



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Osama bin Laden

SPEECH

Tuesday, 10 May 2011

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Questioner
Speaker Gillard, Julia, MP

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Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:15): Mr Speaker, on further indulgence, this is the first time the House has been able to reflect on the news that the world's No. 1 terrorist, Osama bin Laden, was killed on Monday of last week in a targeted operation conducted by a small team of US forces. Those personnel have our nation's gratitude. The death of Osama bin Laden is of course a great blow to terrorism. It is also a measure of justice for his victims and for a world that he has changed forever. As a nation, we are simply relieved that his long career of destruction is over—a two-decade campaign that cost thousands of innocent lives, including the lives of many people of Islamic faith. Those victims also include 10 Australians killed on September 11—9-11—and more than 100 Australians who have lost their lives in terrorist attacks inspired by or linked to al-Qaeda in the years since.

Osama bin Laden's death is a landmark in our campaign against al-Qaeda and it is no surprise that, like any other major event, this operation has given rise to internet conspiracy theories alleging that bin Laden is not really dead or he did not even exist except as a CIA construct. Of course, even al-Qaeda itself has acknowledged bin Laden's death—a warning to all those tempted to credulity or gullibility in this age of information overload. Bin Laden is dead, but we must not allow ourselves to become complacent. Al-Qaeda is still a resilient and persistent terrorist network and al-Qaeda inspired terrorist groups remain active elsewhere in the world.

Our long watch against terrorism is by no means over. The challenges in preventing terrorism and home-grown extremism in Australia and in the Asian region will remain. The challenges in bringing security and stability to Afghanistan will remain as well which is why on my recent visit to London I discussed with Prime Minister Cameron the need to continue our efforts in Afghanistan to take the fight to the insurgents, to train the Afghan National Army, to improve governance in Afghanistan and to work with elements amongst the insurgents who are prepared to renounce violence and adopt a path back to a constructive and purposeful civilian life. We also recognise here the crucial ongoing role Pakistan will have in defeating al-Qaeda and its affiliates, and note that many ordinary Pakistanis have been killed in al-Qaeda's ruthless attacks against their fellow Muslims.

On Saturday morning our time, I was able to speak to President Obama, who was on Air Force One returning from a visit to congratulate the special forces personnel involved in the operation against bin Laden. In our conversation, I offered Australia's thanks to the President and the US military personnel and officials who planned, supported and conducted this operation. I was also able to confirm Australia's commitment against global terrorism and the work that remains to be done in Afghanistan. I made it clear that Australia will see the mission through in Afghanistan, so it can never again become a terrorist safe haven. The operation against bin Laden strikingly affirms President Obama's resolve and capacity to fight terrorism—a resolve I have come to know well in my own meetings and discussions with him. We have in the White House a man of character, of sober judgment and of intellectual clarity. The operation against bin Laden is not the end of our journey. It is important and it will make a difference but the job is not yet done. Our resolve endures and our purpose remains right and we will prevail.