

As much as this ceremony is about honoring Generals Petraeus and Odierno, I am confident they will be the first to say that today does not belong to them. It belongs to all the fighting men and women who have served in Iraq and continue to serve here. Whose bravery, courage, and commitment are unmatched in modern times. Whose valor has been tested on foreign sands and forged in the flames of battle.

You have volunteered to put your lives in harm's way for the good of our nation. And in the last year and a half, you have succeeded beyond our imagination. To paraphrase General Douglas MacArthur, you have built courage when courage seemed to fail; regained faith when there seemed to be little cause for faith; and created hope when hope had become forlorn. The great beneficiaries of that hope are not just your countrymen back home, but millions of Iraqi citizens who now have a chance to build out of the rubble and ashes of war a peaceful and prosperous nation.

You have the eternal gratitude of the American people.

General Odierno, and all the men and women of Multi-National Force – Iraq, good luck and Godspeed.