Never Forget!

Last Tuesday was the anniversary of one of the most devastating attacks on America ever committed. On September 11, 2001, Islamist terrorists hijacked three commercial airliners and flew them into New York City’s Twin Towers and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A fourth hijacked plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania short of its intended target, the U.S. Capitol. All told, the terrorists killed some 3,000 people and totally changed life in the United States. A rush of shock, support, care, and patriotism followed. Nearly everyone wore or displayed an American flag.

Now, six years later, I detect fatigue and even indifference to 9/11. For example, a Massachusetts nurse was quoted in the Denver Post as saying, “I may sound callous, but doesn’t grieving have a shelf life? We are very sorry and mournful that people died, but there are living people. Let’s wind it down.”

I say, “Let’s not!”

And let’s also not forget the people who died or were seriously wounded on December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor, in World War II that followed, in the mountains of Korea, and in the jungles of Vietnam. And let’s not forget the men and women of our armed services who today are taking fire and dying on the streets of Iraq and in the mountains of Afghanistan.

Defending the freedoms we enjoy in the United States is a daunting task that has fallen to a very few brave men and women. You may know some personally. It might be the gal who was a kid down the block a few years ago or some guy in uniform you checked into an Outrigger or OHANA hotel a few months ago. While you are enjoying an essentially normal life at home, a small group of Americans who have volunteered to wear the uniform of our country are risking their lives for us daily in almost unbearable conditions.

One of them is Command Sergeant Major Jeff Huggins, an Army Ranger, a graduate of St. Louis High School (class of 1985) – and the son of long-time Outrigger Employee Pat Moore. Jeff has been in Iraq for 17 months and, as he was recently preparing for the end of his tour of duty, he gave the following vivid description of what he and his comrades have been enduring not far from Baghdad.

“Well, most of my men are out of ‘harm’s way’ but we still need to make it home safe. This will be the last update from Baqubah, as we are heading back to whence we came. We will be moving around the country until we finally get home mid to late September.

My men did a fantastic job here. When we arrived in Baqubah, ‘the most violent city in Iraq’ (per US press), the streets were empty and gunfire was heard around the clock. We were attacked constantly.

We went on the hunt immediately and found the enemy everywhere. He was dug in and prepared to fight. He had bunkers built in houses, schools and mosques. He had IEDs [improvised explosive devices] by the hundreds and houses rigged to blow everywhere. He had the markets, streets, neighborhoods and people completely under his control.

And so we fought, and, yes, we killed a lot of them. We had no choice. Most of the bad and bloody things that happened, you saw on the news, but the press left before they finished the story. I guess success isn’t popular and not considered good reporting.

So this is what it’s like now. Observations on my patrols in the last few days: the streets are packed with people, cars, donkey carts and bikes, the markets are overflowing with goods and shoppers, the neighborhoods are secure and the children are out playing everywhere, and the best part, no gunfire anywhere. It’s like a normal city anywhere.

The Iraqi security forces are not afraid to go out on their own now and protect the people, and the people are giving up information on the locations of Al Qaeda still in the outlying areas.

We fought long and hard for this. It’s good to see. My men can be very proud that they liberated the people and an entire city, the self-proclaimed ‘CAPITAL of Al Qaeda in Iraq,’ from the hold Al Qaeda had on it.

We paid for it with our blood, sweat and at times tears. We lost many. We will never forget their sacrifice.
Packing up to go ‘home’ seems surreal. What will it be not worrying about being shot walking around the streets or being blown up trying to sleep? We will see.

Once again, thank you, thank you, and thank you for all of your support. I can’t tell you how much it helped me get through this.

Look forward to seeing you all soon.

Love,

Jeff

I have tremendous respect for Jeff and all of the men and women of our Armed Forces, and I thank them for their service and sacrifice.

Sadly, not everyone in our country feels the same way. As happened in the Vietnam War, many have grown tired of the War on Terror, even though U.S. casualties are a tiny fraction of what they were in Vietnam. They would pull back our troops and let Iraq implode into a horrific civil war and turn into an oil-rich base for our most deadly enemies. Some are starting to vent their frustrations and anger by turning against our troops.

Some of the venting is very petty, such as the boos and obscene chants the Navy football team had to endure last weekend at Rutgers. Some of it is absolutely disgusting, such as the reception Gen. David Petraeus received when he returned from the field in Iraq this week to report to Congress on the status of the battle for democracy in that country.

Prior to Gen. Petraeus’ testimony, the radical activist group MoveOn.org ran a full-page ad in the New York Times calling one of our country’s finest soldiers “General Betray Us” and accusing him of “cooking the books for the White House.” In short, they called him a traitor and liar.

The Times shares MoveOn.org’s guilt since it offered the ad at a very steep discount. According to the Washington Post, the open rate for an ad that size is $181,692; the Times gave it to MoveOn.org for only $65,000, nearly two-thirds off!

With the exception of Sens. Joe Lieberman and Joe Biden, no Democratic member of Congress has come forth to condemn this shameful attack on Gen. Petraeus and, in effect, every U.S. serviceman and -women. Prof. Peter D. Feaver of Duke University asks, “Have you left no sense of decency?”

The unbelievable dedication and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform continues today as it has in the past. We should always support them and, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, “Never, never, never, never, never forget.”