

patriots who answered the call to serve. They put their lives on the line to defend the country they love. And in the end, many gave that “last full measure of devotion” so that our Nation would endure.

Every single one of us owes our fallen heroes a profound debt of gratitude. Because every time we cast our votes or speak our minds without fear, it’s because they fought for our right to do that. Every chance we get to make a better life for ourselves and our families is possible because generations of patriots fought to keep America a land of opportunity, where anyone—of any race, of any religion, from any background—can make it if they try. Our country was born out of a desire to be free, and every day since, it’s been protected by our men and women in uniform, people who believed so deeply in America, they were willing to give their lives for it.

We owe them so much. So this Memorial Day, we’ll gather together, as Americans, to honor the fallen, with both public ceremonies and private remembrances. And I hope all Americans will take a moment this weekend to think of those who have died in service to our Nation. Say a prayer in their memories and for their families. Lay a flower where they’ve come to rest. Reach out to servicemembers, military families or veterans in your community, or

families who have lost a loved one, and let them know that their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Most of all, let’s keep working to make sure that our country upholds our sacred trust to all who have served. In recent weeks, we’ve seen again how much more our Nation has to do to make sure all our veterans get the care that they deserve. And as Commander in Chief, I believe that taking care of our veterans and their families is a sacred obligation. It’s been one of the causes of my Presidency. And now that we’ve ended the war in Iraq, and as our war in Afghanistan ends as well, we have to work even harder as a nation to make sure all our veterans get the benefits and opportunities that they have earned. They’ve done their duty, and they ask nothing more than that this country does ours, now and for decades to come.

Happy Memorial Day, everybody. May God watch over our fallen heroes, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:20 a.m. on May 22 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on May 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 24.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Ukraine *May 25, 2014*

On behalf of all Americans, I congratulate the people of Ukraine for making their voices heard by voting in their Presidential election today. Despite provocations and violence, millions of Ukrainians went to the polls throughout the country and even in parts of eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatist groups sought to disenfranchise entire regions, some courageous Ukrainians still were able to cast their ballots. We commend the resolve of all those who participated, as well as the efforts of the Ukrainian Government to conduct these elections in the face of those threats.

Throughout the last few months, the Ukrainian people have repeatedly demonstrated

their desire to choose their leaders without interference and to live in a democracy where they can determine their own future free of violence and intimidation. This election is another important step forward in the efforts of the Ukrainian Government to unify the country and reach out to all of its citizens to ensure their concerns are addressed and aspirations met.

The United States looks forward to working with the next President, as well as the democratically elected Parliament, to support Ukraine’s efforts to enact important political and economic reforms. We also continue to support Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, condemn

and reject Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, and remain committed to working with Ukraine and other partners to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With United States Ambassador to Afghanistan James B. Cunningham, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, Commander General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC, and Senior Military Leadership at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan

May 25, 2014

The President. Well, I just want to take a few minutes to say thank you to all of you. The main reason I took this trip—in addition to bringing Brad Paisley—is to make sure that everybody here knows, as we're coming into Memorial Day weekend, we're aware of the sacrifices that so many have made on behalf of our freedom here in Afghanistan, and also to make sure that we're reminded of the sacrifices you and your families make every single day.

This is a tough job. But as I came down the stairs, I had a chance to see the Twin Towers on a poster. Some of you know that I had the chance to visit the 9/11 Memorial Museum that's just gone up in New York. And it's a reminder of why we're here. We are now in the process of transition, and I've been getting constant updates from General Dunford and Jim about the progress that we've made. We've seen an election in Afghanistan, at least in the first round, go successfully. And I'm going to have to make some decisions in conjunction with the folks on the ground about how we manage the transition not just through the end of this year, but post-2014. And we'll probably be announcing some decisions fairly shortly. But I thought it was important for me to make sure that I check in directly with folks face to face before those decisions were finally made.

I'm impressed with not just the progress that's been made, but the dedication and the can-do spirit that is continually exhibited throughout this war theater, and I just want to say thank you for that. And Joe has given me, I think, a fairly detailed briefing about what current plans are and the progress we're making with the training of Afghan forces. I think it has gone—I'll be honest with you—better than I might have expected just a year ago, and that's a testament to the great work that all of you have done, as well as the pride the Afghan people have taken in the possibility of being able to secure their own country and install a government that's accountable to them.

And so I very much appreciate all the great work that you have done. And I appreciate it. And I think the American people thank you as well.

Gen. Dunford. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. in the Joint Operating Center. In his remarks, he referred to musician Brad D. Paisley, who traveled with the President aboard Air Force One and performed a concert for the troops that evening.

Remarks to United States Troops at Bagram Air Base

May 25, 2014

The President. Hello, Bagram!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Hooah! Well, I know it's a little late, but I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd stop by. First of all, I want every-

body to give a huge round of applause to your commander, General Joe Dunford. Please give him an outstanding, rousing acknowledgment. I am grateful to him for his leadership of our coalition here in Afghanistan and for his