

Remarks By President Obama At Nomination of General Joe Dunford as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs

By Administrator
Wednesday, 06 May 2015 05:51 -

RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - President Obama made the following remarks about his nomination of General Joe Dunford as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The transcript of Tuesday's remarks comes from whitehouse.gov

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. As Americans, we are blessed with the strongest military the world has ever known. Yes, our system of equipment and technology, our logistical capacity is unmatched. But what makes us the best, the reason no other nation can do what we do, is our people -- patriotic men and women across our country who step forward, raise their hand and take an oath to defend our nation. It's our men and women in uniform -- and their leaders -- who make our armed forces the very best.

Among our military leaders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military advisor to me and my national security team -- including Vice President Biden; my National Security Advisor, Susan Rice; and our Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter.

In recent years, I have been deeply grateful for the service of our Chairman, General Marty Dempsey, and our Vice Chairman, Admiral Sandy Winnefeld. Marty and Sandy will complete their terms later this year. I'll have a chance to say nice things about them later. I can tell you that they have been outstanding, and I could not have asked for a better team. But today, I'm proud to announce my nominee to be the next Chairman, General Joe Dunford, and the next Vice Chairman, General Paul Selva

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Again, I want to thank General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld for being here today. Marty and Sandy, we are extraordinarily grateful for all that you've done. And we'll have an opportunity to pay tribute to you in the months ahead. I've relied on you both -- your advice, your counsel, your judgment -- as we've navigated the urgent challenges of recent years, from ending our combat mission in Afghanistan to leading the international coalition to destroy ISIL; conducting humanitarian operations from typhoon relief in the Philippines to fighting Ebola in West Africa; and strengthening our security alliances from Europe to Asia. At every step, you have been critical to our processes, and I have valued not only your counsel but your friendships.

At the same time, Marty and Sandy have helped to guide our forces through difficult fiscal

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times -- especially sequestration. They've stayed focused on readiness, and training and modernization. Today there are also more opportunities for women in our armed forces. We're tackling the outrage of sexual assault, which has no place in our ranks. We've made progress in large part because leaders like Marty and Sandy have made sure we're recruiting and training, and equipping and retaining the best fighting force on the planet. I look forward to honoring Marty and Sandy and thanking them more fully for their extraordinary contributions to our nation.

There are other things we're going to miss. We're going to miss Marty's incomparable singing voice. (Laughter.) He will not be singing today. But I'm going to put my request in early for a final number at your farewell. But on behalf of myself, our entire national security team and our armed forces, thank you. And to Deannie and to Mary, we are grateful for your families' service. (Applause.)

My choice for the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Joe Dunford, is one of the most admired officers in our military. A native of Boston, Joe is the very definition of "Boston Strong."

The son of a retired Boston police officer and Marine veteran of Korea, Joe followed in his father's footsteps and has distinguished himself through nearly 40 years of military service. He's commanded Marines in the field, from the platoon level to a Marine Expeditionary Force. During the invasion of Iraq, he led Marines in the charge to Baghdad.

Given his combat experience, I was proud to nominate Joe as the Commander of American and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan. I've had a chance to work with him. I have been extraordinarily impressed by Joe -- from the Situation Room, where he helped to shape our enduring commitment to Afghanistan, to my visit last year to Bagram, where I saw his leadership firsthand.

I know Joe. I trust him. He's already proven his ability to give me his unvarnished military advice based on his experience on the ground. Under his steady hand, we've achieved key milestones, including the transition to Afghan responsibility for security, historic Afghan elections, and the drawdown of U.S. forces -- setting the stage for our combat mission there.

So Joe is a proven leader of our joint force, including our troops in Afghanistan, who he served Christmas dinner to. He's one of our military's most highly regarded strategic thinkers. He's known and respected by our allies, by members of Congress -- on both sides of the aisle -- and by colleagues across our government. He's also tireless. His staff has been known to carry around a voice recorder to keep up with his commands and new ideas.

He just began his service as Commandant of his beloved Marine Corps. So, Joe, I appreciate your willingness to take on this new assignment. I think the only downside in my book is, as a White Sox fan, there is yet another Red Sox fan who I'm going to have to be dealing with. (Laughter.) And I want to thank you and your wife, Ellyn, for your continued service.

In General Paul Selva, we have a Vice Chairman with 35 years of military service -- as both a pilot and a commander. As leader of Air Mobility Command, he earned a reputation as a force

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for change and innovation. I understand that when it was time to deliver the final C-17 to the Air Force, Paul went to the cockpit and helped fly it himself. As head of Transportation Command, he's been committed to the partnerships that are a core principle of our national security strategy, whether it's supplying our joint force around the world, in operations large and small, to supporting and keeping safe our diplomats and embassy personnel overseas.

Paul also served as Secretary of State Clinton's military advisor for the first years of my presidency, so he grasps the strategic environment in which our forces operate. He understands that our military, as powerful as it is, is one tool that must be used in concert with all the elements of our national power.

I should note that, as a graduate of the Air Force Academy, Paul is especially grateful to the Academy because it's there that he met his wife, Ricki, who also served in the Air Force. And, Paul and Ricki, thank you both for taking on this next chapter of your service together.

Joe, Paul -- we continue to call on our armed forces to meet a range of challenges. We have to keep training Afghan forces and remain relentless against al Qaeda. We have to push back against ISIL and strengthen forces in *Syria [Iraq], and build moderate opposition in Syria. We have to stand united with our allies in Europe and keep rebalancing our posture as a Pacific power. We have to keep investing in new capabilities to meet growing threats, including cyber-attacks.

So, as Commander-in-Chief, I'll be looking to you for your honest military advice as we meet these challenges. As we do, we're also going to keep working with Congress on a more responsible approach to defense spending, including reforms in the department so we can preserve the readiness of our all-volunteer force, keep faith with our troops and our military families, and care for our wounded warriors. This is work we have to do together, as a nation.

Again, to Joe, to Paul, to your families, on behalf of the American people, thank you for your continued service to our nation. I urge our friends in the Senate -- and I know I won't have a problem with Jack Reed, who's sitting right here -- to confirm these remarkable leaders without delay so we can stay focused on the work that unites us all as Americans -- keeping our military strong, our nation secure, our citizens safe.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)