



**U.S. Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations**
Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Ranking Member
<http://foreign.senate.gov>



Senate Foreign Relations Hearing
“The Effects of the Madrid Terrorist
Attacks on U.S.-European Relations and
Cooperation in the War on Terrorism”
March 31, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing. It is appropriate that we are meeting today to discuss the March 11th terrorist attacks in Madrid, and the implications that this terrible day will have for our trans-Atlantic relationship.

After September 11th, I feared that it was only a matter of time before Europe would suffer the same kind of murderous violence that we experienced in New York and in Washington. Now, Europeans have their own images of violence and death – and their own date – which will come to define us as governments and as people.

Spain has grappled with homegrown terrorism from ETA (*EH-tah*), just as the United Kingdom has suffered at the hands of the IRA, Italy from its Red Brigades, and Germany from the Baader-Meinhof Gang.

But this newest form of terrorism is of an entirely different scale. It is existential, not political. With Al-Qaida we come to face-to-face with an enemy whose goal is nothing less than to kill as many people as possible, and in so doing, bring an end to the way of life we in the West have worked so hard to achieve.

So we look to a Europe that, like the United States, is bound to change in the coming months as it grapples with such a diffuse and pernicious new threat.

It seems to me that there are three distinct lessons to draw from the Spanish elections held a few days after the Madrid terror attacks.

First, some people voted against the Conservatives because they believed Prime Minister Aznar's (*ath-NAR's*) alliance with the U.S. in Iraq made Spain a terror target.

That's a very human reaction, but also a very misguided one. There is no appeasing Al Qaeda and its allies. Every liberal democracy is a target, and will remain a target, including Spain and its citizens. Europeans more broadly should not fool themselves into complacency by thinking they can "opt out" of terrorism, by distancing themselves from Washington. Terrorism is not a selective threat. I pray that's a lesson Europe does not learn the hard way.

But second, it is also true that the overwhelming majority of Spaniards opposed the war in Iraq long before March 11, 2004. And well before the elections, Mr. Zapatero (*thap-ah-TEAR-oh*) had campaigned on a platform promising to remove Spanish troops from Iraq, absent a new UN mandate.

So this is not a "Munich" sell-out to terrorists, as some alarmists have claimed. Rather, it's a lesson for the United States that, in a community of democracies, it is not enough to convince another country's leaders of the policy we want to pursue – we also have to convince its people.

Unfortunately, in the run up to Iraq, we did a bad job convincing others that attacking Iraq was an urgent necessity.

And after the war, in the first flush of success, instead of bringing the Atlantic community back together again, we continued to show disdain for our democratic allies who had disagreed with us.

Third and finally, it appears that many people voted against the Conservatives because they believed the government manipulated information to point the finger at ETA, not Al-Qaida. There's a lesson here for all liberal democracies, including the United States. Governments have to level with their own people, especially on matters of war and peace.

Unfortunately, as is becoming clearer and clearer, the Bush Administration failed to level with the American people before the Iraq war in terms of the time, troops and treasure securing the peace would require... in terms of Iraq's alleged complicity in the events of 9/11 and ties to Al Qaeda... and in terms of the threat posed by Iraq's WMD.

One of the positive things that came out of September 11th, and I trust will be further hastened after March 11th, is the sharper recognition that we must cooperate in what is bound to be a long and difficult struggle against a determined but diffuse enemy.

Despite our differences on Iraq, we enjoy a broad consensus on the need to share information, to facilitate cross-border investigations and to apprehend terrorists who are planning to attack our people.

But much more needs to be done within Europe and between Europe and the United States.

I applaud the European Union's efforts in Brussels last week to address the common threat to its security from terrorism. Their appointment of Mr. de

Vries (*duh VREEZ*) as the European Union's coordinator for counter-terrorism, is a positive step forward.

Mr. De Vries will have his work cut out for him. First of all, he will need to guide the EU into really getting serious about dealing with terrorism, for example by walking the thin line between protecting personal data and carrying out legitimate counter-terrorism investigations.

Moreover, he will have to overcome bureaucratic obstacles. After September 11th, the EU agreed to a number of measures to share information about terrorist threats. Its record on implementing those agreements is spotty.

Mr. de Vries will need to move the EU into new levels of law enforcement cooperation that undercuts the jealously guarded national fiefdoms of EU member states.

Each of our democracies faces a classic dilemma. We enshrine individual rights to due process, fair and speedy trials, and privacy – but these very rights are exploited by those who are prepared to use any means to undermine our democracies. Striking the right balance is not easy, but the emergency situation we are in makes “business as usual” simply untenable. The first responsibility of a state is the safety of its citizens.

I am convinced that the struggle against an existential enemy that uses terror as a tool and will use weapons of mass destruction if it acquires them must involve the closest possible cooperation with the largest number of countries.

This cooperation will be first and foremost with our allies, but also with the Islamic world.

Despite all of our current differences, Europeans and Americans still look to each other before they look to anyone else when it comes to combating our many common problems. On both sides of the Atlantic, we must rethink our approach, and renew our commitment to one another.

The Bush Administration must abandon its reflexive unilateralism and its disdain for genuine dialogue, for working with allies and for international institutions.

Similarly, the European Union has to make a greater commitment to enforcing the rules of the international community, not making excuses for those who violate them.

Much has been made of the fundamentally different way that the U.S. and European governments supposedly view the challenge of terrorism. Washington sees it as a “war,” while Europeans view it essentially as a criminal matter.

If, in fact, we are in a “war,” it is fair to ask why the Bush Administration has not demanded real sacrifice from the American people. Why, for the first time in our history, have we combined waging war with instituting a massive tax cut? Why, if we are in a “war,” is Homeland Defense so grossly under-funded? These are domestic issues, but ones with profound international significance.

What remains clear after September 11th and March 11th alike is that the only credible course forward is to work together, the EU and the United States, to secure and rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan... to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... to prevent the world’s most lethal weapons from getting into the most

dangerous hands... and to address the root causes of the poverty, isolation, and repression in which many of the peoples of the Greater Middle East are mired.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this afternoon.