



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Press Conference on Death of Osama bin Laden, Impact on Homeland Security, and Next Steps
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
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Good afternoon everybody and thanks for being here. Senator Collins and I wanted to come here today most of all to say thank you to the men and women of the American intelligence, military and homeland security communities for what they did for all of us yesterday.

The fact is that today the world is a safer and better place because of the brave and brilliant patriots who worked together yesterday to kill Osama bin Laden, a mass murderer. For a lot of the past decade, the homeland security committee of the U.S. Senate, which Senator Collins and I have been privileged to be leaders of together, has concentrated on doing everything we possibly could to make sure that the lack of coordination within the United States government that facilitated the attacks on America on 9/11 was ended.

What happened yesterday was in some sense the exact opposite of the mistakes and failure to cooperate that led to the 9/11 attacks against the United States. Because from everything we can determine, every element of our government—military, intelligence, homeland security—worked together as a team and the result was the end of the life of Osama bin Laden.

I want to thank all of them and all particularly express my gratitude to President Obama for his leadership as Commander in Chief. I spoke this morning with one of the members of our national security team—and I want to point out that this was not a political appointee—he said to me that President Obama throughout preparations and deliberations and decision-making that preceded the successful attack on bin Laden yesterday was cool and decisive. The decisions that were made were not easy ones. I want to express my personal gratitude to President Obama for the leadership he gave this great team of ours.

I want to say briefly that our Senate committee on homeland security will continue to monitor and investigate every element of what our country is doing to protect the homeland security of the American people. The enemy is out there and will continue to try and attack the American people here at home, where we live and work. Let me make this point: there's been much commentary on the fact that there may now be a heightened level of danger for a limited amount of time as individuals or groups seek revenge for the murder of Osama bin Laden.

First I want to reassure everyone that all of our homeland security and intelligence agencies are alert to those dangers and using every tool that they have to detect and if necessary prevent such an attack. My own great concern in the days ahead is that a so-called lone wolf, a single individual, who has been radicalized will now mobilize himself or herself to take action here at home against the American people. Of course as we know having spent a lot of time in our committee, particularly having investigated the murder of 13 Americans at Fort Hood by Maj. Hasan, these are the most difficult cases to see and stop. My appeal to the American people is be

alert; this is a classic 'if you see something, say something moment.' If you see suspicious behavior, call the police immediately - even if it's somebody who's a friend or a family member.

Final point I want to make is this. I'd like to put the death of Osama bin Laden in the broader context of the peaceful, democratic uprisings that are occurring now in the Arab world. For the war that we were drawn into on 9/11 against Islamist extremism and terrorism will not end with the death of one man. Even that one man, who most visibly propagated this political ideology that is a corruption of a great religion. This war against Islamist extremism and terrorism will end when the ideas bin Laden propagated, which I call Islamism, lie discredited and abandoned alongside its totalitarian twins, fascism and communism.

In this respect, it is fitting that bin Laden was killed just as democracies are being born in the Arab world. The peaceful, youth-driven, democratic revolutions now taking place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria are the true repudiation of 'bin Ladenism.' It turns out contrary to what 'bin Ladenism' prophesied that his extreme ideology is the weak horse and democracy is the strong horse after all. To rid our world not only of bin Laden, but of 'bin Ladenism,' it is critical we together now do everything in our power to help the democratic forces in the Middle East succeed. For it will be at the hands of his fellow Arabs and fellow Muslims that bin Laden is finally and firmly consigned to the ash heap of history.