

## A Call to Arms

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*September 21, 2001 at 8:00 am*

**Read the entire symposium of the same title at NRO.**

It was no small challenge that George W. Bush faced on Thursday night: to honor the innocent victims; to celebrate the heroic passengers who rushed the hijackers in the sky over Pennsylvania as well as the courageous firefighters and police officers and rescue workers in New York and Washington; to express gratitude to the nations that have rallied behind us; to articulate in plain and memorable terms what is at stake in, and the purpose of, the war that the president, with our support, has committed our country to waging; to issue a public and uncompromising ultimatum to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan who harbor bin Laden; and to reaffirm our devotion to the principles of freedom and equality. With gravity and resolve, the president met the challenge. And then some.

We would not allow the terrorist menace, Bush stressed, to furnish a pretext for the practice of intolerance and hatred. Incidents have been reported of bullies and idiots across the United States who have harassed and assaulted Muslims and Arab Americans and those who look like them. Bush calmly reiterated Thursday evening what he and members of his administration have frequently declared since the attack eleven days ago: The teachings of Islam must be distinguished from the fanaticism of the terrorists; our war is not with the millions of peace-loving Muslims and Arabs here and abroad but with the terrorists and the governments that support them; it is imperative that we continue to live by the principles of freedom and equality for which we fight. These words were necessary and important. They were also stirring. It is an extraordinary country, the likes of which the world has seldom seen, that in its grief and anger, even as it sifts through its rubble and mobilizes its forces and devises its battle plan, summons its citizens to respect the rights of all.