



HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE - IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342-1400

July 4, 2009

To the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Civilians of Multi-National Force-Iraq:

Since our founding, men and women have volunteered to defend liberty. The Declaration of Independence was a bold statement of freedom, but it took sacrifice – for many, the ultimate sacrifice – to transform our founders' hopes into reality. Two hundred and thirty three years later we are a beacon of freedom – with men and women still committed to the same ideals. That is why we serve today, to guarantee the same rights for our sons and daughters.

Today, our families, friends and loved ones will enjoy picnics, fireworks and other traditions as America celebrates its 233rd birthday. You are the reason why Americans can continue to celebrate, have freedom of choice, and embrace our way of life. The United States is the greatest and strongest Nation on Earth, and it is a testament to your dedication, courage and professionalism.

America is an enduring symbol of hope that you defend and protect. Four days ago, as they assumed responsibilities for the security of their cities, Iraqis passed a milestone on their democratic journey. We have stood with them in their struggle, and remain with the Iraqis as they continue to build a just and representative state. They have had a challenging past, but are emerging into a brighter future because of – and sustained by – your efforts.

Each of you have willingly raised your right hand and taken on the responsibility of defending our Nation, and for that you should be very proud. Just as our founders, you have taken it upon your shoulders to defend the freedom and liberty of our country. Our Nation is grateful for all you do every day. Thank you for your service and leadership.

With pride and determination,

Raymond T. Odierno
General, United States Army
Commanding