Independence Day 2015 – Let Freedom Ring

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Yesterday, many Americans had a day off work and began a three-day weekend as the nation celebrates Independence Day, the birthday of United States. Families and friends traditionally gather for beer, hot dogs, ice cream and fireworks.

July 4th celebrations are wonderful, but I think we should also take the occasion to think about the handful of brave men and women who, 239 years ago, risked their lives, families, businesses, farms and homes to throw off the shackles of high taxes, tyranny and oppression that had been imposed on Americans by England’s King George III and Parliament. We should also give some serious consideration to the rise of terror, which is becoming more and more commonplace around the world. I, like many others, fear we are neglecting our hard-won freedom. We have lost and continue to lose much more of it than we seem to realize.

The Declaration of Independence is an eloquent statement, and in today’s world of computers, it is hard to believe that it was hand-written on parchment, using a quill dipped repeatedly into an inkwell.

Well over two centuries after it was written, the Declaration still stirs emotions. “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

The Declaration goes on to list 18 examples of tyranny imposed by King George III on the 13 American colonies and their people, including the charge that “He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.”

I am sorry to report that that description sounds much like what is happening in America today.

Are we not seeing “a multitude of New Offices” and “swarms of Officers” imposing punitive taxation and new, often oppressive regulations that are complicating our lives and dragging down our economy?

There has been an immense growth in the number of federal regulations, particularly over the past seven years. Would Outrigger Enterprises Group exist today if Roy and Estelle Kelley had had to deal with 190,000 pages of regulations and 75,000 pages of tax code when they opened the Islander Hotel in 1947?

Regulations create costs that are passed along to consumers in the price of products and services needed by every man and woman in our nation. Think about this as you buy hot dogs at the grocery store for your backyard barbecue. The prices of meat and many other items are hitting all-time highs!

And then we have nearly overwhelming evidence of incompetence and outright fraud and corruption in many government agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Internal Revenue Service, and Immigration and Naturalization Service.

To sum it up, have we not allowed, perhaps even encouraged, another oppressive government to gradually take the place of the one we overthrew more than two centuries ago?

But we also have frightening evidence that the international terrorist organization ISIS is taking its blood-soaked activities all the way around the globe. This week there were three separate terrorist attacks.
Federal tax laws and regulations are vast and growing annually.

- A manager of a U.S.-owned transportation company in Lyon, France, was decapitated and his head placed on a fence. The murderer then set off a huge explosion at a factory that supplies industrial gases.
- A bomb ripped through a crowded mosque in Kuwait’s capital, killing at least 27.
- A gunman walked through a beach resort in Tunisia and calmly shot and killed 38 sunbathing tourists, most of them British, and seriously wounded at least an equal number. The amateur videos of the attack are absolutely sickening.

Despite this widespread and well-documented danger to world peace and individual liberty, President Obama has submitted a budget that would cut U.S. defense spending (in terms of a percentage of U.S. GDP), to less than half the average spending over the past 50 years.

In the U.S., the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Homeland Security are telling U.S. citizens to be “vigilant and prepared” on this holiday weekend. A significant jump in ISIS activity on the Internet suggests that organization is trying to recruit sleeper cells and sympathizers in the continental U.S. to commit terrorist acts before the end of Ramadan on the evening of July 17. The FBI has set up command centers at all of its 56 field offices to monitor potential threats across the U.S.

So as you sip a beer or bite into a hot dog this weekend, take a moment to reflect on what is happening in our nation and around the world today. Think about those who gave us our freedom. Ask yourself if we have lived up to their hopes and expectations. If not, think about what you can do to help get us back on the right track and “Let Freedom Ring.”