, may see this as an opportunity to once again plot attacks against America from abroad. Here at home, domestic terrorism is increasingly becoming an important national

security issue balanced against other ones that are drawing equal amounts of attention, like cybersecurity, infectious diseases, climate change, and great power competition with Russia and China.

Vigilance was the watchword in the weeks and months after 9/11, and it remains the watchword as policymakers — and the American people — confront these evolving threats today. **RF**

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Preparing for the Next Biological Threat

by ANDY WEBER & NICOLE A. TERAN

Twenty years ago, the world was shocked as jetliners crashed into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on that beautiful crisp, blue-sky morning. One of us was working in a Pentagon office at the moment of impact at 9:37 AM. In the following weeks, anthrax letters started arriving in Senate offices and newsrooms.

The September 11th terrorist attacks and the subsequent anthrax attacks came as a surprise to many due in part to what the 9/11 Commission later called a failure of imagination. But the extreme danger of terrorism and biological weapons were well known to the Department of Defense, which had been grappling with the legacy of the Soviet Union's chilling Cold War achievements conducted at a scale that can only be described as evil.

At the time of the attacks, the Pentagon's Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program was helping Kazakhstan safely destroy an inherited anthrax weapons factory. The factory was capable of producing 300 tons of anthrax during a mobilization period of about eight months. Thanks to Nunn-Lugar, green grass now grows where that anthrax factory, the size of two football fields, once stood.

The Soviet Union had also conducted open-air testing of biological weapons on Vozrozhdeniye, or Renaissance Island, in the Aral Sea. These tests exposed hundreds of monkeys to anthrax, plague, smallpox, and other agents to certify their lethality. Nunn-Lugar later helped Uzbekistan destroy bulk anthrax the Soviet Army had buried, but not fully neutralized, on the island.

After 9/11, the U.S. government acted energetically to counter biological threats. In one sweeping success, the nation stockpiled enough smallpox vaccine to protect every American citizen, converting an apocalyptic threat into a mere logistics and distribution challenge. This essentially rendered smallpox ineffective as a mass-casualty threat to the nation.

These bio-preparedness efforts have paid dividends over the past 18 months. Indeed, because the U.S. invested in protecting

the American people against deliberate and engineered biological threats, agile platforms such as rapid diagnostics, monoclonal antibodies, and mRNA vaccines were able to come online more quickly. Lives are being saved today because the U.S. government chose preparedness over weakness. The stunningly successful partnership between the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services, and industry — known better as Operation Warp Speed — facilitated the development and deployment of vaccines and therapeutics for COVID-19 in record-breaking time. It provides a good model for moving forward.

With a nimble and rapid biodefense system of epidemic early warning, we are unlikely to be surprised again. Coupled with

the development of rapid medical countermeasures, manufacturing, and delivery, America can react quickly and nip pandemics in the bud. A robust biodefense plan can make real progress towards the vision of making bioweapons obsolete as a mass destruction threat *and* ending pandemics. Planning, exercising and improving our biodefense and public health capabilities in the U.S. and with global partners can convince our adversaries that the pursuit of biological weapons will be ineffective. We call this deterrence through preparedness.

Unlike missile defenses, for example, funding for a biological early warning and rapid response system that can be used against deliberate, accidental, and naturally occurring bio-threats will produce both enormous national security and public health benefits. Such capabilities can provide treatments and preventative measures for everything from the highly deadly, hemorrhagic Marburg virus to the inconvenient, cold-causing rhinovirus. The technologies to prevent and treat these diseases — and yet to-be-known diseases — is modern science, not science fiction.

Biotechnology is advancing with an ever increasing pace. When the Soviet anthrax weapons facility was operating, state of the art technologies would have taken 600 years to sequence the human genome. In 2001, the human genome project had been



Andy Weber



Nicole A. Teran

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underway for 11 years with two more to go. Today, a human genome can be sequenced at low cost in under a day.

This and other scientific advancements have also put the power of manipulating biology in the hands of more people. The democratization of biology allows for numerous startups to improve human health, but also empowers less well-equipped nations, groups, and even lone actors who may have malevolent intentions.

Even beyond these evolutions in biological threats, our policies must also account for the threat of accidents, including from research into biological weapons even if they are not used in an attack. North Korea has an advanced program for the research and development of biological weapons. Because South Korean military forces are not vaccinated against smallpox or anthrax, an accidental release could be as deadly as an intentional one. Despite U.S. vaccine stockpiles and given the potential distribution issues, vaccine hesitancy, and the 30 percent mortality rate, an accident could be devastating. For this reason, deterring countries like North Korea from developing biological weapons in the first place should be a core Defense Department mission and needs to be resourced appropriately.

Despite the threat that biological weapons pose, funding for some of our key biodefense initiatives overseas atrophied in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, a month before the pandemic started, then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper cut his Department's Chemical and Biological Defense

Program by about 10 percent, and reduced funding for the Nunn-Lugar Biological Threat Reduction Program by a third. Despite the obvious benefit an early warning and rapid response system would have had against the COVID-19 pandemic, both of these Trump-era budget cuts to DoD biodefense funding have so far not been reversed by the Biden Administration.

Scientific advancement requires a sustained effort that an influx of emergency funds during a crisis cannot replace. This is why we and the Council on Strategic Risks are calling for "10+10 Over 10" — \$10 billion a year for HHS and \$10 billion a year for DoD over the next ten years. With such funding, we can deter the development and use of biological weapons *and* prepare for the next biological outbreak, regardless of its origins. We know what kinds of hazards we are facing and what it would take to prepare for them.

Twenty years ago on 9/11, we suffered from a failure of imagination, and nearly 3,000 Americans paid the ultimate penalty as a result. Shame on us if we are caught unprepared again, because we know the threats that we face and we should not be surprised. **RF**

Andy Weber is a Senior Fellow at the Council on Strategic Risks. He served from 2009-2014 as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs. Follow him on twitter @AndyWeberNCB. Dr. Nicole A. Teran, P.H.D., is a Visiting Fellow at the Council on Strategic Risks.

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Barr & Gonzalez Lead Effort to Stand Up to China

WASHINGTON, DC — The Ripon Society held a luncheon discussion on July 26 with two members of the U.S. House of Representatives who are helping to lead the effort to hold China accountable and slow the spread of their global influence.

Those members were U.S. Reps. Andy Barr (KY-6) and Anthony Gonzalez (OH-16). Barr, the top Republican of the Financial Services Subcommittee on National Security, International Development and Monetary Policy, and member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, kicked things off by discussing just how critical it is to maintain a check on China and the Chinese Communist Party.

“I think the biggest issue facing our country right now is the looming threat from China,” Barr stated. “It’s a generational challenge that we have, and I’m honored to serve on two committees that really have jurisdictional influence on this issue.”

“Ultimately, you can’t beat China by becoming China. We don’t want to emulate China’s theft of intellectual property. It’s socialism. We don’t want to emulate their central planning model. We want to embrace our values of free markets, capitalism, and free enterprise. But how do we do that when we’re facing an adversary that engages in malign foreign investment, stealing our intellectual property, and stealing our technology?”

“Over the last 40 years, when the United States engaged China under different administrations, we thought we had good intentions. We thought that engagement with the People’s Republic of China would introduce them to our Western values: capitalism and free markets. We thought they would evolve and change, that they would embrace not only democratization, but reforms that would lead to human rights and basic acceptance of the international rules. That was not the case. And unfortunately, especially with the new reign of Xi Jinping, we see China using the United States and Western markets to fuel their civil-military fusion, their malign conduct.”

According to Barr, in order to



hold China accountable, there must be an effort to provide financial transparency – an issue that, if ignored, can threaten not only American investors, but U.S. national security as a whole.

“We want Chinese listed companies to be subject to the same rules that U.S. companies are. And that, if you’re going to list on U.S. exchanges, and you’re going to put investors at risk, you need to live by the same Sarbanes-Oxley rules. You need to have the same accounting standards and you have to have the transparency that U.S. listed companies have.”

“The problem is not just investor protection. The problem is national security. For example, U.S. investors could find themselves providing capital to companies that threaten our national security, whether it’s on the telecommunication side with Huawei, or whether it’s a company that has connections with the CCP and the People’s Liberation Army. Americans should not be in the business of fueling the rise of a Chinese surveillance state and their military.”

“I think this is one of the biggest challenges that we face, where China is manipulating access to our capital markets to fuel their civil military fusion. We need to get this right. We need to encourage cross-border exchange. We need to encourage capitalism and free markets around the globe. But, when there’s a national security threat like this, we need to send a clear signal, not just through our securities regulation, but through the power of U.S. sanctions and our economic tools that we have with the U.S. Treasury.”

Gonzalez, who sits on the Financial Services Committee and serves as Co-chair of the House China Task Force, agreed with his colleague

from Kentucky. He explained that when approaching the issue of China, he asks himself three basic questions: “Who are they? What do they want? And how are they playing the game?”

“So who are they?” Gonzalez asked rhetorically. “I think we all know at this point. If it hasn’t been made clear, this is a totalitarian, communist regime that doesn’t believe in human rights, doesn’t believe in a democratic process, and will do anything that they can to achieve their aims.

“What do they want? On the China Task Force, I asked that question to some of the most senior Administration officials, some of the top folks in the State Department and National Security Council. I would ask them, I said, “Does China want a

“This is a totalitarian, communist regime that doesn’t believe in human rights, doesn’t believe in a democratic process, and will do anything they can to achieve their aims.”

*Anthony Gonzalez -- remarks to
The Ripon Society, July 26, 2021*

unipolar world or a multipolar world? Do they think that we can co-exist, or do they think that they need to be at the center, and everything feeds up through them.” And every single person said China wants a unipolar world. They’re not interested in coexisting with an American capitalist system or a Western Democratic system. That is not what they want. They want their system to be the dominant system that informs all of global commerce, defense, and all of the international institutions.

“How do they play the game? They go with what they call a ‘total systems approach,’ which is all encompassing. It is defense, it is economic, it is technological, it is propaganda, and it is information warfare. All of society, for the Chinese Communist Party, is engaged in this struggle. This struggle

that they believe will ultimately end with them at the top of the global pyramid and the rest of us sort of serving underneath them.”

The Ohio Republican says, in order to combat the growing global influence of China, he has introduced pieces of legislation this Congress that would lead to increased financial transparency.

“The DATA Act would create a ‘China Economic Data Coordination Center,’ essentially at the Department of Commerce, whereby all Chinese data could be housed, synthesized, analyzed, and then presented back to the relevant agencies. One thing that’s really difficult with China is that it is really difficult to get reliable data out of China because of how they run

their country...and part of fighting any battle is being able to understand the lay of the land.

“Then the second one is the China Financial Threat Mitigation Act, which would require the Financial Stability Oversight

Council (FSOC) to expand current reporting requirements to our financial regulators to make sure that there are no systemic financial risks associated with China’s shadow banking sector. A lot of the banking that takes place in China is done ‘off-book,’ and, as a result, when you have an economy that is that large and that powerful, it is hard to understand what systemic risks might be out there.

“It is going to take a concerted effort across party lines and across multiple administrations – probably for the rest of our lives.... We need to make sure that we are prepared, and that we understand the threat and are able to articulate an American strategy and a strategy for the world that will keep Western Democratic values at the forefront and not the values of the Chinese Communist Party.” **RF**

Ripon Profile

Name: August Pfluger

Occupation: Representative for Texas's 11th Congressional District

Previous positions held: Currently a Colonel, U.S. Air Force Reserve, previously an F-22/F-15 pilot with 300+ combat hours and 2,000 flight hours, a Squadron Commander, an NSC Advisor, and a NATO officer.

Where were you on September 11, 2001? On 9/11, I was in Del Rio, Texas — one week away from graduating pilot training and entering the ranks of the U.S. Air Force as the newest fighter pilot.

How did the 9/11 terrorist attacks shape your career in the military? 9/11 changed everything for the US Air Force.

From that day on, the Air Force has been constantly deployed around the globe fighting against terrorism and deterring growing powers like China and Russia. I have been deployed all over the world in support of the security of our Nation as well as our allies and partners. This includes fighting against ISIS in Iraq/Syria, deterring Russia in Europe, and deploying multiple times to the Pacific to deter China. As a member of the National Security Council staff, I was able to draw upon these experiences to advise the President and keep our nation safe and secure.

What are the lessons of 9/11 that are shaping your career in Congress today? The attacks of 9/11 have imprinted upon me the fact that our freedom is not free. We must remain vigilant about assessing threats, and we must be willing to use every instrument of power to keep our country and our allies safe. Negotiating from a position of weakness or turning a blind eye to threats will only result in a less secure nation. 9/11 reminds me of how important it is to deter and defeat any and all threats before they reach our borders.





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