

TO: SENIOR STAFF

FROM: STAFF SECRETARY'S OFFICE

RE: OUR LEADERS

DATE: September 26, 2001

We don't usually circulate items that come through our offices—we get many, many laudatory items. This one was special, and we thought we would share it. This is part of an email that was forwarded to me. An Pentagon officer wrote this. He lost some of his people in the attack. Needless to say, the writer did not intend us to see his email.

"All,

We are finally back up on email this morning. Those of us here at the Pentagon greatly appreciate all of the thoughts and prayers from the many people that are, and have been, in our lives. Please continue to pray. Thank you very much.

The mood here is very upbeat in regard to the future. Many people here believe the country's leadership will do what needs to be done, the right way. Please pray for them as well because they need every prayer they can get. Regardless of politics, many of us here, and many others that I have spoken to, are very grateful that we have the President and First Lady we have at this time. He and she seem to be very much the right people that we need now, and up to the tasks at hand and ahead.

At the risk of moving away from my belief, as an officer serving in the United States Army, that it is an inherent duty of mine to ensure that my opinions in this general arena are not put out for public consumption, good or bad, regardless of who is in the White House, let me leave you with a small, but true story to give you an idea of the kind of man and the kind of woman we have in the White House right now.

As you may know, the President and Mrs. Bush visited the Washington Burn Center on Friday 14 September. Among those they visited was LTC Brian Birdwell, the XO to Ms. Menig (Note added: she is the Army's Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management), who was badly burned. Mrs. Bush went into Brian's room, spoke to him for about a minute, all the time as if they had been life-long acquaintances. She then turned to Brian's wife Mel, who at this time had been at the hospital for probably 2 ½ days, and apparently according to Mel herself, was dirty, grimy and had blood on her shirt. Mrs. Bush hugged Mel for what Mel said seemed like an eternity, just as if Mel were one of her closest family members. Mrs. Bush then told Brian and Mel that there was "someone" there to see him. The President then walked in, stood by Brian's bedside, asked Brian how he was doing, told him that he was very proud of them both and that they were his heroes. The President then saluted Brian.

Now, at this point in time, Brian is bandaged up pretty well. His hands are

burned very badly as well as the back of him from the head down. His movements were very restricted. Upon seeing the President saluting him, Brian began to slowly return the salute, taking, from the accounts so far, about 15-20 seconds to get his hand up to his head. During all of this, 15-20 seconds, President Bush never moved, never dropped his salute. The President dropped his salute only when Brian was finished with his, and then gave Mel a huge hug for what also probably seemed like an eternity. No further comments. Pray for our leadership. Thank God for what we are, have, and will be."