NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEWSDAY, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2001

Cheney: It's 'a War Like No Other'

VP tours Ground Zero, speaks at NY dinner

By Dan Janison
STAFF WRITER

Vice President Dick Cheney last night called America's strikes against terrorism "a war like no other" that is proceeding on course.

Addressing a gathering of political bigwigs in New York, Cheney said those responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have become "worried about their own safety." He said bombing missions in Afghanistan have seriously disrupted the operations of the Taliban.

"The struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction," Cheney said at the 56th annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner, which was attended by more than 1,000 people.

He said much of America's war against terrorism will involve covert operations that will be known to "a very small circle."

Like President George W. Bush, Cheney called America's foes "evil people." In fighting them, he said, "Sometimes that means doing business with people you would not like to have as your next door neighbor."

At another point, he added: "No punishment for these terrorists seems too harsh."

He also predicted additional attacks on America. "We have to assume there will be more attacks," Cheney said. "That is the only safe way to proceed. For the first time, America will suffer more casualties at home than our troops overseas."

Earlier yesterday, Cheney, who virtually has been out of sight since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, toured Ground Zero for the first time, greeting recovery and construction workers and signing dozens of hard hats.

Echoing the sentiments of hundreds of dignitaries before him who have visited the World Trade Center rubble, Cheney said, "I'm trying to think if there's anything I've seen that rivals this."

After the Sept. 11 attacks on the trade center and the Pentagon, the vice president was rushed to a bunker below the White House and has spent most of his time since then at an undisclosed secure location.

Questioned about the wisdom of his visiting New York and Bush's going to East Asia during the anthrax scare, Cheney defended their actions.

"What we try to do obviously is not bunch up ourselves," Cheney said.

Accompanied by his wife, Lynne, their daughter Liz and his security team, Cheney was guided around the ruins by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Gov. George Pataki.

Giuliani thanked the Cheneys for coming to New York. As they stood just off the corner of Liberty and West streets, Giuliani said the White House has been "absolutely vital to the rebuilding of the spirit of the people of New York."

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AP Photos

Vice President Dick Cheney, above left, shakes hands with workers at Ground Zero yesterday while on his first visit to the site of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. At left, Cheney takes a moment to talk to reporters about his tour of the site, which was led by Gov. George Pataki, center, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, right.

Cheney said, "It's an amazing effort. I got the chance to meet the folks working on the cleanup, firefighters, construction workers that are out here. They've obviously made great progress in the last few weeks . . . clearly they've done a tremendous job."

During his Ground Zero visit, Cheney saw workers using acetylene torches to remove a piece of facade that once was part of the trade center's South Tower.

As Cheney shook hands with construction workers, one remarked: "That man works so hard, the hardest working guy in Washington."

Another said, "My wife will never believe it."

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