



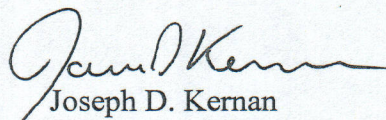
SENIOR MILITARY ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Let me begin with thanking Dave Adams for affording me the opportunity to send a short note to recognize and honor the four World War II destroyer sailors he is with tonight—Wayne O'Brien, Warren Tripp, Bob Plassachert, and Mac Mclain. Your ship, the USS Samuel S. Miles, certainly distinguished herself in the Pacific during World War II, operating around the Marshall Islands and earning 8 Battle Stars. Your fellow destroyer sailors of today, where I started my career, view your exploits with envy as it is unlikely they will enjoy the pleasure of sending 3 enemy aircraft and a submarine to collect barnacles at the bottom of the ocean. We do however find ourselves in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf, assaulting, launching missiles and dropping bombs on terrorist training camps, and remarkably, chasing pirates off the coast of Somalia.

Regardless of the operations we are engaged in today, service men such as yourselves, now commonly referred to as part of our country's "Greatest Generation" -- are the legacy that we in the military endeavor to carry on and emulate every day of our service. Your willingness to serve in a time of war and your countless acts of courage and selflessness are the tenants that preserve our great nation and inspire us. We in the Navy, and every citizen of this country, owes you a great debt of gratitude—not to mention virtually every country whose freedom you fought for in World War II.

Most often, those that serve in our armed forces have other career choices---but they consciously chose to serve others instead of themselves and a nation that is the envy of others. This is because we have brave citizens, like you, that voluntarily fight and die to preserve our freedom. You are the consummate example of this and we thank you for leading the way. You can be enormously proud of the sailors of today's Navy, serving honorable at sea and on the ground in non-traditional roles to assist in the efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their courage and commitment are lessons well learned from your generation. Of the four Medals of Honor awarded for U.S. Military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, two were earned by sailors.

Thank you again for your selfless service and the timeless example for all to follow. God bless you all and your shipmates from the USS Samuel S. Miles.


Joseph D. Kernan
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy