The original documents are located in Box 40, “10/19/76 - Remarks Upon Receiving the AMVETS Golden Helmet Award” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

AMVETS CEREMONY

12:15 PM

THE ROSE GARDEN
THANK YOU, COMMANDER McDonough

Doris Shrake (National President, AMVETS Auxiliary)

Paul Welch (Immediate Past National Commander)

Distinguished Former Commanders and Guests
I AM VERY GRATEFUL FOR THIS HONOR. AS A LIFE MEMBER OF AMVETS, IT IS A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE AND PLEASURE TO RECEIVE THE GOLDEN HELMET AWARD, THE FINEST TRIBUTE THAT YOU CAN PAY TO A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
A major reason why I have always held the AMVETS in high regard is that you have never faltered, or wavered in your support for a strong, sturdy America.
THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES DURING OUR RECENT HISTORY

AND I CITE THE PERIOD OF THE VIETNAM WAR AS AN EXAMPLE

WHEN MANY OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS GREW WEARY OF OUR

LEADERSHIP ROLE AND WANTED TO SHARPLY REDUCE AMERICA'S

PRESENCE AND STRENGTH IN THE WORLD.
Fortunately, those voices never prevailed. The Congress listened to them too much and our defense budgets were cut too much, but over the years, we managed to maintain a military force capable of meeting any threat to our security and we continued to be a forceful leader in international diplomacy.
AND TODAY, THE PENDULUM IS SWINGING BACK THE OTHER WAY. AS I TRAVEL ABOUT THE COUNTRY, I FIND TODAY GROWING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR OUR ARMED FORCES AND GROWING PUBLIC AWARENESS THAT IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PEACE, WE MUST BE WILLING TO INVEST IN A FIRST-CLASS FIGHTING FORCE.
THAT GROWING SUPPORT IS DUE IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO

THE UNFLAGGING DEVOTION OF ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS

THE AMVETS - THROUGH LEAN YEARS AND GOOD YEARS -

AND I AM PROUD TO SALUTE YOU FOR IT.
BUT WE MUST NOT BE LULLED INTO COMPLACENCY SO

TODAY + PAY A HEAVY PENALTY TOMORROW

THAT WE MAKE WRONG DECISIONS. THERE REMAINS TODAY

AN INSISTENT CRY THAT WE SLASH BILLIONS UPON BILLIONS

OF DOLLARS FROM OUR DEFENSE BUDGET IN ORDER TO PAY

FOR A GALAXY OF NEW SOCIAL PROGRAMS, THAT WE
WITHDRAW OUR TROOPS FROM MANY PLACES IN THE
WORLD, AND THAT WE BARGAIN DIFFERENTLY WITH
OUR ADVERSARIES.
LET ME BE BLUNT:

THOSE WHO PREACH TO US THAT WE MUST SLASH BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FROM OUR MILITARY FORCES FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THAT OUR ARMED FORCES ARE THE BULWARK OF OUR FREEDOM.

AMERICA WILL BE FREE ONLY SO LONG AS AMERICA IS STRONG.
THOSE WHO PREACH TO US ABOUT WITHDRAWING OUR MILITARY FORCES AROUND THE GLOBE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THAT AMERICA'S PRESENCE AND AMERICA'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO OUR ALLIES IS THE SINGLE GREATEST FORCE FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD TODAY.
ONLY SO LONG AS OTHER NATIONS CAN RELY UPON

OUR FIRMNESS AND STEADINESS WILL WORLD PEACE

REMAIN INTACT.
-- FINALLY, THOSE WHO PREACH TO US THAT WE MUST

BE TOUGHER WITH OUR ADVERSARIES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY

CUTTING OUR DEFENSE BUDGET TOTALLY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY.
IF THE DAY EVER COMES WHEN AMERICA GOES TO THE

BARGAINING TABLE WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND HER BACK,

SHE WILL RETURN NOT ON HER FEET BUT ON HER KNEES.
IF I MAY, I WOULD LIKE TO BORROW A LINE FROM ADLAI STEVENSON IN ANOTHER CAMPAIGN 24 YEARS AGO. "LET'S TALK SENSE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE," HE SAID. "LET'S TELL THEM THE TRUTH, THAT THERE ARE NO GAINS WITHOUT PAINS."
THE TRUTH IS THAT IN TODAY'S WORLD, WE ARE AT

PEACE ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE STRONG AND WE ARE WILLING TO

PAY THE PRICE OF A MIGHTY MILITARY FORCE. WE ARE

AT PEACE TODAY ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED

TO OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES.
AND WE ARE AT PEACE TODAY ONLY BECAUSE WE ARE FIRM AND DETERMINED IN DEALING WITH OUR ADVERSARIES. SO LONG AS I AM PRESIDENT -- AND SO LONG AS THE AMVETS AND MANY OTHER AMERICANS PREVAIL -- WE WILL NEVER SUCCEDE TO THE VOICES OF THOSE WHO WOULD REDUCE OUR CAPABILITY TO DETER AGGRESSION AND MAINTAIN THE PEACE.
I thank you again for your award this afternoon, and I look forward to working with you and your many thousands of members in the days ahead.

Thank you.