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General Mark A. Milley, U.S. Army (Retired), Named Inaugural Recipient of National WWI Museum and Memorial's Guardian Spirit Award

Award recognizes the 20th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for 44 years of fidelity to the U.S. Constitution

KANSAS CITY, MO. – The National WWI Museum and Memorial announced that General Mark A. Milley, U.S. Army (Retired), is the inaugural recipient of the Guardian Spirit Award, presented last night at the Museum's Centennial Gala.

For 100 years, the Guardian Spirits have stood atop the National WWI Museum and Memorial, carved to represent Honor, Courage, Sacrifice and Patriotism — the virtues a generation lived out, and Kansas City vowed to remember. The Guardian Spirit Award carries that legacy forward, honoring individuals and organizations whose lives reflect those same ideals today.

"General Milley has spent a lifetime answering to something larger than himself," said Matthew Naylor, President and CEO of the National WWI Museum and Memorial. "This award recognizes years, not days, of that kind of service, and a career defined by strengthening the institutions and principles so many have fought to protect."

General Milley is the inaugural recipient, honored for 44 years in uniform, from 1980 to 2023, and for his role in defending and upholding the nation's democratic institutions during a period of significant national and global uncertainty.

Commissioned through Army ROTC at Princeton University, General Milley rose through six Army divisions and a Special Forces Group, deploying to Panama, Haiti, Bosnia, Iraq and three tours in Afghanistan, with additional service on the DMZ in Korea. He served as the 39th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army from 2015 to 2019, then as the 20th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2019 to 2023, the nation's highest ranking military officer and principal advisor to the President, Secretary of Defense and National Security Council.

"I can't tell you how deeply humbled I am as an individual to be here and receive this inaugural award," said General Milley. "The real Guardian Spirit Award is due to those who have so nobly served our country in the past, and in the present and those who will do so in the future."

General Milley's connection to the Museum's mission runs through his own family. Two of his great uncles served in World War I: one wounded at Gallipoli, the other at the Meuse-Argonne. His father



landed at Kwajalein, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima in World War II, while his mother served in the Navy treating the wounded stateside. The Milley family has worn the cloth of this nation for well over a century.

General Milley is honored not for a single moment, but for a lifetime of fidelity to the oath he swore and the constitutional principles the Liberty Memorial Tower was built to uphold, principles that outlast any one generation or era. The Guardian Spirit Award is part of the Museum and Memorial's ongoing work to preserve the memory of WWI and champion the ideals it was fought to defend.

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About the National WWI Museum and Memorial

The National WWI Museum and Memorial is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum and Memorial holds the most comprehensive collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum and Memorial takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America's official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National WWI Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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