



Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Secretary

September 11--We Will Never Forget

On September 11, 2001, America as we knew her changed forever. Without warning, terrorists shook us from our early morning routine as they violently and indiscriminately took thousands of innocent lives. We will never forget that morning, or the faces of those we lost: our loved ones, our friends, colleagues, and our fellow citizens.

September 11 illuminates Americans' resolve to rise to every challenge and bear every burden. Men and women of incredible courage and love for humanity, risked—and gave—their lives in uncounted acts of heroism at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in the cabin of United Airlines Flight 93. We will never forget their sacrifices.

America is defined by our will to overcome adversity; and the dust had not yet settled, nor the smoke dissipated, when an American Flag, tattered but true, rose above the debris to remind us that our Nation endures ----- and will never bow to evil.

In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson said, *"The things that the flag stands for were created by the experiences of a great people. Everything that it stands for was written by their lives. The flag is the embodiment, not of sentiment, but of history."*

For 228 years, 40 million citizen-soldiers defended America's place in history. Their selfless service—and mortal sacrifice—defeated tyrants and secured the rights and liberties we enjoy today. The example set by those veterans penetrates the darkness of 9-11 and illuminates our path to remembrance.

Our nation's veterans passed the torch of freedom on to the young uniformed men and women now serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, on the DMZ in Korea, and here at home. Those soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coastguardsmen hold that torch high. On the front lines in the war on terror, in the skies, and on the oceans— wherever and whenever peace cries out for a champion— they dedicate their service to that defining day, three years ago, when America rose from the ashes. Here too, at home, and in VA, we will never forget.

May God bless our beloved nation, and the men and women who defend her.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anthony J. Principi".