

The original documents are located in Box 42, “12/11/76 - Remarks Upon Presenting a Toast to the Military Establishment, and the Presentation of the Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Medal to Deputy Secretary of Defense Clements (Includes talking points)” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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TOAST:

Sat 10/11
7:30 PM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of every citizen of the United States to personally thank each of you for the tremendous contribution that you have made and are making to the security of America. Your dedication to the defense of freedom today is in keeping with the courage and sacrifice of the men and women who established our independence two hundred years ago.

This gathering tonight has a very special meaning for me. You have been a source of deep strength and confidence during times of world-wide crisis and tension. As your Commander-in-Chief, I have always counted on your loyalty and military readiness to respond in any measure wherever and whenever the need arose.

As we approach the holiday season, not one American is under enemy fire tonight. Peace in the world -- as each of you know -- is dependent on the deterrent strength of our military forces. Our nation has paid dearly for peace -- both in terms of human lives and national treasure. You as Commanders have added the essential ingredient -- leadership -- to make our national defense the best in the world.

Our country will be challenged in the future, as it has been in the past, but freedom will prevail in America as long as we have a strong military team commanded by men of courage and integrity.

In behalf of all Americans I express my deepest thanks.

TALKING POINTS

-- Secretary Clements has held the post of Deputy Secretary of Defense longer than any of his predecessors. He was appointed and confirmed in January 1973.

-- He has served under three (3) Secretaries of Defense and has provided the continuity and leadership which has kept the Department of Defense on a steady course through one of the most demanding periods in our history.

- He has served during a period of many crises; most notably
 - o The October 1973 Mid-East War
 - o The Evacuation from Southeast Asia
 - o Mayaguez Incident
 - o Two Beirut evacuations
 - o Tree surgery of Panmunjon

and his leadership was instrumental and essential to the successful outcome of our national involvement in each of these potentially dangerous confrontations.

-- He has managed the Department of Defense superbly and with great skill. Among his numerous accomplishments are:

- o The smooth and extremely effective transition to an All-Volunteer Force
- o The imposition of rigorous management controls of the weapon system acquisition process and his personal contributions to the success of such major weapons systems programs as the TRIDENT; B-1 Bomber; the F-16 and F-18 Aircraft; the Cruise Missile, the XM-1 Tank, and many others too numerous to mention.
- o The institution of an all-service Committee to upgrade all Defense Education programs which is bringing about unprecedented excellence in all facets of military schooling.

-- His wise counsel, intellect, honesty and personal courage have made him a vital member of the National Security Council, and his participation in this forum represents a significant contribution to the country. His candor, knowledge, and integrity have won the respect and admiration of the Congress, which has been instrumental in marshalling the support necessary for the budgetary authority we have received to support our national security requirements. So it is fitting and a personal honor for me tonight to pay tribute to his contributions with the award of the Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Medal.

-- Don will you read the citation.