**Notes on This Speech**

(NOTE 1: This speech is written for outreach purposes, meaning it is intended for external audiences during Veterans Day commemoration ceremonies. At the same time, it honors our internal audience, our veterans, who will be in attendance.)

(NOTE 2: The time of delivery is determined using a public speaking rate of 100 words per minute. Your actual time may vary).

**Time of Delivery: approximately 20 minutes.**

**“Being There Matters”**

**Veterans Day**

THANK YOU, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, FOR THAT KIND INTRODUCTION. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - FELLOW AMERICANS… AMERICAN VETERANS - THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO JOIN YOU IN CELEBRATING THIS CHERISHED AND SOLEMN DAY.

ON THE 11TH OF NOVEMBER, 1918 -- THE MOST TERRIBLE WAR IN WESTERN HISTORY TO THAT DAY – ENDED… AFTER MORE THAN FOUR YEARS. THEY USED TO CALL IT “THE GREAT WAR”.

IN THE END, THE STALEMATE ON THE WESTERN FRONT WAS BROKEN BY FIVE MILLION AMERICAN VETERANS – WHO FINALLY WON PEACE FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD.

THE NEXT NOVEMBER -- 1919 -- WAS SET ASIDE BY PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON -- TO COMMEMORATE THE SACRIFICES OF THE AMERICAN VETERAN -- AND TO REMIND AMERICANS OF THE TRAGEDIES OF WAR. IT WAS CALLED “ARMISTICE DAY” AT FIRST… BECAUSE MANY PEOPLE BELIEVED… AND DEARLY HOPED… THAT “THE GREAT WAR” – WAS “THE WAR TO END ALL WARS”.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

AN AMERICAN MILITARY COMMANDER ONCE WROTE ABOUT HIS SOLDIERS... QUOTE…

“TO SEE MEN WITHOUT CLOTHES TO COVER THEIR NAKEDNESS - WITHOUT BLANKETS TO LAY ON - WITHOUT SHOES - BY WHICH THEIR MARCHES MIGHT BE TRACED BY THE BLOOD FROM THEIR FEET.....

...... “MARCHING THROUGH FROST AND SNOW - AND AT CHRISTMAS TAKING UP THEIR WINTER QUARTERS.... WITHOUT A HOUSE OR HUT TO COVER THEM....

“..... AND SUBMITTING TO IT WITHOUT A MURMUR - IS A MARK OF PATIENCE AND OBEDIENCE WHICH, IN MY OPINION - CAN SCARCE BE PARALLELED.” UNQUOTE.

THAT WAS GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON WRITING TO THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS – FROM VALLEY FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA - IN DECEMBER 1777.

THE FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY WAS WRITING ABOUT THE GALLANT, UNBREAKABLE -- AND OFTEN UNKNOWN -- AMERICAN VETERAN..... AND THE DEVOTION WITH WHICH THEY HAVE SERVED FROM THAT TIME TO THIS. MORE THAN A CENTURY LATER, AMERICA MADE A DAY TO REMEMBER THEM.

I SAID THAT THE VETERANS ARE “OFTEN UNKNOWN”. THAT IS TRUE -- AND NOT TRUE. WE DO NOT *KNOW* MOST OF THEIR NAMES -- NOR THEIR LIFE STORIES. BUT WE DO KNOW THEM IN THE ONLY WAY WE CAN..... AS OUR PROTECTORS, OUR BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN -- WHO HAVE DELIVERED OUR COUNTRY, AND THE WORLD FROM EVIL -- MANY TIMES -- IN MANY GENERATIONS.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

ONLY TWENTY YEARS PASSED, AND “THE GREAT WAR” WAS FOLLOWED BY WORLD WAR TWO. ALL TOO SOON, AMERICA WAS FIGHTING ON THE TWO GREAT OCEANS AND SEVERAL CONTINENTS.

YOUNG AMERICAN VETERANS WERE ONCE AGAIN CALLED UPON – FOR SERVICE AND SACRIFICE.

THROUGH FOUR BITTER YEARS – 13-MILLION AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN SERVED AMERICA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR. MANY WERE LOST – OR WOUNDED.

THEIR BUDDIES AND SHIPMATES WHO SURVIVED..... KEPT FIGHTING, AND ENDURED THROUGH TO VICTORY.

AND WHEN THEY GOT HOME TO THE UNITED STATES -- OUT OF THEIR OWN HARD WORK, INTELLIGENCE AND INGENUITY -- THEY BUILT THE GREATEST PROSPERITY IN HUMAN HISTORY. THEY FED, CLOTHED AND HELPED TO REBUILD -- THE SOCIETIES OF NOT ONLY OUR ALLIES… BUT ALSO OUR FORMER ENEMIES.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE VETERANS AND THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS..... MADE THE FREE-EST, STRONGEST, PROUDEST NATION ON EARTH. THEY DID ALL THIS AT HOME, WHILE HAVING TO FIGHT ANOTHER ENEMY OF HUMAN FREEDOM.... AS CITIZENS AND SOLDIERS OF AMERICA. WE WERE NOW THE LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD -- IN OUR LONG STRUGGLE AGAINST SOVIET COMMUNISM.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

THE VETERANS OF VALLEY FORGE GAVE US OUR COUNTRY. THE VETERANS OF AMERICA SINCE -- FOR MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES NOW -- HAVE PRESERVED THE COUNTRY THAT WAS WON IN BATTLE. THEY ARE THE HEROES WHO PROTECTED US ALL.

EVEN NOW, AMERICAN VETERANS ON ACTIVE DUTY SERVE THEIR COUNTRY ALL OVER THE WORLD. ON THE GROUND IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN ... IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE ... EUROPE, ASIA, AND BEYOND… ON EVERY SEA AND OCEAN -- AMERICAN VETERANS ARE ON DUTY.

SAILORS, MARINES, SOLDIERS, AIRMEN, AND COAST GUARDSMEN… OUR VETERANS PERFORM THEIR SERVICE EVERY DAY AND NIGHT OF EVERY YEAR.... ON THEIR SACRED MISSION OF SERVICE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM. WHERE AND WHEN WE NEED THEM, THEY ARE THERE.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

IF YOU WILL ALLOW ME NOW TO BE SOMEWHAT PAROCHIAL, GIVEN THE UNIFORM I’M WEARING TODAY, I’D LIKE TO TALK A BIT NOW ABOUT THE VETERANS I KNOW BEST ...... MY SHIPMATES ON WATCH AROUND THE WORLD ....... NAVY VETERANS WHO, AS I SPEAK, ARE PROTECTING AND DEFENDING AMERICA ON THE WORLD’S OCEANS.

NAVY SHIPS, SUBMARINES, AIRCRAFT AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICA’S FINEST YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ARE DEPLOYED DOING JUST THAT. THEY ARE THERE NOW. THEY WILL BE THERE WHEN WE ARE SLEEPING TONIGHT. THEY WILL BE THERE EVERY SATURDAY, SUNDAY AND HOLIDAY THIS YEAR. THEY ARE THERE AROUND THE CLOCK, FAR FROM OUR SHORES, DEFENDING AMERICA AT ALL TIMES.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

THAT THEY ARE THERE IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE – AS WE HAVE LEARNED THROUGHOUT OUR NATION’S GREAT HISTORY -- BEING THERE MATTERS.

BEING THERE MATTERS IN BUSINESS; IT IS WHY AMERICAN FIRMS MAINTAIN A PRESENCE IN THEIR OVERSEAS MARKETS.

BEING THERE MATTERS IN POLITICS; IT IS WHY THE STATE DEPARTMENT MAINTAINS A DIPLOMATIC FORCE IN NEARLY EVERY NATION ON EARTH.

BEING THERE MATTERS TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE; IT IS WHY U.S. SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND MARINES ARE STATIONED AROUND THE WORLD, PROTECTING AMERICA AT ALL TIMES.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

AMERICA’S NAVY VETERANS PROTECT AMERICA ON TWO FRONTS. THEY PROTECT OUR NATIONAL SECURITY. THROUGH FORWARD PRESENCE AND BY PROJECTING OUR NATIONAL POWER AROUND THE GLOBE, THEY PREVENT AND DETER WARS. AND WHEN NECESSARY, THEY FIGHT AND WIN WARS.

BUT THEY ALSO PRESERVE AMERICA’S PROSPERITY BY PROTECTING THE U.S. ECONOMY. OUR ECONOMY FUNDAMENTALLY DEPENDS ON THE UNIMPEDED FLOW OF COMMERCE AND INFORMATION ON AND UNDER THE SEAS. MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF THE EARTH’S SURFACE IS COVERED BY WATER; 80 PERCENT OF THE WORLD’S POPULATION LIVES CLOSE TO A COAST; 90 PERCENT OF ALL GLOBAL TRADE BY VOLUME TRAVELS BY SEA.

THE FREE FLOW OF GOODS OVER THE WORLD’S OCEANS IS A NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE. ONE-QUARTER – THAT IS 38 MILLION -- OF ALL U.S. JOBS ARE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TIED TO GLOBAL TRADE. ONE-QUARTER OF U.S. MANUFACTURING JOBS DEPENDS ON EXPORTS. ONE-FIFTH OF ALL U.S. AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS BY VOLUME IS SOLD IN OVERSEAS MARKETS. YOUR NAVY VETERANS, OPERATING FORWARD, ENSURE THIS FLOW OF GOODS REMAINS UNIMPEDED.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

AMERICA’S NAVY IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO DO ALL OF THIS BECAUSE THE WORLD’S OCEANS GIVE THE NAVY THE POWER TO PROTECT AMERICA’S INTERESTS ANYWHERE, AT ANY TIME. BEING THERE MATTERS.

WHEN AMERICA’S NATIONAL SECURITY IS THREATENED BY THE EXISTENCE OF A WEAPONS FACILITY OR A TERRORIST CAMP ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD, BEING THERE MATTERS.

WHERE THESE THREATS EXIST, CHANCES ARE HIGH THAT NAVY SHIPS, SUBMARINES, AIRCRAFT AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES ARE CLOSE BY, WITH THE WARFIGHTING ABILITY TO DESTROY TARGETS LOCATED HUNDREDS OF MILES INLAND.

WHEN THE DECISION IS MADE TO ACT ON ONE OF THESE THREATS, THE SOLUTION MAY INVOLVE LAUNCHING FIGHTER-ATTACK AIRCRAFT OR UNMANNED AIRCRAFT FROM CARRIERS, FIRING CRUISE MISSILES FROM SHIPS OR SUBMARINES, OR INSERTING A TEAM OF NAVY SEALS TO DO WHAT ONLY SEALS CAN DO.

IN ANY CASE, THE NAVY CAN DO ALL OF THESE THINGS, AND DO THEM ALL FROM THE SEA, WITHOUT THE NEED TO GET ANOTHER COUNTRY’S PERMISSION TO OPERATE WITHIN ITS BORDERS.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

RECENT EXAMPLES OF THIS WARFIGHTING ABILITY OCCURRED JUST MONTHS AGO, AND CONTINUE TODAY. IN AUGUST, NAVY AIRCRAFT FROM THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH CONDUCTED SOME OF THE FIRST STRIKE MISSIONS IN NORTHERN IRAQ AGAINST THE TERRORIST GROUP KNOWN AS ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT. IN SEPTEMBER, THE CRUISER USS PHILIPPINE SEA AND THE DESTROYER USS ARLEIGH BURKE LAUNCHED TOMAHAWK MISSILES INTO SYRIA.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

FOLLOWING A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, LIKE THE IRAQI CITIZENS STRANDED ON MOUNT SINJAR IN 2014, THE DEVASTATING TYPHOON THAT STRUCK THE PHILIPPINES IN 2013 OR THE TSUNAMI THAT RAVAGED NORTHERN JAPAN IN 2011, BEING THERE MATTERS.

BECAUSE THE NAVY IS ALWAYS DEPLOYED AROUND THE WORLD, IT CAN PROVIDE NEARLY IMMEDIATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO OUR GLOBAL NEIGHBORS IN THE WAKE OF A DISASTER, FERRYING SUPPLIES, MEDICINE AND TRAINED MEDICAL PERSONNEL ASHORE FROM NAVY SHIPS VIA HELICOPTERS AND LANDING CRAFT.

WHEN NARCO-TRAFFICKERS USE SPEEDBOATS AND RUDIMENTARY SUBMARINES TO FERRY ILLEGAL DRUGS ACROSS THE OCEANS AND INTO AMERICA, BEING THERE MATTERS. NAVY SHIPS AND SUBMARINES WORK THE WATERS NEAR CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO INTERCEPT SHIPMENTS OF ILLEGAL NARCOTICS BEFORE THEY REACH OUR SHORES.

*[..... PAUSE .....]*

AS THE WORLD’S GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATES CONTINUE TO EVOLVE, THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR NAVY VETERANS AND THE VITAL WORK THEY DO FOR AMERICA GROWS. INDEED, THE PRESIDENT’S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY CALLS FOR A RENEWED FOCUS ON ENDURING THREATS IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION, AS WELL AS AN INCREASED AMERICAN COMMITMENT IN THE INDO-ASIA-PACIFIC REGION -- A VAST, MOSTLY OCEAN-COVERED AREA OF THE WORLD IDEALLY SUITED FOR OPERATIONS FROM THE SEA AND IN WHICH THE NAVY MAINTAINS A ROBUST PRESENCE.

IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO A SIMPLE FACT: WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTING AND DEFENDING AMERICA, BEING THERE MATTERS, AND TODAY, RIGHT NOW, AMERICA’S NAVY – YOUR NAVY - IS ALREADY THERE.

*[… PAUSE …]*

WE LOOK BACK -- TO THE OTHER CONFLICTS AND MORTAL THREATS TO OUR NATION, VALUES, AND OUR LIVES THEMSELVES. AND EVERY TIME, EVERY SINGLE TIME -- THERE HAVE BEEN AMERICAN VETERANS STANDING BETWEEN OUR NATION -- AND ALL ITS THREATS AND ENEMIES.

THE LINE OF WARS AND BATTLES – THE UNBREAKABLE LINE OF SELFLESS SERVICE -- REACHES BACK TO OUR WAR OF INDEPENDENCE… AND CONTINUES IN OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE – OUR CONTINUING FIGHT AGAINST ISIL.

*[… PAUSE …]*

WHO WERE – WHO ARE – THESE PEOPLE, THESE AMERICANS? WHO ARE THESE VETERANS WHOSE MEMORIES WE TREASURE, OR SOMETIMES FORGET – EXCEPT WHEN DANGER LOOMS AGAIN, AND OUR NATION IS UNDER THREAT?

HOW DOES AMERICA FIND THEM – DECADE AFTER DECADE, CONFLICT AFTER CONFLICT? FROM THE FREEZING, BAREFOOT SOLDIERS OF GENERAL WASHINGTON… TO OUR WARRIORS TODAY -- WHO FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISTS? WHO ARE THOSE GALLANT MEN AND WOMEN, WHO PROTECT US AS WE SLEEP, WHOSE MISSION NEVER ENDS?

THE ANSWER, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS RIGHT HERE TODAY. VETERANS ARE AMERICANS JUST LIKE YOURSELVES – WHO SHARE OUR LIVES, OUR VALUES AND OUR COUNTRY. THEY ARE AMERICANS – FIRST, LAST AND ALWAYS.

TODAY, THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR AMERICA ONCE AGAIN. VETERANS FIGHT OUR WARS. IT IS ALWAYS HARD AND DANGEROUS. MANY ARE LOST, AND MANY ARE HURT. IN 2001, WAR CAME TO THIS LAND – KILLING THOUSANDS OF OUR PEOPLE. THIRTEEN YEARS LATER, VETERANS ARE STILL FIGHTING OVERSEAS, TO FIND THE ENEMY ON HIS OWN GROUNDS -- AND KEEP THEM FROM LAUNCHING FURTHER ATTACKS HERE.

WE DON’T KNOW WHAT THIS NEW EFFORT WILL REQUIRE IN YEARS, LIVES AND SERVICE. THERE MAY BE SETBACKS ON THE COURSE AHEAD. BUT AMERICAN VETERANS WILL GET THEIR COUNTRY TO SAFE HARBOR AGAIN – AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS DONE BEFORE.

*[… PAUSE …]*

HONOR - COURAGE - COMMITMENT..... DUTY, AND COUNTRY -- THAT IS THE CODE AND DEFINITION OF AMERICAN VETERANS. FROM THE FIRST DAY OF OUR NATION, TO TODAY’S NEW WAR -- THEY HAVE ALWAYS KEPT FAITH WITH US, THEIR OWN PEOPLE. FOR THE CAUSE THAT OUR LEADERS SO OFTEN SPEAK OF THAT UNITES US ALL…THE PEACE, SECURITY AND PROSPERITY OF AMERICA.

GOD BLESS THEM ALL ON THIS VETERANS DAY.