

SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, JULY 2021

THANK YOU, PRESIDENT GENERAL MANNING, FOR YOUR KIND INTRODUCTION.

DELIGHTED TO BE HERE WITH THIS QUINTESSENTIAL AMERICAN GROUP, SALUTING YOU AS YOU CARRY OUT OUR GENERATION'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR

->REMEMBERING OUR PAST, OUR REVOLUTIONARY ROOTS;

->PROMOTING OUR CORE VALUES, BY PERPETUATING OUR TRADITIONS; AND

->EDUCATING OUR YOUTH WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEA THAT, IN LINCOLN'S WORDS, A GOV'T
OF THE PEOPLE,
BY THE PEOPLE, &
FOR THE PEOPLE CAN LONG EXIST ON THIS EARTH.

IT'S JUST AS REVOLUTIONARY AN IDEA TODAY AS IT WAS WHEN IT BIRTHED OUR REVOLT AGAINST KING GEORGE III, AND ESPECIALLY REVOLUTIONARY TODAY IN A WORLD WHERE SOME AUTHORITARIANS SENSE THE WIND AT THEIR BACKS.

IT'S HUMBLING FOR ME TO BE INVITED TO A GROUP WITH DEEP ROOTS IN OUR NATION'S BIRTH, AND SPEND TIME WITH YOU,
YOU WHO BRING DEVOTION & COMMITMENT TO YOUR MISSION OF KEEPING ALIVE OUR REVOLUTIONARY AMERICAN IDEALS AND TRADITIONS.

ASSUREDLY, YOU KEEP ALIVE THE ECHO OF THE SHOT HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD.

AND NEVER, AT HOME OR ABROAD, HAS OUR NATION NEEDED YOUR WORK MORE. IN THIS REGARD I WANT TO ESPECIALLY HIGH-LIGHT THOSE OF YOU IN YOUR STATE CHAPTERS WHO SPEND TIME IN CLASSROOMS AND WHEREVER ELSE YOU CAN TELL OUR NATION'S STORY, NOTABLY TO OUR YOUNGER CITIZENS.

WE ARE AT ONE OF THOSE INFLEXION POINTS IN OUR BEAUTIFULLY IMPERFECT NATION'S GROWTH WHEN PROTECTING OUR EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY THAT YOU & I CALL, SIMPLY, "AMERICA" CALLS FOR YOUR UNAPOLOGETIC NARRATIVES.

I CONFESS THAT I'M BIASED ABOUT THIS STATE OF WASHINGTON WHERE WE MEET ON THE SHORES OF THIS BEAUTIFUL LAKE.

IT'S APPROPRIATE THAT WE MEET HERE, IN THE MAJESTIC PACIFIC NORTHWEST, BETWEEN THE OLYMPIC MOUNTAINS TO THE WEST AND THE CASCADE MOUNTAIN RANGE TO OUR EAST:

LESS THAN 50 MILES SOUTHEAST OF WHERE WE SIT THIS EVENING LIES MOUNT RAINIER,
THAT ABOUT 155 DEGREES MAGNETIC HEADING FOR OUR SHIPMATES, SOLDIERS AND NAVIGATORS IN THE ROOM.

THOSE FEW TENS OF MILES FROM THE SEA, MT RAINIER STANDS 14,411 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL

IN THE OFFICIAL ARMY JOURNAL OF THE TRAGIC NEZ PEARCE CAMPAIGN OF 1877-78

THE ADJUTANT WROTE THAT HERE, IN THE AMERICAN WEST,

HERE WHERE THESE MOUNTAINS REACH UP TO THE SKY...

IT IS HERE THAT WE ARE REMINDED OF WHAT HE TERMED, "MAN'S ILLIMITABLE HORIZONS".

THOSE WORDS SEEMED TO RING TRUE WHEN I WAS ASKED BY YOU, THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, TO SPEAK THIS EVENING, FOR CERTAINLY OUR FOUNDING FATHERS, THOSE REVOLUTIONARIES, BELIEVED IN OUR "ILLIMITABLE HORIZONS...."

SOME OF YOUR FOREFATHERS, 56 OF WHOM LOOKED EACH OTHER IN THE EYE BEFORE LEANING FORWARD TO BOLDLY SIGN THEIR NAMES IN A PUBLIC DOCUMENT REPUDIATING A KING, PLEDGED ALONGSIDE ONE ANOTHER

->THEIR LIVES,

->THEIR FORTUNES, &

->THEIR SACRED HONOR, TO FREE US FROM THAT KING'S AUTHORITY. CERTAINLY THEY WERE REACHING FOR OUR PEOPLES' ILLIMITABLE HORIZONS?

YOUR COMMENDABLE MISSION IS NOT SOME CONTRIVED PURPOSE FOR GETTING TOGETHER:

FOR WE ALL REMEMBER BEN'J FRANKLIN'S RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION A LADY ASKED HIM WHEN HE WALKED OUT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: "WHAT IS IT A MONARCHY OR A REPUBLIC?" "A REPUBLIC", HE REPLIED, "IF YOU CAN KEEP IT..."

YES, IF WE CAN KEEP IT.

AND GEN WASHINGTON, IN HIS 1779 LETTER TO JAMES WARREN GIVES CREDENCE TO YOUR MISSION AS WELL, EVEN BEFORE WE HAD A COUNTRY. AS THE LEADER OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY ARMY, HE WROTE IN A MANNER THAT SHOWS WHY WE NEED YOU, THE SONS OF OUR REVOLUTION, TODAY PERPETUATING OUR IDEALS. IN THE MIDST OF THE WAR, HE SAID, "UNLESS WE CAN RETURN...TO FIRST PRINCIPLES... I DO NOT KNOW WHAT MIGHT BE" THE OUTCOME....

THIS EVENING, IN THIS BEAUTIFUL CORNER OF OUR COUNTRY,
IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO RESPECT EACH OTHER AS FELLOW TRAVELERS ON THE ROAD OF LIBERTY,
WE CAN SENSE AGAIN THE BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS THAT WENT INTO CREATING OUR MARVELOUS EXPERIMENT.

THEMES STILL COMBINE AND LIVE ON, STRENGTHENING US:

->THE MOUNTAINS STILL REACH UP TO THE SKY...AND

->AMERICANS ARE STILL COMING TOGETHER TO HELP EACH OTHER TO EXTEND THE PATHS TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS THAT OUR REVOLUTIONARY FOREFATHERS INITIATED,
TRUSTING THAT EACH GENERATION WOULD CARRY ON THE EFFORT TO CREATE A MORE PERFECT UNION.

THANKS TO YOU WHO COMMIT TIME, STUDY & RESOURCES AND YOUR DEVOTION TO TEACHING, YOUR OWN EXAMPLES HELP KEEP ALIVE OUR TRADITIONS IN A TIME WHEN THE CONNECTING TISSUE IS NEEDED, SO WE DON'T STRAY FROM OUR ROOTS.

FOR THOSE ROOTS GIVE US STRENGTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES,

ENSURING OUR VALUED TRADITIONS ARE NOT LEFT IN THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD, OUR COUNTRY MUST BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR EXTRAORDINARY REPRESENTATION, AS I READ ABOUT YOUR STATE CHAPTERS INITIATIVES IN SO MANY VENUES, PASSING ON THE TORCH. PASSING ON...

->AMERICAN VALUES, YOU TEACHERS & COACHES PUTTING A HUMAN FACE ON OUR HISTORY;

->EDUCATING OUR YOUNG ABOUT THE PERSONAL COURAGE THAT GAVE US A COUNTRY SUCH AS THIS;

->HIGHLIGHTING THE VALIANT COLLABORATION

THAT REQUIRED COMPROMISE TO GIVE US A CHANCE AT HAVING A COUNTRY SUCH AS THIS...

& COMPROMISE IS ONLY ONE EXAMPLE OF THE WISDOM OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS THAT WE NEED TO FOLLOW TODAY.

COURAGE, COLLABORATION, COMPROMISE...WE ARE TALKING ABOUT REVOLUTIONARY EXAMPLES OF PROFILES IN COURAGE BY OUR REVOLUTIONARY HEROES WHO PUT EVERYTHING THEY HAD – THEIR LIVES, FORTUNES AND HONOR – ON THE LINE.

COURAGE, COLLABORATION, COMPROMISE...WE ARE TALKING ABOUT MUTUAL RESPECT FOR OUR FELLOW CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE DISAGREE.

AND OUR REVOLUTIONARY FOREBEARS DISAGREED MIGHTILY AT TIMES, YET MET THE ENEMY ON THE BATTLEFIELD WITH IMPLACABLE UNITY.

AND THIS IS SURELY WHAT YOU SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION REMIND US ABOUT: WORDS LIKE “UNITY IS INDISPENSABLE”, OR “HONEST CANDOR...IS OUR GREATEST HOPE”. [VANDEN.]

FOR YOU SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION...

YOU HAVE A FOUNDATION THAT, WHEN USED TO THE BENEFIT OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY CAUSE, CAN INSPIRE OUR FELLOW CITIZENS TO REACH AGAIN TODAY FOR THE ILLIMITABLE HORIZONS THAT WE CAN TRULY SENSE THIS EVENING HERE AT THE FOOT OF THE HIGH COUNTRY....

WHAT YOU DO IS CRITICAL, ESPECIALLY NOW, AS WE DEAL WITH THE TUMULTUOUS POLITICAL TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE. WE NEED YOU MORE THAN EVER IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, AND WE WHO ARE NOT SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION CAN EMBRACE IDEAS THAT YOU BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO.

I TRUST THAT YOU ARE HAPPY TO LIVE IN THIS CHALLENGING TIME, WHEN YOUR VALUES AND COACHING ARE SORELY NEEDED. SURELY THOSE WHO FOUGHT KING GEORGE WOULD NOT SHY FROM THE EFFORT TO KEEP ALIVE OUR IDEALS, A GOAL I KNOW IS INCLUDED IN YOUR MISSION. AND AS A FELLOW CITIZEN I SALUTE YOU FOR YOUR UNAPOLOGETIC PATRIOTISM.

FOR IT WILL ULTIMATELY BE THE SENSE OF HOPE THAT RESTORES RESPECT OF DEMOCRACY... DEMOCRACY BEING THE WORST FORM OF GOV'T, AS CHURCHILL ONCE SAID, EXCEPT FOR ALL THE REST THAT HAVE BEEN TRIED...

THERE'S AN ENORMOUS SENSE OF POWER WITHIN A PEOPLE UNITED ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES YOUR FOREBEARERS FOUGHT FOR...AND EMBRACING THE FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ALL AMERICANS WHO BELIEVE IN ONE ANOTHER,

YOUR EXAMPLE WILL HELP ARM OUR PEOPLE TO FEEL WHOLE AGAIN, AND PART OF THEIR COMMUNITIES TO FEEL THE CONNECTION WITH FAMILY & NEIGHBORS

& THUS WAKING EACH DAY IMBUED WITH THAT SENSE OF HOPE THAT WOULD CAUSE OUR FOREFATHERS TO SMILE WHEN THEY SAW IT IN THEIR COMRADES FACES, MARCHING OUT, SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER, TO FIGHT THE REDCOATS.

THIS IS YOUR TIME, A TIME WHEN YOUR ORGANIZATION IS BADLY NEEDED IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY

WE AMERICANS HAVE NEVER BELIEVED THAT ALL THE GOOD IDEAS COME FROM GOV'T,

WE AMERICANS HAVE NEVER BELIEVED THAT MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITIES IN NEED WERE SOLELY A GOV'T RESPONSIBILITY,

->AND I DIDN'T SERVE IN THE MARINES FOR 43 YEARS,
RATHER I SERVED IN THE U.S. MARINES, OUR MILITARY BELONGS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE,
AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HISTORICALLY HAVE STUCK TOGETHER TO HELP ONE ANOTHER, AS YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS DONE FOR 131 YEARS.

CERTAINLY TODAY OUR COUNTRY FACES CHALLENGES.
DEMOCRACIES GO THROUGH THESE RAUCOUS PERIODS,
YET TODAY IT SEEMS WE CAN AGREE ON LESS AND LESS,
WE CANNOT SEEM TO FIND COMMON GROUND WHERE WE CAN WORK TOGETHER.

SO YOU HAVE ANOTHER DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC IN THIS TIME OF NATIONAL DISCONTENT:
THAT OF LEADING BY EXAMPLE, WORKING
->FOR EACH OTHER.

->WORKING TOGETHER, COMING TOGETHER,
->RECOMMITTING TO OUR COMMON PURPOSE,
->WORKING TOWARD A MORE PERFECT UNION,
VICE SCORCHING EACH OTHER WITH HOT POLITICAL RHETORIC.

I ALSO WANT TO RECOGNIZE THE MILITARY VETERANS AMONG YOU:
FOR THEIR EXAMPLE RESONATES WITH THOSE
WHO ENDURED VALLEY FORGE,
WHO TRIUMPHED AT YORKTOWN:

SELFLESS PATRIOTS WHO REJECTED DEFEATISM AND RALLIED TO THE FLAG WHEN WE NEEDED THEM,
JUST LIKE THEIR SUCCESSORS DID AFTER 9-11,
AND WE DID NEED THEM, LADIES & GENTLEMEN:

THINK BACK TO 9-11, AND THE MANIACS WHO THOUGHT THAT BY HURTING US THEY COULD SCARE US,
THOSE WHO
MURDERED 3000 INNOCENT CITIZENS OF 91 COUNTRIES ON OUR SOIL.

->A MESSAGE HAD TO BE SENT,
SENT TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED THAT WE NO LONGER RAISED YOUNG MEN & WOMEN WHO WOULD
VOLUNTEER TO WITHSTAND DANGER & DISCOMFORT,
IN THE TRADITION OF YOUR REVOLUTIONARY FOREBEARERS, AND SO MANY VETERANS SINCE...,

VOLUNTEERS WHO INDEED LOOKED PAST THAT HOT POLITICAL RHETORIC AND SIGNED A BLANK CHECK TO
EACH OF US TODAY, PAYABLE WITH THEIR LIVES.

MANY HAD EXPERIENCES THAT OUR MOST ARTICULATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT, OLIVER WENDALL HOLMES, Jr., HIMSELF A COMBAT VETERAN, CALLED INCOMMUNICABLE.

REGARDLESS OF HOW THESE CURRENT WARS TURN OUT, A MESSAGE HAD TO BE SENT:
-THAT WE ARE NOT MADE OF COTTON CANDY,
-THAT WE ARE NOT SEAWEED DRIFTING IN THE CURRENT,

-THAT OUR SPIRIT CAN STILL WITHSTAND THE TOUGHEST BLOWS, JUST LIKE GENERAL WASHINGTON'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY STOOD THEIR TEST IN BATTLE.

AS A WW II MARINE, A MEMBER OF THE GREATEST GENERATION PUT IT: OUR COUNTRY DIDN'T NEED TO BE PERFECT TO BE WORTH FIGHTING FOR,
AND SO FIGHT WE DID.

AND AS A COMMANDER OF MANY OF THOSE TROOPS, I NEVER DOUBTED THAT IN CLOSE COMBAT AGAINST THOSE MURDERERS DRESSED IN FALSE RELIGIOUS GARB, THE SKILL AND FEROCITY OF OUR TROOPS MEANT WE WOULD TURN THE TABLES ON THOSE WHO THOUGHT US WEAK.

IN MANY CASES WE CARRIED OUR BUDDIES' LIFELESS BODIES TO HELICOPTERS, THEN TURNED BACK TO THE FIGHT.

MANY OF US ARE ALIVE TODAY BECAUSE OF WHAT OUR COMRADES DID ON THOSE TOUGH HILLSIDES, & WE'LL NEVER MAKE SENSE OF WHY WE SURVIVED IN WAR'S SEEMINGLY RANDOM EPISODES, WHEN OUR FRIENDS DID NOT.

BUT WE THE LIVING MUST CARRY ON THIS HARD WORK OF BUILDING A MORE PERFECT UNION,
OF BUILDING STRONGLY ON THE EXAMPLE YOU SONS OF THE REVOLUTION SET IN KEEPING OUR VALUES ALIVE,
OF FINDING WAYS TO GIVE BACK TO OTHERS A SENSE OF THE GRATITUDE WE FEEL FOR LIVING HERE IN WHAT IS STILL THE FINEST COUNTRY ON EARTH IF WE WILL MAKE IT SO BY VIRTUE OF LISTENING TO OUR BETTER ANGELS.

YES, BUILDING A DEMOCRACY IS HARD WORK & REQUIRES A PEOPLE IMBUED WITH A SENSE OF SERVICE, BUT IT IS NOBLE WORK TOO, WORK THAT CAN DRAW US TOGETHER AND GIVE US ALL A SENSE OF PURPOSE LIKE WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION PROVIDES TODAY:
ESPECIALLY YOUR VOLUNTEERS WHO SPEND TIME TEACHING THE YOUTH ABOUT WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE.

AS A FORMER PRESIDENT OF MEXICO ONCE SAID, "THE ONLY SHORTCUT TO HAPPINESS LIES IN HELPING OTHERS."

WE SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT WE WERE BORN FREE BY ACCIDENT OF BIRTH IN AMERICA OR, LIKE MY MOTHER, BY IMMIGRATING HERE;

AND THAT WE LIVE FREE BY THE SIMPLE CHOICE TO LIVE IN AMERICA, AND WE SEE MILLIONS MORE WHO WISH THEY COULD JOIN US;

YET WE ALIVE TODAY HAVE AN OBLIGATION, AN ACUTE RESPONSIBILITY, TO PASS ON THE SAME FREEDOMS TO THE NEXGEN THAT WE ENJOY...

FOR WE HOLD THIS NATION IN USUFRUCT

->A WORD I FIRST DISCOVERED IN THOS. JEFFERSON'S PAPERS

->A WORD THAT I NEVER SAY IF I'VE HAD MORE THAN 1 BEER...

AN AGRARIAN MAN, JEFFERSON BELIEVED THAT IF YOU OWNED THE LAND,
THIS "GREAT LAND" AS OUR CHAPLAIN DESCRIBED IT IN HIS DINNER PRAYER THIS EVENING,
YOU COULD CUT THE TREES, CHANGE THE WATERCOURSES, PLANT CROPS...DO AS YOU WISH,

YET YOU HAD A RESPONSIBILITY TO TURN THAT LAND OVER TO YOUR DAUGHTER OR SON IN AS GOOD A CONDITION, OR BETTER, THAN YOU RECEIVED IT....

WELL, I BELIEVE THAT WE HOLD THIS EXPERIMENT WE CALL AMERICA IN USUFRUCT, AND WE MUST TURN IT OVER IN AS GOOD A CONDITION, OR BETTER THAN WE INHERITED IT, THANKS TO THE BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS OF OUR PREDECESSORS.

WE KNOW THAT AMERICA HASN'T ALWAYS HAD IT RIGHT:

YET WHILE WE HAVEN'T ALWAYS HAD IT RIGHT, THANKS TO OUR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS, WE HAVE A NEAR UNIQUE ABILITY TO GET IT RIGHT.

WITHOUT SIMPLY POINTING OUT WHERE PAST AMERICANS DIDN'T HAVE IT RIGHT, IT'S EACH GENERATION OF AMERICANS RESPONSIBILITY, HOLDING OUR WONDERFUL AMERICA IN USUFRUCT, TO CONTINUE THE NOBLE EFFORT

->TO MAKE US RIGHT, &

->TO MAKE US A LITTLE BETTER,

ON OUR NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY TO A MORE PERFECT UNION.

IN THAT QUEST, EVERYTHING THAT BRINGS US TOGETHER AS A PEOPLE NEEDS TO BE SUPPORTED: IT'S WHY I'M HUMBLLED AND HONORED TO SALUTE YOU HERE THIS EVENING, WHILE I TURN DOWN 95% OF REQUESTS TO TALK.

WHAT YOU DO IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THE YOUNGER GENERATION WILL INHERIT WHATEVER ATTITUDE WE DEMONSTRATE WHEN IT COMES TO THE NOBILITY OF SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY AND ITS VALUES.

->SERVING OUR COUNTRY IS NOBLE AND REMAINS SO.

TONIGHT,

WE CAN SEE THE STORM CLOUDS GATHERING OVERSEAS,

WE WATCH THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES ACTING AS IF THE WINDS ARE WITH THEM,

HERE AT HOME WE RECOGNIZE WE HAVE AN UNHEALTHY PARTISANSHIP

FRAGMENTING SOME OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS' BELIEF IN THE VALUE OF AMERICA, A BELIEF THAT I THINK CAN BE RESTORED BY ROLE MODELS LIKE YOU HERE IN THIS ROOM, BECAUSE YOUR ACTIONS WILL INFLUENCE OTHERS.

YOUR ACTIONS CAN BE TRULY THE FINEST SORT OF CIVICS EDUCATION: THAT OF LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE.

I'VE OFTEN LEARNED MOST ABOUT AMERICA FROM FOREIGNERS, AND I THINK BACK TO A LUNCH ONE DAY WITH THE AUSTRALIAN AMB TO WASHINGTON WHO COMMENTED TO ME THAT "FOLLOWING WW II, THE U.S. MADE THE SINGLE MOST SELF-SACRIFICIAL PLEDGE IN WORLD HISTORY."

I THOUGHT THAT I KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT U.S. HISTORY, SO I ASKED IF HE WAS REFERRING TO THE MARSHALL PLAN?

NO, NO, HE SAID: THE MARSHALL PLAN JUST SHOWED WHAT A UNIQUE VICTOR THE U.S. WAS, WHIPPING THE FASCISTS AND THEN GENEROUSLY HELPING THE GERMAN, ITALIAN, AND JAPANESE PEOPLE BACK ON THEIR FEET.

NO, HE WENT ON, AFTER WW II YOU COULD HAVE TOLD DEVASTATED EUROPE THAT THEY WERE ON THEIR OWN WITH THE SOVIET UNION, THAT TWICE WE HAD BEEN PULLED INTO THEIR WARS AND LOST 100s OF

THOUSANDS OF OUR LADS, SO WE WERE TURNING TO ASIA, LATIN AMERICA, AFRICA FOR OUR MARKETS AND OUR FUTURE.

INSTEAD, HE SAID, YOU PLEDGED 100 MILLION DEAD AMERICANS IN A NUCLEAR WAR WHEN YOU ESTABLISHED NATO AND SAID AN ATTACK ON ONE IS AN ATTACK ON ALL.

.....

TOOK A FOREIGNER TO TEACH ME THAT....I STOOD A LITTLE STRAIGHTER THAT DAY, WALKING OUT OF HIS HOME. AMERICA HAD STOOD UP FOR HUMANITY, FOR THE PROTECTION OF DEMOCRACY NOT JUST AT HOME.

YEARS LATER, AS OUR COUNTRY'S SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, THAT FOREIGNER'S WORDS GUIDED ME DAILY IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR GREATEST GENERATION, IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY COUNTRY.

ANOTHER FOREIGNER, AN ENEMY AT THE TIME, ALSO TAUGHT ME SOMETHING ABOUT THIS GREAT COUNTRY, SPECIFICALLY...THAT AMERICA HAS TWO FUNDAMENTAL SOURCES OF POWER:

->THE POWER OF INSPIRATION, &

->THE POWER OF INTIMIDATION.

OUR MILITARY & CIA ARE THE LEADING EDGE OF OUR POWER OF INTIMIDATION. IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD, WE NEED OUR MILITARY TO KEEP OUR DEMOCRACY SAFE FROM THOSE THREATENED BY IT.

BUT IT TOOK AN ENEMY TRYING TO KILL ME TO REMIND ME OF OUR STRONGER SOURCE OF POWER: THAT WAS AMERICA'S POWER OF INSPIRATION.

TAKE YOU BACK TO THE SUMMER OF 2004 IN WESTERN IRAQ.

SINCE 1979, WITH THE FALL OF THE SHAH IN IRAN AND THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFG, I'VE SPENT MANY SUMMERS IN THE MID-EAST, BUT THE SUMMER OF 2004 WAS THE HOTTEST I'VE EVER KNOWN. 126 DEGREES SEEMED THE NORM, W/ 95% HUMIDITY...

I WAS COMMANDING THE 1ST MARINE DIV IN AL ANBAR, THE HEART OF THE SUNNI TRIANGLE, AND WE WERE IN A FIGHT OVER AN AREA THE SIZE OF N CAROLINA, YET I HAD FEWER TROOPS TO FIGHT A GROWING INSURGENCY THAN N CAROLINA HAS POLICE OFFICERS.

TOUGH TIME, OUTNUMBERED IN MANY AREAS, CASUALTIES WERE THE DAILY NORM. OF MY 29 SAILORS & MARINES IN MY PERSONAL COMMAND POST, 17 WOULD BE KILLED OR WOUNDED AROUND ME IN 4 MONTHS. PULLING INTO A SMALL OUTPOST IN THE WESTERN DESERT...[TELL STORY OF W. EUPHRATES RIVER VALLEY]

IT WAS A REMINDER THAT AMERICA'S POWER TO INSPIRE CAN REACH EVEN MANY OF OUR FOES,

->IF WE AMERICANS, BELIEVE IN OURSELVES,

->PRACTICE RESPECT FOR OUR FELLOW CITIZENS, AND

->IF WE ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO KEEP OUR SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN DEMOCRACY'S PROMISE.

YET WE'LL NEED OUR FIGHTERS TOO, AND THE THANKS WE OWE THEM IS SO CLEARLY FELT IN OUR COUNTRY

THAT EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION IS ALSO FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR NATIONAL UNITY.

I OWE PERSONAL THANKS TO ANY VETERANS HERE THIS EVENING, THOSE WHO SERVED IN EVERY CLIME AND PLACE IN WARS PAST, HOT WARS OR COLD.

THE EXAMPLE OF VETERANS AT LEXINGTON & CONCORD, SHILOH & BELLEAU WOOD, MIDWAY & NORMANDY, IWO JIMA & KHE SANH...REMINDE TODAY'S YOUNG WARRIORS THAT THEY'LL NEVER FACE ANYTHING TOUGHER THAN THOSE VETERANS OVERCAME IN THEIR SERVICE.

A CASE IN POINT: FALLUJA, MARCH OF 2004, ORDERED TO ASSAULT THE CITY AFTER THE MURDER OF FOUR CONTRACTORS:

EVENING BEFORE, ASSAULT BNs, MIDNIGHT, TIME FOR GENERALS TO GET OUT OF THE WAY, LEAVING FIGHT TO THE INFANTRY... "INFANTRY", FALLING BACK TO VEHICLES, BEHIND THE ASSAULT COMPANY THAT WOULD ATTACK IN ADVANCE OF THE HEAVY UNITS,

ENEMY MISCHIEF, HANDLED, WAITING, "WILL FALLUJA BE REAL BAD?" CPL: HUSH, GET SOME REST. WE TOOK IWO, FALLUJA WON'T BE NOTHING". BETTER THAN ANY SPEECH ANY GENERAL COULD GIVE OUR TROOPS, OUR VETERANS' EXAMPLE IN PAST FIGHTS GIVES OUR LADS TODAY THE BOOST THEY NEED WHEN THEY MUST CROSS THE LINE OF DEPARTURE INTO THE UNCERTAIN GROUND.

SO TO YOU VETERANS, WHEREVER AND WHENEVER YOU SERVED, THANK YOU FOR STANDING THE WATCH, THANK YOU FOR YOUR EXAMPLE OF PUTTING OUR COUNTRY FIRST BY PUTTING YOUR LIVES ON THE LINE, THANK YOU,

I WANT TO THANK YOU, SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IN YOUR LAST 130-ODD YEARS, BUT ALSO THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'LL DO IN THE FUTURE TO HELP OUR COUNTRY GET ITS MOJO BACK.

IT'S GREAT BEING HERE WITH YOU, I AM HUMBLLED TO DO SO: THANKS FOR INCLUDING ME.
I WISH YOU GREAT SUCCESS IN YOUR CRITICALLY IMPORTANT MISSION,
AND GOD BLESS OUR AMERICA.