**McGrath Speech [No. 16035]**

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Remarks by Sergeant Major Chris McGrath as the valedictorian for the graduation of Class 25 from the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior En-listed Academy (JSOFSEA).

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[to the person who introduces you, if there is one] thank you very much, [name], for that kind introduction.

before i begin, i hope you’ll let me quickly acknowledge some very special guests who have joined us this [after-noon/evening]. they are [read each name and the per-son’s title/position/reason of importance.]

[lead the audience in applause, if appropriate]

ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, fellow classmates . . . it’s a mystery to me why i’m standing up here right now to give a brief valedictory address on behalf of the largest class of non-coms ever to grad-uate in one bunch from the j-sof academy — class 25. but i’m nonetheless honored by, and grateful for, the assignment.

in fact, i’m grateful for every single aspect of my tour at the academy, because that experience has made me both a better soldier and, i think, a wiser person.

i’m grateful, first of all, of course, to [name of person or group] who [was/were] mainly responsible for my appointment to the j-sof academy in the first place. i’m so very grateful for your confidence and your trust in me.

i’m also tremendously grateful for the wonderfully talented faculty of the academy, who know instinctively that adults learn best when they learn from one anoth-er; and that *everyone* in a room is smarter than any one of them is on his or her own. our teachers [to a man] were wonderful facilitators who had an instinctual grasp of the socratic method: they knew how to teach by asking.

of course, the most facile facilitator in the world can’t succeed if he’s facing a classroom full of bumbells. well, class 25 was anything but that! it was, in fact, one of the most intelligent, stimulating, sharing, and caring group of men [and women] i’ve ever met. i’m so very grateful to all of you, my fellow classmates, for being such great partners in learning, and for becoming such great friends in life.

i’m also grateful for the deep insights i gained at the academy about the true nature and complexity of the world’s interconnectedness, in terms of both military and political affairs. the key, of course, is that we make the most effective use possible of the networking capa-bilites that technology continues to provide to us.

nine-eleven is now sixteen years in the past; but the well-documented failures attending that event must continue to inform our policies and dictate our prac-tices with regard to information-sharing and joint planning, both within the U.S. government and with our strategic partners abroad.

this certainly was the primary impetus underlying the concept of a **joint, interagency, intergovenmental, and multinational** approach — or jiim [“jay-double-i-em”]. the key thing that must take place before any such concept to work in real, operational terms, is that the cooper-ating entities must finally decide — once and for all — to foreswear two of the most ancient, ludicrous, and self-destructive practices ever followed both military, governmental, and corporate institutions, namely: the “cover your ass” syndrome and the “protect your se-crets” syndrome (or the “secrets-are-power” syndrom).

if we learned anything through our coursework and learning exercises at the academy, “cya” and “pys” have no place in the modern military. there’s too much at stake now. to cover your own ass instead of your coun-try’s is, at the very least, a dereliction of duty; and at the worst, damned near treason. and keeping secrets can be downright deadly.

Winston churchill said during the second world war that, ***“In wartime, the truth is so precious that she must be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”*** there is a pro-found wisdom in that statement. but history has *also* shown that, by keeping secrets from each other, the allies in world war two caused grievous harm to one another; thwarted one another’s intelligence-gathering and “unconventional warfare” initiatives; and failed to take advantage of targets of opportunity because the one military branch that *knew* about the targets didn’t *tell* the one military branch who could do something about the targets where they were.

aeschylus said, in his play, *agememnon*, ***“he who learns must suffer.”*** well, the country and the world learned a helluva lot on that tragic morning of nine-eleven , 2001; and god knows, we’ve suffered for our mistakes. if i’ve taken nothing else away from my sabbatical at the j-sof academy, iit s that our job as soldiers is to make sure that a travesty like nine-eleven never happens again, anywhere in the world; and that the key to ensur-ing that we keep succeeding in this mission is three simple words: *communication . . . cooperation . . . and coordination.*

thank you.

and now, it’s my very pleasant duty to ask [name and title] to come to the podium so that — on behalf of the entire J-sof class 25 — i can present you with this stu-dent-designed plaque, which reads: “[read the inscrip-tion]”; and we also hope you’ll accept this check for [amount, if you choose to disclose it] as our class’s donation to the special operations command memorial fund.

thank you, sir!

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