



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20318-9999

Holiday Message 2008

Throughout our history, when faced with war at this special time of the year, American Servicemen and women have risen with crisis and fought with valor – while providing their fellow citizens precious moments to enjoy the season's joyous spirit with loved ones at home.

This tradition harkens to our first holiday season as an independent Nation, 232 years ago. The bleak winter of 1776 found this Republic and its leader, General Washington, with a difficult and uncertain future. At twilight on the twenty-fifth of December, faced with one of the darkest moments of the American Revolution, Washington's Army crossed the icy Delaware River to defeat enemy forces at the Battle of Trenton. Their bravery on that cold winter's night altered the course of the war, and, ultimately, our road to victory.

Among Washington's troops that December was Thomas Paine, who appealed to the honor and patriotic duty of his fellow soldiers with these famous words: *"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."*

This holiday season, more than 280,000 modern-day patriots are deployed around the globe, ensuring their families and friends – and ours – can celebrate in peace and comfort. Let us take pause to honor their sacrifice.

We also offer our thoughts and prayers to the wounded, their families, and the families of the fallen. Theirs is an emptiness we cannot know – made only deeper during the holidays. Although their sacred void can never be filled, let us look deep into our hearts and honor them all – for they richly deserve the *love and thanks* of a grateful Nation.

On behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and our families, I thank you for all that you do for our country. We wish you and your loved ones a festive holiday season, and tidings of peace in the coming New Year.

Respectfully,

M.G. MULLEN
Admiral, U.S. Navy