



**UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF
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**A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF
UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND**

Just nine months into the new century, the world was changed forever by the tragic terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. With the Cold War only a decade behind us, the 21st Century ushered in a new era where state-sponsored terrorism poses a new type of threat to the security of free nations everywhere.

President Bush recognized the need to react swiftly to the attacks, and called upon U.S. Central Command to develop a plan to begin the systematic eradication of international terrorism within its 25-country area of responsibility.

Fighting an enemy that lurks in the shadows and wantonly shields itself with innocent civilians required a shift in the way our planners traditionally prepare for conflicts. But in three weeks, U.S. Central Command carefully planned and received the President's approval to execute Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

On Oct. 7, 2001, a combination of coalition air strikes and sea-launched cruise missile launches were conducted against Taliban and Al Qaeda centers of gravity in Afghanistan. Even more importantly on that first day of operations, we began humanitarian air drops of food for the starving people of Afghanistan – true victims of Al Qaeda terror and Taliban repression.

As more and more nations joined the coalition against terrorism, the tide rapidly turned against state-supported terror in Afghanistan. While their puppet Taliban government quickly disintegrated, Al Qaeda leaders were being killed, captured or on the run – severely crippling their ability to conduct terror operations.

The successes of the 68-nation coalition continued at a rate that exceeded even our most optimistic predictions, and today, less than eight months after our first strikes were launched, Taliban and Al Qaeda forces hold no significant ground in Afghanistan. The country has begun to rebuild its government, and its people are enjoying unprecedented medical care, as well as education services, for men and women alike.

Despite the progress of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, there is still much to be accomplished, not only in Afghanistan, but in other countries throughout the world that harbor terrorists. The tragedy of 9-1-1 has changed the way we view defense and has refocused our sights on a 21st Century threat to world security that must be eliminated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Franks", is positioned above the typed name.

TOMMY R. FRANKS
General, U. S. Army

