



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
3000 MARINE CORPS PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON DC 20350-3000

18 August 2021

Marines,

As each of us tries to comprehend the speed and scope of events in Afghanistan this week, some may be struggling with a simple question: “Was it all worth it?” We see videos and photos, we read stories that bring back memories for some of us, and it becomes intensely personal. We value human life and we want to believe that what Marines have done in Afghanistan made a difference. While Sergeant Major Black and I don’t presume to speak for you or your family, we would like to offer our thoughts so you know where your senior leaders stand.

We both believe – without question – that your service was meaningful, powerful, and important. You answered the call to serve, proudly carrying the torch of so many generations of Marines before you. You put the good of others before yourself. You fought to defend your country, your family, your friends, and your neighbors. You fought to prevent terror from returning to our shores. You fought for the liberty of young Afghan girls, women, boys, and men who want the same individual freedoms we enjoy as Americans. You fought for the Marine to your left and the Marine to your right. You never let them down. You never, ever gave up. You lived with purpose, with intention. Whether you realize it or not, you set an example for subsequent generations of Marines – and Americans – by living our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Was it worth it? Yes. Does it still hurt? Yes.

Since 2001, Marines have served honorably and courageously to bring peace to the people of Afghanistan. You should take pride in your service – it gives meaning to the sacrifice of all Marines who served, including those whose sacrifice was ultimate.

Over the coming days and weeks, we encourage you to connect with your fellow Marines and their families – particularly those you served with overseas. This is a time to come together and give further meaning to our motto, Semper Fidelis. Let us remain faithful to our fellow Marines, faithful to our Marine families, and faithful to the memories of all who have sacrificed.

We are intensely proud to serve alongside you as your Commandant and Sergeant Major.

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. H. Berger".

David H. Berger  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy E. Black".

Troy E. Black  
SgtMaj, U.S. Marine Corps  
Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps