

anyway. We just need those ideas out in the open, in and out of the classroom.

When I meet young people like yourselves, when I sat and talked to Donae, I have no doubt that America's best days are still ahead of us, because I know the potential that lies in each of you. Soon enough, you will be the ones leading our businesses and leading our Government. You will be the one who are making sure that the next generation gets what they need to succeed. You will be the ones that are charting the course of our unwritten history. And all that starts right now, starts this year.

So I want all of you who are listening, as well as everybody here at Banneker, I want you to make the most of the year that's ahead of you. I

want you to think of this time as one in which you are just loading up with information and skills, and you're trying new things, and you're practicing, and you're honing—all those things that you're going to need to do great things when you get out of school.

Your country is depending on you. So set your sights high. Have a great school year. Let's get to work.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Donae Owens, student body president, Benjamin Banneker Academic High School.

Remarks at the Change of Command Ceremony for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Fort Myer, Virginia *September 30, 2011*

Thank you very much. Secretary Panetta, thank you for your introduction and for your extraordinary leadership. To Members of Congress, Vice President Biden, members of the Joint Chiefs, service Secretaries, distinguished guests, and men and women of the finest military in the world.

Most of all, Admiral Mullen, Deborah, Michael, and I also want to also acknowledge your son Jack, who's deployed today. All of you have performed extraordinary service to our country.

Before I begin, I want to say a few words about some important news. Earlier this morning, Anwar al-Awlaki, a leader of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, was killed in Yemen. The death of Awlaki is a major blow to Al Qaida's most active operational affiliate. Awlaki was the leader of external operations for Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. In that role, he took the lead in planning and directing efforts to murder innocent Americans. He directed the failed attempt to blow up an airplane on Christmas Day in 2009. He directed the failed attempt to blow up U.S. cargo planes in 2010. And he repeatedly called on individuals in the United States and around the globe to kill in-

nocent men, women, and children to advance a murderous agenda.

The death of Awlaki marks another significant milestone in the broader effort to defeat Al Qaida and its affiliates. Furthermore, this success is a tribute to our intelligence community and to the efforts of Yemen and its security forces, who have worked closely with the United States over the course of several years.

Awlaki and his organization have been directly responsible for the deaths of many Yemeni citizens. His hateful ideology and targeting of innocent civilians has been rejected by the vast majority of Muslims and people of all faiths. And he has met his demise because the Government and the people of Yemen have joined the international community in a common effort against Al Qaida.

Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula remains a dangerous, though weakened, terrorist organization. And going forward, we will remain vigilant against any threats to the United States or our allies and partners. But make no mistake: This is further proof that Al Qaida and its affiliates will find no safe haven anywhere in the world.

Working with Yemen and our other allies and partners, we will be determined, we will be deliberate, we will be relentless, we will be resolute in our commitment to destroy terrorist networks that aim to kill Americans and to build a world in which people everywhere can live in greater peace, prosperity, and security.

Now, advancing that security has been the life's work of the man that we honor today. But as Mike will admit to you, he got off to a somewhat shaky start. He was a young ensign, just 23 years old, commanding a small tanker, when he collided with a buoy. *[Laughter]* As Mike later explained, in his understated way, when you're on a ship, "colliding with anything is not a good thing." *[Laughter]*

I tell this story because Mike has told it himself to men and women across our military. He has always understood that the true measure of our success is not whether we stumble, it's whether we pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off and get on with the job. It's whether, no matter the storms or shoals that come our way, we chart our course, we keep our eye fixed on the horizon and take care of those around us, because we all we rise and fall together.

That's the story of Mike Mullen. It's the story of America. And it's the spirit that we celebrate today.

Indeed, if there's a thread that runs through his illustrious career, it's Mike's sense of stewardship: the understanding that, as leaders, our time at the helm is but a moment in the life of our Nation; the humility which says the institutions and people entrusted to our care look to us, yet they do not belong to us; and the sense of responsibility we have to pass them safer and stronger to those who follow.

Mike, as you look back as your 4 consequential years as Chairman and your four decades in uniform, be assured our military is stronger and our Nation is more secure because of the service that you have rendered.

Today, we have renewed American leadership in the world. We've strengthened our alliances, including NATO. We're leading again in Asia, and we forged a new treaty with Russia to reduce our nuclear arsenals. And every Ameri-

can can be grateful to Admiral Mullen, as am I, for his critical role in each of these achievements, which will enhance our national security for decades to come.

Today, we see the remarkable achievements of our 9/11 generation of servicemembers. They've given Iraqis a chance to determine their own future. They've pushed the Taliban out of their Afghan strongholds and finally put Al Qaida on the path to defeat. Meanwhile, our forces have responded to sudden crises with compassion, as in Haiti, and with precision, as in Libya. And it will be long remembered that our troops met these tests on Admiral Mullen's watch and under his leadership.

Today, we're moving forward from a position of strength. Fewer of our sons and daughters are in harm's way and more will come home. Our soldiers can look forward to shorter deployments, more time with their families, and more time training for future missions. Put simply, despite the stresses and strains of a hard decade of war, the military that Admiral Mullen passes to General Dempsey today is the best that it has ever been.

And today, thanks to Mike's principled leadership, our military draws its strength from more members of our American family. Soon, women will report for duty on our submarines and patriotic servicemembers who are gay and lesbian no longer have to lie about who they are to serve the country that they love. History will record that the tipping point toward this progress came when the 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff went before Congress and told the Nation that it was the right thing to do.

Mike, your legacy will endure in a military that is stronger, but also in a nation that is more just.

Finally, I would add that in every discussion I've ever had with Mike, in every recommendation he's ever made, one thing has always been foremost in his mind: the lives and well-being of our men and women in uniform. I've seen it in the quiet moments with our wounded warriors and our veterans. I saw it that day in the Situation Room, as we held our breath for the safe return of our forces who delivered justice to Usama bin Laden. I saw it at Dover,

as we honored our fallen heroes in their final journey home.

Mike, you have fulfilled the pledge you made at the beginning to represent our troops with “unwavering dedication.” And so has Deborah, who we thank for her four decades of extraordinary service, her extraordinary support to our military families, her kindness, her gentleness, her grace under pressure. She is an extraordinary woman, Mike. And we’re both lucky to have married up.

Now the mantle of leadership passes to General Marty Dempsey, one of our Nation’s most respected and combat-tested generals. Marty, after a lifetime of service, I thank you, Deanie, Chris, Megan, and Caitlin for answering the call to serve once more.

In this sense, today begins to complete the transition to our new leadership team. In Secretary Panetta, we have one of our Nation’s finest public servants. In the new Deputy Secretary, Ash Carter, we will have an experienced leader to carry on the work of Bill Lynn, who we thank for his outstanding service. And the new Vice Chairman, Admiral Sandy Winnefeld, will round out a team where, for the first time, both the Chairman and Vice Chairman will have the experience of leading combat operations in the years since 9/11.

Leon, Marty, Ash, Sandy, men and women of this Department, both uniformed and civilian, we still have much to do: from bringing the rest of our troops home from Iraq this year to

transitioning to Afghan lead for their own security; from defeating Al Qaida to our most solemn of obligations, taking care of our forces and their families when they go to war and when they come home.

None of this will be easy, especially as our Nation makes hard fiscal choices. But as Commander in Chief, let me say it as clearly as I can: As we go forward we will be guided by the mission we ask of our troops and the capabilities they need to succeed. We will maintain our military superiority. We will never waver in defense of our country, our citizens, or our national security interests. And the United States of America and our Armed Forces will remain the greatest force for freedom and security that the world has ever known.

This is who we are as Americans. And this is who we must always be: as we salute Mike Mullen as an exemplar of this spirit, we salute him for a life of patriotic service; as we continue his legacy to keep the country that we love safe; and as we renew the sources of American strength here at home and around the world.

Mike, thank you, from a grateful nation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Deborah Mullen, wife, and Michael and John Mullen, sons, of Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN; and Deanie Dempsey, wife, and Christopher Dempsey, Megan Dempsey Bailey, and Caitlin Dempsey, children, of Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Related to Afghanistan and Pakistan

September 30, 2011

Dear _____:

In response to section 1117 of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (Public Law 111–32) (the “Act”), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing the attached report related to Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the fourth report submitted under section 1117 of the Act and follows the April 2011 submission.

This report covers the period from January 1, 2011, through June 30, 2011. To the extent possible, the report also provides an assessment through August 31, 2011. Events continue to evolve since that time, for example in our relationship with Pakistan, but these developments fall outside the scope of this report. As I noted in my remarks on the way forward in Afghanistan on June 22, we have seen great progress in our fight against al-Qa’ida; we have