

**Chief of Naval Operations  
Adm. Jonathan Greenert  
Remarks at Military Times Service Member of the Year Award Ceremony**

**18 July 2013**

**Admiral Greenert:** Thank you very much. Isn't it nice in here compared to being outside?

Thanks very much, Congressman, and thanks Dave Coker for those words. I happen to have met many times Mrs. Trost, and you're exactly right. Colonel Trost turned to the right person to be inspired in that regard.

I want to thank Annette as well, Ms. Howard. Thank you so much for, General Motors, thanks for making this happen. This is a terrific event. This is the right thing to do and I'm honored to be here.

Thanks so much to the congressional members who have supported this throughout the years. Your continued support having it here is terrific.

A privilege to be here tonight to take just a few minutes to recognize the service and the sacrifice of these fine young men and women. You've got to read these- you've got to listen to these summaries that appear later on. It will astound you. I'm very glad I'm not competing with these folks today. That was lucky.

As we reflect on the challenges today, look around the world, the dynamics, we look at the budgetary challenges that we have, we say golly, how are we going to do all this? I think we need to remind ourselves that our key symmetric advantage throughout the years has not been necessarily technology and all that. It's been our people, and really, it's been our all-volunteer force. This month marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the all-volunteer force. A very very important piece. Forty years, unbelievable.

We have the finest fighting force the United States has ever fielded and the strength of that is the people. The strength of those people and the military folks, really their attributes and their skill which they bring and we refine, those of us that help organize, train, equip and lead them, but it's really their dedication. And my experience has been their consistent and infectious optimism. They always know they can get the job done and they have again and again. And I know those of you understand that.

They serve to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic and bear true faith and allegiance to the same, and they do that so readily, and they're truly one in 100, just those that we have because they are about one percent of who we are.

Our service members are the brightest, the most committed, and perhaps the most courageous sons and daughters of America and they represent every state. I was out on the George Herbert Walker Bush aircraft carrier watching our unmanned aircraft come in. And as I walked around I

probably met about 100 Sailors, and about seven of them were from other countries. They weren't even born here, but boy, they sure wanted to come and live and serve in America. So we are so privileged to have that. It demonstrates the rich heritage and also the diversity of this great nation and the great military that you all have.

Our men and women and, underline, families, really understand what it means to serve. They deploy abroad and they have for decades, but certainly a lot recently. For months at a time, and then they turn right around and they readily go back over and they serve. They respond immediately if something happens. You can fill in the blank of the recent operation where we picked up and went somewhere. They were ready to go immediately, right away. They've missed birthdays, anniversaries, family milestones, but they're ready to go. And I'm constantly impressed, as all of you are, by their resilience and their endurance.

This evening we will honor five individuals who have gone above and beyond, recognized and nominated by their fellow service members, and think about that. That's pretty special. They were so impressive somebody took the time to sit down and say listen, I want to nominate this person. I am so impressed by them. They've continued to put service before themselves while off duty as well as while on duty, volunteering to do such things as volunteer in the Make-A-Wish Foundation, teaching math and English to children in Afghanistan, raising awareness for Gold Star families, building homes with Habitat for Humanity and working with wounded warriors.

These individuals represent a really special quality of all the service members that we have, and they represent the face of the United States around the globe, and to the leadership overseas, to citizens overseas. They build the trust that enables the partnership that we need so very much to continue doing what we do around the world to ensure security. They are our ambassadors and there are so many of them. They do such a marvelous job. And I personally hear it again and again as I travel around. I know my colleagues would say exactly the same thing. They assure our allies of America's resolve.

So this is America's all-volunteer force and military family. These are the prime representatives of it. And I'm reminded again and again when I see them of a movie I used to love called the Bridges of Toko Ri. It's about a novel that James Michener wrote, a bridge in Toko Ri, North Korea -- Korea at the time -- during the war. We were constantly trying to knock out this bridge because it was a logistics way for the enemy. It was very difficult. We lost many pilots. It was a story of courage, of sacrifice, and of resilience as folks went in to rescue them. As it was ending, there was an admiral on the bridge, the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet Commander, he's out on his aircraft carrier, and he turns to his colleague and he says, "Where do we get such men?"

Well, this afternoon, this evening, I look around at these five individuals and I ask myself, "Where do we get such people?" We get them from the United States of America. And I am truly proud and grateful for their service and to serve with them. Thank you all so much for supporting that. Thank you.

###