



MG

STEPHEN

SEPT 17, 2011

TOM

REMARKS

PACIFIC AIR

FORCES

POW/MIA

CEREMONY

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY THANKING OUR HOST TODAY, THE COMMANDER, 647TH AIR BASE GROUP, COLONEL DANN CARLSON AND AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 1550. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU – VETERANS, FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND DISTINGUISHED GUESTS FOR INVITING ME OUT HERE TO SPEAK . WE PAUSE TODAY TO REFLECT ON THE HEROISM OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS WHO ENDURED THE HARDSHIP OF ENEMY CONFINEMENT, AND OF THOSE WHOSE FATE IN TIME OF WAR REMAINS UNKNOWN. POW-MIA RECOGNITION DAY EVENTS ARE HELD ALL OVER OUR NATION ON THIS DAY TO REMIND US OF THOSE AMERICANS WHO HAVE SACRIFICED SO MUCH FOR THEIR COUNTRY.

HOW DO WE, AS A NATION, THANK THOSE WHO HAVE SACRIFICED SO MUCH ON OUR BEHALF?

WE BEGIN BY NEVER FORGETTING THEM OR THEIR SACRIFICE. AMERICA'S FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR ARE AMONG OUR NATION'S MOST REVERED HEROES. THEY SERVED WITH DIGNITY AND HONOR UNDER THE WORST OF HUMAN CONDITIONS – STARVATION, ISOLATION, TORTURE AND THE EVER-PRESENT THREAT OF DEATH. YET EVEN DURING THEIR DARKEST HOUR, THEY DEMONSTRATED REMARKABLE PERSONAL COURAGE AND UNWAVERING DEVOTION TO FAMILY AND COUNTRY. THEIR STRENGTH IS A TESTAMENT TO AMERICAN CHARACTER.

WE AT THE JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO REFLECT ON THIS IMPORTANT DAY. OF COURSE IT IS EASY FOR US BECAUSE, QUITE FRANKLY, WE LIVE IT. IT IS OUR DUTY 365 DAYS A YEAR TO WORK TOWARD BRINGING HOME OUR FALLEN AMERICANS, WHETHER IT IS THROUGH RESEARCHING RECORDS IN WASHINGTON DC, ESCAVATING A CRASH SITE OR STUDYING REMAINS IN OUR CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY...THE MEN AND WOMEN OF JPAC ARE DEDICATED TO BRINGING HOME AMERICAN HEROES WHO PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE FOR FREEDOM.

AND AS WE THINK ABOUT THE HEROES WHO SACRIFICED SO MUCH, WE MUST NOT FORGET THE THOUSANDS OF MILITARY FAMILIES TORMENTED BY UNCERTAINTY DUE TO THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES WHOSE WHEREABOUTS REMAIN UNKNOWN. WHILE WE CANNOT KNOW, WE CANNOT FEEL THE SAME PAIN AS YOU -- AS PART OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY, OUR HEARTS GO OUT TO YOU FOR YOUR SUFFERING. WE WILL NEVER CEASE IN OUR MISSION TO BRING AMERICA'S MISSING SERVICE MEMBERS HOME; WE WILL NEVER FORGET THE SACRIFICES THEY MADE TO KEEP THIS NATION FREE AND WE WILL NOT FORGET THE FAMILIES WHO SACRIFICED SO MUCH.

MAHALO FOR HAVING ME HERE TODAY. OUR MOTTO AT JPAC IS A SIMPLE ONE.....AND IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT I END MY REMARKS WITH THESE FOUR POIGNANT WORDS: "UNTIL THEY ARE HOME"