

**TALKING POINTS FOR THE
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
NAVAL RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS
COMMISSIONING CEREMONY
DECEMBER 17, 2004**

Thank you Captain Shortt.

Honored guests, proud parents, spouses, family and friends, university faculty members, staff and students of the University of New Mexico Naval ROTC Unit.

It is both an honor and privilege to be here today

When my staff first relayed the invitation to speak at this morning's commissioning ceremony, my immediate reaction was to say yes... and, then I began to wonder if I could still fit into my uniform.

Luckily, dry cleaning hasn't shrunk it too badly over the past couple of years.

More seriously though, as you might imagine, in my current job as the director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, our nation's most renowned institution for scientific research and national security, I'm not usually given many opportunities to participate in formal Navy Marine Corps ceremonies.

So, I am especially gratified that you would allow me to join you.

Moreover, I am deeply appreciative to have this chance to offer my personal congratulations to today's graduates.

Officer Candidate Edward Cruz Matos

Officer Candidate Michael Jordan...

Officer Candidate Nicholas Elliott...

Staff Sergeant Jeffrey Bauer

Midshipman Michael Simmons...

Midshipman Rogelio Arenas ...

Today is a great day for you and for your families. And, I want to make sure you know that today is also a great day for the Navy Marine Corps team and our nation. You are about to join the ranks of America's seagoing service and elite warriors - and the impregnable camaraderie forged among the brave men and women who have served our nation in both peace and in war.

By your hard work, dedication, perseverance, commitment and leadership, you have proven yourselves.

The fact that you have chosen to serve our country in uniform says something very important about each of you, your character and about your belief in the values we hold true.

Your decision also says something about your parents. About their willingness to support you in your decision and about their love for you and our nation.□□

To the parents, spouses, families and friends... today you join a much larger family. A family that is steeped in tradition and the history of our nation. None of this would be possible were it not for you. Your sons, husbands, brothers will need your continuing prayers and words of encouragement. You deserve much credit for their success, and you have every right to be extremely proud.

To the wives of today's married graduates, you have the toughest job of all. We who serve draw our strength from you. There is no doubt that you will play an important part in your husband's career as did my wife Joanne who sends her warmest greetings and encouragement. Whatever future circumstance you might face, remember... you will never stand alone.

The truth is freedom has never been free... it requires constant vigilance and defending by those willing to make sacrifices, by those who are courageous, noble and led by a spirit of service to mankind.

Years ago, when I received my commission, the world was a much different place. The Cold War divided the globe. Communism was on the march. In the world of superpowers, the Soviet Union stood as the single greatest challenge to global security and freedom. The lines of the battle were clearly drawn.

Today, in many respects, the world is a much more volatile place. The peace dividend many thought would come... never did... and the old world order was replaced with disorder,

New threats emerged, threats that if left unchecked, represent an even more insidious and indiscriminate threat to freedom everywhere, including here in America.

No one in my time dared to imagine that the Soviet Union would fall, no one allowed themselves to believe that the Berlin Wall would crumble, no one imagined the vast expansion of NATO, no one imagined that there would come a day when the vast majority of nations would be free.□

And sadly, no one believed for one moment that America would ever be attacked like we were on September 11th.□

Quite frankly, the challenges of this day present a new and tougher set of propositions which are much more complex and difficult.

Today's military leaders must be prepared to think boldly about the challenges they face... it takes a willingness to question the obvious... expecting the unexpected... and always, always relying upon the men and women who look to you for guidance and example.

I am confident that you are ready.□

I can remember when I reported to my first duty station I was filled with a sense of obligation, a sense of adventure and responsibility

I'm also reminded of a writing I came across as I was preparing for my visit with you today.

The writing was by John Stuart Mill, an 19th century intellectual and philosopher, reflecting on the truest blessings of this great nation... freedom, hope, courage, faith, a sense of purpose and duty to all mankind, and how he viewed a call-to-duty.

The saying read... "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature, and has no chance of being free unless made or kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

Make no mistake about it. Your service to this nation guarantees everything else... free enterprise and a free global market place... freedom to share ideas, freedom of speech, freedom to elect representation... freedom that fuels discovery and innovation... and yes, freedom that allows dissent.

When you put your uniform on each day, when you board your ship, when you enter your base, or prepare to fly a mission in harm's way... remember, you represent that which is best about our nation.

The future of our nation and freedom across the world is in your hands.

May God bless you and keep you safe. May God bless your families and friends. And, may God bless this great nation.