

*Remarks for the
Armed Forces Museum Dedication
October 27, 2001*

General Lipscomb, General Walker, Judge Williams, Senator Inouye – this is a great day for the men and women of Mississippi who have served their nation in the armed forces.

Today, we dedicate not just a building, but a commitment to the memory of those who have served and those who will serve.

This commitment is part of our debt to the members of the armed forces – a debt for services rendered in peace and at war, at home and abroad.

Our commitment, our memory, extends to soldiers across time – soldiers like First Lieutenant John William Heard of Woodstock, Mississippi, who fought in the Spanish-American War; Corporal James D. Slaton of Laurel, who fought in Italy in World War II; and Lance Corporal Roy Mitchell Wheat of Moselle, who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

These three soldiers, along with fourteen Mississippians, are winners of the Congressional Medal of Honor. We honor their memory. We also honor the memory of the thousands of others who fought and died without the accolades and the medals; their contribution is equally important.

Today, we are again dealing with war as a nation, a war with an enemy like none other we've faced. I am confident we will win, because I know the quality of soldiers fighting this war.

I know our future is secure, because our faith is strong.

I know the commitment soldiers across Mississippi have made to this conflict, and I thank them for it.

They are continuing a long Mississippi tradition of military excellence, one that reaches back through the years and looks forward into this new century.

They are the men and women of the Task Force 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry – the “Task Force Rifles” – now serving a peace-keeping mission in Bosnia. They are the seventh-oldest infantry regiment in the United States Army, and they’re still going strong.

They are the men and women of the 186th Air Refueling Wing out of Meridian and the 255th Air Control Squadron out of Gulfport, who have answered the call to action in the current conflict.

They are every man and woman who has ever sworn an oath to protect the United States.

This building we dedicate today is part of our effort to honor these soldiers, their service, their dedication, and their memory.

It reminds us we can never forget the price to be paid to live free.

We are honored today to have with us a great American who understands that price.

As a 17-year-old, he spent a week handling civilian casualties at Pearl Harbor. As a soldier with the U. S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, he fought in Italy and France against German forces.

He lost his right arm serving his country.

He has won the Bronze Star, Purple Heart with cluster and 12 other medals and citations for his military service.

And, he shares something in common with Lieutenant Heard, Corporal Slaton and Lance Corporal Wheat – he too is a recipient of the Medal of Honor.

Senator Daniel Inouye served his country in war, and he continues to serve today as a United States Senator from the great state of Hawaii.

It is my great pleasure to welcome to Mississippi and Camp Shelby the distinguished senator from Hawaii, Senator Daniel Inouye.