



**Prepared Remarks of Attorney General John Ashcroft
Oklahoma City Federal Building Dedication
Oklahoma City, OK
May 3, 2004 -- 10:00 am**

Thank you, [Congressman] Ernie [Istook], for that introduction. I thank Carl Truscott, the new director of the ATF, for joining me.

Distinguished friends, family, and honored guests, I am grateful for the opportunity to be here with you to share in this day of hope and healing.

I am honored to bring greetings to you from the President of the United States. Allow me to read a message from President Bush.

Each morning, I begin my day reviewing the continuing terrorist plots and threats against the United States. I see in daily dispatches and reports the ceaseless efforts of terrorists to attack America. Day after day, I see evidence of their insatiable desire for revenge and death.

Today, I am reminded why terrorists will never succeed in fulfilling their desire to defeat America with acts of terror. This gathering, this building, and this city show that men and women -- allowed to breathe the bracing air of freedom -- will always come together to defeat the tyranny of fear and hatred.

The people of Oklahoma City know the terrible cost of terrorism.

You have seen firsthand the death and carnage that terrorists seek. You have felt the loss of loved ones. You have lived in the aftermath of man-made destruction.

Long before September 11, 2001, you had to grapple with the cost of hate and the price of extremism.

Yet today, we are brought together by noble and enduring values -- values that were expressed in the lives of those who were taken here.

As Abraham Lincoln surveyed the battlefield at Gettysburg, he said, quote, "[W]e cannot dedicate ... we cannot consecrate ... we cannot hallow this ground The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us

the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work"

We face the same challenge that confronted Lincoln and his listeners at Gettysburg.

We gather to dedicate more than a building. We gather to dedicate ourselves to "the unfinished work" of freedom. We dedicate ourselves to liberty and to the rule of law that will be defended by those who work each day in this new federal building.

Real dedications are found in lives lived, days devoted. With each act of service, governance, education, law enforcement, prevention and prosecution, this building will be rededicated. This facility will be dedicated as lives are here dedicated to serve others.

We cannot forget the past.

We will never forget. One hundred sixty-eight lives were lost that bright, sunny morning more than nine years ago. Children lost moms and dads; brothers lost sisters; mothers and fathers lost innocent, irreplaceable children, including unborn children.

We will not forget because, in this nation, we are dedicated to the fundamental belief that every life is precious. We remember the achievements, the dreams, and the potential of those who were lost. And it is because we hold every life precious that this nation will never bow to terror.

I am grateful to the people of Oklahoma and Oklahoma City. The response to the attacks here is an example of leadership for America, and it is an example for the world. Pain and bloodshed were turned into action and resolution.

Shortly after September 11, President Bush said, "Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America."

That foundation is secure as long as citizens dedicate themselves to the enduring vision that founded this nation.

We saw that dedication in the aftermath of this attack. Thanks to the help of courageous citizens, local law enforcement, and the justice community, those responsible for this craven act of murder were hunted down and caught. They were prosecuted. And they were imprisoned. One murderer has met his final end.

We will not rest until those who commit terror are brought to justice.

The first priority of government is to protect the lives and liberties of the people. Over the last three years, the world -- and the networks of terror -- have seen and felt our nation's tireless

commitment to justice.

It is especially fitting that this new building links the business districts with downtown neighborhoods. It stands at the crossroads of the community we defend -- a culture of life and liberty, free trade and security. This federal building is a reminder of that precious rule of law that binds us together in equality and links our liberties at home with our freedoms in the marketplace.

Today we remember, and we continue in sorrow. But we also dedicate ourselves, and this facility, to continuing the unfinished work Lincoln spoke of -- the unfinished work of freedom.

We look to the future. This building challenges us profoundly to endurance and resilience. It is a reminder to every terrorist that this nation will not be beaten by murderous acts. It is a shining symbol that in America we will rebuild: Stronger ... Higher ... And ever more hopeful.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless America.

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