

*Remarks for the
American Legion
May 19, 2003*

- Recognize Clyde Hancock, veterans of
American Legion Post 1
 - Recognize Sonny Montgomery / thank
for dedication and commitment to
America's military

We're celebrate not only the 84th anniversary of this post – we celebrate the men and women of America's fighting forces who have served, and serve still, in the fight for freedom.

America has just won another war. Our sons and our daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, answered the call of their country to defend the principles of freedom and justice that we hold dear.

We watched as soldiers deployed to the battlefield. We watched as our citizen soldiers – the men and women of the Mississippi National Guard and Reserves – boarded buses and airplanes en route to service in places we didn't or couldn't know.

They have been deployed to locations in the Middle East, in Asia, and to locations that we can't reveal. But, know this – wherever they are, they are well-trained for the work ahead, and they'll get the job done.

As commander-in-chief of the Mississippi National Guard, I can't express enough the pride I feel knowing that our soldiers are serving their nation.

This much I do know for sure – when America needs their very best, they make the call to Mississippi.

Today, there are new veterans who have experienced combat in Afghanistan and Iraq.

They responded to the call to weed out those who would attack the innocent – and then run and hide in a cave. They responded with their own “rolling thunder” – and it’s a thunder that is echoing still in the ears of our enemies. They will never forget it.

In times of war, there are those who see a hopeless end; I see an endless hope. America is the greatest nation in the history of mankind, and nothing will change that. America is not just a country. It is an ideal, a principle. That principle remains strong today and forever – and it remains strong because our sons and our daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, are fighting to protect it.

I pray, as you do, for the safe return of our soldiers from this conflict. I pray for the wisdom and leadership of our president and those who serve with him. And, I pray for peace.

May God bless our state, our nation and our people.