

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With United States Ambassador to Afghanistan
James B. Cunningham, NATO International Security Assistance Force,
Afghanistan, Commander General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC, and Senior
Military Leadership at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan
May 25, 2014**

The President. Well, I just want to take a few minutes to say thank you to all of you. The main reason I took this trip—in addition to bringing Brad Paisley—is to make sure that everybody here knows, as we're coming into Memorial Day weekend, we're aware of the sacrifices that so many have made on behalf of our freedom here in Afghanistan, and also to make sure that we're reminded of the sacrifices you and your families make every single day.

This is a tough job. But as I came down the stairs, I had a chance to see the Twin Towers on a poster. Some of you know that I had the chance to visit the 9/11 Memorial Museum that's just gone up in New York. And it's a reminder of why we're here. We are now in the process of transition, and I've been getting constant updates from General Dunford and Jim about the progress that we've made. We've seen an election in Afghanistan, at least in the first round, go successfully. And I'm going to have to make some decisions in conjunction with the folks on the ground about how we manage the transition not just through the end of this year, but post-2014. And we'll probably be announcing some decisions fairly shortly. But I thought it was important for me to make sure that I check in directly with folks face to face before those decisions were finally made.

I'm impressed with not just the progress that's been made, but the dedication and the can-do spirit that is continually exhibited throughout this war theater, and I just want to say thank you for that. And Joe has given me, I think, a fairly detailed briefing about what current plans are and the progress we're making with the training of Afghan forces. I think it has gone—I'll be honest with you—better than I might have expected just a year ago, and that's a testament to the great work that all of you have done, as well as the pride the Afghan people have taken in the possibility of being able to secure their own country and install a government that's accountable to them.

And so I very much appreciate all the great work that you have done. And I appreciate it. And I think the American people thank you as well.

Gen. Dunford. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. in the Joint Operating Center. In his remarks, he referred to musician Brad D. Paisley, who traveled with the President aboard Air Force One and performed a concert for the troops that evening.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan :: Military and diplomatic leaders, meeting with President Obama.

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