

those 100 American soldiers, some of who join us today. And those soldiers went on to have families, children and grandchildren who also owe their lives to Alpha Troop.

Now, some may wonder, after all these years, why honor this heroism now? And the answer is simple: Because we must, because we have a sacred obligation. As a nation, we have an obligation to this troop. Their actions that day went largely unnoticed—for decades—until their old captain, John Poindexter, realized that their service had been overlooked. He felt that he had a right to wrong. And so he spent years tracking down his troopers and gathering their stories, filing reports, fighting for the Silver Stars and Bronze Stars they deserved and bringing us to this day. Thank you, John.

We have an obligation to all who served in the jungles of Vietnam. Our Vietnam vets answered their country's call and served with honor. But one of the saddest episodes in American history was the fact that these vets were often shunned and neglected, even demonized, when they came home. That was a national disgrace. And on days such as this, we resolve to never let it happen again.

Many of our Vietnam vets put away their medals, rarely spoke of their service, and moved on. They started families and careers. Some rose through the ranks, like the decorated Vietnam veteran that I rely on every day, my National Security Adviser, Jim Jones.

Indeed, I'm told that today is the first time in 39 years that many from Alpha Troop have pulled out their medals and joined their old troop. Some of you still carry the shrapnel and the scars of that day. All of you carry the memories. And so I say, it's never too late. We can never say it enough: To you and all of those who served in Vietnam, we thank you. We honor your service, and America is forever grateful.

And today also reminds us of our obligations to all our veterans, whether they took off the uniform decades ago or days ago, to make sure that they and their families receive the respect they deserve and the health care and treatment they need, the benefits they have earned and all the opportunities to live out their dreams.

And finally, if that day in the jungle, if that war long ago, teaches us anything, then surely it is this: If we send our men and women in uniform into harm's way, then it must be only when it is absolutely necessary. And when we do, we must back them up with the strategy and the resources and the support they need to get the job done.

This includes always showing our troops the respect and dignity they deserve, whether one agrees with the mission or not. For if this troop and our men and women in uniform can come together, from so many different backgrounds and beliefs, to serve together and to succeed together, then so can we. So can America.

I cannot imagine a more fitting tribute to these men, who fought in what came to be called the "Anonymous Battle." Troopers, you are not anonymous anymore. And with America's overdue recognition also comes responsibility, our responsibility as citizens and as a nation, to always remain worthy of your service.

God bless Alpha Troop and the 11th Armored Cavalry. God bless all those who wear this Nation's uniform. And God bless the United States of America.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul and Janet E. Monti, parents of SFC Jared C. Monti, USA, who was killed in action in Afghanistan on June 21, 2006.

Remarks to Joint Terrorism Task Force Staff Members in New York City *October 20, 2009*

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you so much. It is great to be here today, and I am honored to spend some time with the men and women who are working

so hard, around the clock, to keep not only this city but also this country safe from terrorism.

I want to thank our outstanding FBI Director, Robert Mueller, for that kind and brief

introduction. As I've said before, these are incredibly challenging times for the FBI. And for the last 8 years, Bob has worked tirelessly to prevent additional attacks and keep this Nation safe. He's been doing a unbelievable job under very difficult and trying circumstances, and we are grateful to him.

I also want to commend Police Commissioner Kelly, Assistant Director in Charge Joe Demarest, and all the leaders who've helped to put together a team that is more integrated and more collaborative and more effective than ever before.

Here at the Joint Terrorism Task Force, we have folks from the FBI working side by side with some of New York's finest, as well as countless Federal, State, and local partners. I was taking a look at the list, and it looks like 45, 46 different agencies represented here. And together, your success in thwarting terrorist attacks—the strong intelligence you've gathered and the hard-nosed investigations you've pursued—has proved to be a model for law enforcement officials across the country, and for that you should all be extremely proud.

No one knows better than you how important this work is, because you've always been on the frontlines in fighting extremism. Last month, we marked the eighth anniversary of the attacks on 9/11. And on that terrible day, when terrorists brought so much death and destruction on our shores and so many lives were lost, many of you were the first on the scenes, saving lives, working tirelessly to bring those responsible to justice, and guarding against future attacks in subsequent weeks and months and years.

And that effort continues to this day, quietly, doggedly, courageously. Most New Yorkers, much less most Americans, probably don't know this office is here, and they don't know what you do. Obviously, you're not doing it for the glamour or the glory or the pay. [*Laughter*] You do it to serve and protect your country. And because of the effort and sacrifices that you're making on a daily basis, we are making real progress on our core missions of disrupting and dismantling and, ultimately, defeating Al Qaida and its extremist allies.

I said this when I had a chance to speak to some of the NYPD leadership team last month over the phone, but I particularly want to express my appreciation and admiration for your terrific work, especially in the recent weeks. Working together, you saved countless lives, and your collaboration earned the respect and gratitude not just of New Yorkers but Americans everywhere.

This level of cooperation and integration is going to be critical in defeating the type of determined and resourceful—and oftentimes in the shadows—opponents that you're up against every day. Nerve centers like this one help you share intelligence, answer questions, and give support instantly. And because each organization is on its own, this task force has shown how much stronger all of you can be when you're actually working together.

You're setting the standard for everybody else, as I said, and you're showing what focused and integrated counterterrorism work really looks like. And the record of your service is written in the attacks that never occur because you thwarted them, and because of the countless Americans who are alive today as a consequence of that work. And so America is in your debt for that.

Of course, we all know that we're facing a determined adversary. They are resourceful, they are resilient, they are still plotting, as we have become all too aware. No one can ever promise that there won't be another attack on America's soil. But I can promise you this: I pledge to do everything in my power as President of the United States to keep the American people safe. And that means I pledge to give all of you the tools and the support that you need to get the job done, both here at home and around the world. And I pledge that I will stay as focused on this mission as you are.

So we all have to redouble our efforts in the face of threats that persist. We're going to have to draw strength from the values that we hold dear. We're going to have to keep our eye fixed on the world we seek to build, one that not just—not only defeats our adversaries but that also promotes dignity and opportunity and justice for all who stand with us.

And to do that, I'm going to need all of you to continue the extraordinary work you do and the collaborations you do. That's how we're going to prevail in this fight. That's how we're going to protect this country that we love.

So I know that all of you are extraordinarily busy, and I do not want to draw you away from the work that you do. I just want to let you know that we appreciate it, we acknowledge it, we thank you for it, and I am going to continue to be standing behind you each and every step of

the way. So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:24 p.m. at the Joint Terrorism Task Force Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Raymond W. Kelly, commissioner, New York City Police Department; and Joseph M. Demarest, Jr., Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Division.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Afghanistan *October 20, 2009*

I welcome President Karzai's statement today accepting the independent electoral commission's certification of the August 20 election results and agreeing to participate in a second round of the election. This is an important step forward in ensuring a credible process for the Afghan people which results in a Government that reflects their will.

While this election could have remained unresolved to the detriment of the country, President Karzai's constructive actions established an important precedent for Afghanistan's new democracy. The Afghan Constitution and laws are strengthened by President Karzai's decision, which is in the best interests of the Afghan people.

I congratulate the Afghan people on the patience and resilience they have shown throughout this long election process. Given Afghanistan's recent history, it is extraordinary that they were able to overcome threats and violence to express their democratic right to choose their leader. Insecurity in the country prevented some Afghans from voting, but it is a testimony to the bravery of the Afghan people that so many of them did come out to vote in the first

round under tremendously difficult circumstances.

I commend both the independent electoral commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission for carrying out their mandates. Throughout this process, the United States has been interested above all in the strength and independence of those institutions and the need for them to fulfill their mandate on behalf of all Afghans.

I congratulate President Karzai and Dr. Abdullah, who both earned the support of voters from across the country. I also commend all of the other Presidential candidates who made this such a vibrant campaign.

It is now vital that all elements of Afghan society continue to come together to advance democracy, peace, and justice. We look forward to a second round of voting and the completion of the process to choose the President of Afghanistan. In that effort, the United States and the international community are committed to partnering with the Afghan people.

NOTE: The statement referred to Afghan Presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah.