

The Ghosts of 9/11

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Good morning everyone. I was asked if I would be willing to come here this morning and share some thoughts about 9/11 from the perspective of being a veteran and current student at the University. I would like to, first, offer my condolences and deepest sympathies to the friends and family of those who suffered a terrible and irreplaceable loss, as a result of the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11th.

I, personally, did not know anyone who was killed in the attack. But with an event of this magnitude, the victimization does not stop at those who suffered a direct loss. Considering the course that the last decade has taken, it would be hard to find anybody who has not been affected by 9/11. Those who don't think they have been affected by the tragic events of that day are either fooling themselves or they aren't thinking hard enough.

Before September 11th, I had no real vision of what I wanted to do with my life, which was not really a bad thing, considering I was only 16 years old when it happened. I was sure of one thing afterwards, and it was that I wanted to do what I could, to ensure that something like that did not happen again. So I did the natural thing.

I chose to enlist in the United States Marine Corps in August of 2002. By March, 2003, I found myself attached to Task Force Tarawa, the Marine invasion force from the south. I was 18 then, and turned 19 after having been deployed for about 6 months.

While I was in Iraq, I discovered that there was a new, and lesser discussed, class of people who had subsequently become victimized by the attacks of September 11th. The people I am talking about are the civilian casualties that have been suffered by the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan.

To them, I would also like to offer my condolences. I, personally, can't seem to follow the rabbit hole logic that put me in Iraq in the first place, but I can, somehow, make the connection between the civilian casualties occurring over there and 9/11. If something gets repeated enough

times, it may come true, but you might end up with a truth that is a distorted rhyme of the originally intended truth. Maybe I am the rabbit hole thinker...

When I was 18, I thought that there was a way to preserve the lives of the many by extinguishing the lives of a few. I've since found out that the path to the few is littered with the remains of hundreds of thousands of undeserving victims. Collateral damage if you will. We all wanted justice to be served, but I have doubts that justice can be achieved unless the means are just. Corrupted or polluted means produce corrupted and polluted ends.

On the tenth anniversary of September 11th, I think that it is time that we entertain the idea that we may have already won the war on terror. Al Qaeda is crippled, Bin Laden is dead, we water boarded the hell out of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Hussein was removed from power and executed, what more can we expect to do? The problem is that nobody really knows what 'victory' in the war on terror looks like, but my suspicion is that it looks a lot like peace. I hope that we get there someday.

For the time being, we are in a perpetual state of war, and nobody knows when it is going to end. Until these wars are ended, we will all be plagued by the ghosts of 9/11. There are a handful of new ghosts born every day.

Sometimes it seems as though we fell into a 'terrorism trap' and as long as we keep chasing that elusive dragon, the pain and suffering is going to continue expanding in an exponential manner. Approximately 3000 people lost their lives on September 11th, how many have fallen in the wake of 9/11?

In conclusion, I would like to once again offer my condolences to the victims of 9/11, an ever expanding and inclusive group. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak.