

As Delivered
5-73 Cavalry “Headhunters” Ball Remarks
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071129

Throughout my thirty one years of service, I have talked to countless units about their history and lineage and reflected on their unit pride and esprit de corps... the pride of being part of something bigger than themselves... knowing they wear the same patch... the same crest... that links them to great warriors from World War II, Korea or Vietnam... Soldiers who fought valiantly and honorably and some who never returned.

BUT....

NEVER before have I had the distinct and immense honor I have tonight.... The opportunity to address the Soldiers, the Paratroopers, who actually made their history... the men and women who fought the battles! Being here tonight is very different. I’m not here to talk about Warriors of previous conflicts – to reflect on their bravery and heroic deeds... **NO** – tonight it’s all about **YOU!**

All too often we do our duty and then fade back into obscurity... never asking for accolades or even thanks... well... you deserve the accolades for your efforts and you and your families deserve the thanks for your sacrifices... for the “Spartans of TF 300” just wrote the next chapter in the history of the 82nd Airborne Division! In that next chapter, they will talk about how over thirty percent of this squadron of 442 Paratroopers received valorous awards and another sixty percent achievement awards for actions in the combat zone... how over twenty-five percent of the squadron was killed or wounded in combat and of the eighty Humvees that were in the squadron, over thirty five percent were catastrophic losses with many others damaged. AMAZING statistics by any standard.

Your accomplishments over this last deployment have been incredible... almost unbelievable.

When you entered Diyala Province the enemy had a strong hold and safe haven... a place where they could operate at will and prepare for operations in other areas of Iraq. Immediately upon arrival Headhunter 6 devised a plan to take the fight to the enemy... and that's just what you did! An old adage goes "it is better to have an army of deer led by a lion than to have an army of lions led by a deer." That adage never accounted for the Headhunters. You all are The Spartans of TF 300, a legion of **lions** led by a **lion!**

Your plan, while simple, was extremely effective and now that plan has become a standard for operations in other areas of Iraq.

You conducted three major campaigns during your fifteen month deployment. During these campaigns you stemmed the flow of insurgents and Insurgent technology from Iran. You established a trained and effective Iraqi Border Patrol. During the Turki Campaign you identified and destroyed insurgent safe havens and training camps which were responsible for IED Construction and training, marksmanship training and ideological indoctrination. And in the process you killed over 300 insurgents and captured another 100. During the Diyala River Campaign you were asked to stretch your unit even further and moved the "Spartans of TF 300" westward to Baqubah where you rooted out more al Qaeda – killing over 300 insurgents and detaining countless others. YOUR actions... YOUR success saved countless lives and literally changed the situation in Diyala Province. What the Division intended to be an economy of force operation – you turned into major campaigns... We'll all need to remember that next time we ask the Headhunters to go do something!

And your success was not only in combat operations... You fostered relationships with the Iraqis that led to their trust... a trust that resulted in the

citizens and tribal leaders working with Coalition Forces for the first time in two years...providing important information on insurgent activities and caches.

Bottom line: you were the smallest unit in the brigade. You were spread the thinnest. You sustained the greatest number of casualties and you were able to hold the most ground and accomplish more than any other unit in MND (N). I guess good things really do come in small packages! Diyala and all of Iraq are safer today because of your efforts over the last fifteen months.

But we all realize that it was done by Paratroopers who made incredible sacrifices and showed enormous bravery. (Aside) When I read the reports on the actions of the Paratroopers who will receive Silver Stars tonight I was totally amazed. These stories read like something out of a Hollywood script... A young specialist firing the .50 cal while his buddy in the vehicle applies a pressure dressing to his shattered wrist... and then he dismounts multiple times to resupply his weapon; a medic, with total disregard for his own safety and without orders moves more than 100 feet in the open under intense fire to save another Paratrooper's life while bullets whizz by and even strike his body armor and aid bag. These are just a few of the stories of bravery that highlight the character you all possess. I recently exchanged e-mails with Time Magazine's Mark Kukis who embedded with you along with his cameraman Yuri. Yuri said they saw your character immediately. He said they quickly realized that you were different than other units they had covered. He stated that you were the best they had ever seen... when you realize that Yuri has lived in combat zones for over fifteen years, covering everyone from the Chechen Rebels to sister service units, that is an amazing testament to you all. They sensed... and I quote "a healthy underlying aggression tempered by professionalism and thoughtfulness."... or the translation of this is... Some **kick ass** Paratroopers who could turn it on when required!!

We will never forget and will always honor the sacrifices made by your brothers in arms.... Paratroopers who gave the last full measure of devotion to their Nation... and to you.

I want to assure you tonight that their sacrifices were not in vain. I know that over time, history will record their actions and your operations in Diyala as one of the great success stories in OIF. We already are seeing the results of your commitment and sacrifices.

You all are the one's who achieved this greatness – you all are the ones who were in the arena and deserve the credit.

Teddy Roosevelt years ago talked about the man in the arena..... He said....

“The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly... who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Well let me tell you... it is you... the fearless Spartans of TF 300... who have been in the arena.... That we will remember... **Your** faces are the ones that are marred with sand... sweat.... and blood. **You** have spent yourself in that worthy cause and **you** know the triumph of high achievement. Ten years from now... when a new Paratrooper reports to the Headhunters his leadership will pull him aside and say... “Son, let me tell you what this unit is all about” and he will tell stories similar to what you have heard about Normandy and Sicily... But ten years from now... he will tell the story of the Headhunters who fought in the Turki Bowl Campaign and the Diyala River Campaign in Iraq in 2006 and 2007, he will talk of heroic deeds and incredible sacrifices – he will talk about **you!**

Thanks so much... for allowing Stephanie and me to share this evening with you – you and your families are amazing – and we are thrilled to be here with you!

AIRBORNE!!

God Bless you all!