

**OFFICE OF
THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

EOD MEMORIAL CEREMONY

**REMARKS BY
GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS,
COMMANDANT,
U.S. MARINE CORPS**

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(Applause.)

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: Thank you for the – for the invitation and the welcome – (inaudible) – another warm welcome. Ladies and gentlemen, I typically – when I make public remarks they’re not read from prepared remarks. But this morning is special. I’ve had an opportunity to reflect on many families that I’ve met in the cafeteria. This is a very solemn and a very serious and a very dignified occasion. And I ask that you’d forgive me as I read from these remarks this morning because I have some things I want to say, and I don’t want to overlook or miss out on anything.

I want to recognize a few people in the audience this morning. My fellow member of the Joint Chiefs, General Norty (ph) Schwartz and his lovely wife Suzie – Norty, Susie, thank you for your continued fidelity to the men and women of the Air Force and all of us that serve. You’re a great testimony to that and also a good friend. Brigadier General Leslie Smith is representing General Dempsey, United States Army. And Rear Admiral Tillotson is here representing Admiral Gary Roughead, the United States Navy. Thank you for being part of today’s memorial ceremony.

I want to thank the explosive ordinance technicians past, present and future who are here in the audience and joined us here today. Your legacy has helped make this event something of a national significance. But most importantly, I wish to honor and direct my comments today to the families of our fallen who have come here to celebrate the lives of their loved ones. I am humbled to walk among you this morning and to share in this unique opportunity to commemorate and honor our explosive ordinance disposal warriors.

Each one is a genuine American hero and a national treasure. I’m reminded of a quote from Thomas Jefferson in which he said, “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.” Ladies and gentlemen, the vigilance that Thomas Jefferson spoke about and referred to is reflected in what EOD is all about.

This grand memorial stands as a testament to the fraternal spirit so much alive in your community today. The four services standing together in one place, at one memorial, forever honoring their heroes and the common mission that all of them were a part of. This one wall represents a single team fighting together. No individual whose name inscribed hereon stood alone; nor did they fall alone. This memorial reminds us of the great sacrifice and fidelity of our brothers and sisters who have given everything so that Americans might live in peace.

Members of our military EOD team stand ready to sacrifice daily. While we gather here in beautiful panhandle of Florida, your brothers and sisters are out on patrol throughout the many provinces of Afghanistan and throughout Iraq; saving lives, conducting the most difficult missions possibly imaginable.

Amidst the most dangerous and intensive circumstances, EOD operators exhibit a balance of calmness, maturity and technical skill that few will ever know in life. You move towards danger when others flee; you create access on the battlefield; you clear compounds; you permit movement down dusty and nasty and dangerous roads; and ultimately, you make an area safe for the people who live there.

It was Winston Churchill who said that “Out of the depths of sorrow and sacrifice will be born again the glory of mankind.” The spirit of fidelity towards one another, to their almost impossible mission, is what gives EOD warriors the raw courage to make the long walk. I’m talking about an ever-faithful spirit that resides in the DNA of every single EOD soldier, sailor, airman and Marine in a unique and unbelievable way. The great American author once said that the Civil War soldiers were a mysterious fraternity born of smoke and the danger of death. What a stirring image of what the singular brotherhood of an explosive ordinance disposal team is like.

I know I speak for all the guests here today when I say I’m in awe of the central brotherhood that sustains the EOD warriors as they do their job every day. These warriors have the raw courage to stare straight into danger’s face when others would surely turn and run. What makes your fidelity to one another even more unique are the inter-service bonds that are formed right here from the very beginning.

All EOD soldiers, sailors, airman and Marines train together, right here at this school. And together, regardless of service, you team up; you mount up on the roads and the villages and in the cities where the insurgents attempt to take our lives. Not only do you work together, you fight together. You play together; you bleed together. And sometimes, you enter eternity together. We celebrate today the explosive ordinance disposal family, which is a uniquely bonded fraternity that has sacrificed much. We will always remember those noble warriors and their families for their supreme courage and steadfast loyalty to our nation and to one another.

We often ask: Where do such heroes come from? As I look out on the families this morning, the answer is clear to me: They come from you. They were warriors who daily demonstrated the patriotism and fidelity that they learned with you. And they wanted to make a difference in life, because you taught them that it was important to do so. As husbands and wives, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, you have contributed and continue to contribute through your fidelity toward one another and your steadfast willingness to sacrifice, even today.

The family bears the heaviest burden when a loved one makes the final long walk. Our nation’s responsibilities do not end at the gravesite, nor at the memorial services such as this today. We owe each other – we owe each of you much more than our gratitude. We are honor-bound to keep faith for the families of our fallen warriors, and we must do it forever.

Each of you who proudly wear the explosive ordinance disposal insignia stand shoulder to shoulder with the most courageous men and women in our nation’s history. Thank you for all that you have given, and for all that you continue to give to this day. You embody all that is honorable and good about the American spirit.

Ronald Reagan said that “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it on to our children in their bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.” EOD warriors have fought and continue to fight for us with courage, skill and an ever-faithful commitment to our great nation.

We are eternally grateful for those who have gone before, to those who stand today, and to the always faithful families of our men and women who have given the last full measure in service to one another and to our country. God bless them all. It has been my honor to have been even a small part of today’s wonderful memorial celebration. Thank you, and semper fidelis.

(Applause.)

(END)