

**The original documents are located in Box 40, “10/19/76 - Remarks Upon Receiving the AMVETS Golden Helmet Award” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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5+

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

AMVETS CEREMONY

12:15 PM

THE ROSE GARDEN

THANK YOU, COMMANDER McDONOUGH

DORIS SHRAKE

(National President, AMVETS Auxiliary)

PAUL WELCH

(Immediate Past National Commander)

DISTINGUISHED FORMER COMMANDERS AND GUESTS

I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR THIS HONOR, AS A

LIFE MEMBER OF AMVETS, IT IS A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE AND

PLEASURE TO RECEIVE THE GOLDEN HELMET AWARD, THE FINEST

TRIBUTE THAT YOU CAN PAY TO A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

A ~~MAJOR REASON WHY~~ I HAVE ALWAYS HELD THE

*because*

AMVETS IN HIGH REGARD ~~IS THAT~~ YOU HAVE NEVER FALTERED

OR WAVERED IN YOUR SUPPORT FOR A STRONG, STURDY

AMERICA.

THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES DURING OUR RECENT HISTORY

AND I CITE THE PERIOD OF THE VIETNAM WAR AS AN EXAMPLE

WHEN MANY OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS GREW WEARY OF OUR

LEADERSHIP ROLE AND WANTED TO SHARPLY REDUCE AMERICA'S

PRESENCE AND STRENGTH IN THE WORLD.

FORTUNATELY, THOSE VOICES NEVER PREVAILED. THE  
CONGRESS LISTENED TO THEM TOO MUCH AND OUR DEFENSE  
BUDGETS WERE CUT TOO MUCH, BUT OVER THE YEARS, WE  
MANAGED TO MAINTAIN A MILITARY FORCE CAPABLE OF MEETING  
ANY THREAT TO OUR SECURITY AND WE CONTINUED TO BE A  
FORCEFUL LEADER IN INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY.

AND TODAY, THE PENDULUM IS SWINGING BACK THE OTHER  
WAY. AS I TRAVEL ABOUT THE COUNTRY, I FIND ~~TODAY~~ GROWING  
PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR OUR ARMED FORCES AND GROWING PUBLIC  
AWARENESS THAT IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PEACE, WE MUST BE  
WILLING TO INVEST IN A FIRST-CLASS FIGHTING FORCE.



THAT GROWING SUPPORT IS DUE IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO

THE UNFLAGGING DEVOTION OF ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS

THE AMVETS - THROUGH LEAN YEARS AND GOOD YEARS }

AND I AM PROUD TO SALUTE YOU FOR IT.

BUT WE MUST NOT BE LULLED INTO COMPLACENCY SO

*Today + pay a heavy penalty tomorrow*

THAT WE MAKE WRONG DECISIONS. THERE REMAINS TODAY

AN INSISTENT CRY THAT WE SLASH BILLIONS UPON BILLIONS

OF DOLLARS FROM OUR DEFENSE BUDGET IN ORDER TO PAY

FOR A GALAXY OF NEW SOCIAL PROGRAMS, THAT WE

WITHDRAW OUR TROOPS FROM MANY PLACES IN THE  
WORLD, \ AND THAT WE BARGAIN DIFFERENTLY WITH  
OUR ADVERSARIES.

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LET ME BE BLUNT:

-- THOSE WHO PREACH TO US THAT WE MUST SLASH BILLIONS

OF DOLLARS FROM OUR MILITARY FORCES FAIL TO UNDERSTAND

THAT OUR ARMED FORCES ARE THE BULWARK OF OUR FREEDOM.

AMERICA WILL BE FREE ONLY SO LONG AS AMERICA IS STRONG.

-- THOSE WHO PREACH TO US ABOUT WITHDRAWING OUR MILITARY  
FORCES AROUND THE GLOBE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THAT AMERICA'S  
PRESENCE AND AMERICA'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO OUR  
ALLIES IS THE SINGLE GREATEST FORCE FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD  
TODAY.

ONLY SO LONG AS OTHER NATIONS CAN RELY UPON

OUR FIRMNESS AND STEADINESS WILL WORLD PEACE

REMAIN INTACT.

-- FINALLY, THOSE WHO PREACH TO US THAT WE MUST  
BE TOUGHER WITH OUR ADVERSARIES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY  
CUTTING OUR DEFENSE BUDGET TOTALLY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND  
INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY.

IF THE DAY EVER COMES WHEN AMERICA GOES TO THE

BARGAINING TABLE WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND HER BACK,

SHE WILL RETURN NOT ON HER FEET BUT ON HER KNEES.



IF I MAY, I WOULD LIKE TO BORROW A LINE FROM

ADLAI STEVENSON IN ANOTHER CAMPAIGN 24 YEARS AGO.

*k* "LET'S TALK SENSE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE," HE SAID.

"LET'S TELL THEM THE TRUTH, THAT THERE ARE NO GAINS

WITHOUT PAINS."

THE TRUTH IS THAT IN TODAY'S WORLD, WE ARE AT  
PEACE ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE STRONG AND WE ARE WILLING TO  
PAY THE PRICE OF A MIGHTY MILITARY FORCE. WE ARE  
AT PEACE TODAY ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED  
TO OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES.

AND WE ARE AT PEACE TODAY ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE FIRM AND  
DETERMINED IN DEALING WITH OUR ADVERSARIES. SO LONG

AS I AM PRESIDENT -- AND SO LONG AS THE AMVETS AND MANY

OTHER AMERICANS PREVAIL -- WE WILL NEVER SUCCUMB TO THE

VOICES OF THOSE WHO WOULD REDUCE OUR CAPABILITY TO DETER

AGGRESSION AND MAINTAIN THE PEACE.

I THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR AWARD. ~~THIS AFTERNOON,~~

~~AND~~ I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AND YOUR MANY

THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

THANK YOU.