

Good evening.

Two months and two days ago the world changed.
And it will be changed forever.

Sixty-three days ago a group of terrorists, in a very dramatic and deadly attack, declared war on the United States of America.

These sixty-three days have been very difficult for our state and nation.

These sixty-three days have been hard on our economy.

These sixty-three days have been hard on our children.

And these sixty-three days have been hard on our way of life.

But we are at war and we must stay united in this unprecedented effort to preserve the freedoms of the greatest democracy in the history of the world.

In sixty-three days Minnesotans have worked hard to prepare not only the defense of our state, but for the effects of the war on our economy.

Tonight I would like to outline some of that work.

- Minutes after the news of the plane hijackings and attacks on New York and Washington D.C, our Law Enforcement and Intelligence Management went to work to evaluate the threat to Minnesota.
- Under the direction of Public Safety Commissioner Charlie Weaver our law enforcement agencies were put on high alert and our emergency operations center was activated immediately.
- The Department of Health, under the direction Of Commissioner Jan Malcolm, immediately put out an electronic message to all local public health agencies around the state, alerting them to watch for possible signs of bioterrorism in their communities. Within one hour, virtually all local agencies had acknowledged receipt of the message. Incredibly, Minnesota's Health Alert Network was activated almost 2 hours faster than even the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention got its first messages out to state health departments around the country.
- Soon after I convened an emergency meeting to direct my commissioners of Public Safety and Health, and General Andreotti of the Minnesota National Guard, to take whatever measures possible to begin a coordinated approach to safeguarding our people and our infrastructure.

What I soon found out is that Minnesota was prepared. Systems were in place to deal with this emergency. Plans had been made and people were implementing those plans.



- The Minnesota Department of Public Safety began sending out periodic updates to local law enforcement, communicating any new information that they had received from the FBI and other federal agencies.
- The Minneapolis Division Joint Terrorism Task Force, a tri-state coordinating team that includes the FBI, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and local law enforcement, was ready to react to any terrorist activity in the tri-state region.
- Soon after the attacks Commissioner Weaver also convened a group of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to identify issues unique to each region of the state and to coordinate terrorism preparedness.
- The Minnesota National Guard was immediately put on high alert and was ready to react when needed.
- When the President of the United States asked us to supplement security at our airports the Minnesota National Guard was mobilized to airports in the Twin Cities, Rochester and Duluth.

Under a plan developed by the FAA, Operation Noble Eagle is now providing a trained, armed, military security presence at our airport facilities and helping us all feel much more safe when we fly.

And just last week President Bush announced an expansion of our airport security so that when you are flying to see your loved ones for the holidays you will feel extra secure.

In addition, the Minnesota National Guard Duluth-based F-16 fighter jets are maintaining their alert posture and continuing to fly random combat air patrols over major metropolitan areas to insure our skies are safe from external threats.

And finally, the Guard's 55th civil Support Team continues to provide active support across the state by assisting local officials in identifying potential biological and chemical hazards.

With the onset of the Anthrax threat in various parts of the country bioterrorism is high on all our minds.

But the preparedness of our Department of Health should be very comforting to all Minnesotans.

Commissioner Malcolm tells me that Minnesota's Health Alert Network is one of the best in the nation at connecting our Department of Health with every local public health agency in Minnesota's cities and counties.

Our local public health agencies have a superior system to communicate with local clinics, hospitals and other community partners.

And it is comforting to know that the Minnesota Department of Health has one of the most sophisticated public health laboratories in the United States.

It is one of a handful of labs that can do the highly specialized tests necessary to detect the presence of most biologic and chemical agents that might be used in a bioterrorist attack.

For those of us that have been through wars in the past this is certainly a war of a different kind.

Vietnam, Korea, and the Gulf War certainly did not require the protection of our homeland to the extent of this new war.

But Homeland Security and the fight to preserve our lifestyle here in America is a reality.

It is a reality so that every day I am required to work with my staff and my commissioners to deal with what might be the consequences of additional attacks on America.

But we are prepared.

- Recently I called together my fellow constitutional officers to review the continuity of government and to be sure that we are all aware of our responsibility to carry out the executive, legislative, and judicial processes of government under any emergency circumstance.
- The State's Division of Emergency Management and the Health Department are working together as a Terrorism Preparedness Advisory Committee to ensure appropriate response mechanism are working well.
- The Minnesota Domestic Preparedness Program is a coordinated effort to make sure that first responders are properly equipped to respond to incidents of domestic terrorism involving chemical and biological agents, as well as radiological and explosive devices.
- And finally, I have convened an Emergency Preparedness Working Group, led by several state agencies and the Department of Public Safety. This group is working with our private sector partners and the FBI's National Infrastructure Protection Center to ensure Minnesota's health, food, water, fuel, power, phone and transportation services would continue to operate in the event of a terrorist attack.

As you can see we have been busy.

And be assured, we will continue to be busy, because your safety is an important responsibility that the State of Minnesota takes very seriously.

While important public policy issues will continue to require our time and energy, I want to assure you that as a state, our primary focus has got to be on the security of our people.

In addition, I believe that it is important to emphasize the impact the war against terrorism will have on an economy that is already suffering.

As governor, I know that an attack on our way of life can be very discomfoting to our families. But add to that the discomfort and pressure an unsettled economy can put on all of us and we have a very large challenge before us.

However, working together with the people, the legislature and my administration, we will soon begin to take concrete measures to deal with projected budget shortfalls.

In early December we will have better understanding of how the economy is going, but trust me, we are going to have to make some adjustments and it won't be easy.

But I am working very closely with my cabinet to make these adjustments and will work with legislative leaders to make sure that whatever we do is in the best interest of the people.

However, keep in mind that while this downturn in the economy will be difficult, it will not be as difficult as it is for most other states. Last year I worked together with the Minnesota legislature to insure that we were prepared for the worst and as a result we have substantial reserves to cushion the blow of reduced revenues.

Finally, keep in mind that we will tackle this challenge with full knowledge and understanding that any decisions we make will not, in any way, interfere with our ability to defend ourselves against terrorism.

When I was preparing this speech I felt it was important for you to know just what we have been doing to help protect and secure our state.

But beyond the important measures I have just gone through, there are things that we can all do to help.

As citizens going about our daily lives we can be alert.

Last week Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Al Garber gave me some very interesting information.

You may not know it but commissioner Garber was an Army Ranger, served in Vietnam and had a long and distinguished career as an FBI agent.

He said that he believed an alert citizenry would provide the best intelligence for our Governmental agencies to act on.

He said that it is true that generally crimes are solved, not through some sophisticated type of science, but rather through someone telling a law enforcement agency who did it.

I pass this information on to you in the spirit of unity. We are all in this together and we all need to work together and do our part.

Be alert and be careful. But be free. Exercise those hard earned rights that our country has long stood for and that our Veterans have long fought for.
Finally, let me finish with a thought that I got from another of my commissioners.

Jeff Olson is the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs.

Last week Jeff sent me a note with this advice to send along to the people of Minnesota:
Help our children and our grandchildren to understand this difficult time.

Talk to them about our fears, now and during other conflicts, letting the children know that it's okay to be afraid.

Talk to them about our freedom and how in past we have not let anyone take it away from us and we won't let it happen now either.

Tell them not to judge people based on their religion or color of their skin.

Tell them about how our country was founded and how for over two hundred years so many people from so many different countries have come together to live free and pursue their dreams in America.

Teach them tolerance of all people and all walks of life.

And finally, tell them to be confident that their moms and their dads, their Grammas and Grandpas, their teachers, their coaches, their neighborhood police officers, their fire department, their Mayor, the military, the President and everyone around them are working hard to make sure that they are safe.

We live in a great country and a great state.

And working together, we will not fail to preserve our freedoms for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you.