

*Speech given by RADM William L. Schachte, Jr (Ret.) at the Massing of the Colors, 7 March 2010  
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## **“America Under Siege”**

Good afternoon.

On this beautiful day in this beautiful Chapel, it's indeed an honor to be the speaker at this ceremony honoring the patriotism of all of those who have served our nation, especially those who have fallen. Concerning those who made the ultimate sacrifice, no words can adequately describe their sacrifice. But there are inspirational words, etched on the Army's 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Memorial in what was formerly known as Burma, that have special meaning this day as we remember those who lost their lives.

The Memorial was erected during World War II to honor those many valiant Americans who never returned home from the Burmese jungles and fields. The inscribed words are just as relevant, just as powerful today as they were when written.

The Memorial reads:

**“When you go home, tell them of us, and say – for your tomorrow, we gave our today.”**

Think about those simple words – for your tomorrow, we gave our today. Thanks to our noble citizen soldiers, freedom endures today, and it endures for future generations.

Our Wars have won for us every hour we live in freedom. Our wars have taken from us the men and women we honor today, and every hour of the lifetimes they had hoped to live!

As a nation we're now engaged in a war against an ideology, an ideology that is the personification of evil on this earth, radical Islam. And the battlefields are overseas and here in America. How did we get here? There were a number of international events that indicated we were on this path. The bombing of the Khobar Towers, and then Somali (Mogadishu) where we departed in disgrace. The bombings of US Embassies, the USS Cole bombing and on and on with no meaningful response from us to establish that attacks on Americans and our assets had consequences. No, America essentially remained silent. Then came 9-11.

So here we are now - - a free country at war against an evil ideology often being fought on our own soil.

And how as a nation are we currently responding? The GWOT or Global War on Terrorism is now known as Man Made Disasters. We're scheduled to be treating brutal Islamic terrorists in Gitmo as citizens of our great nation and trying them as criminals in our Federal courts, in spite of the fact that we have Supreme Court approved Military Tribunals that were set up to prosecute such terrorists. I guess it's really not surprising that our President approved our Attorney General's decision in this matter.

But, indeed, what do these actions say to the families of those who perished in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, much less the families of our brave men

and women who died in combat. I would add to this list, investigating and pursuing CIA agents whose interrogations resulted in information that was useful in defending our Country. Also on such a list should be declassifying interrogation methods, treating the Christmas Day bomber as a criminal and giving him Miranda warnings after 50 minutes of questioning - - are all ill-advised - - to be nice about.

I must admit that I was encouraged to hear the news reports that broke on Friday and carried over the weekend that the decision to turn these butchers over to our civilian courts is being re-evaluated by the administration. Nonetheless, the totality of this Administration's actions concerning terrorists, I submit, may be summed up as deeply disturbing, or as others have described their actions - - "disgraceful."

You know, one wonders if America will measure up to today's serious challenges. We really do face difficult issues. How do we return to those values of our forefathers that generations of veterans fought to preserve - - values that made America great. And how do we confront and how do we correct our National Debt? Indeed, our National Debt which should be better described as our national disgrace.

At the rate our Congress is spending borrowed money, we, as a nation, are headed for a major financial disaster. In fact, our unsustainable massive deficits and growing National Debt have the potential to accomplish something that veterans have prevented any foreign power from accomplishing, and that is bringing about the demise of America - - indeed the death of the American dream.

Conservative pundits familiar with the liberal voting record of our President, his radical associates and his world view have said that under his administration we entered the world stage as America. At the end of the Obama administration, we will depart the world stage as France. Let us all hope that these pundits are wrong.

What has happened to us as a nation? Some would say it is the arrogance of a government that is not responsive to its citizens, or a government that seems to be consumed with a desire to be liked by the world community and so forth. But is there something more than these and similar explanations that have led us to complacency, indifference and often silence? Is it something deep in the American soul. I would submit yes - - the moral illness that began in the 60's and 70's in this Country. A moral illness that attacked our nation's institutions and initiated a "Me First" philosophy of life that rejects authority, that rejects traditional values like home, church, nation and family. As a nation, we seem to remain in a period of pick and choose morality with a greater priority for material possessions than for moral and spiritual welfare. Some even say our schools no longer teach the 3R's, but the 3S's; safe sex, socialism, and self-esteem. And the current pluralism - - that is all opinions are equal - - is prevalent in our society today. It seems that the greatest sin now is the sin of intolerance. The problem here, of course, is that pluralism means there's no right or no wrong. Everything is relative. And that is not true, that is wrong. Even a casual observer of American history has to be shocked at how far the American concept of right and wrong has been degraded in just one generation.

But look at our founding fathers, many of whom were our first Veterans. They also experienced turbulence emerging at home and around the world when they set America on its course for democracy and freedom. Perhaps we can learn to put present day things in perspective if we go back in history and reflect on the legendary vision and ideals of our founding fathers who really began the experiment of "Constitutional Democracy" and created a new form of government by the people and for the people.

First, I would submit, is the profound observation of how deeply our early leaders believed in the power of Almighty God and relied on divine guidance to inspire them during the early and formative years of our Country.

Historically, as a nation, we probably owe the most to one man, George Washington. His bravery in battle, his perseverance in hardship, his patience and wisdom are exemplary models for anyone in a national leadership role, and when he announced his final farewell from public life on September 17, 1796, he stated: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable." He also stated that "It is impossible to govern rightly without God and the Bible."

All of the truly great leaders of our country were clear in their own personal realization of the connection between God and our nation's destiny. Our ancestors realized America was nothing more than a reflection of its citizens and their beliefs. They knew that without faith in God there could be no true virtue, no dreams, no hope and democracy could not long endure. Our Country's truly great people, who were pillars of strength in the moral structure of America, believed in a higher power, and they had the courage to express that belief in their words, their writings, and their deeds.

It has been said that those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it. From this background, I'd like to mention Alexander Frasier Tytler, an obscure historian, who was born in Scotland in 1748. It is questionable whether he wrote an essay in 1802 about the decline and fall of the Athenian Republic. Nonetheless, irrespective of who actually authored the observation, the quote is indeed relevant to us today. The quote is: "A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public Treasury with a result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy always followed by dictatorship."

Speaking of the Athenian Republic and Greece, other observers of history refer to Lord Kenneth Clark, recognized as an authority on culture and civilization, who wrote a classic simply titled "Civilization." These observers point out that in "Civilization" he repeatedly refers to the fact that nations and societies are but collections of individuals, a fact understood by the Founders of our country. They further understood that it is the collective health and positive attitudes of the people that make up the very innards of a nation.

Observers are quick to point out that to the degree that individuals of a culture fear introspection and honesty, so in a like manner will that country. It has been recognized that as an individual forsakes the privacy of his own decision-making power concerning his destiny and begins to call on outer forces for protection, so does the national consciousness. When individuals fail to believe in themselves they cry out for Big Government to come and rescue them.

Many, of course, have a neurotic fear of government. This fear may well be justified. But, as history reveals, when individuals lose their confidence, anonymous "leadership" groups almost automatically take over. Clearly the problem is not with Big Government, but with a lack of Big Individual.

Indeed, we can learn many lessons about confidence and survival from the history of other nations. Observers of history point out that there was nothing the ancient Greeks, for example, thought they couldn't do. We not only draw from them the intellectual concept of democracy and personal freedom, but even the underpinnings of that concept: the belief in the dignity of individual man. We take that so much for granted today - - at least in the abstract - - that it is nearly impossible for us in modern

society to understand how radical these concepts must have been in that ancient time of kings and despots. Also coupled with that was the universal belief that magic and the supernatural whim of the gods ruled lives and controlled events.

Other observers of history refer to Edith Hamilton; one of the great scholars of Greek culture, who pointed out that scarcely a generation after the incredibly heroic battles of Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis, the Greek culture could no longer inspire such feats. Their culture was on the wane. She pointed out that people had lost their ideals, their energy and the confidence to be larger than life. They thus succumbed to the role of mediocrity and surrendered the giant that was in them.

Others referring to her writings point out that great works of art or other expressions of a healthy society are not just the products of a gifted few. They are the products of the society. To a large extent the prevailing attitude of the culture dictates who and what that culture will be. When individual courage, individual confidence, and the individual will to succeed cease to be the norms of existence, history has demonstrated that it's only a matter of time before that culture exhausts itself.

Another alarming message comes from Benjamin Disraeli who observed: "The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through the following sequence:

From bondage to spiritual faith;  
From spiritual faith to great courage;  
From courage to liberty;  
From liberty to abundance;  
From abundance to complacency;  
From complacency to apathy;  
From apathy to dependency;  
From dependency back to bondage."

All Americans must be committed to getting America back on course. We owe it to those who gave their very lives for this great Country, and we owe it to ourselves and our children and future generations to become involved and to be prepared to make difficult choices and sacrifices that are needed. We must reclaim and awaken the giant that is within each one of us. The Tea Party movement seems to indicate that finally we may be headed in the right direction.

Many of you in this audience have contributed to the greatness of America. You and the generations preceding you have given America a legacy of freedom and prosperity. I challenge you to draw on your experiences and your energy to help our great nation mount the obstacles in the road ahead, to awaken that giant that is within each one of us and do our part for America - - and to get involved.

The restoration of the moral fabric of America can be accomplished by a return to the moral values of our forefathers. Such a return begins with you and it begins with me. It begins with our own integrity. By the way, defining "integrity" is very simple to me. It means doing what you know is right when no one else is looking or when no one else will ever find out. Also, integrity means doing what you know is right when everyone around you is compromising. And having integrity means that if you have to compromise to stay on the team, you will realize that you are on the wrong team and you will have courage to walk away from that team.

In conclusion, I want to stress that time is running out. Now is the time to take our Country back and return to our traditional values, and it begins with each of us, in our homes, and should be enriched and

strengthened by our churches and synagogues and, yes, by our schools. Each of us must do our part to get our Country back on the road to greatness. To return us to what we once were - - "One nation under God."

It has been my honor to address you. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.