

## **A Message from Secretary Eric K. Shinseki on the Tenth Anniversary of September, 11, 2001**



**This is a time of remembrance, resilience, and renewal. For those who witnessed the heartrending collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the fireballing of American Airlines flight 77 into the Pentagon, the shock of 9/11/2001 was immediate, bewildering, and removed the vestiges of our innocence.**

**In an age of instant communications and constant news coverage, unlike other calamities visited on the American people, this attack on our homeland was witnessed within minutes by nearly an entire Nation, and within an hour by much of the world. Even today, it is difficult to watch the tragic images of the towers imploding without feeling as though one's heart had dropped into the pit of one's stomach.**

**For those at the Pentagon, the urgency of evacuating the wounded was followed by anxious days, that stretched into weeks, of searching for the missing, recovering their remains, comforting families, treating the horrific injuries from an attack specifically targeting noncombatants, and attending the long procession of funerals over the following months.**

**Ten years after this unwarranted surprise attack, we remember those lost—American and non-American, believers from all faiths—Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and so many other religions—our brightest, most generous peoples.**

**In the intervening decade, we have proven our resilience as a Nation. Those who perpetrated this tragic loss of life failed in their plan to bring this country to its knees politically, economically, militarily, and socially. We remain, today, a beacon for all who love liberty and cherish freedom. We remain free and confident and resilient as a people, and in doing so, we categorically reject those who tried to bring us and our democracy down. We have prevailed in choosing to live our lives without fear, without constraint, and without distrust.**

**Five million men and women have served in our armed forces since the turn of the century; three million of them have joined since September 11, 2001, knowing that they would likely go into combat. Their service and sacrifice in response to the attacks have been defined, like every generation that has gone to war for this Nation, by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice, and devotion to duty.**

**We, at the Department of Veterans Affairs, are grateful to these men and women who serve and have served. They are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism—the living, breathing embodiment of our national values and our special place in the world.**

**On this tenth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, we remember and honor those lost on 9/11 in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania—and all who have given their last full measure of devotion in the decade since to hold accountable those who spawned this tragedy. As we remember victims, heroes, and families, we remain resilient and resolute in renewing our commitment to the principles that have preserved our way of life for over 235 years now.**

**May God continue to bless America.**