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NDIA Forrestal Award Speech

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First of all, let me thank all of you for coming today. I'm honored by your attendance and receiving such a recognition. I'm reminded of a quote from Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis: "No one wins on their own." So, I would be remiss if I did not first thank my family for the many sacrifices they have made and the support they have provided over the years. I would not be here today without them, especially my wife, Jan. And I would also like to recognize this remarkable group of people gathered here today, for you all strive to ensure the best for our country and for our military—a task that can only be accomplished together.

One such individual who has worked tirelessly over the years to ensure the best for our warfighters is Senator John Warner. I had the privilege of working for and with Sen. Warner for over 4 decades—first when I was a Marine Corps 2nd Lt Infantry platoon commander in Vietnam and he was my boss as Undersecretary and then Secretary of the

Navy, 8 layers up the chain of command; and then when I worked in the Senate for Sen. Sam Nunn. We worked with Sen. Warner on the SASC every day for over 20 years. Sen. Warner, throughout his life, has exhibited the kind of courageousness that all of us should strive for. He fought in not one, but two major wars— serving in World War II in the Navy and then came to his senses and served in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. If Carl Vinson was the father of the two-ocean Navy, Sen. Warner is the father of our modern Navy. His courage extended to the political realm— he was not afraid to defy his party or Republican and Democratic presidents when he felt they were in the wrong. And long after the rest of us retire, the powerful submarine, the *USS John Warner*, will continue to patrol the seas to keep our nation safe, just as it did five nights ago with her missiles hitting chemical weapons targets in Syria. Sen. Warner is a model of citizenship, patriotism, and bipartisanship, and he is a true national treasure. Sen. Warner, we salute you.

I would also like to recognize the Marines I served with in Vietnam during this 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. More people should know their stories, their incredible dedication and courage, and the sacrifices they

made in a war few supported, and even fewer thanked. That is why I wrote my recently published book *On War and Politics: The Battlefield Inside Washington's Beltway*. Life as an infantry rifleman in Vietnam was not easy—slogging through free fire zones for weeks and months, seeking an elusive but ever-present lethal enemy, never knowing if someone was an enemy or a friend, a war without a front line. We were constantly cold, wet, hungry, and tired—resupply would rarely arrive on time and we had to ration food, ammo, and water. We never had any heat tabs to warm the awful C-ration meals or even any dry socks. Every day was pretty much the same—up at the crack of dawn, trudge for miles to our nighttime position, clear areas en route, set up ambushes, and stay up half the night on watch, with many a firefight in between. That is the life of a rifleman in combat.

One of those riflemen was Cpl. Roy Lee Hammonds. I was hit giving first aid to a wounded corpsman and was seriously wounded myself. Cpl. Hammonds, who was within weeks of going home, dashed from a totally safe position to help me. We had never met—he wasn't even in my platoon. The bullets that hit him would have surely torn through me. He died saving my life. I dedicated my book to Cpl. Hammonds. His sacrifice

is seared in my soul forever, and every day I vow to make myself worthy of his sacrifice. This is why I've dedicated my life to ensuring that the Cpl. Hammondses of our military have the support they need—in Congress, in the Pentagon, in industry, and in the public sphere, so they never give their lives in vain.

And again, we remember Sec. Mattis's words: "No one wins on their own." Not in our personal lives, not in the military, and not as a nation.

And I must say, the challenges our nation faces today are the toughest I have seen in my long career. But there is reason to be optimistic. It is in many ways reflective of the sentiment captured in Charles Dickens' *A Tale Of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

In reference to the "best of times," we have in the Defense Department – where many of you serve today – an incredibly strong leadership team, civilian and military. We have our Marine Corps colleague Jim Mattis as Secretary of Defense, a battle-tested, experienced, and

balanced leader, and a man who has dedicated his entire life in service to our nation. We have as the Deputy Secretary Pat Shanahan, a man who comes from the defense industry, and understands its capabilities and perspectives. He and Jay Gibson, the Chief Management Officer, are leading the charge on implementing Sec. Mattis's high-priority reform agenda. We have a stellar group of appointees in the national security realm: individuals like Undersecretary of Commerce for Export Administration Mira Ricardel, with her Hill, industry, and government experience. Pete Giambastiani and Laura McAleer, two of the Pentagon's top links to the Hill. Jimmy Thomas, formerly of NDIA, now chief of staff to a service undersecretary, and many others. I challenge anyone who sees this great cadre of national security individuals serving in our government today to say we are not getting the best of the best.

We have a bipartisan consensus in Congress—perhaps the only bipartisan consensus around today—that we now face serious threats in a chaotic world, and that defense expenditures must be calibrated accordingly—as reflected in the recent defense budget increase for FY17, FY18, and presumably FY19.

We also have seen the articulation and publication of a National Security Strategy and a National Defense Strategy that more closely align us with the threat environment we face than any since the Cold War, and should provide essential guides in shaping and prioritizing our defense efforts moving forward. I applaud those who contributed to formulating both documents. The National Defense Strategy is what we in the military call “Commander’s Intent.” It gives the Pentagon its marching orders: it identifies the main priorities and provides a roadmap to achieving success.

On the industry side, there is also much reflecting a “spring of hope.” The performance of our defense industry in 2017 was very positive, and there is reason for optimism going forward. We have leaders of renown in our CEOs of large, medium, and small companies, many here today. The tax reform legislation is reducing the effective tax rates of the major providers, which has changed plans for capital deployment with companies increasing capital expenditures and adding to independent research and development. In general, the companies have successfully negotiated their way through a period where the pain of sequestration threatened to damage

future potential, and for that successful navigation all our senior industry management deserves great credit.

We have the greatest military in the world for three reasons: we recruit and retain the best people, we ensure the force has realistic and constant training, and we provide them with the best technology. Our industry is essential in maintaining this greatest fighting force in history, and we must always continue to enhance our technological superiority, or regain it where necessary, so our military never has to face a fair fight.

But we also have the “worst of times”: a strategic environment that causes deep concern, with the return of great power competition with China and Russia and to a lesser extent Iran and North Korea, global terrorism, the weaponization of information, and our near peer competitors constantly nipping at the heels of our technological edge. This creates a threat we are struggling to calculate and comprehend, and a national body politic that is disturbingly divided on many issues.

With the newly passed budget that lifts the caps and adds to defense resources, we may be witnessing the leading edge of an “age of wisdom,” one that hopefully will allow us to emerge from that “age of foolishness”

of the Budget Control Act and sequestration. And those of us here today, in both the public and private sectors, can only work to ensure wisdom continues to increase and foolishness continues to decline. Any other outcome would certainly move us from a “spring of hope” back toward a “winter of despair.”

So, what must be done? As I have stated many times in the past, when you look at defense spending in constant dollars, today we spend more for defense than during the Reagan build-up when I was on the Senate Armed Service Committee Staff. Today’s funding, however, supports a force that is 50% smaller and in some cases less ready and less capable. I have called this the ever-shrinking fighting force. This must be reversed and Congress is supporting Sec. Mattis’s efforts to increase the size, readiness, and lethality of our wartime forces.

We must also focus on the department’s massive overhead. Defense-wide spending has grown from 5% to 20% of the budget. The 4th estate has grown in number, scope, and cost and nary a trigger-puller in the bunch.

We must also recognize that due to the changing political landscape, towering deficits and growing impact of entitlements, we will not see the

necessary sizable, real growth budgets in the out-years of the five-year defense plan as we have in FY18 and FY19. As a result, we need to think smarter, not richer.

Going forward, this is our looming challenge. But how?

The answer is nothing new or novel. To steal an old phrase, we simply have to make the Pentagon, along with other important elements of the military-industrial-congressional complex, more productive. We need to focus more on outputs and less on inputs. This does not mean we should “do more with less.” I have always detested that phrase since my days in Vietnam. It has been voiced so often that many have come to believe it is a feasible, workable mantra. As one officer said, “they have told us to do so much with so little for so long, that they seem to have concluded we can do anything with nothing forever.” We have to make every dollar count to create in some way our own national security multiplier effect. We need more bang for the buck, and this is the charge Sec. Mattis has given Deputy Secretary Shanahan, Chief Management Officer Gibson, and the service secretaries.

In closing, let us once again remember Sec. Mattis's words: "no one wins on their own." I know all of you here will continue your efforts in support of a strong national defense. We all need to pitch in.

God bless this great nation and all here today. Thank you.