



*Bill
McCollum*

A Guest Article from Florida's **Attorney General**

Florida's Progress Since 9-11-01

On September 11, 2008, the seventh anniversary of the terror attacks that claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians and first responders, I had the honor and privilege of speaking at the dedication of Mount Dora's memorial to fallen police officers and firefighters.

This monument was created to recognize the brave men and women who put their lives on the line every day, standing up for public safety, especially those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and its citizens. Planning for the memorial began in 2000 when it was re-discovered that the Mount Dora Police Department lost an officer – **Officer Clinton Hyde** – in a 1959 shooting. The information about that line-of-duty death had been lost to a new generation of officers. His sacrifice was not memorialized anywhere around the station or city.

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the concept for the memorial expanded to make it a Mount Dora memorial for all police officers and firefighters who have died in the line of duty. Without these heroes, America would be a very different place. Even seven years after the attacks on our country, we are still facing the threat of terror and these public servants are the ones standing between us and danger.

We can never forget that thirteen of the 19 9-11 terrorists lived in Florida, had a Florida driver's license or had trained at Florida flight schools. **Mohammed Atta**, the leader of the terrorist cell, had an arrest record in Florida for driving without a license. In spite of having an active warrant pending for failing to appear at a court hearing, he was able to obtain a valid Florida driver's license as well as

leave and re-enter the United States.

Since 2001, Florida has made significant progress in the sharing of intelligence between our local, state and federal law enforcement agencies by enacting our own security structure. Chief in this structure is the Florida Domestic Security Oversight Council which consists of state agencies and law enforcement officials who have a critical role in Florida's security. This council, of which I am a member, acts as an advisory body and funding mechanism to those who directly investigate threats and respond to a wide range of potential hazards.

Another key component of Florida's security structure is the Fusion Center network. Fusion Centers, staffed by state and federal officials, analyze and "fuse" together disparate intelligence and law enforcement reports to yield actionable products in order to reduce threats in local communities.

While Florida's domestic security preparedness is reputedly the best in the nation, we need to do more. The public needs to be better educated about how to report suspicious behavior and our state

must remain focused on securing the specialized equipment necessary to stay well-informed, prepared and protected. Florida is home to 14 deepwater ports, emphasizing the need for the strongest port security possible including effective screening of cargo before it reaches these ports.

I am committed to do what it takes to make sure Florida is the safest state in the nation and continuing to support our brave men and women – especially our law enforcement and firefighters – who are protecting our citizens every day. ●

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The local sheriff was looking for a deputy, so Jim Bob, who was not exactly the sharpest nail in the bucket, went in to try out for the job.

"Okay," the sheriff drawled, "Jim Bob, what is 1 and 1?"

"11" he replied.

The sheriff thought to himself, "That's not what I meant, but he's right." Then he asked, "What two days of the week start with the letter 'T'?"

"Today and tomorrow."

The sheriff was again surprised that Jim Bob supplied a correct answer that he had never thought of himself.

"Now Jim Bob, listen carefully: Who killed Abraham Lincoln?"

Jim Bob looked a little surprised himself, then thought really hard for a minute and finally admitted, "I don't know."

"Well, why don't you go home and work on that one for a while?"

So, Jim Bob wandered over to the barbershop where his pals were waiting to hear the results of the interview. Jim Bob was exultant. "It went great! First day on the job and I'm already working on a murder case!"

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