EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SPEECH OF HON. CL. “BUTCH” OTTER
OF IDAHO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, September 11, 2001

Mr. OTTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlemen from New Jersey and California for their leadership on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues who have offered their voices before mine, I too arise in strong and unyielding support of this resolution.

May this horrific act of mass violence compel us to turn anew to God seeking healing, restoration and justice, as well as devine guidance, so that His will will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Sikhism is an independent religion. It is not part of Hinduism. Sikhs are identified by five specific markers: uncut hair covered by a turban, a kirpan, or ceremonial sword, a bracelet, special underwear, and a special comb. These are distinct identifiers and are required by the Sikh religion.

Let's not attack anyone for his or her religion or the way he or she looks. Those who do so are cut from the same cloth as Mr. bin Laden. In America, we do not accept that.

The Council of Khalistan, which is the organization representing Sikhs, has written a letter to the President and a press release strongly condemning the attack Tuesday. I would like to place them in the RECORD at this time for the information of my colleagues.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN CONdemns attack on United States

URGES SIKHS TO GIVE BLOOD
WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 12, 2001.—Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, today condemned the brutal attack on the United States that occurred yesterday.

"On behalf of the 21-million strong Sikh Nation and especially on behalf of more than 500,000 Sikh Americans, I would like to express our sadness and our sympathies to the people of the United States for the terrible attack on the United States yesterday and for the loss of life it entails," Dr. Aulakh said.

"I urge Sikh Americans to give blood and to pray for the victims, for their families, and for all those who are helping our country and our communities in this time of need," Dr. Aulakh said. "We must do our part as American citizens," he said. "We stand together as a nation."

"Like all Americans and all decent people everywhere, we condemn this brutal and senseless attack. The Sikh religion recognizes all the human race as one and we pray for the well-being of all. Our prayers and our sympathies are with the people of the United States at this tragic time. We especially pray for the families of those who have departed."

"This tragic event happened in the most diverse city in the world," Dr. Aulakh said. "There is hardly a national or ethnic group that has not been touched directly by this tragedy. Our sympathies are extended to those who have been touched personally," he said. "Violence against innocent people of any religion or ethnicity is unacceptable. It must be ended."

Unfortunately, some people have engaged in violence against Sikhs in the wake of the bombings yesterday. A couple of young Sikhs were attacked Wednesday afternoon in Brooklyn. Sikh businesses have been stoned and cars have been burned. Apparently, these Sikhs were targeted because of their turbans and beards, which are required by their religion.

It would be grossly unfair to attack Muslims, even though Mr. bin Laden, who appears to be the mastermind, claims to be an adherent of the Muslim faith. I know many Muslims and they are good people who are not involved in this kind of activity in any way. Yet what makes these attacks even stranger is that Sikhs are not Muslims. They don't even wear a turban the same way. Sikhism is an independent religion. It is not part of Islam; it is not part of Hinduism. Sikhs are identified by five specific markers: uncut hair covered by a turban, a kirpan, or ceremonial sword, a bracelet, special underwear, and a special comb. These are distinct identifiers and are required by the Sikh religion.

Let's not attack anyone for his or her religion or the way he or she looks. Those who do so are cut from the same cloth as Mr. bin Laden. In America, we do not accept that.