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*Memorial Day Address at Camp Eggers*



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I'm very honored to be here with all of you today, in the company of great soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines and civilians of many different countries that are all here for a common purpose. And I'm also honored to be in the presence of the spirits of two great Americans that we've talked about this morning.

Excellencies, Minister of Defense Wardak, Minister of Interior Atmar, my friend Ambassador Karl Eikenberry -- this is a special day; it's almost a welcome home to Camp Eggers for Ambassador Eikenberry. General Formica, Afghan friends, international partners of ISAF and CSTC-A, and fellow Americans. Today we gather to remember and honor those soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and civilians who have died in our nation's service. We come together to acknowledge our debt to the fallen heroes: those from every war and from every generation. We come together as warriors who know only too well the true cost of war.

Countless number of Americans will gather together in our towns, our villages and communities, across the country today to place flowers and flags on the graves of those who have given their last full measure of devotion for our country and for freedom. They will, in their own way, acknowledge the sacrifices of those American warriors who have paid the ultimate price.

For those of us in uniform, particularly for those of us here today fighting far from home, Memorial Day takes on an added significance. It is not simply paying tribute to heroes from years gone by who fought in distant lands. It's rather about the here and the now.



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It's the empty seat in the mess hall, the battle buddy who is no longer here, or the friend who did not return from patrol. And it's the commitment to carry on with the mission in their honor. And Memorial Day for us is intensely personal.

Forgive me for going off my script for a minute, but there are probably very few people sitting here or standing here today that have not lost a loved one, a friend, a comrade, from some nation, that's fought for freedom over these last nine years. And today, with the United States of America at least, it's a special day where we come together in remembrance. To those of us who deployed to this land -- those who deployed with us but will not return home, we salute you and we will never forget you. Your deeds will be remembered by all of us here today. Our brothers in the Afghan National Army, in the Afghan National Police, the Afghan people, and across our grateful nation, you are reflected in every American flag fluttering proudly in the breeze today.

And to those who came before us, from the beginning of our great republic to this war in Afghanistan, to those who donned a uniform and stood up for the ideals laid out in our constitution. Their devotion has seen our country through its darkest hours and insured that the light of freedom continues to shine over our land. It is a debt of honor and service that can never be repaid. It is our duty and our obligation to carry forward that tradition of service to the country. That is how we shall pay our respect and demonstrate our thanks for their sacrifices.

All of you who are here today because our country was suddenly attacked and thousands of innocent Americans were killed by a shadowy terrorist network. In the course of that mission we have also become committed to a better future for the people of Afghanistan. And it is a commitment that we will not leave -- that we will see through to the very end. All of you have answered the call to duty just as our forefathers have done throughout our history. With steadfast dedication to the mission you risk your lives every day. I am honored to be one of you on this day, in this place.

So today, as we remember and pay tribute to our fallen comrades, I also pay tribute to all of you. Our coalition partners and our Afghan comrades in arm, you are all doing a superb job of carrying on a long and proud tradition of selfless service. And make no mistake, we will be successful. May God bless us and guide us and take care of the great Afghan people and our people and our mission on this significant day for Americans.

Thank you very much.