

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN HONOR OF PETER RINALDI AND
THE ENGINEERS OF THE PORT
AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK AND
NEW JERSEY

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2002

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, there were many heroes on September 11th, and many more in the months that have followed. I rise today to pay tribute to the engineers of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, each of whom could tell you a different story about the difficult days and arduous work following September 11th. I would like to tell you a little about one Port Authority engineer, Peter Rinaldi, who joined his fellow New Yorkers in the tremendous rescue and recovery effort at Ground Zero. The following excerpt is from "American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center," by William Langewiesche, published in the July/August 2002 edition of *Atlantic Monthly*.

At age fifty-two, Rinaldi was an inconspicuous olive-skinned man with graying hair and a moustache, who observed the world through oversized glasses and had a quirky way of suddenly raising his eyebrows, not in surprise but as a prompt or in suggestion. He had grown up in the Bronx as the son of a New York cop, had gone to college there, and had married a girl he had met in high school. Though he and his wife had moved to the suburbs of Westchester County to raise their three sons, he had never cut his connection to the city, or quite shed his native accent. For twenty-eight years he had commuted to the World Trade Center, to offices in the North Tower, where he worked for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, deep within its paternal embrace and completely secure in his existence. There was an early warning in the terrorist bombing of 1993, which caught him in an elevator. Nonetheless, he was wholly unprepared for the destruction that followed in 2001. During the days after the attack, when to New York City officials the Port Authority seemed to have disappeared, it was hunkered down across the river in its New Jersey offices, suffering through a collective emptiness so severe that people themselves felt hollowed out. Peter Rinaldi felt it too, though he was far away at the time of the attack, vacationing with his wife, Audrey, on the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

Back in New York . . . Rinaldi was assigned to New York City's recovery team . . . [and] given the job of supervising the consultants who had been brought in for the specialized belowground engineering. The underground, beneath the pile, was a wilderness of ruins, a short walk from the city but as far removed from life there as any place could be. It burned until January, and because it contained voids and weakened structures, it collapsed progressively until the spring. The job of mapping the chaos fell to a small team of about six engineers who did some of the riskiest work at the site, climbing through the crevices of a strange and unstable netherworld, calmly charting its con-

ditions, and returning without complaint after major collapses had occurred.

By mid-November only one important underground area remained to be explored—a place people called "the final frontier," located deep under the center of the ruins, at the foot of the former North Tower. It was the main chiller plant, one of the world's largest air-conditioning facilities—a two-acre chamber three stories high that contained seven interconnected refrigeration units, each the size of a locomotive and capable of holding up to 24,000 pounds of dangerous Freon gas.

With the huge quantities potentially involved here, a sudden leak would fill the voids underground and spread across the surface of the pile, suffocating perhaps hundreds of workers caught out on the rough terrain and unable to move fast. To make matters worse, if the Freon cloud came into contact with open flames, of which there were plenty here, it would turn into airborne forms of hydrochloric and hydrofluoric acids and also phosgene gas, related to the mustard gas used during World War I. Then it would go drifting. People accepted the danger. The standard advice, "Just run like hell," was delivered with a little shrug. Everyone knew that if the Freon came hunting for you at the center of the pile, you would succumb.

Of all the people setting out now for the chiller plant, twenty men redefined by these ruins, the one who would have the greatest influence on the unfolding story was an obscure engineer, a lifelong New Yorker named Peter Rinaldi.

For twenty-eight years the World Trade Center was a second home to Peter Rinaldi. After its destruction, he and his fellow Port Authority employees worked "seven days a week, often fifteen hours a day" to make sure that those involved in the recovery effort would be safe, and to restore needed services, such as subway and commuter train service, to those returning to live and work in lower Manhattan. His leadership in the days following September 11th took him, on that day in November, into the debris of the World Trade Center, where it was determined that the Freon had vented and the recovery work could continue in relative safety.

Today, nine months after that horrible day, as we celebrate the lives of those we have lost and commemorate their heroism and bravery, we thank those who have given so much of themselves to the recovery of our great city. I would like to extend my thanks to the employees of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, each of whom has come to embody the spirit of public service to the city they have served so admirably.

U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2002

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, President Bush has returned from a successful summit in Moscow. As the Cold War ce-

des more and more into memory, our relations with Russia continue to improve, as they should. Russia has made a significant contribution to the struggle against terrorism since the attacks on the United States last September. While there remain serious differences in the area of human rights, foreign policy, and economics, we should welcome President Putin's "turn to the West" and encourage Russia to further integrate into an international community of mutual security, free trade, and democratic structures.

Nevertheless, over this summit banquet of warm words about the "new strategic relationship" looms a "Banquo's Ghost" of tragic and monumental proportions.

I refer to the war in Chechnya—the subject of a recent hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which I co-chair—which continues to wreak havoc and death on combatants and non-combatants alike. The brutality of the so-called "anti-terrorist operation" of the Russian military has been amply documented by reputable Russian and international organizations. Bloody military "sweeps" of civilian areas, bestial "filtration camps" and "holding pits" have become hallmarks of what passes for Moscow's military strategy.

One month ago, the Helsinki Commission heard chilling testimony from Ms. Aset Chadaeva, a nurse from Chechnya who resided in a community near Grozny, Chechnya's capital. Ms. Chadaeva described an event in February 2000, when the Russian military carried out one of its most notorious "anti-terrorists" operations:

Young Chechen men living in Chechnya today have two choices: to wage war or to wait for Russian soldiers to arrest or kill them. All three of my brothers were illegally detained by Russian servicemen. One of my brothers—officially classified as disabled because of his poor eyesight—was severely beaten by Russian soldiers in my presence. When I asked the soldiers why they were arresting him, they told me: "He's a Chechen! That's reason enough!" I treated women who had been raped by Russian soldiers, and I've also seen the bodies of women who had been killed after being raped. During both wars, I buried many dead. Bodies were left lying in the streets. I, my brothers, and my neighbors collected them so they wouldn't be eaten by dogs.

In February 2001, the remains of over fifty persons were found in a mass grave in a village located less than a mile from the Russian military headquarters in Chechnya. Russian authorities attribute their deaths to Chechen partisans.

In 2000 and 2001, the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva condemned the widespread violence against civilians and alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law by Russian forces. I would note that even Chechen officials who have sided with Moscow in the conflict with the secessionist movement have criticized the reign of terror created by the Russian military in Chechnya. Unfortunately, efforts to have a resolution passed this year at the Human

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