



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20318-9999

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31 August 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR THE JOINT FORCE

SUBJECT: MESSAGE TO THE JOINT FORCE

In the midst of these challenging times, we want to thank our entire Total Joint Force – every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, Guardian and Coastguardman – for your service in defense of our great Nation. Without hesitation or reservation, you accept great risk, endure long separations from your families, and confront the ugliness of war. Together, wrapped in the cloth of our Nation, you project strength, safeguard peace, and carry compassion throughout the globe.

Nearly two decades have passed since that horrible, dark September day in our Nation's history. 2,977 innocent lives lost. Since then, the men and women of our Joint Force have fought tirelessly to defeat violent extremist organizations. Both at home and abroad, your talent and efforts have fueled this fight. In Afghanistan, our military mission there has come to an end.

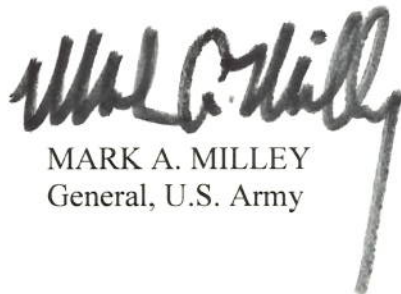
To every member of our Joint Force who fought in operations in Afghanistan, you can hold your head high that we prevented an attack on the United States homeland. And you – sacrificed more than anyone – know this came with a heavy, irreplaceable cost. In Afghanistan, 2,461 Americans lost their lives. 20,691 were wounded in action and many others suffered – and continue to suffer – the unseen wounds of war. To each of you, your service mattered. This is personal to us, and we know it is personal to every one of you.

18 days ago we were given the mission to evacuate Americans, third-country nationals, and Afghans from a war torn country and we executed that mission across nine countries and 26 intermediate staging bases and temporary safe havens. 11 Marines, a Soldier, and a Navy Corpsman paid the ultimate price to save over 124,000 people and gave them an opportunity to live in freedom.

This mission was historic and each of you who participated in this operation demonstrated compassion, character, commitment and exceptional competence in the execution of this high risk mission in a very fluid, dynamic, and dangerous operational environment.

Your actions honor the sacrifice of our brothers and sisters in arms who lost their lives or were wounded in Afghanistan. Over the last two decades and the last 2 weeks, you embodied our American values of equality, liberty, and human dignity for all.

We could not be more honored to serve alongside each and every one of you.



MARK A. MILLEY  
General, U.S. Army



RAMÓN COLÓN-LÓPEZ  
SEAC, U.S. Air Force