

News from Senator

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER COMMENCEMENT

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There's a maxim in military circles, as old as complaints about the food and the longing for home and loved ones. It holds that soldiers win the battles, and generals reap the credit. From my own experiences in war I can't honestly contradict it - but then I found myself for several weeks this year a patient at this magnificent medical facility, and I came to realize that, at Walter Reed at least, there are no such artificial distinctions. All of you are foot soldiers in the daily struggle to prolong and protect life. And each of you deserve five stars for your personal commitment and professional competence.

So, one of the reasons I am here this afternoon is to offer both thanks and congratulations on a day of endings and beginnings, of old friendships and new assignments, of fond memory and untapped potential. Of course, it's customary for graduation orators to look upon their task as a chance to impart some of the wisdom unique to age and experience. It's customary - and just a bit presumptuous. After all, added years don't automatically mean added insight. There is little I could possibly hope to add to the erudition of your teachers. It is they who are the medical experts, as I so well know.

Neither have I come to report or speculate on the precise dimensions of the military build-up now being fashioned in the Congress. Because I believe it isn't so important just how much money we appropriate for how many aircraft carriers, or how many missiles we deploy or how fast a manned bomber we develop. Instead, as I have listened to the talk filling congressional cloakrooms and committees these last few months, I've decided that the psychology of American commitment is at least as important right now as the individual components of that commitment. Direction takes precedence over hardware. Isn't it enough to know that after a decade-long drift, America has finally decided to resume her historic role as defender of the free world, and democracy's arsenal?

A Fresh Mission of Leadership

You enter into your careers at a critical juncture. Your country, too, has embarked upon a fresh mission of leadership. Think back a few years, when Americans weary of war turned inward. Having tasted the ashes of Vietnam, they had no appetite for crusades. Many even deluded themselves with the idea that the world might be a less dangerous place if only America lowered her profile. But we didn't merely lower our profile. We nearly vanished from the scene. We fell silent in the face of Soviet aggression. We practiced self-defeating economies, and we allowed our military capacity to go stiff in the joints. We chose to forget the immutable logic of history - that great nations must spend dollars for defense if they wish to avoid spilling blood in battle.

Douglas MacArthur knew intimately the dangers of self-delusion. "The history of failure in war", he once wrote, "can be summed up in two words: too late. Too late in comprehending the deadly purpose of a potential enemy. Too late in realizing the mortal danger; too late in preparedness; too late in uniting all possible forces for resistance; too late in standing with one's friends."

What MacArthur said about war applies with equal logic to diplomacy, to the conduct of international relations, and to military deterrence itself. New ships and fighter planes like the rapid deployment force and military pay raises, will all help guarantee the safety of this land. But they should not be built or operated with the narrow view of protecting people and property alone. America's greatest weapons have never been military, but spiritual and political. America does not conquer territory; she stands up for ideals of human freedom and self-determination. In European foxholes and Asian jungles, I have seen men and women motivated by such idealism, citizen soldiers who left the prairies or urban assembly lines to serve a system of values rather than a temporary set of leaders.

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The Demands of Patriotism

For the last decade, it has been fashionable to sneer at such beliefs. Cynicism is always cheaper than faith, and apathy less demanding than patriotism. But faith in a just cause can move mountains, and patriotism allied to selflessness is the noblest expression of mankind. What General George C. Marshall said to my generation of returning G.I.'s is still applicable to those of you who will go out from this place today to serve the soldiers who serve the country.

"Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine", in the words of General Marshall, "but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist."

Marshall spoke those words in launching the vast program of economic aid to war-torn Europe that bears his name and endures as his most lasting monument. But the values and beliefs that underlie the Marshall plan remain at the heart of American purpose in the world. They stand watch over a million ghosts in blue and grey, in brown khaki and olive drab, who are your predecessors and whose sacrifice is your most precious legacy. They outlast leaders, and overshadow the fads and fashions of any season. They march behind a flag that is both shield and defender to nations large and small, seeking to widen the opportunities for individual freedom. You are not the world's policemen. You do not serve in the frontline of any aggression. You do not poach on the land of other nations, and you are not divinely appointed missionaries sent out into the world to preach the gospel of American perfectionism. Your task is more subtle than that. Your inheritance is more heroic.

Here is the true meaning of America's current mood, this national springtime that proclaims we have recovered from our brief flirtation with isolation. Rebuilding the military informs the world that freedom once more has a sentinel standing guard, that hundreds of millions who have yet to know a day of personal freedom can have cause again to hope, and that this nation, which was conceived in the struggle for individual liberty, has once more returned to the road carved out for her by destiny.

Rebuilding American Power

Napoleon, no mean authority on battle, said that there were only two forces that could wield genuine and significant power in the world: the sword and the spirit. Today's America wields both. On many fronts, we are moving to restore our once pre-eminent position, and match the commitment each one of you are making to the preservation of life and the defense of your country. At home, we are working tirelessly to rebuild economic strength by infusing new life into old words like incentive and profit. We are investing billions in modernizing our armed forces, and providing those who serve in them with a decent standard of living. We are strengthening old alliances, and seeking out new friends.

All these steps are necessarily related, much as a surgical team in an operating room performs well because it performs in harmony. Economic power is the foundation for international standing. Military power is the mailed fist to diplomacy's velvet glove. But more important than either economic or military power is national willpower. More than pay-raises or shiny new weaponry, it is that new surge of self-confidence and conviction that backs up America's armed forces. You can rely on the support of the American people in the years ahead. But what of you? What kind of soldier wears an army uniform in the Eighties? What meaning, and what mission, can you attach to the sacrifices that lie ahead?

Look around this room, and the questions will answer themselves. Four years ago, the Army Medical Department graduated just 30 internal medical specialists. Today, that number has quadrupled. Some of you will remain here, as fellowship students studying cardiology or infectious diseases. Many more will be sent to community hospitals, to carry the knowledge gained in these classrooms into the camps and bases where the bulk of America's fighting men and women serve. Still others will find themselves stationed as battalion surgeons with European command infantry or artillery divisions. You may be sent to different destinations, but what will be asked of you is not affected by geography or climate. Whether you are doctors or dentists, chaplains or social workers, all of you will be called upon to exert leadership. You will be asked not only to help in the defense of the land of your birth - but also to defend the very ideals of life and liberty that gave birth to the land itself. You will serve as ambassadors of healing and messengers of hope. For all this you have been well prepared.

Those Who Stay Behind

Those who stay behind will find their own challenges, and their own leadership opportunities. For you who teach have been accorded a crucial role in extending old values even while keeping up with the latest in technology and leading the way toward fresh medical breakthroughs. In supervising medical services and providing patient training care, you carry out the basic functions of a hospital - and you do it as well as anyone

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I've ever known. In conducting research into the causes of disease and the care of service-related injuries, you perform a vital task that ensures the forward progress of medicine on and off the battlefield.

But perhaps it is in the daily contact that comes with teaching that you make your greatest contribution. For in sharing your expertise and your knowledge with the next generation - the generation graduating today - you incubate tomorrow's doctors and provide continuity within the health profession. You teach commitment as well as competence and it is that commitment that your students have observed and hopefully imbibed in their years at Walter Reed. It is that concern for excellence that they take away with them this afternoon, and will pass on to still others in their wake. It is that skill and that dedication that they will be called on to put into practice in a thousand hospitals, around ten thousand campfires.

The Essence of Leadership

All of you serve, and in your service, you provide examples for others to follow. That is the essence of leadership, and that is the heart of America's own rediscovery of her truest mission. She serves the cause of freedom, the rock on which she was founded more than two hundred years ago. She inspires those whose ambitions include something better than chains. She guides her friends and allies in the common search for a wiser, more peaceful world. Across two centuries, notwithstanding wars and depressions and revolutionary changes in other lands, this has been America's mission. And now it is yours as well.

You could not have been better prepared to assume it than here at Walter Reed. Here, you have learned perspective as well as facts. You have gained insights from each other as well as from books and the accumulated knowledge of the ages. You have learned to lead, by example and by deed. When you leave this place, don't ever forget why you came. And your country will not forget to be grateful that you did.

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