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James Mattis

9/11 Remembrance Ceremony Address

delivered 11 September 2017, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.



[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

Mr. President, Mrs. Trump, our first lady, fellow secretaries of the president's cabinet, distinguished guests, first responders, ladies and gentlemen; and a special heartfelt welcome to the 306 family members gathered to remember their loved ones lost 16 years ago today:

We are here to honor those 2,977 lives claimed by the brutal attacks of September 11th, 2001: men and women who woke that day never anticipating an attack on their place of work or against this country; innocents who hailed from 90 nations and all walks of life; attackers perpetrating murder that fateful day.

But heroism and compassion were boundless on 9/11.





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Patriots from all backgrounds and all walks of life responded with speed, with courage, and with compassion.



In the aftermath of the attack, our service members, our nation rallied together as one.



For while we had never asked for this fight, we are steadfastly committed to seeing it through, as President Trump has made abundantly clear; and with no more temporizing, as our example of leadership galvanizes other nations to stand united against this threat to all human kind.

Maniacs disguised in false religious garb thought by hurting us they could scare us that day.

But, we, Americans, are not made of cotton candy.

We are not seaweed drifting in the current.

We are not intimidated by our enemies.

And, Mr. President, your military does not scare.



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Our nation's troops today are worthy successors of our revolutionary army at Valley Forge, worthy successors of our valiant sailors at Midway, and our Marines at bloody Iwo Jima, and of our Air Force pilots patrolling MiG Alley. Men and women of your Armed Forces, America, having signed a blank check to the protection of the American people and to the defense of our Constitution, a check payable with their very lives, your military stands ready and confident to defend this country, this experiment in democracy. And we will continue to do so using all means necessary and as long as necessary.

So, today, we remember the loss of so many in New York City, in a somber field in Pennsylvania, and here in this very building behind me, and in many battles since -- and some of those battles are still raging. As former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld observed on 9/11 every year we again are mindful and resolute that their deaths, like their lives, shall have meaning; and that is in how we carry forward our responsibility to protect America.

To the families of those who perished, the loss you have endured drives us in our mission today and every day.