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Every generation has its moment. For many Americans, including myself, who are part of a new generation, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were a call to action.

In the years since, millions have volunteered to serve the country in different ways and America is safer today because of the patriotism and courage of these brave individuals. Some gave their lives on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan while others bear the scars of war. Those on the home front have sacrificed, too - often because of multiple deployments of loved ones. Very few have asked for anything in return.

All Americans can now take satisfaction in what is surely a defining moment. After nearly a decade-long manhunt, Osama bin Laden is dead. It's a proud moment, in fact. Soon after it was reported, the news of bin Laden's death was marked by a chorus of cheers and celebration, reminding us all that the memory of Sept. 11 is as vivid today, almost 10 years later, as it was in the days after the attack.

The operation that targeted bin Laden was the product of tireless work and personal sacrifice. American special operations forces showed their efficiency and precision, not just by killing bin Laden inside a guarded compound, but by extracting his body without taking a single casualty. They deserve great credit and thanks for what they did, along with every other American who has contributed to the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bin Laden's death is an important benchmark in what will continue to be a dangerous fight against an enemy that is committed to our destruction. Justice has been served, but the overall threat still remains.

In Afghanistan, Marines and soldiers fully understand that news of bin Laden's death does not mean a sudden change in the danger they face or the mission at hand. Taliban and al Qaeda forces are showing no signs of relenting, making it all the more important that we hold the gains achieved so far and continue attacking the enemy with speed and force.

Victory in Afghanistan is within reach, but there is still a ways to go. In the meantime, it's the obligation of us all to support the military in its efforts and guarantee our men and women in uniform have the material and moral support to get the job done. This also includes preventing unneeded distractions that originate through the political discourse at home.

A good example is the previous debate on government funding that wrongfully threatened military paychecks. A shutdown was avoided, but just the mere suggestion of withholding military pay was an outright disservice to anyone undertaking the combat mission overseas.

Now an impending debt-limit vote presents another moment of potential uncertainty for military families. Daily reports from the front lines - not just news pertaining to the death of bin Laden - plainly illustrate an obligation to do what is right by guaranteeing the military is never used as a bargaining chip.

Overall, every American has a stake in what happens in Afghanistan. There are security implications at home and abroad. For our military, it's also about leaving with victory. Either way, we are all in the fight together. The Sept. 11 attacks are a constant reminder of that fact.

Almost everyone has a story about where they were when bin Laden and the rest of al Qaeda mounted their attack or can recall how they felt as it happened. For me, it was a feeling of anger and frustration, along with a sense of responsibility to step forward and do my part. I joined the Marine Corps soon after and served three tours overseas - two in Iraq, one in Afghanistan. Sept. 11 changed my life, as it did for millions of other Americans who recognize that now it's our turn to come forward in defense of liberty.

With the death of bin Laden, momentum in Afghanistan continues to build - thanks to the tremendous leadership and talent within America's military today. The mission in Afghanistan will go on, but, understanding how far we've come, the removal of al Qaeda's inspirational leader at the hands of U.S. forces is something for which we can all be proud.