

Press Releases: Remarks at the 20th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony of the Embassy Bombings in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Remarks

John J. Sullivan

Deputy Secretary of State

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DEPUTY SECRETARY SULLIVAN: It's a great honor for me to stand here today, and it's a solemn day on which we gather.

I have had the honor of speaking at events like this. I speak at our embassies when I travel around the world, and I thank all of those women and men I meet, including our locally employed staff. I always make a point, as my colleagues know, of speaking first to the locally employed staff and tell them how important they are to us, to our mission. I also thank them for

their service.

And I've said this many times, and some of my colleagues are sort of sick of me reminding everyone, but I have a personal connection, a family connection to some of what you and your loved ones went through. My family – my uncle was a career Foreign Service officer and served for 32 years. And his last post was as our ambassador to Iran, and he was – he and my cousins and my aunt Marie – my uncle's name was Bill Sullivan – they were – my uncle was recalled by President Carter before his colleagues were taken hostage on November 4th.

But as I've reminded people – and I mentioned this when I testified in my confirmation hearing – what I most remember about his service in Tehran was the fact that on Valentine's Day, February 14th, 1979, our embassy in Tehran was overrun, and my uncle and all of our – all of his colleagues at the embassy were briefly held hostage. They were eventually rescued, ironically enough by the Revolutionary Guards, but they were held hostage briefly.

But the memory that sticks with me the most from that day is on the same day our Ambassador to Afghanistan Spike Dubs was kidnapped and assassinated. And I at the time was a sophomore in college, and I always thought the life of a diplomat, I thought of my uncle's life as glamorous and dinner parties and socializing. And it dawned on me, boy, this is hard, dangerous work; these are women and men who go out to their posts unarmed with – representing the United States, representing us, and subjecting themselves to enormous risks.

All of you here know and lived through what we came to realize were the even larger risks that materialized on August 7th, 1998. And it's my honor to stand before you today to remember the victims of that terrorist attack on our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

Before I continue any further, I want to first acknowledge Ambassadors Bushnell and Lange for their efforts in bringing everyone here together. Ambassador Bushnell has impressed upon me the need – although not necessary, but I'm grateful to hear it – the need to both remember what happened on August 7th, but – and continue to work to make sure the United States Government not only remembers but does all that it needs to, to make everyone who was impacted by those events whole, to be respected and made whole.

I also want to acknowledge the Deputy Chief of Mission of Kenya David Gacheru and the Ambassador of Tanzania Wilson Masilingi for attending today's event.

Most importantly, I want to thank all of you, survivors and families who are here today. We are here to honor you today, and to honor those who lost their lives in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, 20 years ago. Twenty years after that fateful morning, we're reminded of the bravery, heroism, compassion, and sacrifice of those who are here today and those who were taken from us. We remember especially the legacy of those who perished.

Many of you here today acted to save lives and help your colleagues and strangers. We thank all of you for your courage, bravery, and valor as you answered that call – call of duty, call of basic humanity – to respond to

those attacks and to those who were injured and killed on that day.

It is to those brave women and men here and countless others who have perished defending the cause of freedom that we owe a great debt of gratitude.

Yesterday, we hosted an event – many of you here, I'm sure, attended. The theme was "Remembrance, reflection, and resilience." One thing we can draw from that powerful event is that no one who survived is untouched by the events of that day. Twenty years later – and I was commenting to some of you, it seems like in my mind – and I did not – I just witnessed those events through the media as a spectator, but they're etched in my mind from 20 years ago, and it seems like just yesterday to me. I can only imagine what it's like for those of you who survived. It must seem – the immediacy of those events, despite the passage of 20 years, must be profound. On the other hand, the pace of events, all that's happened in those 20 years, is also remarkable.

But despite the passage of time, the gravity of those events and the experiences we remember compel us to gather today to share our memories – your memories – and to discuss lessons – lessons in leadership from across the department, Ambassador Bushnell, Ambassador Lange, and all of you. I read in the *Foreign Service Journal*, I know they've dedicated the recent issue to the embassy bombings. The leadership lessons, the memories – it's important that they be recorded and not forgotten.

Leadership from across the department is what's represented here this morning, and I want you to know that the leadership of this department, the current leadership of this department, stands united with you in remembrance and respect of the human toll that these events took on our embassy communities. And of course, that includes other government agencies beyond the Department of State, some of whom are represented here – USAID, our military colleagues, et cetera, Commerce Department, Foreign Commercial Service – I previously served at the Commerce Department – and of course, innocent bystanders, all of who were affected by the devastating attacks on that day.

I spent time earlier this morning with some of you, speaking to the survivors and the family members of those who perished. Many of us, I included – millions of Americans will never understand the ultimate sacrifice made 20 years ago by those who perished in the attacks. It's just a fact of life. The pace of life in modern America, trying to remember what happened 20 years ago – I remember, but it's difficult, I think, for most Americans, thinking about – something that happened 20 years ago seems like an ancient memory. It's not for this department, it's not for those of you gathered here, and know that the leadership of this department will ensure that Americans remember. And this department certainly will remember.

We recognize the depth of you and your loved ones' commitment to public service, and we'll never forget the price that was paid by so many of our colleagues, our friends, our loved ones, and innocent strangers.

August 7th was and still is a difficult reminder of the sacrifice members of our community make every day to answer the call to public service, a call that is inextricably tied to promoting and defending the interests of our republic. The women and men who serve in our embassies and consulates around the world, as you all know, do challenging work that is not always fully appreciated by many of those fellow Americans. They protect our interests and promote our values abroad. Our staff – Americans, locally employed staff, those who serve in uniform, all of those who serve at our embassies – endure hardships, often at great risk, far away from home, because it keeps the United States safer and stronger.

And as I mentioned at the outset, we can't succeed in this effort without the vital assistance of our locally employed staff who work hand in hand with us each day to advance the interests of the United States. And I would like to thank personally all those survivors, many of whom continue to hold important positions at our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam today, as we speak. And of course we recognize the valuable contributions of our locally employed staff who make those contributions every day at U.S. posts around the world.

Twenty years ago, al-Qaida tried and failed to undermine the values we're sworn to uphold. While we may be facing new threats in different parts of the world, the imperative to remain vigilant endures. And to this end, we remain committed to ending the scourge of global terrorism by whatever means it now organizes and it calls itself. In so doing, we must honor the memories of those we continue to mourn today by pressing the cause of freedom and justice to which they dedicated their lives. The sacrifices of the victims and their families will not be in vain. We must continue to stand strong in our values. Those who would inflict violence on others in service to their countries will not be allowed to prevail. Those who preach intolerance and hatred will not break us.

Even as we remember our fallen colleagues, we continue our efforts to defeat al-Qaida, ISIS, and other global terrorist organizations, and to prevent further attacks on the United States and our citizens. Our resolve is as strong today as ever, and we owe it to those whose lives have been taken by terrorist violence to remain steadfast in our efforts to root out violent extremism wherever it exists.

I would now like to welcome to the podium Ambassador Prudence Bushnell and Ambassador John Lange to say a few words. Their leadership was inspirational, necessary, and recognized by all, and I'm really honored that they are here today to be able to share some of their observations. It was their dedication that kept our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam running in the aftermath of October [\[i\]](#) 7th. They've continued to serve as true champions for their communities, for all of you gathered here, and they've been selfless patriots over the past 20 years. It's my honor to introduce Ambassador Bushnell and Ambassador Lange. Thank you. (Applause.)

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