



Captain Brian Kilgore, Glendale resident and West Point Graduate, Invited Speaker, during the patriotic presentation after the Village of Glendale Memorial Day Parade.

Memorial Day 2009 Presentation

Thank you, Mayor Hubbard, for your invitation to speak today and for your introduction. As stated, my name is Captain Brian Kilgore. I am sure I have played soccer with and refereed some of you or your children at Summit and Lake parks, and having been raised here in Glendale I count it an honor to have your audience today.

I am going to briefly speak on three topics: First: from my own lens a little how we, your men and women in uniform, are currently serving our nation's, and an international, noble cause; second: the affects of those who have served on our local world today; and third: the significance of Memorial Day and the price paid.

Our military is special in that it is not merely comprised of nationals, but rather by an amalgamation of different cultures and nationalities, individuals who see our country and its ethos as a beacon. My soldiers include a young man from Australia, who, visiting family in Florida in late summer 2001, knew that we would take action and do what was right: he joined our military. They also include a Canadian, my age, who wanted direction in his life while having the opportunity to have a lasting positive affect in the lives of others: he joined our military. They include a young Mexican-American from Chicago who wanted the opportunity to save lives on a battlefield, both American and Iraqi, both military and civilian. He did so by joining our military.

In six years the United States Army has struggled side-by-side with the Iraqi civil authority to create an environment that shows increasing benefits to a country of great inequalities. Over the last five years our military has recruited an Iraqi military and has handed over responsibility to it for the operations against those who seek to terrorize the citizenry and cause anarchy with indiscriminate violence. I have served in the US Army for nine years, more than three of which have been in Iraq. I was a platoon leader my first deployment, staff and company commander during the second deployment, and responsible, in my third deployment, for the shift of funding for reconstruction from your tax dollars (thank you, by the way) to Iraqi government itself, on projects ranging from agricultural development to water resourcing. What we, America, have given to the Iraqi people is an opportunity to enjoy many of the same freedoms that we take for granted. When I am asked what lasting impressions I have from my time over there, I often respond reflecting on the enthusiasm with which the population took the opportunity to hold a free election. I remember that despite threats on the lives of those who would go to vote, the lines to the ballots were long, some people having walked miles just to cast their vote. I also remember the stories of violence and atrocities committed against the people by the former ruling regime: daughters disappeared in Baghdad, families relocated or murdered because of their ethnicity in Kirkuk, and I remember the thanks given to me and my soldiers by the majority of the population for removing these threats from their communities and families. Every day our soldiers willingly face the peril of a stealthy unseen enemy in order to make this world a better and safer place.

John 15:13 tells us that "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

These men and women of the US military are represented here in this crowd before us. My neighbors here in Glendale, the men at my church, role-models in government and elsewhere, have set the precedent for service. In church yesterday were read the numbers of those fallen.

Operation Iraqi Freedom: 4,301 men and women
Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan: 680 men and women
Vietnam War: 58,209 men and women
Korea: 36,516 men and women
World War II: 405,399 men and women
World War I: 116,516 men and women

Of these numbers are 12 of our own, residents of Glendale. They did not go serve merely to find a job. They were not our outcasts. They were the best of us. They entered the service because they saw justice and right, and the opportunity toward a good greater than self. They recognized the merits of our country, the blessings that we enjoy, their friends and families, as worth defending and risking for.

Memorial Day was declared in 1866 by General Logan, Commander of the Armies, as a day to honor and remember the fallen of the Civil War. Initially named Decoration Day, it was intended as a day given to families and former soldiers to visit their friends and loved ones, specifically involved in the Civil War. After World War I the intent was, by decree, expanded to honor the service of all the soldiers, sailors, and marines of all conflicts.

Today we are here in recognition of Memorial Day. We share a common gratitude to those who sacrificed themselves to promote the causes of individual liberty, religious freedoms, community, and equality. We celebrate the lives and our memories of those who have sacrificed themselves because they loved those with whom they served. I ask you to take the time today to ask these veterans, your neighbors, for their memories of those left behind...more than anything to keep their memories fresh in our minds, and alive successively in yours.

Instead of my own words, I close with the words of President Lincoln, in recognition and appreciation of the sacrifice of the soldiers killed at Gettysburg: "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say." "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

Respectfully,
CPT Brian Kilgore