NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

# Cheney makes 1st trip to Ground Zero

## ■ Vice president shakes hands, signs hard hats

TIMOTHY WILLIAMS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vice President Dick Cheney, kept largely out of sight since the terrorist attacks, got his first tour of the World Trade Center rubble yesterday amid tight security.

Cheney said he watched the attacks on Sept. 11 unfold from the White House.

"This is the first time I've had the chance to be back in New York since then and I'm trying to think if there's anything I've ever seen that rivals this," Cheney said.

"Television is great but it doesn't convey the sense of destruction that clearly happened here."

Accompanied by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Gov. George Pataki, the vice president shook hands with firefighters at ground zero and signed construction hats passed to him by workers. Cheney's wife, Lynne, and daughter Liz were also on hand.

"They've done a tremendous job," Cheney said of the workers.

The vice president stood quietly looking at the site from behind a yellow crime scene tape for several seconds. His wife shook her head several times. Cheney recalled being in lower Manhattan for a parade welcoming home the troops after the Persian Gulf War when he was defense secretary.

"None of us has ever seen anything like this," Cheney said of the scene.

Giuliani praised the Bush administration's response: "There hasn't been a single thing we've needed and asked for that we haven't gotten and more."

The site has drawn a range of visitors since the towers were leveled, including Miss America, Muhammad Ali, Saudi and British princes, dozens of members of Congress, governors and other celebrities.

Cheney wore a black baseball cap emblazoned with NYPD and FDNY, for New York's police and fire departments.

Officials yesterday updated the number of trade center victims: 4,515 were reported missing, 458 bodies had been removed and 408 identified.

Later yesterday, Cheney gave the keynote speech at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial dinner.

In a solemn tone, Cheney said Americans should expect more attacks by terrorists, even as the war to destroy their physical and financial bases proceeds "on course."

"The struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction, and in victory for the United States and the cause of freedom," Cheney said.



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Vice President Dick Cheney, center, is given a tour of the World Trade Center site by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, left.

Cheney also joked about his low profile in recent weeks.

"We haven't been out much lately, and the Waldorf is a lot nicer than our cave," said Cheney, who was joined by his wife Lynne.

Cheney was rushed to a bunker below the White House just after the Sept. 11 attacks on the trade center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. With the exception of a few national television interviews he has been largely out of sight since then, spending most of last week working out of an undisclosed secure location.

When Bush addressed Congress Sept. 20 Cheney stayed away. A Senate historian believes it is the first time that a vice president stayed away from a joint session of Congress because of security to ensure that the line of presidential succession is maintained.

On Wednesday, Cheney appeared with President Bush at the White House before the president left for China.

Bush has been to New York twice since Sept. 11 attack. Three days after two hijacked jets slammed into the twin towers, Bush stood atop a rubble pile and encouraged rescue workers.

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