



## AUSA EISENHOWER LUNCHEON OCTOBER 13, 2015

Thanks, General Sullivan, I appreciate that.

And you notice that the first words in that video was readiness. The second was future force. The third people who are taking care of our troops. And those are the three priorities I put out. And today I'm going to concentrate on the first one.

But, General Sullivan, I first want to thank you for putting this together for all of us. And thanks to you for your years of mentorship, leadership, and continued service to our Army. You are truly a great representation of our Army, and you are truly an example of selfless service. So how about a round of applause from everybody?

I would also take note that General Sullivan told me that this is normally the Chief of Staff of the Army's debutante kind of roll-out, but frankly I never actually thought of General Sullivan and the way he is and has been over the years as a debutante.

But maybe they grow debutantes at Quincy, I don't know.

So, I also notice that my wife happens to be sitting between two lawyers. I'm not sure how that, what that means for what I'm about to say. Maybe she'll need them or I'll need them after I conclude my remarks. But the association of the U.S. Army has provided, yet again, a wonderful venue for us as the leaders of our Army, and our allies and friends and supporters throughout the country to honor our soldiers, our civilians, and importantly, our families. And it gives us an opportunity to reflect on what that means. And I think we have some 30,000 attendees at this year's conference is what I was told. And I'm pretty sure that I and Secretary McHugh shook all of your hands last night in a pretty long line.

And for Secretary McHugh I want to publicly thank him. I've done it a couple of times earlier in the week, but this is a pretty big forum and I think it is worth noting, since this is his last AUSA convention as Secretary, to take a moment to reflect on his six years of service.

And over the course, Mr. Secretary, of your tenure you have never failed us. You have fought hard for your great Army, for our great Army. And you've led us through a number of very significant strategic transitions. You've led us through tough resourcing decisions and chaotic fiscal realities. And your leadership has ensured that we remain ready, and we remain the most capable Army in the world. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, on behalf of everyone in this room. And thank you on behalf of all of us soldiers and their families. Thank you for all you've done as the second longest serving Secretary of the Army in the history of the American republic.

This convention also allows us to take a moment and reflect on what we have done as America's Army and establish some markers, some priorities on the way ahead. Normally the Chief stands here and announces all new initiatives. And I am sorry to report that this year, my first year, I will sorely disappoint. Despite overwhelming numbers of cards, and letters, and



emails that have poured into me over the last six to eight weeks, now is not the time for me to announce changing our blues to the World War II pinks and greens.

And, no, I am not going to bring back the 1911, 1945 which I dearly love. And contrary to popular belief, I will not rename all our forts after victorious Union Generals. So, sorry to disappoint; maybe next year, but not this year. General Shinseki said, don't throw a new beret out there, not on your first day.

But I do think it's a good opportunity to talk about who we are and what we do and the world we are in and where we are going. And to start, I think it's important to recognize up front that we the Army are something bigger than just the Army. We are part of joint force where we as the Army do not, and never have, fought alone. We have always fought alongside our brothers and our sisters in the Navy, the Marines, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard, and with our many allies who are represented here as well.

The United States Army deploys on exercises, goes into contingency operations, goes to war on Navy ships and Air Force planes. And lest we forget, yes, we call Army attack helicopters artillery or mortar support, but we also call close air support from Navy or Air Force fighters and bombers. And usually, in fact always, from someone who has done it, that is the first call we make when we are in enemy contact. We, the Army, we the United States Army are truly blessed to have the greatest Navy and the greatest Air Force the world has ever known. And despite our annual football rivalries, when the bullets are flying the Navy and the Air Force and the Marines are the Army's best friend without fail. They have always been there and they always will.

I am personal witness to pilots who, without hesitation, will risk their all when they hear a call that ground troops are in contact. We may not like their football teams, but we damn sure love the sound of their jets.

Americans are free today and safe for many reasons. But I submit that one of those, one of the most important reasons is because we have and still have an exceptional military. And our Army, the United States Army, is the very foundation of that military. And we have also had an exceptional array of allies and partners who walk shoulder to shoulder for years and decades in a cause against common foes.

Some, like France, have been with us for over two centuries, since the American Revolution. Others, like Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have fought along our side for well over a century. Germans, Japanese, and Koreans for over six decades. And many, many others in the coalition for the last 14 consecutive years of war. Yes, we are a great Army, we must remain so. But, we should never ever forget that we are not in this fight, and never have been in this fight, alone. And this convention gives us an opportunity to look at ourselves and what we must do to remain the most competent, most capable, and most lethal Army as part of an incredible joint and solid international team. And so let me talk a little bit about our Army.

First, why do we even exist? Why do we have an Army? Why does the United States taxpayer foot the bill for the United States Army? It's simple really. We the United States



Army, as part of the joint force, we exist for a singular purpose and none other. And that is to fight and win wars in defense of the United States of America. That's it. It's that simple.

We exist to fight the crucible of ground combat. And when we fight and where we fight we win. We have the capability. We have the capacity to perform a multitude of other activities. We can accomplish any mission assigned. But fighting and winning wars is our *raison d'être*. It is our very reason for being. And our nation expects and deserves no less from us.

Second, we are a total Army. We are one Army. And we are an Army of almost a million strong, not 490,000. We are an Army of 19 divisions, not 10 divisions. We're an Army of 60 brigade combat teams, not 32 brigade combat teams. We are one Army consisting of three components in the regular Army, National Guard, and United States Army Reserve. And all our uniforms say United States Army. It does not distinguish between us. We are one Army, and we are indivisible.

Right now, today as I stand before you, America's Army is strong. We are capable, we're well-equipped, well-led, and we're a disciplined combat seasoned force that will answer the nation's call anywhere, any time, against any foe, as we have done not only for the last 15 years, but as we have done for the last 240 years.

Today we are engaged with more than 140,000 soldiers in over 150 countries around the world either in the fight, deterring aggression, or reassuring our allies and partners. We continue to engage the enemy in the mountains of Afghanistan as we work with allies and partners to support the Afghan National Security Force. We are training, advising, and assisting in Iraq to fight the ruthless terrorism of ISIL. And the United States Army is relentlessly hunting terrorists throughout many other parts of the world. We are engaging our partners in Africa, and throughout Americas, both North and South. We have almost 100,000 soldiers committed to the Pacific. And we are deterring aggression in the Korean peninsula as we have done for 60 years.

In both Europe and Asia we are actively reassuring allies in the face of emerging challenges. And, in short, our Army stands ready.

We are not even close to being a hollow Army. And no enemy of this country, no enemy of the United States should ever think otherwise. We, the United States Army, may bend, but we, the United States Army, refuses to ever break.

However, there's much to do. We can't just say we're going to be strong. There is much to do to remain strong, to remain capable, to remain ready, to ensure that, in fact, we do not break. We must constantly recommit ourselves to the readiness of our Army. And we must never ever lull ourselves into a false sense of complacency where we beat our chest on how good we are with bravado and hubris to wake up and find ourselves unready for combat.

Readiness, combat readiness is our number one priority. And there is no other number one. We, as leaders, must never allow our nation's most precious asset, our sons and daughters, to go into harms way unprepared, lacking equipment, untrained, undermanned, or with less than competent leadership. That is a covenant with our soldiers and our nation that we must never break.



So, let me say it one more time, to all leaders, senior and junior, and to every soldier in the United States Army, readiness for combat is our number one priority, and there is no other number one.

Today, as we look around the world, we can see a significant rise in instability in many regions. The velocity of instability is actually increasing, not decreasing. While America is safer to be sure, we are still engaged in several active wars in support of our partners. And just as importantly, there are more than a few storm clouds gathering and the warning flags are beginning to flutter.

In the Middle East and South Asia and beyond, we see ISIL and other radical groups presenting a significant threat to regional stability with a reach that is not only deadly but long. For many of our close friends ISIL is truly an existential threat. And make no mistake about it, ISIL is resilient, ruthless, and they have an expansionary apocalyptic vision that must be destroyed, as President Obama charged us to do over a year ago.

The war against radical terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa, and elsewhere, is going to take considerable time. And we as an Army are going to be intimately involved in that all the way. Our tasks will vary from place to place, but we must sustain our capabilities to fight terrorists, guerrillas and insurgents, and help our partners develop increased capabilities to do the same. There is much at stake for our country. And we as an Army have a very important, perhaps the key role to play in that lengthy struggle.

But we cannot focus on only one typology of war and only one reason. The United States is a global power. We have global responsibilities. And we have had them at least since the Second World War, if not longer.

As an Army we must maintain capabilities to fight along an entire range of military operations, from humanitarian assistance, to fighting guerrillas and terrorists, to nation states, if required. We do not have the luxury of preparing to fight one type of enemy at one time in one place.

Today we see nation states taking active steps to destabilize regions of the world through the uses of hybrid warfare. Using aspects of conventional and an irregular war combined with terrorism and asymmetric capabilities these nations attack other nations through surrogates, through cyber and electronic warfare, through political influence, and economic coercion. And quite often they do so undetected or at least with a high degree of deniability.

Many of the nations I am talking about have significant traditional capability, and traditional and conventional capacity. Specifically, a revisionist Russia has demanded we once again consider how to deter their coercion and how to deter their aggression. A task that was largely unexpected only 24 months ago. After modernizing its nuclear and conventional capabilities in 2008, and updating its military doctrine, Russia has launched on an aggressive foreign policy in the last seven years, attacking Georgia, annexing the Crimea, invading the Ukraine through surrogates, threatening other neighbors that are NATO allies, and now militarily intervening in the Middle East to complicate an already complicated and tragic situation.



Russia has engaged in deliberate efforts to undermine NATO and the United States in not so subtle attempts to reestablish their near abroad, increased demonstrations of military prowess in the air and sea that we have not seen since the height of the Cold War. Most significantly, within just the last year, Russia, their senior leadership, has rattled the nuclear saber, which is alarming and irresponsible.

I cannot predict, no one can with certainty, what Russia's intent is. But I do know that Russia has considerable capability. And we can judge their recent behavior as very aggressive, in violation of many long-standing international norms. It certainly appears to me that Russia considers the United States and NATO a direct threat to its core interests and seems to be acting accordingly. Nobody, not me or anyone in this room, wants an armed conflict with Russia. But the United States Army must be prepared, as part of a joint force, an international force, to further deter Russian aggression.

In Asia, only 60 days ago, we saw significant provocative actions by North Korea that rapidly increased tensions. There has been an armistice there since 1953. But that situation on the Korean peninsula has always been tenuous. The United States with our ROK ally and others have been vigilant and we must remain so. The 38th parallel today is still, as it has been for years, the most heavily armed border in the world. And a conflict there would be a human catastrophe of immense proportions.

Our readiness to rapidly respond to a petitioning Korea is a key task for this Army and requires significant training for a large number of our formations. One day the Korean people will be whole again. And for that to happen peacefully, that is going to require high levels of readiness on the part of the United States Army in order to deter war.

Elsewhere in Asia, we see a rising China with increased military capabilities and a growing assertive foreign policy. However, assertiveness is not aggressiveness and China is not an enemy. But history tells us that while a capability grows slowly, intent can change quickly. Our Army has an important role to play in maintaining stability in Asia by assuring our allies that U.S. commitment is firm. And we do this through exercise and routine engagements.

Six of the world's largest armies are in Asia. Forty percent of all weapon sales happen in Asia. And 21 of 26 chiefs of Asian militaries are army officers. There is no doubt in my mind that U.S. interests in Asia are supported by the great capabilities of our Navy and Air Force. But our Army also has an important, and indeed critical, role to play in preserving the peace in that critical region.

We should not easily forget that in the last 70 years we have fought three of our nation's largest and most bloody conflicts in Asia. For 40 years there has generally been peace in Asia, and our Army remains the key, a key to our entire joint force to help keep that peace. And our readiness to conduct combat operations on short notice and strategically deploy must be known by our adversaries, must be demonstrated on a routine basis that we are ready, and together that constitutes a fundamental to deter.

We will do that over time by setting the conditions to increase our effectiveness to meet



the challenges of today in the future. We will set the conditions to maintain overmatch against future adversaries by developing new technologies, some of which you saw in that film, for ground combat, and exploring new concepts on how to fight in innovative ways, on how to organize our forces while enhancing our ability to deal with unforeseen challenges. And this requires an absolute focus on readiness and reminds us, especially in light of challenging fiscal conditions, how critical it is that we build the right Army of the future.

But first, let me discuss a few myths, a few misconceptions about war that often creep into the dialogue, especially here inside the beltway where we deal with budgets and figure out forestructures and future investments. In my view, these myths are factually and historically incorrect and can lead to bad policy choices, not only for our Army but for our nation's security. And my experience is that these are often promulgated by those who have never actually experienced the blood, the sweat, and the tears of war. And let me review just a few of them.

First, I don't know how many times I've heard that wars will be short, wars of the future will be short. There is no doubt that decision makers of any nation in the market of war most of the time desire it to be a short affair, perhaps even a minor dustup. Our founding fathers certainly had no intention of fighting a five or six year war against the greatest power of the day. Most thought they would rebel a bit, get some tax relief, and could do so with their local town militias. They had no idea of the struggle they were entering with Britain.

Lincoln, perhaps our greatest President, along with most Northerners thought that he was entering a mere 90 day contingency to put down a small rebellion. Neither leaders nor followers in either the North or the South had any clue that they were entering a four year bloodfest that would be the deadliest in American history.

And, of course, no leaders in Europe or elsewhere in 1914 thought they would butcher an entire generation of their youth in the next four years, and lose five empires, and cause a massive and history-changing revolution in Russia, and set conditions for World War II, the most devastating war in human history only 20 years after the first war ended.

No one, no one in their European capitals thought when they mobilized their forces for what they believed would be a six to eight week short war of maneuver in that fateful summer only 100 years ago. And we thought dispatching a few battalions of troops from our occupation Army in Japan would stop a North Korean invasion in the summer of 1950, and as soon as the North Koreans knew they were facing American soldiers they would simply stop.

Vietnam was never supposed to last a decade, result in defeat, and end a presidency, and cost the lives of over 50,000 soldiers and Marines.

And, of course, I doubt we thought we would still be in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq when we first started the places I've been. Wars are funny things. They have a logic all their own and they rarely conform to pre-planned timelines. Perhaps it is the need for illusion and hope in the human psyche. Perhaps it is not understanding the very nature of war upon which we embark. Or perhaps it is just sheer bloody incompetence. But, for whatever reasons, wars are very rarely short.



Another myth is that wars can be won from great distances through the use of advanced technologies which give us stand-off from the air or the sea, a truly asymmetric advantage that America does possess. Our precision munitions and cruise missiles are wonderful. I love them. And they deliver a devastating punch. But this too is very seductive, and it posits that wars can be won on the cheap in terms of our own blood. Of course, we want it to be true. No one wants it to be more true than I, and those of us who have seen battle up close, who watched our comrades die. I deeply want that to be true. I want wars to be able to be won from stand-off ranges. But, unfortunately, it's fantasy not fact. It simply is not true.

Unfortunately, after the shock and awe comes the march and fight. And why, why is that? Why do we have to march and fight? Because war is a political act, it's an act to impose our political will on an opponent through the use of organized violence. And politics is about people. And people live on the earth's surface. And their will to fight is ultimately broken on the ground. Stand-off weapons from either sea or air are for surely necessary to bring the full synergy of war fighting power to bear, but they are never sufficient in and of themselves to break a determined enemy's will.

In World War II on the European front the allied air forces perfected strategic bombing against targets in Germany, increasing intensity and frequency, bombing from 1942 all the way to the end of the war in 1945. Although those bombing were effective, they destroyed key logistics and infrastructure, and they did set the condition for strategic and operational ground maneuver, they did not significantly reduce or resolve the Nazi will to fight. They continued to build weapons, they Nazis did, and their military continued to fight with great skill long after it was obvious they would ultimately lose. It would take a substantial ground force with great support from the air and the sea fighting through North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, and of course the huge battles on the eastern front that all led ultimately to the axis army's defeat and their unconditional surrender in 1945.

In the Pacific, I think of Iwo Jima, a small two miles by four miles island in the Central Pacific with very little vegetation bombed for over 60 consecutive days by air forces and almost four days of pre-assault fires by a U.S. Navy fleet consisting of over 400 ships with hundreds of five inch, six inch, eight inch, and 16 inch guns. No eight square miles of the earth's surface has ever been bombed as much as the island of Iwo Jima. The Marines of the assault force were told that the Japanese defenders were all killed, the resistance would be minimal. Of 23,000 Japanese ground forces defending that island, roughly 300 were killed in the pre-assault fires. At the end of the Marine's amphibious assault, as the U.S. flag rose over Mount Suribachi, 22,000 Japanese and almost 7,000 Marines lay dead; 20,000 other Marines wounded. All of that in 19 days.

My father passed away a few months ago, but he never forgot Iwo Jima. And he could tell you with certainty about the myth of winning battles or wars from the sea or air alone. But we see that same myth playing out today on our evening news. As we watch an ideologically committed enemy in ISIS withstand and even expand despite over a year of pounding from the air. As we know all too well the first shots in any war are often fired from the sea or the air. But to win a war the last shots are going to be fired on the ground.

Another and perhaps more recent myth is that Special Forces can do it all, and America needs only an elite rapid-reaction force to battle terrorists and we will be good to go. To be sure,



our SOF, our Special Operations Forces, are the best in the world. But killing high-valued targets is the tacticization of strategy. That's all it is. It is necessary, but not sufficient. To prevail at war takes so much more than killing selected terrorists through drone strikes or small unit raids, which is nothing more than attrition warfare, a dressed-up version of body counts. Like war from stand-off ranges, it is very seductive and takes very few American casualties.

And there is no doubt that our SOF operations are necessary, and they are brave, and they are the best SOF operatives in the world. But they alone cannot do it.

And yet another common misconception is that armies are easy to regenerate. All you have to do is go to basic training, add a few leaders, and presto you have a unit. The reality is far more challenging. Leaders take many, many years to develop the competencies and the skills necessary to wage ground combat. A platoon sergeant will take 10 to 15 years, while a battalion commander will require 15 to 17 years. Units that are capable of conducting maneuver require years to train to the levels of proficiency that are needed to actually fight in a real war.

Today's weapon systems, mission command, communications, just to name a few examples, take many months to master. An M-1 tank, an Apache helicopter, our Patriot missile system are not weapons where their crews develop the necessary skills simply overnight. And then to work beyond the individual and crew skills, to get the combined hours maneuver with joint fires where commanders bring together teams of teams there's a higher order of skill requiring repetitive and rigorous training over extended periods of time.

Even throughout our own history, before we had all these sophisticated weapons, it took years to generate sufficient forces to prevail in actual war. We had a small standing Federal Army on the eve of the Civil War. When World War I began we were merely a constabulary force chasing Pancho Villa. And, again, in World War II we had to expand rapidly. It was amazing actually that we only had a couple of hundred thousand troops in our Army, while the clouds of war were gathering above Asia and Europe.

Neither Nazi Germany nor Imperial Japan thought the United States was serious. And just six months prior to Pearl Harbor, six months in the summer of 1941 prior to Pearl Harbor, four years after the start of the war in Asia when Japan invaded China, two years after the start of the war in Europe where Nazi Germany invaded Poland, then Army Chief of Staff George Marshall went to Congress to ask for a draft and it passed by only one vote. Americans were split even at that late hour, we thought America could actually stay out of that war and we did not need to raise a large standing Army.

It took several years to increase from a couple of hundred thousand, training with World War I rifles, to expand to an 8 million man Army in 89 divisions with modern equipment and a level of quality to defeat Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan simultaneously in nine theatres of war.

I can tell you that that level of expansion is probably unlikely, but there is no doubt in my mind that at some point in the future the United States Army will be required to expand again. And to the extent possible I intend to modify the calculation of speed and expansion through the



selective use of increased National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve readiness by adding training days, asking for money to increase the CTC rotation, and the effective use of round-out units to put teeth, actual teeth into the words of our total Army concept. But even if we fully implement the initiatives I propose, that will not be sufficient to offset the need for a significant standing regular Army of considerable capability and considerable capacity.

And we have learned over and over again that the cost of believing in these myths has been paid in the blood of our first battles, cost thousands of lives due to our unpreparedness at places like Bunker Hill, Bull Run, Corregidor Bataan, Mackinac Island, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and of course in North Africa, Kasserine Pass.

In 1945 we had an incredible military force, but yet again we ripped it apart thinking we would not soon engage yet another ground war. But just five years later 80,000 North Koreans with Soviet and Russian consent support crossed that 38th parallel destroying not only Task Force Smith, but much of the 24th Division and several other units as they drove us down to the Pusan Perimeter.

We were unprepared yet again for the type of war we would fight in Vietnam. And in post-Vietnam era our performance at Desert One, Lebanon, Grenada were all smaller and similar examples of unpreparedness which led to significant loss of life.

We certainly never saw 9-11 coming. And when it did, we reacted quickly, but again our forces were not structured, trained, nor adequately equipped for the fight that we entered into in Afghanistan.

In Iraq, we dispatched an armed 400,000 man Army with considerable skill in less than a month, with combined arms maneuver and joint fires, but we were caught very short for the ensuing years of insurgency and terrorism. We adjusted, as we always do, but only after learning the hard lessons and the loss of many lives.

Maybe in the future, maybe, it will allow us months or even years to raise and train land forces, but I for one seriously doubt it. Learning lessons means we do not repeat the same mistakes of the past. And we here in this room today, and every day hereafter, must make the solemn promise to do all we can in our power to never again repeat the mistakes of unpreparedness, the mistakes of unreadiness. And when our soldiers deploy to defeat the enemies of our country, they must go with the best equipment, the best training, and their formations must be well-manned, and most importantly well-led. In short, they must be ready.

As the Chief of Staff of the United States Army there are aspects of readiness I do not control, such as the budget. However, we will ensure that no matter what budget we get, no matter how big we are, that our Army is well-trained, that we will execute realistic top-integrated combined arms and joint training at home station and at the CTC. This training without fail will include the Army Reserve, National Guard, and our regular Army. We must maintain a combat edge. Tough, realistic training builds trust and confidence in our leaders and our formations and all of our soldiers. It is the most important thing we do to prepare for combat. The best care for our soldiers is bringing them home with their dog tags, alive and whole in mind and body. And



providing tough, realistic training is the best way I know of to do that.

And readiness means our units will be well-equipped with the best American industry can produce. We must sustain the discipline to keep our kit properly maintained. And readiness also means that we cannot allow our formations to be so undermanned that we end up with one or two squads of effectives in a platoon, or one or two platoons to a company. No matter how many units we have we must keep them at a readiness to withstand the rigors of combat.

And key, the key to our readiness, is our leaders. And we have to continue to adapt our leader programs and institutions to ensure our leaders are the best we can possibly make them; they have already proven in combat to be agile and adaptive; every Major and below knows nothing but war, they are seasoned and they are good. They are good at learning, innovating, and remaining ahead of their adversaries.

But we must never have our leaders only of great competence, we must create leaders of great character. We must not forget that when the chips are down and it's the middle of the night and the enemy is closing in, it is character that ultimately carries the day. And we as senior leaders must also help our junior leaders, and we must underwrite the risk and not cop out and pass it off to them.

And we must reduce the overwhelming administrative burden on our units and our leaders. And we must focus them on the tasks that only have to do with fighting and combat. Maintaining battle focus for our leaders and our units is a key to combat readiness.

And, finally, readiness means we will ensure our formations are filled with ethical, moral, and competent soldiers that are superbly fit both mentally and physically to withstand the intense conditions of ground war. We have soldiers in our charge that are the very cream of our nation. Without question we have soldiers that are smart, tech-savvy, dedicated to their country and living the Army values. And we must set and enforce standards for them as leaders. And those standards must be related to actual combat. If we do that, our soldiers will respond, each having the equal opportunity to rise to the level of merit, regardless of their gender, regardless of their race, regardless of their self-identity.

Each of our soldiers has volunteered to serve a cause greater than themselves. And ensuring their care and the care of their families during and after their service is every leaders' responsibility. And every one of us is a soldier for life.

As we move into an uncertain future we do not want a fair fight, we want the odds all the time in our favor. And to do that we must be ready today, we must prepare for tomorrow, and we must always take care of our troops and they will take care of the mission.

The protection of freedom, as Dwight Eisenhower said, and this is his luncheon, must never be left to the weak or the timid. And let our friends and foe alike know that we are America's Army. And let them all know that we are neither weak nor timid, and America's Army will not fail.



In the dark of the night all of us who have led soldiers in combat, all of us who have been combat commanders, we all know the ghosts of our battle past. For me that number is 242. We see their faces, and all of them speak to us from the grave. We in uniform know that we risk life and limb. We understand the hazards of our chosen profession, but those ghosts, they remind us. They remind us that no soldier should ever die because they were not ready.

Major Andrew McClary was killed at Bunker Hill. He reminds us too. And Private James Kluf fell at Bull Run in another first battle. Private Matthew Juan died at Cantigny in World War I. And Lieutenant Herbert Pace gave the ultimate sacrifice in Manila as the Japanese overran the Philippines. Eugene Johnson, a young Marine PFC, was killed at Guadalcanal in a battle that any Marine will tell you they weren't prepared to go into. And Army Sergeant Frank Aiello died in our first battle in North Africa as Kasserine. A short time later PFC Richard Confer gave his life as part of Task Force Smith when he fired a bazooka at a North Korean tank and it bounced off. And Jerry Hymer, a young Specialist in the 1st Calvary known to some in this room, died in the Ia Drang Valley in our first big battle there. Never forget Marine Sergeant John Harvey, he died at Desert One in Iran. And all of us, in this room especially, remember PFC Marlin Rockhold. He was killed by a sniper a day after we declared mission accomplished in Iraq.

The cost of our unpreparedness is high. And the lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines hang in the balance of the decisions we make as senior leaders. And let us swear upon their valor and courage, let us swear upon their graves, that we will never send them into combat again unready. Readiness is the key. It's the key to peace. It's the key to deter conflict. And it's a fundamental requirement to winning war.

If our founding fathers resolved that these colonies are and have a right to be free, then let us in this room resolve that these soldiers who protect that right, they too have a right and ought to be ready. It is our duty, the duty of the living, to never forget and never again make the mistakes of unreadiness. We must remain ready today, tomorrow, and always.

Army strong!