



[Briefing Room](#)

[Your Weekly Address](#)

[Speeches & Remarks](#)

[Press Briefings](#)

[Statements & Releases](#)

[White House Schedule](#)

[Presidential Actions](#)

[Executive Orders](#)

[Presidential Memoranda](#)

[Proclamations](#)

[Legislation](#)

[Pending Legislation](#)

[Signed Legislation](#)

[Vetoed Legislation](#)

[Nominations & Appointments](#)

[Disclosures](#)

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 09, 2014

Remarks by the President at Fort Hood Memorial Service

Fort Hood
Killeen, Texas

2:06 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: In our lives -- in our joys and in our sorrows -- we've learned that there is "a time for every matter under heaven." We laugh and we weep. We celebrate and we mourn. We serve in war and we pray for peace. But Scripture also teaches that, alongside the temporal, one thing is eternal. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

Deputy Secretary Fox; General Dempsey; Secretary McHugh; Generals Odierno and Milley; and most of all, the families of the soldiers who have been taken from us; the wounded -- those who have returned to duty and those still recovering; and the entire community of Fort Hood, this "Great Place": It is love, tested by tragedy, that brings us together again.

It was love for country that inspired these three Americans to put on the uniform and join the greatest Army that the world has ever known. Sergeant First Class Daniel Ferguson. Staff Sergeant Carlos Lazaney-Rodriguez. Sergeant Timothy Owens.

And Danny and Carlos joined two decades ago, in a time of peace, and stayed as the nation went to war. Timothy joined after 9/11, knowing he could be sent into harm's way. Between them, they deployed nine times. Each served in Iraq. Danny came home from Afghanistan just last year. They lived those shining values -- loyalty, duty, honor -- that keep us strong and free.

It was love for the Army that made them the soldiers they were. For Danny, said his fiancée, being in the Army "was his life." Carlos, said a friend, was "the epitome of what you would want a leader to be in the Army." Timothy helped counsel his fellow soldiers. Said a friend, "He was always the person you could go talk to."

And it was love for their comrades, for all of you, that defined their last moments. As we've heard, when the gunman tried to push his way into that room, Danny held the door shut, saving the lives of others while sacrificing his own. And it's said that Timothy -- the counselor, even then -- gave his life, walking toward the gunman, trying to calm him down.

For you, their families, no words are equal to your loss. We are here on behalf of the American people to honor your loved ones and to offer whatever comfort we can. But know this: We also draw strength from you. For even in your grief, even as your heart breaks, we see in you that eternal truth:

"Love never ends."

To the parents of these men -- as a father, I cannot begin to fathom your anguish. But I know that you poured your love and your hopes into your sons. I know that the men and soldiers they became -- their sense of service and their patriotism -- so much of that came from you. You gave your sons to America, and just as you will honor them always, so, too, will the nation that they served.

To the loves of their lives -- Timothy's wife Billy and Danny's fiancée Kristen -- these soldiers cherished the Army, but their hearts belonged to you. And that's a bond that no earthly power can ever break. They have slipped from your embrace, but know that you will never be alone. Because this Army and this nation stands with you for all the days to come.

To their children -- we live in a dangerous world, and your fathers served to keep you safe and us safe. They knew you have so much to give our country; that you'd make them proud. Timothy's daughter Lori already has. Last Wednesday night, she posted this message online: "I just want everyone to think for a moment." Love your family, she said, "because you never know when [they're] gonna be taken from you. I love you, daddy."

And to the men and women of Fort Hood -- as has already been mentioned, part of what makes this so painful is that we have been here before. This tragedy tears at wounds still raw from five years ago. Once more, soldiers who survived foreign warzones were struck down here at home, where they're supposed to be safe. We still do not yet know exactly why, but we do know this: We must honor their lives, not "in word or talk, but in deed and in truth."

We must honor these men with a renewed commitment to keep our troops safe, not just in battle but on the home front, as well. In our open society, and at vast bases like this, we can never eliminate every risk. But as a nation, we can do more to help counsel those with mental health issues, to keep firearms out of the hands of those who are having such deep difficulties. As a military, we must continue to do everything in our power to secure our facilities and spare others this pain.

We must honor these men by doing more to care for our fellow Americans living with mental illness, civilian and military. Today, four American soldiers are gone. Four Army families are devastated. As Commander-in-Chief, I'm determined that we will continue to step up our efforts -- to reach our troops and veterans who are hurting, to deliver to them the care that they need, and to make sure we never stigmatize those who have the courage to seek help.

And finally, we must honor these men by recognizing that they were members of a generation that has borne the burden of our security in more than a decade of war. Now our troops are coming

home, and by the end of this year our war in Afghanistan will finally be over.

In an era when fewer Americans know someone in uniform, every American must see these men and these women -- our 9/11 Generation -- as the extraordinary citizens that they are. They love their families. They excel at their jobs. They serve their communities. They are leaders. And when we truly welcome our veterans home, when we show them that we need them -- not just to fight in other countries, but to build up our own -- then our schools and our businesses, our communities and our nation will be more successful, and America will be stronger and more united for decades to come.

Sergeant First Class Daniel Ferguson. Staff Sergeant Carlos Lazaney-Rodriguez. Sergeant Timothy Owens. Like the 576 Fort Hood soldiers who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, they were taken from us much too soon. Like the 13 Americans we lost five years ago, their passing shakes our soul. And in moments such as this, we summon once more what we've learned in these hard years of war. We reach within our wounded hearts. We lean on each other. We hold each other up. We carry on. And with God's amazing grace, we somehow bear what seems unbearable.

"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." May God watch over these American soldiers, may He keep strong their families whose love endures, and may God continue to bless the United States of America with patriots such as these.

END

2:18 P.M. CDT

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