**ARMED FORCES SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BILL TAYLOR**

Hello everyone!!! I would like to thank all of you for being here today. As with most important and defining moments in a person’s life, it took me a while to get here and so it’s taken me a while to look back and think of all of the incredible opportunities, challenges and people that have gotten me to this point. There is no way I could have done anything I’ve accomplished without the love, support, mentorship, and inspiration I have received from those I’ve been blessed to know.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and thank my wife Tammy for always being there…. whether I was or not. No matter the assignment, no matter the distance between us, the thought of Tammy, “holding down the fort” at home kept a sense of home within me as well. Tammy, somehow, you never failed to “make it work.” You’ve managed to find the ways to adapt and adjust, even in the most trying of times. A wise person once said, “A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.” Thank you for being “**HOME**.”

To my parents, Bill and Beth, I’ve heard the quote, “I am part of all that I have met.” With you two, truer words cannot be said!!! You made me who I am, you encouraged me to be who I’ve become. Naturally, as parents, your words held weight, and whether you realized it or not, I **WAS** listening. I’ll never forget that Father’s Day, years ago, when my dad told me that for Fathers Day that year, he wanted me to join the military…. 34 years and a million miles down the road of life, here we are. I remember that each time I deployed, my father would share his wisdom…. “Don’t volunteer for anything,” and “Don’t pick up any wooden nickels.” … Well Dad, one out of two isn’t bad…. I never did figure out what a wooden nickel was or where to find them… As I look back on that Fathers Day, I can now see that I was the one that got the gift.

To my family, thank you for being here today and for your years of support and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for being there, keeping the sofa warm and the beverages cold and for providing the “Welcome home” that every person in the military cherishes.

To the men and women in the 272D…I mean it when I say it has been an absolute honor and pleasure to serve with you. Each and every one of you has left your mark…. I’ve learned, I’ve grown, I’ve experienced more than I could have ever imagined from knowing you. Whether or not it was spoken, I always felt like you had my back…. And I daresay that I feel confident that **NONE** of you would have allowed me to pick up any “wooden nickels” (**Wait for the laugh**). All of you are my “team” and whether we’re side by side or in different parts of the world, please know we are connected. All of you are part of the best E&I unit in the country, and don’t ever forget that. I look forward to hearing of all the great things you will do collectively and as individuals and know that I am with you, cheering you on.

I would have to say that the most important calling of my career was the time I worked at the US Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. There were some huge opportunities on that assignment, and by that I mean they seemed to be insurmountable challenges… I will never forget when, in the middle of one of Kabul’s not so friendly winters, contractors ripped up fourteen fiber optic cables with an excavator. It was thanks to the quick wit and the incredible resourcefulness of one very special man and wingman, MSgt Fernandez, that he and his team were able to restore power to the embassy and safe houses throughout the country. It was an incredibly daunting challenge, but you did it. It is people like MSgt Fernandez that set the gold standard for military service. Thank you for your support and partnership.

I want to give a special thanks to Col. Dominguez. Robert Browning said, “A man’s reach should exceed his grasp…” that’s one of the infinite things you taught me. Thanks to your wisdom and encouragement, I was able to live a bigger life, to stretch farther than I thought possible, to **GO FORTH BOLDLY**, and that has a ripple effect. I hope to be able to encourage and inspire those around me, thanks to the mentoring I received from you.

The poet, e.e. Cummings said, “It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” Well, here I am, standing at the threshold of my next adventures. I intend to use my time wisely and to take the priceless lessons I’ve learned throughout my service to encourage and inspire those I meet along the way. Whether that’s in the professional sector or in some capacity to support others, know that you have helped me to build the foundation I bring to others. Thank you all!!