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Last Updated: 03/05/2025

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 10, 1988

REMARKS AT VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

DATE: November 11, 1988
LOCATION: Vietnam Veterans Memorial
TIME: 11:30 a.m.
FROM: REBECCA G. RANGE

Rebecca G. Range

I. PURPOSE

To commemorate the Sixth Anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to receive thanks from Vietnam Veterans.

II. BACKGROUND

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund was responsible for raising private funds to build the Memorial. Each year they host a Veterans Day ceremony at the Memorial Wall. At this year's ceremony, they wish to thank you for the role you played in the construction of the Memorial and for elevating the public respect for Vietnam Veterans.

In 1984, you attended a ceremony at the Memorial dedicating the statue of the servicemen. At that event, the Vietnam Memorial was officially turned over to the U.S. Government.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Approximately 25,000 Vietnam Veterans and their families.

IV. PRESS PLAN

Open press coverage

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

A detailed scenario will be provided by the Advance Office.

Remarks to be provided by Speechwriting.

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUMDATE: 11/09/88 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: NOON THURSDAY 11/10SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

(11/09 6:30 p.m. draft)

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	KRANOWITZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DUBERSTEIN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MASENG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
POWELL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RANGE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WRIGHT - OMB	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RISQUE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OGLESBY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RYAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CRIPPEN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SPRINKEL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CULVAHOUSE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TUCK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAWSON	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	TUTTLE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DONATELLI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DOLAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FITZWATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	COURTEMANCHE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HOBBS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HOOLEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please provide any comments/recommendations directly to Tony Dolan by NOON on Thursday, 11/10, with an info copy to my office. Thanks.

RESPONSE:



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Thank you Jack Wheeler and good morning. Before I begin, let me take a moment to congratulate the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and ^{the} ~~our~~ other distinguished guests, without whom the construction and operation of this Memorial would not be possible. I am also grateful to the hundreds of Vietnam veterans who, when I asked them to join my Administration, did so and have served our nation proudly. For your devotion to America, I salute you.

(Judge/ARD)
November 9, 1988
6:30 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: VETERANS DAY CEREMONY, 9 PM 6:49
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1988

> Insert (A)

We are gathered today, just as we have gathered before, to remember those who served, those who fought, and those who gave their last full measure of devotion for our country.

~~This is a special place -- a memorial~~
~~We are gathered at a monument~~ on which the names of our
fallen friends and loved ones ^(FROM THE VIETNAM WAR) are engraved, and with crosses instead of diamonds beside them, the names of those whose fate we do not yet know. One ^(whose name is forever engraved on this wall) of those ~~who fell~~ wrote, shortly before his death, these words: "Take what they have left/and what they have taught you/with their dying/and keep it with your own./And... take one moment to embrace/those gentle heroes/you left behind."

Today, Veterans Day, as we do every year, ^{Let us} ~~we take~~ ^{at this special place,} ~~that~~
a moment to embrace the gentle heroes of Vietnam and of all our wars, ^(and always) ~~we~~ remember those who were called upon to give all a person can give. And we ^{honor} ~~remember~~ those ^{Proud men and women} ~~who were prepared to make~~
~~who wear their country's uniform and stand prepared to make~~
~~that sacrifice, if it were demanded of them in the line of duty,~~
~~the ultimate sacrifice.~~
~~though it never was.~~ Most of all we remember the devotion and gallantry with which all ^(VIETNAM VETERANS WHO SERVED) ~~of them~~ ~~ennobled~~ their Nation as they became champions ^{the} of a noble cause ^{of freedom} ~~of freedom~~

~~I am not speaking provocatively here.~~ Unlike the other wars of this century ~~of course,~~ there were deep divisions about the wisdom and rightness of the Vietnam War. Both sides spoke with honesty and fervor, and what more can we ask in our democracy? And yet, after more than a decade of desperate boat people, after the killing fields of Cambodia, after all that has happened in

that unhappy part of the world, who can doubt that the cause for which our men fought was just? It was, after all, however imperfectly pursued, the cause of freedom, ^{our men and women} ~~and they showed~~ ^{Pursued with uncommon courage.} ~~uncommon courage in its service.~~ Perhaps at this late date we can all agree that we have learned one lesson -- that ~~many~~ Americans must never again be sent to fight and die unless we are prepared to let them win.

But beyond that, we remember today that all our gentle heroes of Vietnam have given us a lesson in something more -- a ^{devotion and} lesson in ^A living love. Yes, for all of them, those who came back and those who did not, their love ^{For} ~~of their~~ families lives. Their ^{devotion to} ~~love of~~ their ^{camrades} buddies on the battlefields and friends back home lives. Their ^{devotion and} ~~love of~~ their country lives.

^A
This memorial has become a monument to ~~that~~ living love. The thousands who come to see the names testify to a love that endures. The messages and momentos they leave speak with a whispering voice that passes gently through the surrounding trees and out across ~~the breast of~~ our peaceful Nation. A childhood teddy bear; a photograph of the son or daughter -- born too late to know his or her father; a battle ribbon; a note: There are so many of these and all are testimony to our living love for them.

~~And~~ ^{devotion and} our Nation ^A ~~itself~~ is testimony to the love our veterans have had for it and for us. Our liberties, our values, all for which America stands is safe today because brave men and women have been ready to face the fire at freedom's front. And we thank God for them.

Yes, gentle heroes, ~~and living love~~ and our memories ^{are} of a time when we faced great divisions here at home: And yet if this place recalls all this -- both sweet and sad -- it also reminds us of a great and profound truth about our Nation, that from all our divisions we have always eventually emerged strengthened. Perhaps we are finding that new strength today, and, if so, much of it comes from the forgiveness and healing love that our Vietnam Veterans have shown.

For too long a time, they stood in a chill wind, ^{a lonely sentry} ~~as if on a~~ ^{on a} winter night's watch. And in that night, their deeds spoke to us, but we knew them not. Their voices called to us, but we heard them not. Yet in this land that God has blessed, the dawn always at last follows the dark, and now morning has come. The night is over. We see these men and know them once again -- and know how much we owe them, how much they have given us, how much we can never fully repay. And not just as individuals but as a Nation, we say we ^{respect you, we honor you, and we love you.} ~~love you.~~

These days, we show ~~our~~ love in many ways -- some of it by the Government. We now fly of the POW-MIA Flag at this memorial on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and POW-MIA Recognition Day. This is a small gesture, but a significant one. America also keeps a vigil for those who have not yet returned. We have negotiated with the Vietnamese to bring all the bodies of our Nation's sons home and for the first time to have joint teams investigating places that might shed light on the fate of those we list as missing. In Laos we have also begun to survey and excavate sites. And we have told Hanoi that it is up to them to prove

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that Americans are no longer living against their will in Indochina. Otherwise we will assume some are, and we will do everything we can to find them.

Here, at home, a new Department of Veterans Affairs and extended veterans benefits are merely outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible ^{sense of care and compassion} ~~grace~~ that has come to our land.

Vietnam service is once more universally recognized as a badge of pride.

Four years ago, I noted that this healing had begun and that I hoped that before my days as Commander-in-Chief were over it would be completed. Well, now as I ~~reach~~ the end of my service ^{the healing process is nearing completion.} ~~it appears to me that it has been, and what can I say but,~~ "Welcome home."

Now before I go, as have so many others, Nancy and I wanted to leave a note at the wall, and if I may read it to you before doing it.

"Our young friends: Yes, young friends, for in our hearts you will always be young, full of the love that is youth, love of life, love of joy, love of country. You fought for your country and for its safety and for the freedom of others with strength and courage. We love you for it. We honor you. And we have faith that, as He does all his sacred children, the Lord will bless you and keep you, the Lord will make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace, now and forever more.

Ronald and Nancy Reagan."

Thank you all and God bless you.

and we see Vietnam veterans taking
their rightful place in the
eyes of our nation.