



# SMDC / ARSTRAT



## Armed Forces Day luncheon speech as presented by LTG Richard P. Formica on 20 May 2011

Is this a Hooah day in Lawton – Fort Sill or what? Let me tell you that it's wonderful to be back... Recognitions (deleted).

Thanks for this invitation to join you for your Armed Forces luncheon. The presence of so many of the civic, military, business and community leaders that are here today is evidence of a great relationship, and also the presence of so many of our retired senior mentors (recognitions deleted) and so many of the other retirees who have been here all week, as well as the corporate sponsors.

It is really is good to be back. General (MG RET) Leo Baxter has often reminded those of us who still serve not to forget where we came from. It's wonderful that the Lawton – Fort Sill community kicks off its two-day celebration of Armed Forces Day with this luncheon, and then follows with a parade, that I believe, is scheduled for tomorrow and other activities.

Those of us who serve cherish and appreciate the support of our local communities. None do so better than Lawton – Fort Sill. Now you know, Diane and I are now in Huntsville, Alabama. And Huntsville has earned an Army-wide reputation for its close relationship with and support for Redstone Arsenal and the commands that serve there. And we have found that reputation to have been well earned.

But I want to tell you that at our Chamber welcome a few months ago, I acknowledged the warm reception that we had received from the community and I acknowledged their reputation of support, but then I laid the marker down. And I told them that Diane and I had recently come from Lawton – Fort Sill – a community that embraces its partnership with the military community. And that I would measure Huntsville against the standard that you set here in Lawton – Fort Sill.

That support became plainly evident for us, and more important than ever, in early 2003 when we sent our first ten battalions; three of our FA Brigades – led by the likes of COL Nate Slate and others – and we sent them to war in Iraq. Next weekend our Nation will pause to honor our fallen at Memorial Day activities across the country. For me personally, I'll remember the 20 Soldiers from III Corps Artillery that are memorialized here at Fort Sill in the Fires Brigade Area across from Goldner gym. I know that the Lawton – Fort Sill community will join me in remembering those Soldiers and the nearly 6,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Civilians who have given their lives in this war against terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world.

I also know that your great support as a community for our Soldiers and DA Civilians here at Fort Sill continues day-to-day in your interaction with the Lawton – Fort Sill community and is reinforced through programs like the Lawton – Fort Sill Community Covenant, the CO-OP program, Partners for Patriots, Fit Kids in South West Oklahoma, numerous school and unit partnerships, Camp Cowabunga, and so many other programs and activities, which live up to the spirit embodied by the motto: Team Sill – Oklahoma Pride.

Well, like many others, I came back to Lawton – Fort Sill this week to attend and participate in the Annual Fires Conference hosted by Dave Halverson, CSM Morrissey, Tom Vandal and Roger Mathews. It's been a great week. The conference was focused and valuable. It included excellent presentations and panel discussions, and it encouraged interaction and feedback from across the Fires community.

Cameron University served as the host at this year's conference and it was remarkable. The wonderful facilities, the warm reception was another sign of the Lawton – Fort Sill partnership. It was good to see the tremendous growth that has occurred on the Cameron University Campus, which I know is indicative of the educational growth that has occurred there under the leadership of President Cindy Ross – on a campus that has been close to the heart of the Formica family. Cindy, thank you for this week and for all that you've done for Cameron and the community.

So a thought came to me during the conference that I'd like to share with you today. In his keynote remarks at the dinner earlier this week, LTG (R) Dave Valcourt referred to the BRAC move which brought the Air Defense Artillery School, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> ADA Brigades to Lawton – Fort Sill and gave rise to the Fires Center of Excellence. I'd like to comment on this. I noticed last year, when I was here at the conference how good the environment was for that union of these two branches. But it has been particularly striking for me this year and at this conference.

It's a move that could have generated resistance and even resentment. It could have been an example of branches and units that were slow to embrace change. But it hasn't been. Instead, you sense this renewed sense of vigor and enthusiasm here, a vigor that was born of the marriage of two Artillery branches in the Fires Community.

Reeling from the loss of force structure in both branches and challenges to the relevance of SHORAD and Field Artillery Fires, these two branches have come together and found new energy and vitality in the growing contribution of the Fires capability areas:

- Air and Cruise Missile defense
- Global and Theater Ballistic Missile defense
- Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortar
- Precision FA Fires
- And a new emphasis on Fires in support of Combined Arms Maneuver and Wide Area Security

Now this renewal is possible because of the response by four distinct groups:

First, it stems from the leadership. The conditions were set some years ago by Dave Ralston and Bob Lennox. Continued by Pete Vangjel and Howard Bromberg and then embodied now in the leadership of Dave Halverson; CSM Morrissey; both school Commandants, Tom Vandal and Roger Mathews; and by Dan Karbler the Chief here at Fort Sill. Focus on the Fires functional area and optimizing the strengths of both branches without parochial agendas, the leadership team has really created an environment – again with conditions set by the previous Commandants and Commanders here – to allow this merger to flourish. It's evident inside the Fires Functional Concept, and how we're going to operate and bring warfighting capability to our Army. It's evident in the interaction of the Fires Center of Excellence and the Department of the Army and with the other elements in our Army. And it's evident in the Fires Conference this week. You see it in the relationships established here at Lawton – Fort Sill.

Second group, it results from the attitude and response by those currently serving in our Air Defense Artillery and Field Artillery units. You can see it in the actions and hear it in the words of those who serve. Our unit Commanders and Command Sergeants Major, our Soldiers and DA Civilians have embraced this new partnership. Seeking opportunities to move forward, not resisting or putting up barriers. The result will be an ever-growing contribution of Fires to our Force and the recognition of relevancy that comes with that.

Third, it results from the reception by our retired Senior Mentors. It would be easy for them to resist this change, to harbor resentment for the way things were. But the presence and active participation by retired Air Defense Artillery and Field Artillery General Officers, Colonels, and Command Sergeants Major here at Fort Sill, and at the Fires conference, and throughout the community truly enable this change to move forward. And it generates much of the vitality that I mentioned earlier. You hear it in their comments and on their guidance for how we should employ these capabilities. You hear it in their counsel on leader development and growth, and it's evident in their support of the traditions and lineage of each branch. Watching the FA community leaders attend and celebrate the opening of the Air Defense Artillery Artifact and Learning Center; and just this morning the dedication of the First to Fire Room in the memory of LTG (R) Jack Costello; and to see the ADA community turn out to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Field Artillery school; and at the Field Artillery Association Tattoo in honor of LTG (R) Mike Dodson – I am grateful for the leadership our Senior Mentors have brought to this merger.

And fourth, to you, the Lawton – Fort Sill community. This merger simply would not have worked if the community failed to reach out in advance and to embrace the ADA community on its arrival here. Rather than reject this change, Lawton – Fort Sill welcomed the ADA community in their midst, in their move from Fort Bliss, and that welcome is evident and clear throughout the community. The warm, inviting, supportive Lawton – Fort Sill community has received ADA Soldiers, Civilians, and Families and embraced this new partnership as they have received new Soldiers, Civilians, and Families at Fort Sill since Fort Sill was first established.

And so, for what it's worth, my message to you all on this Armed Forces Day is an acknowledgement of the really exciting things going on here at Lawton – Fort Sill. At the Fires Center of Excellence; in the Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery schools, and in the Field Artillery, Air Defense Artillery, and Marine units on post. The contributions of our Fires Soldiers, ADA and Missile Defense Soldiers on point in Qatar, Kuwait, Alaska, California, Japan, Korea and around the world; Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery Soldiers and Marines deployed and serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea and around the world. That contribution is strong, relevant and is appreciated in our Army. And it has its roots and its strength in the energy, enthusiasm, vitality, intellectual rigor, reflection on lineage and heritage, and sense of community that has been nurtured here in Lawton – Fort Sill.

I for one will leave here this week personally reenergized from what you're doing for our Nation, for our Army, for our Soldiers and their Families and for this great community.

Thanks so much for being precisely who you are and for everything that you do.

Army Strong!

Fires Strong!

Hooah!!!!