

Remarks as prepared for

Admiral Dennis C. Blair

Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command

JTF-FA Repatriation Ceremony

Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii

April 13, 2001

Yesterday on this spot, 24 men and women returned to America with honor – and to joyful families. Today, 7 men return to America with honor – but to grieving families.

Many young Americans face danger, suffer, and sometimes die. But these are America's sons and daughters who have volunteered to wear their nation's uniform, and that distinguishes them somehow.

Every single day, 300,000 men and women of the U.S. Pacific Command perform dangerous and important duties for our nation. These 7 served the United States with particular courage, working to heal the scars of war.

As we gather here this afternoon, their comrades-in-arms still stand the morning watch – are on the morning patrol – at sea, on land, and in the air across the vast Western Pacific. Our warriors of today threaten no one but those who threaten peace. They serve alongside other young men and women in the uniforms of our allies: Korea, Japan, and Australia; Thailand and the Philippines.

They are engineers – building hospitals in Nepal and Bangladesh – nations whose armed forces join ours in keeping peace around the world. They serve in East Timor with contingents sent by 47 countries from Asia and around the globe to protect a people who have suffered much.

The men we honor today died with 9 Vietnamese, whom we also mourn. Together, they were pursuing a joint quest to account for those still missing from the wars of Southeast Asia 30 years ago, showing the entire world that countries can put aside old differences, for international military teamwork when we have common goals.

- Lieutenant Colonel Rennie Cory,
- Lieutenant Colonel Marty Martin,
- Major Charles Lewis,
- Chief Petty Officer Pete Gonzales,
- Master Sergeant Steve Moser,
- Sergeant First Class Tommy Murphy,
- and Technical Sergeant Marty Flynn . . .

would be the first to tell us never to let America abandon duty and cooperation, even if they sometimes lead to the ultimate personal sacrifice.

We can only say to the families who have suffered this loss that we grieve for your sons, husbands, and brothers – our teammates. We honor their service; we renew our dedication to the cause they served. We will never forget them.

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