



**Remarks by Paul “Rob” Roberts
Retired Staff Sergeant**

November 19, 2012

Thank you Mr. Isacco.

I am honored to be here today.

This is the first time talking in a public forum. I have to admit, I am a little nervous. But this is such an important issue, I felt it was my duty to be here and help my fellow Soldiers.

So let me start my story at the beginning.

I joined the Army in February 2003. I was in college at Norfolk State University and had finished three years towards my degree. But after 9/11, I knew I wanted to serve my country and decided to enlist in the Army.

The Army teaches you about leadership values in basic training: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. As for my class, we learned them a lot more than most because we lost Drill SGT Murillo on the land night fire course which was crossing over for us from basic training to AIT.

I served at various posts and deployments, Camp Humphrey Korea, Fort Stewart Georgia 3rd Infantry Division, Iraq, but it wasn't until I went to Afghanistan that I sustained my injuries.

On June 2, 2009, while on assignment in Chamkani, Afghanistan, my squad and I were performing a routine combat patrol when my vehicle was hit with an improvised explosive device (IED). The impact of the IED totaled my vehicle and killed my driver, Jonathan Oneill, my gunner, Roberto Hernandez, as well as my Linguistic specialist also known as an interpreter. I was the only survivor.

I sustained severe injuries from the explosion including third degree burns to my wrists and legs, second degree burns to my arms and face, and I suffered a traumatic brain injury. After the accident, I was medically evacuated to Bagram Air Force Base, and then eventually moved to the burn center in San Antonio, Texas.

While recovering at the Warrior Transition Battalion, I participated in Wheelchair Basketball. I played for the San Antonio Spurs wheelchair basketball team and for the Center for the Intrepid. The three best events I will ever remember are when we played at the Spurs home game half

time event; played Walter Reed and won on their own court. They had like 200 fans to our three; and playing at the Warrior Games. I love playing this sport...I am really good at it. I don't mean to brag, but I actually won one silver and two gold medals while competing the last three years in the Army Warrior Games.

But what's most important is that Wheelchair Basketball was instrumental in my recovery and transition. It gave me a sense of purpose and a sense of drive. I started thinking about what I wanted to do if I wasn't able to stay in the Army.

When I took my oath, raised my hand, and swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, I meant it. So if I couldn't serve in the Army any more, I knew I wanted to serve my country by working for the Federal Government whether it is for the CIA, DEA, or FBI.

I worked with Mr. Rodney Lenard at the Soldier Family Assistance Center. He helped me improve my resume. I had to figure out how to translate my military resume to a federal government resume. He also helped me prepare through mock interviews.

My occupational therapists, Dr. Michelle, Toby Watson, and Zachary Gant were amazing. They knew I was interested in working at an agency, so they worked with Operation Warfighter and helped me secure an internship with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

The internship was awesome. I was treated like family there!

But the internship with the DEA taught me that even though I am a little bit slower, I am still a valued part of the team. That my experience in the Army is what makes me valuable, and that I still have the ability and desire to learn.

I was part of the DEA Task Force 1 team for 13 months. It ended when I was medically retired from Army on January 29, 2012.

When I retired from the Army, I didn't need a job. I wanted a job. I am too young to be retired. People need a sense of purpose, or they start to shut down and wither away. This can lead to more health problems and believe me....I don't need any more health problems. I have enough.

So I worked with my Advocate from the Army's Wounded Warrior Program. My Advocate, Ms. Ayandria Berry, is the best. After my internship, she worked with me to find job opportunities.

I began attending job fairs at Ft. Belvoir. There other veterans and I worked on our interview skills, specifically how to sell ourselves to an employer. We worked on our resumes, and then on the last day, employers came in to interview us. I actually received a few offers from companies like Lockheed Martin, but I took a job with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

I can't really give you detail on my new job, but I can tell you that the skills I learned in the Army such as leadership, situational awareness, analysis, and attention to detail, transition perfectly into my new job.

I miss the Army, but I LOVE my new job. I feel lucky that I had wonderful people at the Army Wounded Warrior Program help me transition from the Army to Civilian life. I can't thank my lovely wife, 549th Military Police Company and Soldiers, Mr. Watson, Mr. Gant, Ms. Berry, Dr. Michelle, and my Wheelchair Basketball coach, Willie Jackson, and family enough.

Today I speak for all Soldiers and Veterans trying to get a job. It's a big responsibility, and I want to leave you with one last thought and two quotes...

The Army teaches us how to be winners...in whatever situation. Whether we are under attack, on fire, disabled, or just filling out paperwork, we are winners. We are the best of the best. Who wouldn't want to hire the best?

Two Quotes to leave you with from Albert Einstein:

First Quote: Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex. It takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.

Second Quote: The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.

Thank you!

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