

Gates Offers Gratitude to Troops, Families in Thanksgiving Message

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WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates expressed his gratitude to the nation's service members and their families in his annual Thanksgiving Day message. Video

Here is the text of the secretary's message:

"In this season of hope, I want to say how uplifting it has been to get to know so many soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines during the last 24 months.

"Many of you are far from home, and I'm sure there's no place you would rather be than with your loved ones. But know that they, and all Americans, are free and secure because of what the men and women of the U.S. military are doing all over the world – from Fort Lewis to Fort Drum, from Korea to Kosovo, from Bagram to Baghdad.

"The holidays are a time to reflect on the kind of nation we are: a nation whose character and decency are embodied in our armed forces. Those who risk life and limb every time they set foot "outside the wire." The medical personnel, engineers, and civil affairs teams who improve the lives of thousands. And all are volunteers.

"To the families of our forces: thank you for sharing your loved ones to defend us all. To our troops: we admire your selflessness and pray for your success and safe return home. And to all: happy holidays."

Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense

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