February 18, 2024

TO: Dr. Matthew Memoli, Acting Director, NIH

CC: John Burklow, Chief of Staff, NIH
Julie Berko, Director, OHR, NIH

FROM: Nathaniel James Brought, Director, ES, NIH

SUBJECT: Resignation

Dear Dr. Memoli,

On July 3, 2001, I stepped off a bus on Marine Corps Recruit Training Depot Perris Island. Scared out of my mind, I stood on a pair of freshly painted yellow footprints, raised my right hand, and recited the oath of enlistment:

> I, Nathaniel James Brought, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign *and domestic*; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.

For the last 23 years, 7 months, and 15 days, I like to believe I have faithfully carried out the duties of each office to which I've been appointed in my military and civilian service to this nation. That Service has taken me from the Marine Corps to 3 different federal departments, spanned 3 continents, included service in one war zone, and has included:

- For the Marine Corps and the National Security Agency, I worked on intelligence operations at the highest classification levels using bleeding edge intelligence tools to ensure America's special operators put boots-to-asses on America's enemies overseas (including commendations crediting my work for the kill or capture of dozens of terrorists), ensuring America's policy makers were able to track the movement of dangerous dual use

nuclear technology across international borders, and monitored the flow of terrorist financing across the international banking system.

- Utilized information from all-source intelligence to ensure the continued security of America's homeland from international and domestic threats.

- Worked with some of the finest lawyers in the world to ensure America's security operations were effective, while upholding the rights of all those who interacted with them.

- Ensuring that America's rural communities had access to programs like rural development loans, farm aid, and that America's children wouldn't be hungry as they sat in their classrooms and tried to learn.

- Most recently, and frankly most dear to my heart, working with each of you here at the National Institutes of Health to advance the future of science and medicine. Not for Americans. Not for any one group of people. But for ALL of humanity.

I am unbelievably proud to be able to say that there are Americans who are alive, and terrorists who are not, because of the work I've done to serve this nation. I am proud to say that my service to this country has allowed me to ensure that my children have never faced the struggles of poverty that I grew up with. That service didn't begin because of some great altruistic impulse or drive. I didn't grow up saying "I want to do the great work that needs to be done to weave the fabric of America and ensure her people are not only safe, but healthy." Frankly, that service began because I was poor, and I was *inspired*. I grew up as a free lunch kid who lived in project housing. It was my fellow Americans who made sure I wasn't hungry in class and that I had enough food to excel academically the way I did. It was Americans who had more than we did that made sure I had good schools to attend where I could learn things that expanded my mind.

As I approached the end of high school, I dreamed of going to college and figuring out how to make a living that would allow me to do more than scrape by. I had seen my parents fight and struggle every day so that maybe things would be a little better for me. But I was a realist. I knew my parents couldn't pay for me

to go to college. I knew my grades weren't good enough to compete for scholarships with kids who were as smart as me but also had private tutors and didn't have to work after class to be able to drive their brand-new cars to our school each day. So, I gave up. I nearly failed my senior year of high school with an attendance failure, even though I only needed two classes to graduate. I didn't see the point. What was the point of learning calculus? So it would be that much harder when my dream of being a brain surgeon died not because I was incapable, but because I didn't have the means to make it come true? I resigned myself to being one of the working poor. I resigned myself to needing a spinal fusion before I was 50, like my father, because he *literally* broke his back trying to make his dreams come true. The example of my father didn't inspire me at that time. It reminded me of the futility of trying to escape the rung of the social ladder I had been born onto. No matter how smart or "gifted and talented" I may have been, I saw no path that led me to a place where I could realize my potential. So, instead I accepted that it would be wasted.

Ultimately, the reason I find myself here today, rather than in the place I saw as my only end, is because of another young man who committed to serving his country. Shamefully, I do not remember his name, but there was a young corporal from the United States Marine Corps who had been assigned as a recruiter in Reading, Pennsylvania at that time. This man spoke to me about my plans for my future during lunch one day at school. I told him I planned to do what my father had done. Work hard jobs until my body broke down, maybe start a struggling business, and try to do what I could to stay above the poverty line and off welfare. I told him I hoped to be successful enough that my kids never had to watch me use food stamps at the grocery store. It had been hard to watch my mom go through that. How sad is that? I was a smart young 18-year-old man stepping out into the world with his entire life ahead of him, and my hopes and dreams for my life boiled down to "I hope my kids never have to watch me put the eggs back because I don't have enough food stamps this week."

That young corporal, barely older than I was, had the wisdom to *listen* to me. He took the time to understand where I was coming from, and where I thought I was headed. And then he invested his energy in selling me on the value of serving the American people. Of being a part of something even bigger than improving my own life. He sold me the idea that America wasn't perfect, but we all tried. That we were like siblings; we may mess with each other a bit more than we

should sometimes, but we'd be damned if anyone was ever going to come in from the outside and divide our family. He told me about all the ways I could make my life better through honorable service to my country. He told me that America rewards those who take on the task of upholding America's ideals. In the end, he gave me back my hope that I could be something more than the circumstances I was born into. He helped me see that likely *I* would not be a brain surgeon, but if I worked hard, I could get to a place where one of my kids could be if they wanted it.

That young man's words, combined with everything I'd seen and learned of America to that point, are why I signed my contract and eventually stepped on those yellow footprints. I saw America as a land where people from all backgrounds sat around the table and hashed things out. Where we listened to each other and found ways to solve our common problems. Where 95% of us realized that we were all in the same boat, struggling to get by and just wanting things to be a little better for the people we care about. Where it didn't matter where you came from or how you got here, if you were willing to roll up your sleeves and pitch in.

I was in boot camp, 3 weeks away from becoming a United States Marine, when America was attacked on September 11, 2001. I watched in horror as our country bled before the world because of what we stood for. I stood in a room with 80 of my brothers, young men like me trying to have a better life, as the realization set in that things had just gotten very real. That we were about to be called upon to do everything we were training for. That the benefits of service would still come for most of us, but that some of us would have that dream cut short to make sure the world knew that America would *not* be felled, no matter how many towers toppled. Not one of us shrank from that responsibility. Few if any of us *really* signed up because we *wanted* to kill, but if they wanted the fight, we'd be all too happy to deliver it to their doorsteps, rather than having it on the front lawns of our countrymen.

3 weeks later I stepped out of the insular world of recruit training into an America even more united than I would have thought possible. *We* had been attacked. *We* were going to stand together. *We* were about to stomp a hole in every coward who'd *dare* attack *our fellow Americans.* When I was in Baghdad and Ramadi and rockets were being fired at the bases we were on, I didn't care if

the people around me were men, women, gay, straight, trans, republican, democrat, geniuses, or ASVAB waivers. I cared that they survived. I cared that they made it back to their children. When I put together targeting packages to bring to justice terrorists who would kidnap Iraqi children and leave their dismembered bodies on their parents' porches in trash bags because they had the audacity to *vote*, I didn't care what their nationality was, or give a single thought to their racial or gender identity. I cared that we killed or captured them so *their* fight against what America stands for would be over, no matter who they were. THAT is the American way. "We don't care who you are if you're willing to work towards a better tomorrow." *THAT* is the America that I've been inspired by and proud to serve throughout my career.

At this point, I no longer see the ideals I have committed my life to serving reflected in *any* of our leaders in Washington. Foreign influence in our social media drives us deeper and deeper into corners so that we're more and more willing to fight ourselves. Politicians, who are aware of these efforts to divide us and the effects they are having, lean into dividing the electorate, rather than putting their collective feet down to do something to keep America united. America's enemies have long known that a *united* America cannot be laid low, but a divided America will cannibalize itself for you. Above all, I did not make sure terrorists met their makers so that I could watch one lead and then attack my country. I didn't swear my life and watch friends lose theirs so that I could watch that same terrorist free America's domestic enemies from prison while he tried to overthrow our country ***again***. I *certainly* didn't risk life and limb only to come home and watch cowards and collaborators in Congress standby and *watch* this happen while neglecting their own oaths, while a disgrace to everything the Marine Corps stands for cheers for a dictator while serving as Vice President. For love of country, ask yourself this question… "Would Donald Trump trample the Constitution in this way if he thought there was a greater than zero chance that a Democrat would *ever* win the White House again and be able to wield the same power?" I assure you, he would not, and that his confidence is not based on hubris. It's based on his certainty that no one in Washington has the intestinal fortitude to do what needs to be done to stop him before he can cement single party rule in the United States.

Donald Trump doesn't give a damn about federal employees or who works where. Donald Trump cares about stuffing CISA full of hyper-partisans so he can

fulfill his dream of declaring any votes he doesn't like as "compromised." Donald Trump doesn't care about DEI. He cares about being able to install racists at the State Department and DOGE, to continue his lifelong fight against justice for African Americans (and now Africans). Donald Trump could care less about immigrants. He cares about keeping billionaires happy on the backs of the poor. Amazingly, Donald Trump is the least important part of all of this. He's a tool being used to achieve a goal because he doesn't have enough interest in anything beyond himself to say "no" when he's asked to be the lever used to fell our Constitutional Republic. Maybe it was his "bone spurs" that kept him from being the next Smedley Butler, who had the spine and fortitude to not only resist, but to expose the Business Plot in 1933… Damn those Russian assets on Epstein Island and whatever evidence they must have managed to collect on POTUS…

After much soul searching, I can no longer serve my own interests by staying in a job that I love, as doing so would mean continuing to execute the orders of leaders who continue to betray us in a bid to steal the might and treasure of the United States Government. I'm a 6'3" white straight-passing disabled veteran. I could easily "go along to get along" and probably even attain enough status and privilege to enrich myself via the downfall of American Democracy… But I won't. I'm not the President. I don't pay lip service to the Constitution or my love of country. I live it. It's in the very core of my soul. For these reasons, I resign my position as the Director of the NIH Executive Secretariat effective at midnight, February 28, 2025.

Semper Fidelis,

Nathaniel J. Brought, Director, ES, NIH