U.S. AIRBORNE SPEECH

FOR

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“I jump by parachute from any plane in flight. I volunteered to do it, knowing well the hazards of my choice.

I serve in a mighty Airborne Force-famed for deeds in war-renowned for readiness in peace. It is my pledge to uphold its honor and prestige in all I am-in all I do.”

These are some of the words of the U.S. Airborne Creed. The U.S. Airborne is made up of soldiers who have accepted the challenge to protect and defend by being dropped into battle to secure territory. Their actions must be swift and precise. They are sometimes described as “adrenalin junkies,” but their bravery and nerve goes far in protecting this nation and its citizens. Although the first mention of airborne troops is said to have been proposed by General Billy Mitchell shortly after World War I, as incredible as it may seem, Benjamin Franklin is actually believed to have come up with the concept of “sky soldiers.” In 1784, Franklin said, “Where is the prince who can afford so to cover his country with troops for its defense, so that ten thousand men descending from the clouds do an infinite deal of mischief before a force could be brought together to repel them?”

For almost one hundred years, our country has had the benefit of protection by the U.S. Airborne and the strategic deployment of airborne troops was critical to the triumph experienced by our country during World War II. The U.S. Airborne played a critical role in operations carried out on that fateful day, June 6, 1944. At 8.30 pm on June 5th, 20 C-47 aircraft carried troops to the Cotentin Peninsula in Normandy. These men formed the vanguard of the invasion that preceded the 13,000 troops that would tackle the ground fighting. Little did they know they would be met with German anti-aircraft fire, and that between adverse weather conditions and German Flak attack, the formations became disorganized and the paratroops missed their designated drop zones. Still they persisted and in the end, the disoriented landing ultimately worked in their favor as the US Airborne managed to confuse the Germans with their unexpected attack points.

That illustration is just a small example of the bravery and daring of the U.S. Airborne. These fine soldiers are all-volunteer and are trained in “Jump School” in Fort Benning, Georgia. School consists of a three-week course distinguished as Ground Week, where soldiers are trained how to literally land and “hit the ground running.” They are taught all about their “new best friend,” their parachute, and they also learn how to perfect their Parachute Landing Fall, otherwise known as PLF. The second week is Tower Week, and in this phase, the trainees continue to learn to jump from the 34-foot tower and advance to the 250-foot tower. They learn how to conduct a mass exit of an aircraft in mid-flight as well as emergency techniques to serve them in any scenario. The final week of Jump School is fittingly known as “Jump Week.” During this final phase of training, potential paratroopers must complete five jumps ranging from no load, also known as “Hollywood Style” to doing jumps in full combat gear and load. The course culminates in a brief graduation, where family members may be present to pin wings on the graduates, and within the next day or so, the brave new airborne soldiers accept their assignments and are deployed.

This country has been protected by our armed forces for generations and the U.S. Airborne has done an incredible and dangerous job in the service of the United States military. Every day, these brave soldiers are ready to be placed in seemingly impossible situations. The U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) has been a powerful presence in “every campaign fought by the U.S. Army.” From Iraq to Afghanistan, and every challenge in between and after, the U.S. Airborne has been present to be the “eyes and ears” of conventional combat forces, as General Norman Schwarzkopf has described. The “Quiet Professionals” proudly serve their country while living up to the motto of the Special Forces, which is “De Oppresso Liber, to Free the Oppressed.”

Thank you.