



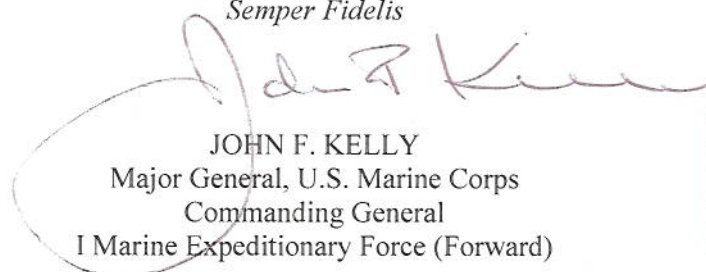
11 September 2008

Today marks the seventh anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against our country. The attacks took the lives of nearly 4,000 innocent human beings mostly Americans, but also men and women from 60 other nations. They were victims all of whom left their homes and families that beautiful September morning, but because of acts of unimaginable terror by the most hateful men on earth were in God's hands before noon. Our nation was in shock that day in a way that we have never been shocked before. We have always had the luxury of seeing these kinds of despicable acts take place overseas never closer to us or our families than the television set. Until that day we had always been able to shake our heads in disbelief, then go back to whatever it was we were doing safe in the knowledge that it couldn't happen in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles...New York or Washington. And then it did. We watched in horror as the towers collapsed and the seconds it took them to fall was an eternity for the poor souls inside. Their lives horribly snuffed out and only God himself understood the why of it all. No decent man or woman could ever understand the kind of hate these men held in their hearts for our country, and for the way we live our lives. Our freedoms and how we revere our God given rights won for us over two centuries ago by patriots of amazing character and commitment, and preserved for us by an endless line of Veterans who have selflessly protected us and kept us free. They hate the way we treat each other, these men, the way we respect each other's differences, worship the God of our choice, love our family and friends, see goodness and dignity in every person, and worth in every life.

Most of our people did not know what to do that terrible day. As a nation we were scared as we had never been scared before. Mothers ran crying to find their children to gain as much as give comfort. Total strangers hugged and supported each other in the streets. Adults who thankfully had never experienced anything like this before called aged parents and grandparents who had seen something like this before one December morning a very long time ago, and knew how to handle it. Overnight American patriotism soared not as a last refuge as the cynics say, but because in the darkest times Americans know it is country first, that America will prevail, and strong men and women will see to their defense—we always have.

There was, however, a relatively small segment of American society that made very-very different decisions that day. They made Americans stand in awe on 9/11, and everyday since. The first were the police and firefighters that died—killed by the terrorists—but were not victims. They were doing what they swore they would do, to protect and serve, a commitment only others who have done the same can truly understand. Then there were our Armed Forces. Most of us who serve today came after and because of the terrible assault on our way of life, by men who must be killed and an ideology that must be destroyed. A plastic flag in your car window was not your response to terrorism. A commitment to protect the nation and swearing an oath to your God to do so to your death was your reply. When future generations ask why America is still free and a beacon of hope to the world, and why Al Qaida's heyday was counted in days rather than centuries, you can say "because of me, and people like me, who risked all to protect millions in their homes who will never know my name."

Semper Fidelis


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