**Armed Forces Day**

**(Greetings)**

**It's a privilege to stand before you today on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars as we approach a truly significant occasion: Armed Forces Day.**

**Today, I would like to begin by asking all of you to observe a moment of silence for all of those whose lives were cut short while defending our nation. Let us also pause to think about the families who loved and cherished them … and consider the weight of their loss****.**

**(Pause)**

**While Memorial Day honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice and Veterans Day celebrates all who have served, Armed Forces Day, observed on the third Saturday of May, holds a unique and vital place in our national consciousness. It is a day dedicated to paying tribute to the men and women proudly wearing our nation’s uniform … our active duty, Guard and Reserve soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, Guardsmen and Guardians.**

**Armed Forces Day, first officially celebrated in 1950, was born from the vision of unifying the individual service days into one powerful expression of appreciation for our active-duty personnel. It serves as a powerful reminder that our freedom is not a given; it is actively defended every minute of every day by dedicated individuals who stand ready to protect our nation's interests and our way of life, often at great personal risk and sacrifice. Whether they wear the colors of the United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force or Coast Guard, they work tirelessly safeguarding our shores and skies and projecting peace and stability across the globe … their commitment is unwavering, their dedication absolute.**

**However, our responsibility to those who serve doesn't end with lavish hometown parades and heartfelt speeches like the one I give today. We must actively cultivate a culture of understanding and appreciation in future generations. Why is this so crucial? Because the torch of freedom is passed down through knowledge and remembrance. If our children and grandchildren do not understand the sacrifices made, if they do not grasp the importance of a strong and ready military, then the very freedoms we cherish could be taken for granted, even eroded.**

**To do this, we must encourage open conversations in our homes and classrooms about the vital past, present and future role our armed forces play. We must not only share the stories of courage, resilience and dedication that define the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, we must also share our own stories of service, and all we’ve overcome since returning home.**

**By fostering this understanding, we instill a sense of respect and gratitude that will endure, ensuring that future generations recognize the immense debt we owe to those who stand on the front lines.**

**So, how do we, as a nation, continue to show our appreciation and gratitude, not just on Armed Forces Day, but every day? The answer lies in a multitude of actions, both big and small.**

**Whether we’re veterans or simply proud Americans, we must put our time and support behind organizations that provide vital resources, assistance and camaraderie to our active-duty personnel and their families. Organizations that advocate for them and work to make their life better … organizations like the VFW. We can also volunteer our time and skills to help military families in our communities. We can actively listen to the experiences of those who serve and seek to understand the unique challenges they face. We can advocate for policies that ensure our military is well-equipped, well-trained and well-cared for.**

**Armed Forces Day is more than just a holiday; it's an opportunity – an opportunity to reflect on the vital role our active-duty military plays, an opportunity to educate our youth about their sacrifices, and an opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support for our brave men and women before, during and after their service to our country is done. Let us seize this opportunity, not just on this one day, but every day, to show our deep and abiding gratitude for the brave men and women who stand guard, ensuring the blessings of liberty for us all. Let us ensure that their service and sacrifice are never forgotten. Thank you.**

**-VFW-**