

**The original documents are located in Box 29, “4/10/76 - Remarks at a Bicentennial Ceremony at the Memorial Plaza, El Paso, Texas” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT WAR MEMORIAL  
EL PASO, TEXAS, APRIL 10, 1976

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -- EL PASO BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION

-- THANK YOU, JOHN (Senator Tower introduces you)

-- CONGRESSMAN DICK WHITE

-- MAYOR HENDERSON (El Paso)

-- MAYOR LEZAMA (Juarez, Mexico)

-- MRS. BARNES

-- REVEREND NICHOLS

IT IS A ~~VERY SPECIAL~~ PRIVILEGE FOR ME

TO BE HERE TODAY DEDICATING THIS MEMORIAL WHICH HONORS

THOSE MEN FROM EL PASO WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR

COUNTRY ~~IN VIETNAM~~•

LET ME THANK THE GOLD STAR MOTHERS AND

THE EL PASO BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION FOR SPONSORING THIS

IMPORTANT OCCASION•

I EXTEND MY PARTICULAR THANKS TO

MRS. BARNEY BARNES FOR HER KIND LETTER OF INVITATION,

AND I COMMEND HER SONS, STANLEY AND MARK, BOTH

~~OF WHOM I UNDERSTAND ARE~~ <sup>here</sup> STUDENTS AT PARKLAND HIGH SCHOOL.

IT WAS THEIR EFFORTS WHICH RESULTED IN THIS

BRONZE PLAQUE WE DEDICATE TODAY.

THEY WERE MOTIVATED BY THE MEMORY OF THEIR

BROTHER, CORPORAL CHARLES BARNES OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY,

WHO IS LISTED AMONG THE 203 MEN WHOSE MEMORY AND

BRAVERY WE HONOR.

IN A LARGER SENSE, WE ARE PAYING TRIBUTE

*for their Country*

TODAY TO ALL THOSE AMERICANS WHO DIED ~~IN THAT~~ BITTER

CONFLICT, 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 PRESENT.

THIS CEREMONY SHOULD ALSO MAKE US THANKFUL

FOR THE 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 OR BROTHER OR SON - LIVES IN CONSTANT

FEAR OF LOSING THEIR LOVED ONES.

AND TODAY, AS WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO  
PRESERVING THE FREEDOM FOR WHICH THESE MEN DIED,  
WE MUST ALSO DEDICATE OURSELVES TO PRESERVING THE  
PEACE THEY DIED TO SECURE•

PEACE TODAY HAS A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE --  
BECAUSE WAR TODAY HAS A SPECIAL TERROR•  
A THERMO-NUCLEAR 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 REPUBLIC.  
GEORGE WASHINGTON TOLD US: "TO BE PREPARED FOR WAR  
IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS OF PRESERVING  
PEACE."



WE ARE PREPARED TODAY, AND WE WILL STAY

PREPARED. WE ARE STRONG TODAY AND WE WILL STAY

STRONG.

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 THAT AMERICA WILL REMAIN STRONG AND  
UNITED, BUT ITS STRENGTH WILL REMAIN DEDICATED TO THE  
SAFETY [AND SANITY] OF THE ENTIRE FAMILY OF MAN, AS WELL  
AS TO OUR OWN PRECIOUS FREEDOM.

TODAY 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 THREATS.

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 THESE 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.  
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