

Honoring the 9/11 Generation of Troops & Military Families

“As we near the 10th anniversary of the attacks that thrust our nation into war, this is also an occasion to pay tribute to...a generation that has borne the burden of our security during a hard decade of sacrifice.”

--President Barack Obama
July 12, 2011

The 10th anniversary of 9/11 is a time to honor the victims of those attacks, to keep faith with their families, and to express our nation’s appreciation to our troops and their families—the 9/11 Generation—who have now been at war for ten challenging years.

Troops—The 9/11 Generation includes more than 5 million Americans who have served in uniform, Active, Guard and Reserve, over the past decade. It includes those on duty on Sept. 11, 2001 who quickly transitioned to a war-footing, and the nearly 3 million Americans who have joined the military since, knowing they could be sent into harm’s way. The service of today’s enlisted personnel, on average just 27 years old, has been defined by 9/11 and its aftermath.

Families—With a majority of today’s military personnel married, the 9/11 Generation includes our inspiring military families: more than 1 million spouses; 2 million children, most of whom have lived their whole lives with America at war; and the parents and relatives of service members, all of whom have borne heavy burdens while their loved ones have been deployed.

A Place in History—The 9/11 Generation has earned its place among the greatest of generations in U.S. history. Over the past decade, more than two million of our troops have served in the war zones, deploying more than 2.5 million times. Hundreds of thousands of troops have deployed multiple times. Our National Guardsmen and Reservists have completed an unprecedented number of deployments. More women have served in combat than ever before.

All Volunteers—In contrast to earlier conflicts, the 9/11 Generation are all volunteers. Everyone in today’s military has chosen to serve in a time of war. Afghanistan and Iraq mark the first time since the Revolutionary War that our nation has engaged in sustained conflicts fought entirely by volunteers. Never before has America asked so much of our all-volunteer force. Moreover, the 9/11 Generation continues to step forward, with re-enlistment rates of troops in the war zones among the highest in the military and with every military service continuing to meet its recruiting and retention goals.

Keeping America Safe—The accomplishments of the 9/11 Generation have been extraordinary—toppling the Taliban, pushing al Qaeda from its Afghan safe havens, training Afghan forces, delivering justice to Osama bin Laden and putting al Qaeda on the path to defeat, all of which has helped to prevent terrorist attacks and save American lives at home. Meanwhile, our troops in Iraq battled a brutal insurgency, have trained Iraqi forces and given the Iraqi people an opportunity to forge a better future.

A Generation of Innovators—Faced with resilient adversaries, our troops have proven themselves as a generation of innovators. They adopted new tactics, mastered new languages

and harnessed new technologies. Junior officers have taken on responsibilities once reserved for more senior commanders. Our troops have not only had to defeat their adversaries on the battlefield, they've excelled in political, economic and development tasks for which they often had little or no training, but which have been critical to their success.

Sacrifice—On this 10th anniversary of 9/11 we honor all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice over the past decade—more than [1,600¹] who have given their lives in Afghanistan and more than [4,500] in Iraq, as well as tens of thousands of our wounded warriors, and the Gold Star families of our fallen heroes.

Moving forward—Thanks to the service and sacrifices of our troops, we are moving forward from a position of strength. We have started to bring our forces home from Afghanistan and will complete the transition to Afghan lead by 2014. At the same time, we ended our combat mission in Iraq, removed more than 100,000 troops from Iraq and are responsibly ending that war. Today, fewer of our military men and women are in harm's way compared to just two years ago, and we will continue to bring more of our troops home.

Veterans & Wounded Warriors—As the beneficiaries of their service, we have a sacred duty to care for all who sacrifice for our defense. With an historic increase in the VA budget, we dramatically have increased treatment for mental health and the signature wounds of the 9/11 Generation—traumatic brain injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. We have given new support to caregivers of our wounded warriors. We are helping hundreds of thousands of veterans and their families pursue a college education under the post-9/11 GI Bill.

Americans United—Although only one percent of our country—our men and women in uniform—are fighting for our security, 100 percent of Americans can support our troops and their families. Through *Joining Forces*—championed by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden—every segment of American society is mobilizing to honor and serve our tireless military families who sacrifice on our behalf. Every American can do something.

Keeping our Military Strong—Despite the enormous strains of ten years of continuous operations, our military remains the strongest it's ever been. Thanks to the commitment and character of the 9/11 Generation, we have the best-trained, best-led, best-equipped fighting force in history. The quality of today's recruits is the highest in decades. We are going to maintain our military superiority so that our troops can meet any mission and so we can keep America safe.

The Best of America—In an era when other institutions failed to meet their responsibilities, the 9/11 Generation has upheld the virtues of service, sacrifice and selflessness that have always been the source of America's strength. Coming from every corner of our country and reflecting all backgrounds and faiths, our military men and women—including many immigrants who have become American citizens while wearing the uniform—represent the unity and diversity we need as our nation confronts urgent challenges at home and abroad.

Rebuilding Our Strength at Home—As we move forward and rebuild the foundations of our national strength here at home, the 9/11 Generation will play a pivotal role, just as our World War II veterans came home and built the largest middle class in history. The nearly 3 million

veterans of the 9/11 Generation are uniquely qualified to be the teachers, skilled workers, community leaders and entrepreneurs to help strengthen the pillars of American competitiveness in the 21st century.

A Resilient Nation—Just as earlier generations of Americans overcame great tests and turmoil, the 9/11 Generation has risen to the challenges of our time, ensuring that America will emerge even stronger. Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen and their families have served with honor, kept us safe, and earned the eternal gratitude of all Americans. As a nation, we will move forward with the same strength, unity and resilience that our troops and their families display every day.

ⁱ Bracketed fatality figures are current as of August, 1, 2011. Figures should be updated and confirmed before being used publicly.