

America hadn't forgotten



From Barack Obama <info@obama.org>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To Obama Foundation <reply-fecb177170640775-326_HTML-1941581-100016450-10@email.obama.org>
Date 2021-05-01 07:00



Dear friend,

When you walk into my office, the first thing you see is an American flag signed by the team that carried out the operation in Abbottabad, Pakistan, against Osama bin Laden ten years ago.

On Monday, I sat down in front of that flag with Admiral Bill McRaven, who commanded those special operations forces, to reflect on the mission, and why that gift is the most meaningful object I received as president.



After the operation was over and the team returned

stateside, it was important to me to thank them personally. Admiral McRaven invited me to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where I presented the group with a Presidential Unit Citation and shook all their hands. Before I left, the team handed me a flag they had carried with them to Abbottabad, signed by each operator.

That flag means a lot to me. When you swear an oath to be Commander-in-Chief, you have an obligation to the more than 1 million Americans serving in our nation's military to only send them into harm's way when absolutely necessary—and to approach the job with a level of seriousness that reflects their decision to commit to a life of service.

Every day in the White House, I worked to uphold that promise. Receiving that flag, I was humbled by the fact that the team recognized how much I cared about them as Commander-in-Chief. That despite all of the unknowns we had going into the mission, I was able to make the decision to authorize the raid because I had complete confidence in them, even as I knew the risks they were taking.

As I shared with Bill, a few days after the raid, I traveled to New York City to visit Ground Zero. I had lunch at Engine 54, a firehouse where 15 firefighters had died on September 11, shook hands with police officers who were some of the first on the scene at the World Trade Center, and hugged children whose parents had been murdered. They all shared how much this operation meant to them. Nothing could bring back the people they loved, but the raid had sent an important message: that America had never forgotten their loss.

When I look back ten years later, I am grateful to all the people who allowed me to look those families in the eye and

tell them we had kept our promise. Whether it was the intelligence professionals, the diplomats, the White House and agency staff, or the troops on the ground, the success of that operation depended on hundreds, if not thousands, of patriotic professionals doing their jobs well, over months and years, with no fanfare or regard for who got the credit. They were the reason we were able to bring justice to bin Laden and strike a decisive blow against the al Qaeda terrorist network. And as Bill and the SEAL team stressed when they presented me with that flag, their work built on the sacrifices and hard won lessons of so many who had come before.

[I hope you'll take a moment to watch my conversation with Admiral McRaven.](#)

Theirs is a story we'll honor at the Obama Presidential Center, and I hope that shared sense of selflessness, service, and commitment to making our world a safer place will continue to serve as an example for the next generation of leaders as they tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

—Barack



© 2021 Obama Foundation

[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Subscriber Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

You received this email at sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org because you subscribed to updates from the Obama Foundation.

The Barack Obama Foundation | 5235 S. Harper Ct, Suite 1140, Chicago, IL, USA 60615