

SGT. KYLE WHITE-HALL OF HEROES INDUCTION CEREMONY

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT WORK

To the family and friends, acquaintances and comrades in arms of Sgt. Kyle White. Good Morning on this absolutely splendid day in May.

It is singularly an honor for me to represent Secretary Hagel, who is a former Army sergeant. He would be right here if he was in the country, but he is out of the country today and has asked me to represent him. I do so with great honor. Joining the Chief, Under Secretary Carson, Sgt. Maj. Chandler, Gen. Paxton, veterans and current members of our Armed Forces, the Soldiers of Chosen Company, and all those who know Sgt. White. We gather here today to honor his extraordinary heroism.

Now, quite frankly there's little more that I can add to the stirring account that General Odierno gave of the battle of 09 November 2007 and the selfless and heroic actions that Sergeant White performed that day for which he was awarded our nation's highest award for bravery -- the Medal of Honor. Nor can I improve on the heartfelt explanation of Under Secretary Carson who explained how Sgt. White embodies the very best of what makes all Soldiers, as well as Marines, Sailors, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen so singularly special and part of the greatest Armed Forces that this world has ever seen.

So as I prepared for this speech, I asked myself, what I might add to this gathering and I decided to pull on a little bit of the string that both the chief and the under secretary talked about.

The unbelievably small and extraordinary brotherhood that Sgt. White has entered and what it means to all of us who have served the nation.

Secretary Carson mentioned the first Medal of Honor was awarded in 1863 in the midst of one of the greatest catastrophes our nation has ever had -- our Civil War. And perhaps, fittingly for the audience today, it was awarded to another soldier the first one, Pvt. Jacob Parrott, Company K, 33rd Ohio Infantry, one of six survivors of the daring raid that the under secretary talked about, sent 200 miles behind enemy lines to disrupt Confederate railroad traffic.

Since then, 40 million Americans -- men and women -- have either volunteered or been drafted to serve in times of war spanning from 1863 and the remainder of that bloody Civil War to the Spanish American Wars to WWI, WWII, Vietnam, the first Persian Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan and countless small, bloody wars and battles around the globe.

Of those 40 million servicemen and women, only 3,488 -- counting Sergeant White -- have been awarded the Medal of Honor. Now I want you to think about that for just one second.

Since 1863, we have awarded this medal less than 3,500 times reserved for a very, very select few who have responded above and beyond the call of duty as outlined so eloquently by Gen. Odierno and risk their lives in selfless acts of bravery. In all of WWII, only 464 medals were

awarded. Korea 133. In Vietnam 246. Of the 2.5 million service members who've deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq since the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001. Sgt. White is the 14th recipient of this honor.

That is why, by custom, every service member, regardless of rank, regardless of station, stands and salutes anyone who wears the pale blue medal adorned with stars around their neck. It is also why we consider the Hall of Heroes such a hallowed and storied place because it represents the highest Soldierly virtues of literally millions of men and women who have risked their own lives and often given them for their country and their brothers and sisters in arms in battle.

Sgt. Kyle as the President of the United States said yesterday and recounted by Gen. Odierno today, your inspiring actions in that narrow pass in Afghanistan, in that cold day in November have proven yourself worthy to be a member of this select group.

Secretary Hagel and I and everyone in the Department regardless if they're a Soldier couldn't be prouder for you or your unit and your Army. So this is a little unscripted, but I ask Sgt. White for you to stand and face the crowd and I'd ask that everyone who has served in uniform, and is either in uniform or not, to stand with me and salute this American hero today.

Hand salute. Ready to.

And finally they've been recognized here today several times and I think by his very actions that day in November as well as the metal bracelet that Sgt. White wears around his wrist every day.

I think that I could confidently speak for him and ask that we all pause once more again and offer a moment of silence or prayers for the comrades Sgt. White lost on that fateful day on 9 November. Capt. Ferrara United States Army, Sgt. Mersman United States Army, Cpl. Langevin United States Army, Cpl. Rouque United States Army, Sgt. Lancour United States Army, and Sgt. Bocks United States Marine Corps.

Sergeant White, these fine young men, your fellow warriors -- your brothers-in-arms -- although no longer of this Earth, are going to be with you forever. I'm sure they're toasting you now, applauding your life that you've lived since their deaths and cheering your future accomplishments. After all, the very purpose of this award is to celebrate in both gratitude and remembrance. So Kyle, let this award mark not only your bravery, but the bravery and memory of your fallen brothers in arms.

I hope that all Americans come to know your service [and] to know the exceptional courage you displayed on behalf of your fellow soldiers and Marines and to witness the example you've set as one who answered the call to service, completed your mission, transition to civilian life with grace, purpose and honor. Your story represents the very, very best of the American fighting men and women and preserves the memory of your comrades. May your medal remind you of the tremendous good your service has brought this far and of the limitless things Secretary Hagel and I know will bring in the future.

On behalf of Secretary Hagel, thank you, Kyle. May God bless you and your family, and all those like you in the greatest Army on the planet, who volunteered to serve and fight our nation's foes wherever they may be found.

Thank you all and God bless you.