

**General Pace's Extemporaneous Remarks during  
Armed Forces Farewell Tribute in honor of  
General Peter Pace, USMC, 16<sup>th</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

**And an Armed Forces Hail in honor of  
Admiral Michael Mullen, USN, 17<sup>th</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

SUMMERALL FIELD, FORT MYER, VIRGINIA  
11:40 A.M. EDT, MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2007

**MR. :** Ladies and gentlemen, General Pace. (Applause.)

**GEN. PACE:** Thank you.

President Bush, Vice President and Mrs. Cheney, Secretary and Mrs. Gates, Secretary and Mrs. Rumsfeld, to our service secretaries and our deputy secretary of Defense, my fellow joint chiefs and our senior enlisted advisers, and everyone who's here who has been mentioned already, whether you be a very important person in the eyes of some, every single one of you here is a very important person in my eyes. And I thank you for coming today on this incredible day to witness the transfer of responsibility from the 16th chairman to the 17th chairman and to pay our proper respects to two incredible Americans who've spent the greater part of their adult lives serving their country -- Lynne Pace and Deborah Mullen. (Applause.)

Mr. President, I thank you, Secretary Gates and Secretary Rumsfeld for your trust and confidence in me. For six years, multiple times a week, you have allowed me to speak my mind -- not only allowed but encouraged, expected that I would give you my best military advice. All of us, certainly all of the joint chiefs and all of your combatant commanders, appreciate the way that you've listened. We wish that all of America could see their president and our commander in chief making decisions after listening very carefully.

And for all of us who wear the uniform, thank you for not only making tough, right decisions, but also for standing behind us and supporting us and never wavering once you've given us a mission to do. We thank you for that, sir. (Applause.)

I want to thank the troops in formation in front of us today. You and the 2.4 million of your fellow service members -- active, guard and reserve who serve our nation always -- always -- freely give more than anyone could ever demand. This nation is so fortunate to have you. We have great pride in what you do, and I am humbled to have had the opportunity to walk side by side with you, to serve with you and to represent you.

And to your families: Everything I learned about military families I learned in my own kitchen. I know that when we deploy our families wait at home and pray for our safe return. And when we return, they stand in the background and watch us get awards and promotions and pretend they had nothing to do with it. And when we're tired, they dust us off and put us back in the fight and remind us how important what we are doing is for the nation and for the world. Our families serve this nation as well as anyone who has ever worn the uniform, and we owe each of them a great debt -- we thank you. (Applause.)

Thanks, too, for the employers. We've got an incredible Guard and Reserve, and we're using them in defense of the nation. And they are so good that it's obvious that the places from which they came, the businesses around the United States have holes in their leadership structure that are there because great American patriots have taken off their suits and their ties, put on the uniform of the United States, and they're doing their nation's business. We thank the employers for their support. (Applause.)

It seems like now is a time where everyone's interested in what you did right and what you did wrong, in retrospect. Well, as my president has pointed out, I did a pretty good job of picking my parents. My dad came here from Italy. My mom's family was here from before the Revolution. Between the two of them, they instilled in us a love of this country and an understanding of the possibilities.

And through their hard work, four children -- our sister the first one in the family to get a college degree, first one to get a master's degree; most recent one, as in two years ago, to get a law degree.

My brother led me into the Naval Academy -- preceded me into the Naval Academy, preceded me into the Marine Corps, got wounded twice in Vietnam, left after the service and became a very accomplished and successful businessman.

My younger brother, a very accomplished lawyer, a very accomplished businessman, and although he is in his 50s, to me, he's my younger brother, and I just enjoy watching him clear his own path through life.

I tell you all those things not to be proud of my own family, which I am, but to just recognize the incredible benefits that our nation bestows on those who come to our shores and those who live here and work hard.

My wife, Lynne, has been at my side. And I must confess, since folks are interested in what you did wrong in life, I met Lynne in 1967; I made a huge mistake waiting four years to ask her to marry me. Assuming she would have said yes sooner, I could be married 40 years now instead of 36. Shame on me.

She has raised two incredible children: our daughter, Tiffany, who through grit and determination just finished her CPA and is a wonderful young lady; our son, Peter, six years active-duty Marine, now in the Marine Corps Reserve, successful businessman; and our daughter-in-law, Lynsey.

Again, this country has so much to offer to those of us who live here.

During my four years as vice chairman, I had the great privilege of being a wingman for a great American, General Dick Myers. Dick always treated me not as someone who should be flying a little bit behind and a little bit to the left, but as someone who should be flying side by side with him.

I hope that I did the same thing with the great submariner, the admiral who will forevermore by presidential decree be known as "Admiral G," Admiral Ed Giambastiani, whose exploits under the water are known by very few, but those who know have incredible admiration for what he has done in the service of our country. And all of us had the privilege of watching him serve above the water as vice chairman with incredible intellect. And now General "Hoss" Cartwright, United States Marine, one of the smartest men on the planet, working side by side with Admiral Mullen.

Mike Mullen and I go back a long way. Mike Mullen introduced me to my wife. She was dating his roommate. (Laughter.) So as I've got it figured, had she gone with the roommate instead of me, we'd be having a change of responsibility ceremony today between two roommates instead of between two folks who go back a long way.

Mike Mullen is as fine an officer as this nation has ever produced. He has a keen intellect, he has the grit and the ability to speak his mind and to speak in a way that is clearly understood. Mike, although I regret to give up the reins of responsibility, I am so proud that you are the one who will take on the responsibilities as 17th chairman. Thank you for your service. I look forward to supporting you in whatever way I can, probably most of all just staying out of your way.

And last, but certainly not least, the first senior enlisted adviser to the chairman, my battle buddy, Sergeant Major Joe Gainey, United States Army. Every time I've had responsibility, whether it be as a platoon leader in Vietnam, where Sergeant -- then-Sergeant E-5 Reed B. Zachary and now retired Sergeant Major Zachary was my platoon sergeant, all the way up until I become chairman, every time I had responsibility, I had an incredible enlisted leader partner. If I can take credit for anything, it is, I did try to listen to what they told me. And having Sergeant Major Gainey out and about, listening, talking, and telling me not all that he knew but the things that I needed to know, has made all the difference for me. And I thank you, Sergeant Major, for your leadership. (Applause.)

I won't talk to you about 40 years, but I think I will talk a couple of words about 40 days, the last 40 days, and the things that I have done in those last 40 days that have impressed upon me why it is that we love our country so much.

I had the opportunity to go to the 4th Marine Division reunion. This division was activated during World War II. It was on active duty for two years. It fought a total of 60 days in places like Guam and Saipan and Iwo Jima. And in 60 days of combat, that one U.S. Marine Corps division lost almost 18,000 on the battlefield. They were decommissioned in November 1945. Happens to be the month I was born.

Through an accident of birth, I was born in the United States of America. Through the incredible valor of the members of that Marine division and so many other Marine, Army and Air Force and Coast Guard and Navy units across the globe that fought during World War II, through their valor, I was born free.

I went to NATO. It's not unusual that I go to a NATO meeting. This one was my last. I was sitting there with my fellow chiefs of defense, and I was looking around the room -- 26 countries now, flags and name plates from countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary, Poland. And I sat there and I thought to myself, how wonderful that we have NATO as an alliance, how sad that the newest countries had to crave for their freedom for so long, and how instructive that those who have most recently joined that table of freedom are the most energetic in trying to share that freedom with those around the globe who do not yet have it.

I got to see a movie, the pre-screening of "The Kite Runner." It tells about Afghanistan before, during the Soviet occupation and the Taliban rule. If we ever forget what it is that we're fighting against, just go see that movie. It will strengthen in you the understanding of the true nature of those who seek to dominate us.

I had a chance to be with the families of the fallen. There are no words that any of us can ever speak that will ease their pain, but I hope that in commemorating the lives of the fallen and in the way that we spend the rest of our lives, that we will pay respect to their sacrifice in a way that will give meaning to all that they fought for.

I visited troops in a hospital. You want a humbling experience? Visit the troops in the hospital. Unless you ask them about their wounds, they won't tell you. They want to know how their unit's doing, and they want to know how soon can they get back to be with their buddies.

I've visited troops in the field. And I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the platoon that I served with in Vietnam, in Iraq. Great young platoon leader

in command. What he was doing in my spot I don't know, but there he was, Silver Star recipient as an enlisted man now leading these Marines.

He was a wonderful bookend for me. To have seen those Marines in that platoon about two weeks ago and then last night at my house seeing the Marines from my platoon from Vietnam -- now, if you saw the guys from my platoon at Vietnam right now, you might think that they are middle-aged, sometimes a little bit overweight men; when I look at them, I see heroes, men who answered the call as those who serve today answer the call.

Whether it be the men from yesterday or the men from today and the women from today, they want to know one thing: Do the American people still support us? In the last 40 days, I've been with organizations like the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation that takes care of the children of the deceased; the Sentinels of Freedom who help those who are severely wounded assimilate into productive lives in our community; the USO, that for decades has provided entertainment and a bit of home to the troops overseas -- the answer is a resounding yes! The American people, no matter what they believe about the ongoing conflict, believe in their troops.

I had a glimpse of the future at Chaminade High School, talked to 1,700 young men -- clear-eyed, smart, sharp, looking forward to taking over their leadership positions in our country.

And lastly, I went to a wedding. It was a family wedding, but it was a typical American family wedding. One part of the wedding party was Italian American; the other was Indian American. And what struck me -- and this was just last Friday night -- was that the clear expectation of everybody in the wedding party was one of great hope and optimism for the couple that was getting married, for the possibility of them having children and the belief that this country would provide to them and their children and their grandchildren the same liberties and freedoms that we have enjoyed. We may not have been sitting there thinking about that precisely, but as you looked around the room, for me, I could not help think about what an incredible country where weddings and other ceremonies like that reflect on the pure optimism that rightly so pervades our nation.

I had the chance to participate in the process of our government, testimony in front of the Congress and press conferences. I would be less than honest if I told you I looked forward to either one of those. They are not fun. But it is a privilege; it has been a privilege to participate as an American citizen, to know that the senior military leadership of the country gets called in front of the Congress of the United States to answer is an important part, a fundamental part of our freedom. There is no country in the world that is free that does not have a free press; said differently, you cannot be free unless you have a free press. So the fact that sometimes questions are tough is tough, because it's right for our democracy.

The one part that worries me -- might sound a little out of my lane, but it impacts on every single member of the armed forces and all of our families, and therefore, I'll say it. Our democracy is strengthened by divergent views and dialogue about those views when that dialogue is conducted in a civil manner, in a gentlemanly way, in a way that allows people to argue on the merits of what they believe and to understand that what they believe is part of the answer, and if they have the willingness to cooperate, to find the right answer for our country. And what worries me is that in some instances right now we have individuals who are more interested in making somebody else look bad than they are in finding the right solution. They are more interested in letting their personal venom come forward instead of talking about how do we get from where we are to where we need to be.

And if we as a country -- (applause) -- if we as a country can accept the fact that, yes, fellow citizens have a right to object -- I can hear voices right now of folks out in the street who are exercising their right of free speech in this democracy to say what they want to say. And I take pride in knowing that the men and women on the parade deck in front of us are going to ensure that they continue to have that opportunity.

But I want them to understand -- (interrupted by applause). I just want everyone to understand that this dialogue is not about can we vote our way out of a war. We have an enemy who has declared war on us. We are in a war. They want to stop us from living the way we want to live our lives.

So the dialogue is not about are we in a war, but how and where and when to best fight that war to preserve our freedom and to preserve our way of life and to do so with the least damage to our own society and the least damage to those we're fighting against so we can -- we can put the pieces back together on the end of this. We will prevail. There's no doubt about that. (Applause.)

I am sad to leave. It is not that I am sad to put down any of the things that I just talked about. I simply will miss putting on this uniform, going to work each day and trying to do the right thing for PFC. Pace, wherever he or she may be serving. And I will miss being able to walk out and hug them and tell them I love them.

I asked the good Lord when I took over this responsibility to give me the wisdom to know what is right and the courage to do it. To the best of my ability, I've done that. I made a promise about 38 years ago to Guido Farinaro, Chubby Hale, Whitey Travers, Mike Witt, Little Joe Arnold, Freddie Williams, John Miller, that I would serve this country in whatever capacity I could for as long as I could, and try to do it in a way that would pay respect to the sacrifice that they made following Second Lieutenant Peter Pace in combat.

I am still in debt, but I leave today knowing that I have tried to fulfill that promise and in doing so have been led on an incredible journey.

God bless all of you who remain on active duty, and God protect the United States. (Extended applause.)