

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 10, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(El Paso, Texas)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
WAR MEMORIAL PLAZA

3:20 P.M. MST

Senator John Tower, Congressman Dick White, Mayor Henderson, Mayor Luzama, Mrs. Barnes, Reverend Nichols, distinguished guests:

It is a great privilege for me to be here today dedicating this memorial, which honors those men from El Paso who gave their lives for their country. Let me thank the Gold Star mothers and the El Paso Bicentennial Commission for sponsoring this very important, this very dramatic occasion.

I extend my particular thanks to Mrs. Barney Barnes for her very kind letter of invitation, and I commend her sons, Stanley and Mark, both students here at Parkland High School.

It was their efforts which resulted in the bronze plaque that we dedicate today. They were motivated by the memory of their brother, Corporal Charles Barnes of the United States Army who was listed among the 203 men whose memory and bravery we honor.

In a larger sense, we are paying tribute to all those Americans who died for their country and to Americans throughout our history who paid the very highest price for the sake of our liberty.

This ceremony should make us realize how precious freedom is and how dearly Americans have paid for it from the first battles for independence down to the very present.

This ceremony should also make us thankful for peace we now enjoy. Not one American serviceman is fighting in any part of the world today. Not one American mother or wife or daughter, father, brother or son lives in constant fear of losing their loved one.

MORE

And today as we dedicate ourselves to preserving the peace and freedom for which these men died, we must also dedicate ourselves to preserving peace they died to secure.

Peace today has a very special significance because war today has a very special terror. A thermonuclear war today would mean death and destruction on a scale so vast that we can hardly comprehend it.

We can avoid this holocaust, and we will avoid it if we keep America strong, not strong for the sake of war, but strong for the sake of peace.

This concept is as old as our great Republic. George Washington told us to be prepared, for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving the peace. We are prepared today, we will stay prepared. We are strong today, and we will stay strong today as well as tomorrow.

But true strength demands true responsibility and keeping the peace means keeping our commitment to avoid constant and reckless confrontation, to weigh our words carefully, knowing what hangs in the balance.

In my very first words after taking the solemn oath of office to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, I pledged myself to an uninterrupted and sincere search for peace.

I said America will remain strong and united, but its strength will be dedicated to the safety of the entire family of man as well as to our own precious freedom.

Today on this solemn occasion, I repeat that pledge, to work for a world where the foundation of peace is mutual self-interest instead of mutual terror, to reduce world tensions through patience and perseverance, rather than increase those tensions with hot words or rash acts.

Where there is conflict, let us try conciliation. Let us attempt to work out our differences on the negotiating table rather than in a desperate duel that would leave the world in ashes.

You have placed your memorial at the base of a flower-bed. It is an appropriate setting, for the flowers are a symbol of life. To honor the memory of those who fought for freedom, you will keep those flowers blooming, and together we will keep America strong, at peace and forever free.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 3:25 P.M. MST)