



Soldier with Joint Forces Command–United Assistance, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), holds up U.S. flag during promotion and reenlistment ceremony, January 1, 2015, at Barclay Training Center, Monrovia, Liberia (U.S. Army/Rashene Mincy)

Upholding Our Oath

As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I am honored to represent the extraordinary Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen, and Coastguardsmen who make up the Joint Force. Throughout my travels and engagements, I continue to be inspired by your professionalism, your commitment to defending the Nation, and your adaptiveness in encountering the security challenges our country faces.

Meeting the challenges of today's dynamic and demanding operating environment while preparing the Joint Force to win future fights remain a team effort. This must remain our number one priority, and I continue to devote my time, focus, and energy to this effort. At the same time, as our country again prepares

for a peaceful transfer of power to a new administration, I write to share my views regarding our mutual obligations as military professionals and rights as citizens during this election season.

Our Values

Every Servicemember swears “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States” and to “bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” This oath is embedded in our professional culture and underpins the values that shape and define our all-volunteer force. Beginning with General George Washington resigning his military commission, our deliberate and disciplined commitment to upholding the principle of civilian control of the military under-

pins not only our warrior ethos but also the expectations of how we conduct ourselves while in uniform.

Our Responsibilities and Conduct

As military professionals, our most important asset is the trust of and credibility with the American people. While we must always safeguard our professional integrity, extra vigilance is required during any political transition. Our individual and collective obligation during this election season is twofold. First, we must recognize that we have one Commander in Chief, and until authority is transferred on January 20, 2017, the Joint Force must remain clearly focused on and responsive to the



Soldier fills out absentee ballot form during voting assistance drive at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar (U.S. Army/Dustin Senger)

existing National Command Authority. Second, the Joint Force must conduct itself in such a way that the new administration has confidence that it will be served by a professional, competent, and apolitical military. This is especially important in the context of delivering the best military advice.

Civic Participation

Every member of the Joint Force has the right to exercise his or her civic duty, including learning and discussing—even debating—the policy issues driving the election cycle and voting for his or her candidate of choice. Provided that we follow the guidance and regulations governing individual political participation, we should be proud of our civic engagement. What we must collectively guard against is allowing our institution to become politicized, or even perceived as being politicized, by how we conduct ourselves during

engagements with the media, the public, or in open or social forums.

Closing

We are living in the most volatile and complex security environment since World War II. Whether confronting violent extremist organizations seeking to destroy our way of life or dealing with state actors threatening international order, threats to our national security require a Joint Force that is ready, capable, and trusted. To that end, I have a duty to protect the integrity and political neutrality of our military profession. But this obligation is not mine alone. It belongs to every Soldier, Marine, Sailor, Airman, and Coastguardsman. Thank you for joining me in honoring our history, our traditions, and the institutions of the U.S. Armed Forces by upholding the principle of political neutrality.

It is an honor to serve as your Chairman, and I look forward to hearing from you. JFQ

GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR.
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

