

honor the service and cherish the friendship of those who have fought and worked and bled by our side. And all Americans are awed by the service of our own men and women in uniform, who've borne a burden as great as any other generation's. They and their families embody the example of selfless sacrifice.

I remind everybody, the United States of America did not choose to fight a war in Afghanistan. Nearly 3,000 of our people were killed on September 11, 2001, for doing nothing more than going about their daily lives. Al Qaida and its allies have since killed thousands of people in many countries. Most of the blood on their hands is the blood of Muslims, who Al Qaida has killed and maimed in far greater number than any other people. That is the future that Al Qaida is offering to the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan, a future without hope or opportunity, a future without justice or peace.

So understand, the road ahead will be long and there will be difficult days ahead. But we

will seek lasting partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan that promise a new day for their people. And we will use all elements of our national power to defeat Al Qaida and to defend America, our allies, and all who seek a better future. Because the United States of America stands for peace and security, justice and opportunity. That is who we are, and that is what history calls on us to do once more.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; Bruce Riedel, chair, interagency review on Afghanistan and Pakistan policy; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks at an Installation Ceremony for Eric H. Holder, Jr., as Attorney General

March 27, 2009

I am proud to be here today for the installation of my friend Eric Holder as the 82d Attorney General of the United States.

I want to recognize our Deputy Attorney General, David Ogden, for his outstanding service to this Department, both in this tour of duty, and in his last. Where did David go? He was here just a second ago. [*Laughter*] Here he is. Come on out here—that's David. I'd like to thank Special Agent Earl Camp for starting things off with the Pledge of Allegiance and for his tremendous sacrifice for this Nation. Thanks also to Members of Congress who have joined us, to President Steven Knapp for hosting us, and to Judge Robert Richter for administering the oath. Thank you very much.

I also want to welcome Eric's entire family, who is here today. Like me, Eric married up. [*Laughter*] And we are grateful to his extraordinary wife, Dr. Sharon Malone, and their children Brooke, Maya, and Eric, for sharing

him with all of us. So, Sharon, thank you. Thank you, guys.

There are few more important jobs in our Nation's Government than that of Attorney General. As President, I swore an oath to preserve, protect, and defend our Constitution. And as Eric himself has said, it is the Attorney General who serves as the guardian of that revered document that is the basis of our laws and the driving force of our democracy.

And that's what's always distinguished this Nation, that we are bound together not by a shared bloodline or allegiance to any one leader or faith or creed, but by an adherence to a set of ideals. That's the core notion of our founding, that ours is a government of laws, and not men. It is the motto inscribed on the library of my law school alma mater: "Not under man but under God and law."

But today, as we install the man charged with upholding our laws, we are reminded that

the work of translating law into justice, of ensuring that those words put to paper more than two centuries ago mean something for all of our people, that is a fundamentally human process.

It is what so many of you, the men and women of our Justice Department, do every single day: keeping us safe from terrorist attacks, bringing to justice those who would do us harm, rooting out corruption and fighting violent crime, protecting our markets from manipulation and our environment from pollution, and upholding our most fundamental civil rights.

That's why I sought to appoint an Attorney General who understands that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory or footnote in a casebook. It's about how our laws affect the daily realities of people's lives, whether they can make a living and care for their families, whether they feel safe in their own homes and welcome in their own nation.

I sought someone who recognizes the very real threats we face, but has the wisdom, in those hard-to-call cases, to find that fine balance between ensuring our security and preserving our liberty. And most of all, I was looking for someone who believes deeply enough in the American people's cause to serve as the American people's lawyer.

And taken together, I think that's a pretty good description of our new Attorney General. It's a reflection of how he was raised and of the choices he's made throughout his life. Eric's father came to this country as a boy and served in the Army during the Second World War. And even though he couldn't get served at a lunch counter in the Nation he defended, he never stopped believing in its promise. He and Eric's mother worked hard to seize that promise for their sons and give them every opportunity to succeed.

But Eric was never content to achieve just for himself. Each time he rose, he worked to pull others up with him: mentoring young people in college; working for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund in law school; distinguishing himself as a prosecutor, a judge, and a leader in this Department. All along working tirelessly to right the balance of power so ordinary people could get a fair shake, all along showing the independence of mind that justice

requires, never hesitating to take on members of his own party, including those to whom he owed his job. In fact, several months ago, Eric even had the audacity to comment to a reporter on my basketball skills. [Laughter] He said, and I quote—[laughter]—here's what he said—he said, "I'm not sure he's ready for my New York game." [Laughter] We will see about that, Mr. Attorney General. [Laughter]

Now, I can't vouch for Eric's skills on the basketball court, but I can confirm that he is thoroughly prepared to take on the law enforcement challenges of this new century. As a student of history, he also knows history's lessons about what happens when we let politics and ideology cloud our judgment, and let fear and anger, rather than reason, dictate our policy. These are mistakes he will not repeat. Because in the end, Eric comes to this job with only one agenda, to do what is right under the law.

It's no easy task. And it is one that falls to every member of this Department, because our laws are only as effective, only as compassionate, only as fair as those who enforce them. In the end, our Union is only as perfect as we are willing to work for. It endures only to the extent that we are willing to fight for the ideals on which it is based, to do our part as generations before us to breathe new life into them with the more enlightened understandings of our time.

That has always been the core mission of this Department. It is the story told by the murals that adorn the walls of your headquarters, installed years ago to illustrate the power of law to improve our lives.

Now I haven't seen it yet myself, but I'm told that one of these murals, painted back in the 1930s, depicts black children and white children attending school together, sitting side by side in the same classroom. This was years before *Brown versus Board of Education*, at a time when Washington, DC, was still a segregated city.

It is, to this day, a moving reminder that sometimes law lags behind justice, and it is up to us to bridge that distance. That's been the work of Eric Holder's life and so many of yours. I thank you for answering the call to serve this Nation, and I look forward to working with you

in the months and years ahead to meet the urgent challenges of our time.

So thank you. God bless you. Keep up the great work, and let's install our outstanding Attorney General.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. in the Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University. In his remarks, he referred to Ste-

ven Knapp, president, George Washington University; District of Columbia Superior Court Judge Robert I. Richter; and Miriam Holder, mother, and William Holder, brother, of Attorney General Holder. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Holder.

The President's Weekly Address

March 28, 2009

Even as we face an economic crisis which demands our constant focus, forces of nature can also intervene in ways that create other crises to which we must respond, and respond urgently. For the people of North and South Dakota and Minnesota who live along rivers spilling over their banks, this is one such moment. Rivers and streams throughout the region have flooded or are at risk of flooding. The cities of Fargo and neighboring Moorhead are vulnerable as the waters of the Red River have risen. Thousands of homes and businesses are threatened.

That's why, on Tuesday, I granted a major disaster declaration request for the State of North Dakota and ordered Federal support into the region to help State and local officials respond to the flooding. This was followed by an emergency declaration for the State of Minnesota. And we are also keeping close watch on the situation in South Dakota as it develops.

The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency continue to coordinate the Federal response. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano is helping to oversee Federal efforts, and she remains in close contact with State officials. Acting FEMA Administrator Nancy Ward has been in the region since yesterday to meet with folks on the ground and survey the area herself.

In addition, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is assisting in the emergency construction of levees. The Coast Guard is aiding in search and rescue efforts, while the Department of Defense is helping to move people

and supplies. Members of the National Guard have been activated and are on the scene as well. Hospitals and nursing homes in the area are being evacuated and residents in poor health or with special needs are being transported to higher ground. Teams from the Department of Health and Human Services are aiding in this work. And the Red Cross is in place to provide shelter and supplies for folks in need.

It is also important for residents in these States to remain vigilant in monitoring reports on flood crests and to follow instructions from their State and local leaders in the event that evacuations become necessary.

My administration is working closely with Governors John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, and Tim Pawlenty, and I've been meeting with Senators Byron Dorgan, Kent Conrad, and Amy Klobuchar, as well as Congressmen Earl Pomeroy and Collin Peterson, to pledge my support. I'll continue to monitor the situation carefully. We will do what must be done to help in concert with State and local agencies and nonprofit organizations and volunteers who are doing so much to aid the response effort. For at moments like these, we're reminded of the power of nature to disrupt lives and endanger communities, but we are also reminded of the power of individuals to make a difference.

In the Fargodome, thousands of people gathered not to watch a football game or a rodeo, but to fill sandbags. Volunteers filled 2.5 million of them in just 5 days, working against the clock, day and night, with tired arms and aching backs. Others braved freezing