



S M D C / A R S T R A T



AUSA Greater Los Angeles Chapter

Army Ball

4 June 2011

LTG Formica Remarks as Presented

What a great event! This is certainly an appropriate ending to a superb symposium and a wonderful way to celebrate the Army's 236th birthday.

I'd like to offer a special thanks to Arianna [Arianna Afsar, Miss California] for her inspiring rendition of our national anthem; and to Teresa [Teresa Scanlan, Miss America 2011] for a wonderful performance of "Chopsticks." And that magnificent piano recital; it was wonderful, thank you. I'd also like to acknowledge again the cast of Curtain Up. That was just a phenomenal show; thank you again.

I'd also like to add a special heartfelt thanks to all those who donated seats to give Soldiers a "Night Out" and celebrate the Army's Birthday.

Thank you, too to the Greater Los Angeles Chapter of the AUSA, for all you do for our Army and for our Soldiers. I came here for the first time; you had a great reputation, and you have exceeded that great reputation. Thanks for all that you do.

To the local Reserve unit and the ROTC cadets who are here tonight. We thank you for your support tonight, and thank you for your service to our country. I'd like to join those and acknowledge two special ladies who made this Ball and this Symposium what they turned out to be. First, already recognized, Ms. Patty Menke, Executive Director of the Ball, and

and God Bless her, Ms. Felicia Campbell, for her leadership in the Symposium.

We've had a great couple of days here, with a Symposium that was focused on Warfighters and supporting Soldiers, and was appropriately organized and conducted to maintain that focus. This Ball was the culmination, as we celebrate our Army's 236th birthday.

As you know, the Army shares its birthday, June 14th, with Flag Day, celebrating the adoption of the United States flag. The history of both our Army and our flag are intertwined; both symbolize the very best things about our country, and the people who have fought for democracy from the very earliest days of our history. Our Soldiers cherish the flag and the values it represents.

On June 14, 1775, Colonial Soldiers banded together to fight for independence and a democratic way of life. 236 years later, U.S. Army Soldiers and Civilians still volunteer to do the "heavy lifting" for our nation. Many have paid the ultimate price for freedom.

183 campaign streamers hang from our Army colors. They provide a glimpse of our nation's history and the measure of the commitment of our American Soldiers. The streamers represent the strength and courage of the Soldiers who wear the uniform, and who serve and defend our freedom and our way of life.

Tonight, I'd like to briefly address three segments of the audience who are here. Soldiers, Veterans, and this great and very energetic and enthusiastic community.

First, to our Soldiers. We are honored to have with us tonight Soldiers from local Reserve and Army National Guard units, proudly representing their fellow service members. Thanks to AUSA and again to the corporate and individual sponsors who purchased tickets to give these Soldiers this night out and to celebrate the Army's birthday.

Today, while we enjoy the opportunity to celebrate the Army's birthday here, more than 239,000 Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers with deployed DA Civilians are either deployed or forward stationed around the world doing our nation's work. Soldiers and Civilians are serving with distinction, wherever and whenever they're called to duty. They are fighting with courage and valor at the forefront of the war against a global terrorist network. Our Soldiers deter aggression in troubled regions worldwide, they secure our borders and they prevent attacks on our homeland.

Our Soldiers also serve supporting civil authorities in responding to natural disasters. Just in these last few weeks, National Guard Soldiers were called out in Alabama, Oklahoma, Missouri and other states across the United States, to assist in recovery efforts after some of the most devastating tornadoes in our history leveled homes and changed lives forever. We are grateful for the service of our Soldiers. We acknowledge their sacrifices and the sacrifices of their Families. We honor those gave

their lives in the service of their country, and our prayers go out to families and friends left behind.

Second, to our Veterans. Here in Los Angeles, I have come to learn you are part of the largest concentration of veterans in the United States. Over 400,000 veterans in this area; and the state of California has more than two million. And we are honored to have among us today a distinguished Medal of Honor recipient, Private George Sakato, who was already introduced. What an honor to have him here.

We've already had a chance to recognize the veterans by having them stand, so I won't ask you to do that again, but I will add my personal thanks for you for your service.

Veterans are an integral element in the fabric of our country. In local communities nationwide, they are visible reminders of service, patriotism, and that enduring commitment to our values. Just this past Monday, I had the honor to represent the Army and the Space and Missile Defense Command at a Memorial Day service in Huntsville, Alabama. Probably no different than a Memorial Day service in communities all over our country. It was an inspiring event. It was well attended by people of all ages, with Veterans from different wars, proudly wearing their organizational colors and unit badges.

It was the veterans who organized the event, served in the Color Guard, provided tributes to our Soldiers and their Families, laid wreaths in

their honor, and of course, provided the Patriot Guard carrying the flag of the United States on their motorcycles.

Before the service began, a Veteran approached me. Probably a Vietnam-era vet. He was a Patriot Guard, had his jean overalls on, beard; hadn't done PT in a while. But like only a Soldier could, he looked me straight in the eye, gave me a crisp salute and said, "General, do you have a minute." I said, "Of course." He handed me a small box. In that box was a Bronze Star. He looked at me directly and said, "I found this in a Pawn Shop. This doesn't belong in a Pawn Shop. Would you take care of it for me?" And he handed it to me, saluted and walked away.

That's what our Veterans do as they represent in our country. I now have that Bronze Star on display in our command headquarters, and I tell that story every chance that I have in honor of our Veterans and their service to our nation.

And third, to this community. A community like none other, I've learned tonight. You all do so much to support our Soldiers and their Families. Communities across America demonstrate appreciation for our Soldiers every day. You know, we're at war; we've been at war for ten years. America has learned to say thank you again. As I travel around the country, I wear my uniform to fly, and the outpouring of support and gratitude from our citizens is overwhelming.

The Greater Los Angeles Chapter of AUSA, other service organizations, our corporate and industry partners, and communities

across the United States are doing wonderful things for our military, each and every day. Your support is our lifeline when our Soldiers are deployed. You are the cheerleaders, the ones whose simple acts of kindness mean so much to Soldiers, Civilians and Families.

Your gestures of thanks as we walk through airports; your fundraisers to help military Families while we're deployed and meet their needs; your commitment of time to mentor our military children mean so much.

Just last Friday, in another expression from the heart that we were confronted with, my wife and I had attended an awards ceremony at a local elementary school. On the way back, we stopped at a Cracker Barrel for lunch; is there any other place to stop for lunch? I was in my ACUs. We finished our lunch.

There was an older couple at the table adjacent to us. And as they finished their lunch, this older gentleman, probably Korean War veteran, maybe World War II. He came up to our table, and he handed me a dollar bill in the shape of a cross. I politely accepted the dollar bill, and waited patiently for the man to say something. And as I looked at his face, I realized that he could not speak. His eyes were filled with emotion, his face visibly choked up, and he just was unable to utter a word. And so Diane and I politely accepted the dollar bill and said thank you, and he turned and walked away. That expression of love and commitment from that couple and that man says it all about the support we get from our community.

And so, just as I thanked that gentleman for that dollar bill in the shape of a cross, I thank you for your unwavering support for our Soldiers, our Civilians and our Families. On this special night, we salute the United States Army, and we celebrate its 236th birthday.

On behalf of our Army, I want to thank each and every one of you; the Soldiers who are present, our Veterans, and this wonderful community for your service and your support. You can be proud of America's team of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guards and Civilians – who tonight, while we're here, keep our nation safe and secure in a dangerous and uncertain world.

Thank you. Hooah! Army Strong!