

Welcome Home Ceremony – Raider 6 Remarks

Sixteen Months ago, I stood at this very podium on the eve of a combat deployment and quoted one of my personal heroes, LTG Hal Moore, US Army retired. General Moore's (then LTC) quote was conveyed during his battalion's deployment ceremony nearly 43 years ago at FTBGA. The quote went as followed:

"We are moving into the Valley of the Shadow of Death where you will watch the back of the man next to you, as he will watch yours, and you won't care what color he is, or by what name he calls God. We are going into battle against a tough and determined enemy. I can't promise you that I will bring you all home alive. But this I swear... when we go into battle, I will be the first to step on the field and I will be the last to step off. And I will leave no one behind... dead or alive. We will all come home together."

As much as things have changed in the 43 years since those inspirational words were spoken, I now realize how much has remained the same. Not all of our soldiers came home alive, but we have all come home.

Acknowledgements/Recognitions.

- Congressman Dicks, Mr. Creighton, LTG & Mrs. Jacoby, LTG Harrison, CSM & Mrs. Grippe, Distinguished Guests, families and friends thanks for participating in this glorious event today.
- I'd like to recognize some very special people and organizations that have followed and supported this Stryker brigade over the past 15 months:

Carolyn

- First is Ms. Garol Blashek, who heads-up (OPN Gratitude). Op GRATITUDE is deeply involved with providing a touch of home to our soldiers across the Army. They have delivered over 350,000 Care-packages to deployed service members.
- Second, is Chrysler Corps for their generous contribution to OPN Gratitude, and subsequently, to ~~SFC~~ ^{CPL} Gallagher currently assigned to the Tomahawks.
- Ms. Sue Hertling, a strong advocate and supporter of OPN Gratitude and the soldiers of our Army – two of which are her sons. Additionally, she is the wife of my last division commander in Iraq – MG Mark Hertling – of the great 1 AD
- Mayor Richardson and the city officials and police from Lakewood our supporting city connector who provided unwavering support to our families throughout the deployment.
- The various Regimental Associations present here today in a show of support to the various Regiments represented within the Brigade. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of our unit's lineage and the impact on the soldier's fighting spirit.
- Our very own 1st Corps Band who consistently brightens our day with their wonderful music
- I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the spouses and families of our deployed soldiers and the Rear-D/FRG leadership. It's not lost on us that in many ways, their conditions were tougher than ours. I am very proud of all of you!

- Last but not least, I'd like to recognize and honor the Gold Star family members who were able to grace us with their presence to day. It's an honor to be in your company, today.
- Ladies & Gentlemen, PLEASE JOIN ME IN APPLAUSE FOR OUR SPECIAL GUESTS

I stand before you today representing the 4th Stryker Brigade, experiencing a mixed collection of feelings and emotions.

Excitement - on one hand we are extremely excited to be reunited with our families, friends and the country we deeply value and cherish.

Pride - it goes without saying we are proud of our accomplishments throughout Baghdad, Salah ad Din and Diyala Provinces. The essence of our pride emanates from the fact we have assisted the Iraqi's in taking the country they value and cherish, back from the insurgents and criminals who seek to destroy their great nation.

Finally, Sadness - we are saddened by the fact 54 brave soldiers associated with the Raider Brigade paid the ultimate sacrifice while protecting the honorable sons and daughters of Baghdad, Salah a Din and Diyala Provinces.

My message today is simple – it centers on the emotion of pride, previously mentioned. We arrived and fought in the worst neighborhoods of Baghdad, Baghdad's northern belt and Diyala Province alongside of our Iraqi partners. To use an expression, it was readily apparent "the inmates were running the asylum" when we forced our way into our operating area. Al Qaeda and the Shi'a Extremists were clearly in control.

In places like Doura, East Rashid, Tarmiyah, Husayniyah, Boob al Sham, Rashidiyah, Khan Bani Sa'ad, Hashmiyat, Nahr Bustan, Hadid, Hib-Hib, Ba'qubah, Muridiyah Garall, Khalis, Dojima, Abu Khamese, Wojihiya, Mukhissa, Qubbah, Muqdadiyah, Bodija, Himbus, Sherween, Dali Abbas, Baji, RTE GOLDEN, Nid-ah, Balad Ruz/Turki and Bani Zaiyd.

To place all of this into perspective, the BCT has killed more than 500 and detained over 1700 insurgents and militiamen, to include 220 Brigade High Valued enemy leaders; we have dealt with over 2200 Improvised Explosive Devices, cleared 87,000 kilometers of roads, brought 12,000 Iraqi men in from the darkness, away from the insurgency, thru the Sons of Iraq program in both Baghdad and Diyala Provinces.

The combined coalition and Iraqi Security Force effort created the conditions for our magnificent teammates from the Provincial Reconstruction Teams to build capacity of the Provincial and local government to govern, markets to open, fuel capacity to increase, Universities to open, compensation payments to be disbursed, essential services to improve, loans to be awarded and the roots of a fledgling democracy to take hold. Said another way, the surge has worked and has created the conditions for rebuilding efforts to become the main effort.

Over the course of the deployment I have personally learned many things. If asked to narrow it down it down to three points, they would focus on the intricacies of counter-insurgency.

The first, although common-sensical, can be lost in a long, difficult combat deployment; treating all people with dignity and respect. We feel this is a fundamental requirement to separate the insurgent from his base of support. We can never lose the moral ascendancy we maintain over the enemy we fight.

Second, security and protection of the population is first and foremost. Although the temptation is great to work all aspects of a counter-insurgency campaign simultaneously, results can't be achieved until the population perceives security and safety. Until this effect is realized, the enemy must be pursued relentlessly.

Finally, although patently obvious to most strategists, it took me time to realize it will be the Iraqi's who will ultimately defeat the insurgency – not us. We are merely setting the conditions for the government and the Iraqi Security Forces to reach this plateau. It's well within our reach, but we're not finished yet.

In conclusion, sixteen months ago I made a request of these soldiers at our Deployment Ceremony. The salient point of the speech was that we'd serve proudly and return home with honor. We live in a culture that looks up to troubled musicians and overpaid and under-mannered professional athletes as heroes. I submit to you the 54 men who paid the ultimate sacrifice and the men/women standing in formation today, epitomize the concept of valor, bravery and courage. None of these soldiers are paid 6 or 7 figure salaries, nor can they call in sick after a hard weekend. But I guarantee they are the most honorable Americans our generation can provide.

I humbly stand before you today, proud to report we have completed the mission and we did so with our honor. It's been my distinct privilege to command the greatest generation of American soldiers to ever take the field of battle. Thank you for honoring these soldiers and their families today – they have clearly earned the recognition and honor.

God bless our soldiers, God bless our Army and God bless the United States of America.