



U.S. Air Force

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY

SPEECH SERIES

Veterans Day 2011

A Day of Honor—A Day to Honor

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Good (morning, afternoon, evening) ladies and gentlemen, friends, families and veterans.

Welcome.

Today, on Veterans Day we gather here to recognize our Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard veterans who have sacrificed, both in war and in peace, to protect America and the American way of life. We are here to honor our brave men and women who have proudly served this great Nation, for they are the fabric from which our flag has been woven.

Armistice Day, as this commemoration was first proclaimed, recognized the day the ceasefire was signed during World War I, putting an end to hostilities on November 11, 1918, at 11:00 a.m., on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Armistice Day was first designated to honor those who fought in World War I, which was said to be “a war to end war.”<sup>i</sup> Unfortunately, it didn't. Following World War II and the Korean War, Congress replaced the word "Armistice" with "Veterans" in 1954 to honor all American veterans.

It is easy to recognize our veterans as active-duty servicemembers who are very visible due to our ongoing operations overseas. However, the majority of veterans we honor today no longer actively serve wearing a military uniform. Many have gone on to become our teachers, police officers, firemen and neighbors. Whether they wear the military uniform today, or wore it decades ago, veterans represent an unwavering dedication and exemplify the highest ideals of service to our Nation.<sup>ii</sup>

Today, on Veterans Day, we are still a Nation at war. October 7, 2011 marked the 10th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. Today, we honor the unwavering courage of the men and women who have served in our Armed Forces, including those in the ongoing efforts of securing our Nation and in their continuing fight against terrorism.

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Our men and women in uniform both past and present, have been, and are, the most powerful line of defense in all conflicts against enemies who set out to harm our way of life. The true strength of our military is the spirit and skill of the men and women who have worn the service uniforms of our Nation. They have answered the call to duty from all across America.

Over the course of the last year alone, our Airmen have remained focused on our missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in the fight against al Qaeda and its affiliate networks around the world. Airmen are justifiably proud to be part of the Joint team that finally brought Osama bin Laden to justice this year. At the same time, they have maintained constant vigilance defending America through our continuous air sovereignty, space, cyber, and nuclear deterrence missions.

But that's not all we asked our Airmen to do this year. In addition to these efforts, they have been busy demonstrating their capability to respond successfully to other unexpected events. This includes working with our NATO allies and other partners in operations in Africa, as well as providing timely disaster relief to our friends in Japan following the terrible earthquake and tsunami. Closer to home, our Airmen helped their fellow Americans battle wildfires, hurricanes, and other severe weather in the United States. Our Airmen, like all of our veterans, make us exceedingly proud each day.<sup>iii</sup>

Today, approximately 223,000 Airmen are actively engaged in some type of operation. That's roughly 43 percent of our Air Force. As you look at the numbers, it's easy to focus only on our Airmen who are far from home, separated from love ones for six or maybe 12 months, doing the Nation's work. But, Veterans Day is not only about recognizing those deployed Airmen, Veterans Day also recognizes the noble service of all servicemembers who report for duty every day to carry on the fight from the home front<sup>iv</sup>—and, all of our veterans past and present who have helped maintain the sovereignty of our Nation whether they are overseas or at home.

As our servicemembers depart from our shores, we look forward to their safe return home. But, we know that some of them will not. It is our responsibility to honor those who return home, especially our wounded warriors. And, we must never forget those who paid for our freedom with the ultimate sacrifice.<sup>v</sup> We must also honor the families of our veterans, who sacrifice in their own, often uncelebrated ways.

As long as we remain engaged in prolonged conflict, Airmen and family support will continue to be a key focus area of our Air Force leadership, and we will always recognize and honor their accomplishments and sacrifices to our Nation.<sup>vi</sup>

America is fortunate to have servicemembers who exemplify commitment to duty, willingly display valor under fire, and favor humility over glory. This notion of selflessness and sacrifice—the likes of which are exhibited each and every day by Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen—is the bedrock of our all-volunteer force.<sup>vii</sup>

To our veterans—our servicemembers of all ages—who have engaged in combat, stability, and humanitarian operations—we honor you. To those servicemembers who paid the ultimate price or who are still missing or unaccounted for—we honor you by remembering the sacrifices you and your families made for our great Nation.

So, today is a day of Honor and a day to Honor. On this day of celebration and reflection, I thank everyone who has worn a U.S. military uniform for their honorable service and for our freedom.

Thank you

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The American Pageant, 12th Edition, David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, Thomas A. Bailey, Ch 31, The War to End War, 1917-1918, American Public University ([www.apnotes.net/ch31.html](http://www.apnotes.net/ch31.html)); and Wikipedia.org; Woodrow Wilson ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodrow\\_Wilson#cite\\_ref-81](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodrow_Wilson#cite_ref-81))

<sup>ii</sup> Veterans Day, SAF/PA 2009 Air Force Public Affairs, Veterans Day, 2009, ([www.afoutreach.af.mil/afspeakers1/speech.asp?id=588](http://www.afoutreach.af.mil/afspeakers1/speech.asp?id=588))

<sup>iii</sup> 2011 State of the Air Force, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley Remarks at the Air Force Association's 2011 Air & Space Conference & Technology Exposition, National Harbor, Md., Sept. 19, 2011, ([www.af.mil/information/speeches/speech.asp?id=669](http://www.af.mil/information/speeches/speech.asp?id=669))

<sup>iv</sup> The Enlisted Perspective, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Roy, Remarks at the Air Force Association Conference and Technology Exposition, National Harbor Center at Oxon Hill, Md., Sept. 15, 2010, ([www.af.mil/information/speeches/speech.asp?id=615](http://www.af.mil/information/speeches/speech.asp?id=615))

<sup>v</sup> Not Forgotten, SAF/PA 2007 Air Force Public Affairs, Memorial Day, 2007, ([www.afoutreach.af.mil/afspeakers1/speech.asp?id=559](http://www.afoutreach.af.mil/afspeakers1/speech.asp?id=559))

<sup>vi</sup> 2011 Air Force Update, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz, Keynote speech during the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference & Technology Exposition, National Harbor, Md., Sept. 20, 2011 (<https://newafpims.afnews.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-110921-014.pdf>)

<sup>vii</sup> 2011 Air Force Update, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz, Keynote speech during the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference & Technology Exposition, National Harbor, Md., Sept. 20, 2011 (<https://newafpims.afnews.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-110921-014.pdf>)