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TROY STATE UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE – FT. MYER

*Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the
Department of Defense: “Domestic Enemies and Pyrrhic Victories,”
Arlington, VA, Saturday, June 7, 2003.*

Troy State University graduates, faculty, family and friends:
Congratulations! These are exciting times in America and in our
Department of Defense; and today is an exciting day for each of you.

Secretary Rumsfeld likes to remind us all, from time to time, “that you get
what you inspect, not what you expect, or put differently, that what you
measure improves.”¹ Today, we celebrate your measured self-improvement
as leaders within a Department of Defense transforming itself in ways that
none of us could have imagined 25 years ago -- or even one year ago.

Now that you have completed the human capital self-investment known as
an academic Master Degree, prepare yourselves to re-invest your heart and
soul into your oath of office -- but never forget where your heart resides at
the end of the day, and to whom your soul ultimately belongs.

It's payback time now. For many of you, your military department has paid
for your Master Degree. For some, the Veterans Department may have
subsidized your graduate education. But for every one of you with a family,
your spouse has invested more in opportunity costs over the past year than
your new diploma could ever show.

It's payback time. For those of you who have the honor of swearing the oath
of office, gird yourselves for the new asymmetric battles of the 21st Century.
But first, do something special for your spouse and family. Take care of your
first priorities first.

¹ “DOD Acquisition and Logistics Excellence Week Kickoff—Bureaucracy to Battlefield,” Remarks as
Delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, The Pentagon, Monday, September 10, 2001.

About the same time each of you embarked on your Troy State Masters program a year ago, I was taking the oath of office as the Inspector General of the Department of Defense. Shortly before I swore my oath, Secretary Rumsfeld issued a statement on the occasion of “Liberty Day,” highlighting the importance of this oath. Allow me to read from the Secretary’s short Liberty Day statement, which by the way, you will find reproduced on the first page of the passport-sized copy of the Constitution you are about to receive along with your diplomas:

“I encourage all to examine the words of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution, which together form the basis for our freedom and prosperity. These documents serve as a constant reminder of the oath that Congress has ordained for every ‘individual elected or appointed to an office of honor or profit in the civil service or uniformed services’:
‘that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.’”

Two weeks ago in Annapolis, Secretary Rumsfeld described his vision for the future of the Department of Defense:

“Precisely how you will serve in the years ahead, the challenges you will face and what future may hold for you is certainly not knowable today. But this much seems reasonably certain: Your future is likely to be unlike anything that we imagine today.”

Think of the changes that have occurred just since you started your Troy State educations. How many of you could have imagined a year ago that, to borrow from Secretary Rumsfeld’s recent remarks, “many of our former Warsaw Pact adversaries would be our close allies in NATO, working alongside of us [not only in Iraqi Freedom, but] in a wholly new and unexpected struggle with the global war on terror.”²

² *Remarks as delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Annapolis, MD, Friday, May 23, 2003* (<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20030523-secdef0242.html>).

The incredible changes we have witnessed over the past generation and over the past year, to borrow again from Secretary Rumsfeld, “didn't just happen. They were the result of leadership -- leadership at literally every level of government, from successive commanders in chiefs to the commanders [throughout the Department of Defense], and leadership by the American people and by the leaders in our allied countries as well.”³

In the months and years to come, national leadership will turn to those best prepared to meet the challenges of a world marked by changing conditions and circumstance. Your investment in education has been an opportunity to study, research, and, in some cases, rehearse how to lead and tackle the challenges that come at a unique time in our history. The exciting part about being here today is meeting you, because we do not know and can only imagine, what great decisions and judgments will rest on your shoulders.

Throughout my career, the men and women of the armed forces, regardless of age or rank, have taught me how much each of them turns to officers and leaders for answers to the most difficult and troubling questions in their lives. Our men and women closely follow our example, no matter the time or setting, because the content of our character and our personal code of ethics is always on public display.

Unknowingly and sometimes, unwittingly, we influence the personal development of those around us. The confidence that the men and women of the Department of Defense have in us as leaders invokes a level of personal responsibility and moral courage that we should all both acknowledge and welcome. While the American people have high expectations of the important role you will play in the decisions that lie ahead, our national leadership will rely on more than your unique skills and experiences.

Of all of your qualities as professionals, the American people value most your judgment and your integrity. Take comfort in these basic virtues and remain confident in the special trust that the American people have placed in you, and never place that trust at risk.

Each of you has earned the degree of “Master” in some form of the government-wide priority President George W. Bush calls “strategic

³ *Ibid.*

management of human capital”⁴ -- be it a “Master of Public Administration,” a “Master of Business Administration,” or a “Master of Science in Management.” From this day forward you have earned the title of “Master” -- which according to Noah Webster connotes someone who is “eminently or perfectly skilled in any occupation, art or science.”⁵

You are the new “Master” leaders of the world’s most powerful military. My advice, as Inspector General of the Department of Defense, is threefold, and transcends two centuries of American military tradition: First, lead by example; the exemplary conduct leadership standard prescribed and promulgated by Congress in 1775 is just as timely today as it was for leaders of our Continental Navy: “shew in [your]selves a good example of honor and virtue . . . be very vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under [you;] discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices.”⁶ Second, be alert to all forms of “dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices,” including but not limited to those identified in the Inspector General Act, namely fraud, waste, and abuse of authority.⁷ And third, above all, enthusiastically live your sacred oath of office.⁸

You might be asking yourself by now, “How is this Inspector General going to try to pull together in any meaningful way such disparate topics as visionary leadership; basic virtues; waste, fraud, and abuse of authority; and a sacred oath?” Let’s start with the ancient Greek name emblazoned on your new Master Degree diplomas.

⁴ Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget, THE PRESIDENT’S MANAGEMENT AGENDA, FISCAL YEAR 2002, at 11 (www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget).

⁵ Noah Webster, AMERICAN DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1828).

⁶ See 10 U.S.C. § 5947 (“All commanding officers and others in authority in the naval service are required to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination; to be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command; to guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Navy, all persons who are guilty of them; and to take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the naval service, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.”); see also 10 U.S.C. §§ 3583 & 8583 (same “exemplary conduct” leadership standard for the Army and Air Force respectively).

⁷ See 5 U.S.C. Appendix, *passim* (Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended).

⁸ 5 U.S.C. § 3331 (“An individual, except the President, elected or appointed to an office of honor or profit in the civil service or uniformed services, shall take the following oath: ‘I, AB, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God’.”)

Eight Hundred and Seventy Eight years after the siege of Troy, a twelve-year-old boy named Pyrrhus took the throne of a City State in what is now northwestern Greece. Pyrrhus grew to be an aggressive and quarrelsome king, given to warring with his neighbors. In 280 B.C., he led 25,000 men (and 19 elephants) to what is now southern Italy, where he defeated the Romans -- but only after losing a multitude of his own soldiers. A year later, he again suffered heavy casualties at Roman hands in another battle in central Italy. According to Plutarch, on being congratulated for those victories, Pyrrhus retorted, "Another such victory over the Romans, and we are undone."⁹ Hence the origins of the term, "Pyrrhic victory."

My challenge to each of you today, as we take on the asymmetric challenges of the 21st Century, is to be on guard against Pyrrhic victories, whether abroad or on our own soil. Never forget that it is a Constitution that we swear to support and defend, against all enemies, both foreign and domestic. Imagine if we were to defeat international terrorism by military might and intelligent risk-taking abroad, only to lose to domestic enemies the very foundation of the Constitution at home. THIS would be a Pyrrhic victory: to win abroad, but as we did so to lose our most valuable, irreplaceable resource here at home.

That the oath of office acknowledges both foreign and domestic enemies of our Constitution suggests that each of us who has taken this oath could -- and arguably should -- be prepared to serve in domestic as well as foreign warfare to protect and defend our Constitution.¹⁰

As you move forward as Master leaders, how well will you organize, arm, and discipline yourselves for domestic combat? How many potential and actual domestic enemies of our Constitution will you even recognize?

In 1798, President John Adams recognized a few persistent domestic enemies when he admonished officers of the Massachusetts Militia that: "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as

⁹ "Plutarch's Lives" (Dryden translation), edited by Arthur Hugh Clough, Project Gutenberg Release #674 (October 1996).

¹⁰ 5 U.S.C. § 3331.

a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."¹¹

We need not parse today the interstices of what John Adams meant by a “religious people”; suffice it to say that the 21st Century Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense exists to combat fraud, waste, and abuse of authority -- an unholy trinity of immoral practices that Congress has identified for us in the Inspector General Act of 1978 -- three domestic enemies of the Constitution.

In the course of your daily girding for warfare against international terror and other asymmetric foreign enemies of the 21st Century, forget not that these domestic enemies could still, as John Adams admonished, “break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net.”

Finally, as you go forward from this exciting Commencement Ceremony today, remember always -- and enthusiastically choose to live every hour of every day -- the sacred oath each of you has taken freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic, so help us God.

¹¹ J. Adams, Oct. 11, 1798, "to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts," in THE WORKS OF JOHN ADAMS -- SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, Vol. IX, p. 229 (C.F. Adams, ed. 1854).