

APRIL 22, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary
(Indianapolis, Indiana)

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT
THE ANNUAL SERVICE OF THE ATLANTA CHAPTER
OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF WORLD WARS

PEACHTREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
APRIL 23, 1976

We observe today an occasion of somber reflection and grateful praise. As we honor the mothers of men who gave their lives in the service of their country, we have cause once again to honor the brave men themselves.

Although our hearts still mourn the loss of loved ones, we can draw inspiration from the knowledge that their supreme sacrifice was made in defense of our Nation's noblest ideals.

The fact that we stand here today as citizens of the strongest and freest and greatest Nation on earth, is powerful testimony to the valor and courage with which these men gave the last full measure of devotion to America.

The pages of history record the names of many brave men who led great armies into battle and to victory, and this Nation rightly reveres them.

But there are other names, known only to those of us assembled here, whose contributions were just as great, whose devotion was just as steadfast, whose sacrifice for the cause of freedom was just as complete.

They all share the same glory, won many times over many foes in many different uniforms. Their common enemy was always tyranny, and thanks to them, that enemy has never cast its shadow on our land.

It is by the deeds of these gallant men -- by heralded acts of bravery and by unkonwn acts of quiet courage -- that freedom flourishes in America today. It is their legacy that Government "of the people, by the people, for the people" still thrives in America in 1976.

Our memorial today is a recognition of their deeds and a celebration of that legacy.

It is a prayer for the divine care of men who have pressed the battle of freedom and made freedom secure.

(MORE)

And it is a pledge to them of America's unfailing resolve to preserve and enhance and cherish the freedom they made secure for us. America has no intention of abdicating its leadership to any nation committed to the destruction of liberty.

We know that the freedoms we have defended so often are still being challenged today. We know that our strength, our vigilance and our national resolve are the foundation of mankind's hope for peace and stability in the world. When I took the solemn oath of office as your President twenty months ago, I pledged myself and this nation to an uninterrupted and sincere search for peace. I said then -- and I say again today -- that America will remain strong and united, but our strength will be dedicated to the safety of the entire family of man, as well as to our own precious freedom.

America has seen too much of war in the 20th century, too much of suffering and dying on bloodstained fields of battle. We cherish the peace that America enjoys today, the peace that finds no American boys in combat anywhere on the face of the globe. Peace today has a very special significance because war today has a very special terror. The devastation and death left in the wake of thermo-nuclear war would be so great that the world as we know it would simply cease to exist.

Therefore we must do our best to keep the peace, not the peace of weakness and concession, but the peace secured by strength and courage. This is the role that destiny calls us to play. Our country is very special in the eyes of the world. America shines today as the brightest beacon of hope for millions who live in the darkness of tyranny and oppression.

The men whose mothers we honor today have held that beacon high, have carried it into battle, and made the darkness retreat. Now they have passed the beacon to us. In the quality of our lives, in the steadfastness of our purpose, we must show ourselves worthy of the sacrifice they made.

May we, like them, devote ourselves to peace and liberty and, like them, march always in the ranks of honor.

#