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Opening Statement Rep. John F. Tierney, Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Security Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Hearing on "Afghanistan: Honoring the Heroes of Extortion 17"

February 27, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we begin today, it is extremely important to honor the lives of the fallen heroes, for the untold contributions they have made in the service of this country, and to the families who mourn their losses. We need to remember that not only did we lose 30 great warriors that night on the Afghan battlefield, but the burden is now carried by the families who lost their sons, fathers, brothers, and husbands.

I would also like to acknowledge that some of the families are with us here today. For you and the other families who could not attend today's proceedings, I would like to express my profound gratitude for your sons' service, and also express my condolences for your loss.

Mr. Chairman, while I understand that there are some out there who strongly believe that this hearing is necessary, other families and their representatives have contacted the Subcommittee and expressed grave concern about today's hearing. They have asked for privacy and they seek closure. While I realize that some have more questions about what happened, we should acknowledge that not all the families affected with this tragedy support these proceedings. I have confidence that you will make all efforts to conduct today's discussion with both dignity and fairness.

I think it is also important to acknowledge that earlier this week, senior officials from the Pentagon provided an extensive briefing to Members and staff where many questions were asked and answered about other topics that we may not be able to discuss today in this setting.

We also received an unclassified briefing last week on some of the post-operations concerns that you intend to focus on today. Pentagon officials provided answers to many questions, and I look forward to their testimony today, which I hope may provide some answers to those still seeking them.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to acknowledge the distinguished men and women on today's panel. These officials also serve their country. Some have even served in harm's way.

Others have served as one of the final caretakers of our fallen heroes. During the briefings this last week, we heard from these officials just how truly humbling their work is. It is not made any easier by the fact that the fallen heroes are also their fallen comrades.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude by noting that, to date, we have lost 2,175 brave Americans during the war in Afghanistan and tens of thousands of others have been wounded and severely debilitated. While we are here today to discuss events surrounding the tragic deaths of 30 brave Americans, let us also take the opportunity to acknowledge the thousands of men and women who have sacrificed and paid the ultimate price in their service to this country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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