

Have you **Renewed** your **Commitment** yet?

By **BRYAN B. BATTAGLIA**

The Chairman's letter to the joint force has been published for some time now, and in that letter he addresses four priorities. Since these are his priorities, they are also our priorities. At this point, we should be familiar with them, but just in case, we are to "Achieve Our National Objectives in Current Conflict, Develop Joint Force 2020, Renew Our Commitment to the Profession of Arms, and Keep Faith with Our Military Family."

As I circulate around the force, I enjoy talking about all four of these priorities. But for the purpose of this article, I want to expound on one of them: renewing our commitment to the profession of arms. To begin, I do not want you to think that because renewing our commitment is listed third, it is of lesser importance. In fact, that could not be farther from the truth. The way I see it, the last three priorities blend to achieve the first. In *Joint Force Quarterly* 64 (1st Quarter 2012), I mention a favorite "how to renew" method: reaffirming our oath of enlistment or office, an oath that has literally been around since the late 1700s. It is a powerful paragraph of soldierly verbiage and expresses the lifelong investment to a purpose that is greater than ourselves. "Service in our Armed Forces is more than a job; it is our profession. A job is something assigned within the profession. And jobs come and go, but the commitment and passion to the profession in which we serve lasts forever." There comes a time when we honorably discharge or retire. Though no longer in

uniform, the membership and passion within the profession remains unbroken.

I was recently asked by a Soldier in Afghanistan, "SEAC, I get the re-swearing of my oath piece to renew my commitment. But is there anything else I can do? What sort of questions am I asking myself as I renew my obligation and commitment? I've never done this before and I want to do it right." These very questions may be on the minds of many others, too.

Allow me to offer some suggestions, along with a personal experience to help in your renewal. It worked for me and I am confident it can work for you. We are all

different and our purposes for joining the military vary. But regardless of whether you have been serving four months or four decades, it is never too early or too late to renew your commitment.

In our line of work, accompanied with risk and danger, there are two fundamental questions that I recommend you ask yourself: Why do I serve? Why is it worth the sacrifice? Now to help you answer those questions, let me offer a recent personal experience. It may cost you a few out-of-pocket pennies to get there, but again, I believe it will be money well spent and enable you to find additional answers to help with your reflection.



U.S. Army (A.M. LaVey)

Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen prepare for mass joint reenlistment ceremony, Al Asad Air Base, Iraq

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Airman carries flag during 10th anniversary of 2-mile remembrance march at Sather Air Base, Iraq, to honor victims of 9/11

In February, I found myself in New York City. It was my first visit to this powerful metropolis. I had seen Ground Zero only on television and in pictures. Where the Twin Towers once stood, only holes in the ground remain. Ground Zero has since been converted into an almost surreal memorial surrounded with nameplates of those who lost their lives on 9/11. You cannot help but get caught up in the moment, and for us who wear the cloth of this nation, that moment is quite long. (Suggesting New York City as a place to reflect and renew your service commitment brings no intent to slight the other two terrorist-struck sites, the Pentagon and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.) New York City was where 9/11 started. Think about it: hundreds of thousands throughout the city woke up that morning having no idea what was in store—other than just another day at the office, and carrying on with life in a free democratic society for which our country was founded. Only hours later, thousands of men, women, and children—our

countrymen we are sworn to support and defend—perished.

After the events of September 11, there was never any question from our foxholes as to why the following month we as a robust fighting force deployed overseas, taking the fight to our enemy. That is what our President directed, and we as American fighting men and women were going to exhaust every effort to defend our nation by eliminating the threat so this would never happen again. Many if not all of you were raising your hand, saying, “Put me in, Coach!” From that time on, you have been putting it all on the line, and that in itself lives up to the oath, obligation, and commitment to which you all raise your hand.

We hold our fallen with great respect and honor. When we bury one of our comrades, we vow ourselves to them, their family, and each other that we will never forget. I intently listened to one of our guides talk about that morning, and how her husband, firefighter Jeffrey Olsen, whose fire station

was literally a stone’s throw away, responded to the World Trade Center alarm. As she finished speaking of how her husband was such a proud and committed firefighter, she directed our attention to a memorial nameplate that contained the inscription “Firefighter Jeffrey Olsen, Engine #10.” It made me reflect that, along with our military fallen, there are other groups of brave men and women who we also promise never to forget. They, too, have sacrificed much. Escorted throughout the sites and hearing their stories reminded me of the questions that I ask here. Though it comes with great sacrifice, *this is why we continue to serve.*

Visiting such a location can help you find your own answers and reaffirm your commitment. While in spirit only, our fallen comrades have left an indelible legacy at Ground Zero, heavily felt throughout those hallowed grounds.

How have you renewed your commitment to the profession of arms? I am interested in hearing your feedback. **JFQ**