**Goolsby Speech [EZ Speech No. 16290]**

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Remarks by Shasheshe Goolsby in observance of Memorial Day, 2017.

[if your weren’t introduced] good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name’s shashshe goolsby, and i’m [a/an] [subject?] instructor at the [name] base at fort lee.

[if you were introduced] Thank you [name of introducer] for that lovely introduction.

ladies and gentlemen . . . we are gathered here today at glendale national cemetary to observe memorial day, 2017. and i say “observe” instead of “celebrate,” because this is not a day for celebration, but rather a day to honor and give thanks to all those who’ve made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

since its inception in 1861, the medal of honor has been awarded to three thousand, five hundred and fifteen soldiers, sailors, marines, aviators, and coast guards-men. three hundred and eighty-seven of these heros are buried in arlington national cemetary in washington. one of them — corporal michael fleming folland, of richmond city, virginia — is buried right here at glenview.

corporal fleming’s courage and heroism are summed perfectly in the citation that accompanied his medal, which was awarded posthumously three years after he was killed in action in viet nam. i hope you’ll allow me to read that citation in full, not because it is special, but precisely because it’s so *typical* of all the men — and one woman! — who’ve been awarded this unique recognition:

*“for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. corporal foland distinguished himself while serving as an ammunition bearer with the weapons platoon of Company D, during a reconnaisance patrol mission. As the patrol was moving through a dense jungle area, it was caught in an intense crossfire from heavily fortified and concealed enemy ambush positions.*

*“as the partol reacted to neutralize the ambush, it became evident that the heavy weapons could not be used in the ramped fightin area. corporal folland dropped his recoilless rifle ammunition, and ran forward to join is commander in an assault on the enemy bunkers. the assaulting force moved forward until it was pinned down directly in front of the heavily fortified bunkers by machine gun fire. corporal folland stood up to draw enemy fire on himself and to place suppressive fire on the enemy positions while his commander attempted to destroy the machine gun positions with grenades.*

*“Before the officer could throw a grenade, an enemy grenade landed in the position. corporal folland alerted his comrades and his commander hurled the grenade from the position. When a second enemy grenade landed in the position, corporal folland again shouted a warning to his fellow soldiers. seeing that no one could reach the grenade, and realizing that it was about to explode, corporal folland, with complete disregard for his safety, threw himself on the grenade. by his dauntless courage, corporal folland saved the lives of his comrades, although he was mortally wounded by the explosion. corporal folland’s extraordinary herosim, at the cost of his own life, was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.”*

now, i rather suspect that before he enlisted, mike folland was probably just a regular kinda guy, an ordinary fellow. i don’t know if he was married or had a family. But I do know that, at the age of 20 years and three months, he had his whole life in front of him, a future full of hopes and dreams and, perhaps, even great accomplishments. but he volunteeered to put those hopes and dreams on hold to serve his country. i emphasize “volunteered” because mike folland didn’t *have* to do it. he didn’t *have* to be there. he didn’t *have* to volunteer. but he *did* volunteer, and he *did* go to viet nam, and he *did* serve his country with honor and bravery . . . and it cost him his life.

it is this sacrifice that we memorialize today. Not just mike folland’s, but that of the hundreds of thousands of other men and women who’ve served in our armed forced over the years. and in this age of an all-volunteer military, you have to ask: why do they do it?

well, as a 15-year and still-active member of the military, I think I can answer that in the first person.

we do it, first and foremost, because we love america, and we want to make sure that it remains the “land of the free.” we take pride in our service. we take pride in the skills we’ve learned and the discipline we’ve mastered. We know in our hearts that — whatever turn our lives might take in the future — we did our part in the military. We contributed. We did our best. And for those who, in lincoln’s words, “gave the last full measure of devotion,” we say in the sincerest way possible: thank you, thank you, thank you. and god bless america.

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