

REMARKS BY
ADM. MIKE MULLEN,
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
AT THE PENTAGON 9/11 MEMORIAL DEDICATION
CEREMONY LOCATION: THE PENTAGON,
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2008

ADM. MULLEN: President and Mrs. Bush, Mr. Vice President, Madame Speaker, Secretary Gates, Secretary Rumsfeld, Jim Laychak, Dick Myers, Pete Pace, good morning and welcome, especially to the families and friends of those we remember this September 11th. Our thoughts and prayers have been with you for the past seven years, and they are with you here today.

The events of 9/11 still burn, still singe our memories. And even for all the pain, it heals us to come back here and reflect on the suffering and the sacrifice of that day.

I am reminded of what Major General Joshua Chamberlain of the famous 20th Maine said many years after the Battle of Gettysburg when he returned to Little Round Top to dedicate a memorial to his men, quote, "In great deeds something abides. On great fields something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear, but spirits linger, to consecrate ground for the vision-place of souls. And reverent men and women from afar and generations that know us not and that we know not of shall come here to ponder and dream, and the power of the vision shall pass into their souls.

"This," he said, "is the great reward of service: to live far out and on in the life of others," end quote.

The spirits of those who perished here live on in this place, in us, in others who know the "great reward of service." And their lingering spirits unite with those who now rest, those who gave the last full measure, answering the call trumpeted on this great field. Their memorial -- small, white, marble, in Section 60 at Arlington, in quiet fields across our nation, upon other hallowed grounds throughout the world -- bespeak the high price paid on behalf of those who perished here.

Today we honor the sacrifice of innocent civilians who perished here. Today we honor the sacrifice of servicemen and -women who fell here. And today

we honor the heart-wrenching sacrifice, the quiet courage of those who called souls dad, mom, son, daughter, husband, wife, brother, sister, friend.

Here, in this vision place of souls, linger the spirits who consecrate this ground and continue to live far out and on in our lives.

Navy Petty Officer Matthew Flocco is one of them. I visited Matt's memorial just the other day. The youngest service member to perish, just 21, his bench can be found in the fourth row, first from the left.

Many of us know his story, how he died on the first floor of the Pentagon's D-Ring; how his parents, Michael and Sheila, grief-stricken yet determined, would help to rebuild the Pentagon. With Sheila's blessing, Michael moved to Washington to join the Phoenix Project, and every day for nine months Michael would return to the exact spot where his son lost his life.

It became a vision place, a vision place for Michael and for Sheila and really for all of us. And that returning to that spot is our enduring call to action, a call that resonates far out and beyond this sacred ground.

It's a call to always remember that dedicated men and women right now are serving, in harm's way, a call to always reflect upon the sacrifice that they and their families make and a call to always renew, by returning reverently to that spot, that vision place.

We will never forget, for the vision has passed into the souls of our servicemen and women. I see it in their eyes, the eyes of every one of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, who at this very moment stand watch anywhere, anytime, ready to do their duty.

They are the most combat-hardened and experienced force our nation has ever known. The enduring resolve to take the fight to our enemies, those who brought the fight here, burns strong within each and every one of our servicemen and women.

It is that resolve that will always return us here, to this spot, this vision place of souls. And it is that resolve that will never allow us to forget what happened here.

God bless the families of those who paid the ultimate price. God bless our servicemen and women. And God bless America.

(Applause.)

END.