

General Cartwright:

I don't know that you could put together a better day, given what we've had for weather for the last few days, and given what the rest of the nation is experiencing.

My thanks, Fran, for that kind introduction.

I think two things as I walked around and said, "Gee what do you say to a graduating class?" Secretary Gates gave me a great piece of advice: "They won't remember you after they leave, and they won't have a clue as to what you said."

So, two groups here I want to address today and the first is kind of towards the back here and spread around us and that's the families. We're a nation at war. You – the families, the guests, the friends, the loved ones – will bear a large part of the strain and the stress of that conflict in supporting your member. You did it this year as they went through this academic curriculum, and you'll do it as they depart and go places many times without you, and you will celebrate the birthdays, the anniversaries probably many times without them. This nation, I, can't thank you enough and probably don't have the right words to communicate how much of the burden you actually carry for us. And you deserve our heartfelt thanks, appreciation, and admiration, both from the standpoint of the nation and from the standpoint of the uniformed military services. Thank you so much for being here today and doing what you do every day for us.

We are a nation at war and so my comments will focus in on this group across the front. I have an expectation of you. I am thinking more about the output of what you've done even though you're thinking more about the course.

I have an expectation that you will leave here and go back to your units and advance the capabilities of national and global security. That expectation is one that I will hold you to. Not only will I hold you to, and like I said you'll forget me by the time you leave here, but you're going to go lead and those who you lead will have an expectation of you that you will have to meet.

The good news is, like you, many others in the uniformed services are out in other colleges and universities across the nation, having similar ceremonies today. Many of your colleagues went to businesses and spent the year interacting in the business world.

All of those pieces have to come together, and while the curriculum was, probably I'll get in trouble with the president here but, was probably very important, the people sitting on your left and right is probably what's going to save you and advantage you as we move to the future.

We are very proud of our joint heritage, and where we're going as a joint force. But modern warfare, today and as we move to the future, will be much more about our interagency colleagues and our international colleagues. They will define how we fight

war in the future. They will define how we prevent war in the future. It is us with them, in a partnership that will have the best opportunity to solve the world's problems.

So, joint is important but not as important as the relationships you have built here with your international and interagency colleagues. Those relationships you must nurture, you must take advantage of as you move from here to command to leadership positions. It will be critical, and it is expected.

Education, you know, being an old guy, at least I have some perspective on education in the military and what it has done for us. I can remember, as a few people here I can see with similar colored hair, life in a conscript force in the United States in the 60s and 70s. Much of our recruitment program was satisfied by federal judges, and the nuance there is you had a choice: you can go to jail or you can go to the Marine Corps. It was a very different force.

In the mid 70s, some – some very brave uniformed people at the top, made a decision that we were going to start to recruit high school graduates into the enlisted force and that was going to be the standard. And we started at about seventy percent and the recruiters said its impossible and then we moved to eighty and then we moved to ninety and ninety-five percent. What it did to our force, when you add in the volunteer nature of the force, completely transformed how we do business today.

On the officer side, what these universities, joint service out into the college and university system and industry, what that has done for us is set the stage and an expectation of you that only education could have brought to this force. If you think, and this is the bad news part, if you think this is the end of the education and you've learned it all, you are sorely mistaken, and there will be a problem as you move into the future. You will be irrelevant, and you will be the only one that doesn't know it.

You must stay educated; you must continue to do what you have done this year. You must do it on a self-paced approach, and you must do it in a formal approach. Absent that, you will not be able to credibly lead the people that we are recruiting. Their expectations of you are probably higher than mine and that's not a bad thing. You have got to continue to educate yourself and I got it, that's the last thing you want to hear at graduation, but it is the most important thing that I will tell you today. You must continue this education; you must continue your outreach in the joint force, in the interagency and with our friends and allies. Absent that, you will be irrelevant.

The last thing that I leave with you today is that this is a dangerous world that we're in, and my crystal ball is no better than anyone else's, but you are moving to positions of leadership to address those dangers. And you must remain flexible, you must remain credible, and you must be ready to do the unexpected. Innovation has to be part of your mindset; there is no playbook for what you're going to be asked to do on the battlefield. Be ready. Lead from the front. Be confident, you have the tools. My sincere thanks for what you have done and for what you will do as you lead national security for

this nation and your nations, for the foreign officers that are here today. Thank you and good luck to you.