

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

**Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial in
Arlington, Virginia**
September 11, 2014

Good morning. Scripture tells us, "We count as blessed those who have persevered."

Secretary Hagel, General Dempsey, members of our Armed Forces, and most of all, the survivors of that September day and the families of those we lost: Michelle and I are humbled to be with you once again.

It has now been 13 years. Thirteen years since the peace of an American morning was broken. Thirteen years since nearly 3,000 beautiful lives were taken from us, including 125 men and women serving here at the Pentagon. Thirteen years of moments they would have shared with us. Thirteen years of memories they would have made.

Here, once more, we pray for the souls of those we remember, for you, their families, who love them forever, and for a nation that has been inspired by your example: your determination to carry on, your resolve to live lives worthy of their memories.

As Americans, we draw strength from you. For your love is the ultimate rebuke to the hatred of those who attacked us that bright, blue morning. They sought to do more than bring down buildings or murder our people. They sought to break our spirit and to prove to the world that their power to destroy was greater than our power to persevere and to build. But you, and America, proved them wrong.

America endures in the strength of your families who, through your anguish, kept living. You have kept alive a love that no act of terror can ever extinguish. You, their sons and daughters, are growing into extraordinary young men and women they knew you could be. By your shining example, your families have turned this day into something that those who attacked us could never abide, and that is a tribute of hope over fear and love over hate.

America endures in the tenacity of our survivors. After grievous wounds, you learned to walk again and stand again. After terrible burns, you smiled once more. For you, for our Nation, these have been difficult years. But by your presence here today, in the lives of service that you have led, you embody the truth that no matter what comes our way, America will always come out stronger.

America endures in the dedication of those who keep us safe. The firefighter, the officer, the EMT who carries the memory of a fallen partner as they report to work each and every day, prepared to make the same sacrifice for us all. Because of these men and women, Americans now work in a gleaming Freedom Tower. We visit our great cities, we fill our stadiums and cheer for our teams. We carry on, because, as Americans, we do not give in to fear—ever.

America endures in the courage of the men and women who serve under our flag. Over more than a decade of war, this 9/11 generation has answered our country's call, and 3 months from now, our combat mission in Afghanistan will come to an end. Today, we honor all who have made the ultimate sacrifice these 13 years, more than 6,800 American patriots. And we give thanks to those who serve in harm's way to keep our country safe and meet the threats of our time.

America endures in that perennial optimism that defines us as a people. Beginning tomorrow, there will be teenagers—young adults—who were born after 9/11. It's remarkable. And while these young Americans did not know the horrors of that day, their lives have been shaped by all the days since, a time that has brought us pain, but also taught us endurance and strength; a time of rebuilding, of resilience, and of renewal. What gives us hope—what gives me hope—is that it is these young Americans who will shape all the days to come.

Thirteen years after small and hateful minds conspired to break us, America stands tall and America stands proud. And guided by the values that sustain us, we will only grow stronger. Generations from now, Americans will still fill our parks, our stadiums, our cities. Generations from now, Americans will still build towers that reach toward the heavens, still serve in Embassies that stand for freedom around the world, still wear the uniform and give meaning to those words written two centuries ago: land of the free, home of the brave. Generations from now, no matter the trial, no matter the challenge, America will always be America.

"We count as blessed those who have persevered."

May God bless your families, who continue to inspire us all. May God bless our Armed Forces and all who serve to keep us safe. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Pentagon Memorial, wreath-laying ceremony in Arlington, VA.

Locations: Arlington, VA.

Names: Dempsey, Martin E.; Hagel, Charles T.; Obama, Michelle.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Casualties; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Iraq : U.S. military forces, casualties; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks; Virginia : Pentagon Memorial in Arlington; Virginia : President's visits.

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