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REMARKS

BY

THE HONORABLE RALPH C. BLEDSOE

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

AND

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

AT THE

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

HHS AUDITORIUM
WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 4, 1987

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, GENERAL BECTON. I MUST ADMIT THAT I DON'T RECALL SEEING YOUR NAME ON THE ROSTER OF TODAY'S HONOREES. BUT I WOULD THINK THAT AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU DESERVE AN OSCAR FOR THOSE SPLENDID INTRODUCTORY REMARKS. IN FACT, JUST AS SOON AS I GET BACK TO MY OFFICE, I'M GOING TO REREAD MY BIO TO MAKE SURE THE PERSON YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT WAS REALLY ME.

~~DR. SWISHER~~, GENERAL BECTON, OTHER DISTINGUISHED PLATFORM GUESTS, AND ESPECIALLY TODAY'S HONOREES, ~~THEIR~~ FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE AND A RARE PRIVILEGE ~~FOR ME~~ TO HAVE BEEN ASKED TO JOIN YOU THIS MORNING FOR WHAT I BELIEVE IS NOT ONLY AN OCCASION OF SIGNIFICANCE TO YOU, BUT TO ALL OF THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRY.

AND IF THERE IS ANY ONE GOOD WAY FOR ME TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND INVITATION, IT'S PROBABLY TO PROMISE TO ~~GET TO END OF~~ ^{KEEP MY} MY REMARKS ^{BRIEF} ~~AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.~~

AFTER ALL, THIS IS YOUR DAY. AND WHILE I'M HONORED TO BE AMONG THE HONORED, I'LL TRY TO KEEP WHAT I HAVE TO SAY AS BRIEF AS I CAN.

-MORE-

THERE ARE, OF COURSE, A COUPLE OF THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO ^{FIRST}
PASS ALONG TO YOU ~~BEFORE I REACH THE END~~, AND ONE OF THEM ~~IS~~ ^{CONCERNS}
~~THIS MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT.~~

~~PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. (SEE ATTACHMENT, PAGE 11; INSERT AS
APPROPRIATE.)~~

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PRESIDENT'S SALUTATION MAY HAVE SAID ALL THERE IS TO SAY. BUT
IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME, I WOULD LIKE TO EXPAND A BIT ON HIS MESSAGE
BECAUSE IT CONTAINS A WORDS THAT I HAVE GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT AND~~
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JUST TO SHOW YOU HOW DIFFERENT, I ONCE ASKED A GROUP OF FRIENDS IF THEY THOUGHT THAT THOSE WHO CHOOSE A CAREER IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE SHOULD BE COMMITTED. AND WITHOUT HESITATION, THEY ANSWERED, ABSOLUTELY! TO SAINT ELIZABETH'S, BELLEVUE.....JUST TO NAME A COUPLE OF OUR MORE CHOICE INSITUTIONS WHERE WE COMMIT THE COMMITTED.

THAT, OBVIOUSLY, IS NOT THE KIND OF COMMITMENT I'M TALKING ABOUT. THE KIND THAT I AM TALKING ABOUT IS THE COMMITMENT THAT ONE MAKES TO A PROFESSION, OR TO PUT IT MORE CERTAIN TERMS, A PROFESSION THAT DEMANDS A HIGH COMMITMENT.

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IN OUR SOCIETY, IT HAS GENERALLY BEEN ^{THOUGHT} TAKEN AS AN ARTICLE ~~OF FAITH~~ THAT THE ONLY TRUE SECULAR PROFESSIONS ARE MEDICINE AND LAW.

~~AND WHY~~ WE HAVE COME TO ACCEPT THIS ~~IS~~ BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT THOSE WHO ENTER THESE TIME-HONORED PROFESSIONS ARE BOUND TO AN OATH OR CANON OF ETHICS WHICH COMMITS THEM TO PUT THEIR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES ABOVE THEIR PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS.

SO HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOU? ASIDE FROM THE GOOD DOCTORS AND LAWYERS THAT ARE PART OF THE FEDERAL SERVICE, I WOULD NOT BE SO FOOLHARDY AS TO SUGGEST THAT THE SKILLS YOU BRING TO YOUR JOB MIGHT BE THE SAME AS THOSE THAT THEY BRING TO THEIRS. I MAY THINK SO, BUT I'M NOT ABOUT TO SUGGEST IT AND HAVE THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION COME DOWN ON MY BACK.

~~BUT WHAT I WILL SUGGEST TO YOU IS THAT~~ WHEN YOU ENTERED THE FEDERAL SERVICE, YOU ~~TOO~~ BROUGHT SKILLS AND TALENTS, AND YOU TOO SWORE AN OATH THAT NOT ONLY BOUND YOU TO A PROFESSION OF HIGH CALLING, BUT COMMITTED YOU TO SUBJUGATE YOUR PERSONAL INTERESTS TO YOUR SWORN PROFESSIONAL DUTIES.

I DON'T KNOW HOW OTHERS FEEL ABOUT IT, BUT TO ME NO ONE CAN PLEDGE A GREATER ALLEGIENCE OR COMMIT TO A MORE SACRED TRUST THAN TO THE SERVICE OF HIS OR HER COUNTRY. AND ON THIS LEVEL, THAT ~~TO ME~~ PUTS YOU ON A PEDESTAL WITH ANY PROFESSION ANYWHERE, BAR NONE.

AT THIS POINT, IT OCCURS TO ME THAT I MIGHT BE RUNNING THE RISK OF SEEMING TO BE OVERLY PATRIOTIC, ESPECIALLY BEFORE A GROUP OF SEASONED PROFESSIONALS LIKE YOURSELVES. YOU SHOULD KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT IF I THOUGHT THAT I HAD TO WAVE THE FLAG AT YOU, I DON'T THINK YOU WOULD BE HERE TODAY.

AND I DON'T THINK YOU WOULD BE HERE TODAY, EITHER, IF YOU THOUGHT I WAS IMPLYING THAT EVERYONE IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY SHARES THE SAME LEVEL OF COMMITMENT. NOT EVERYONE DOES, OF COURSE. BUT THEN, AGAIN, THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF OTHER PROFESSIONS OF SWORN TRUST. AND IN THE END, THOSE WITH LESSER RESOLVE USUALLY GET WEEDED OUT SOONER OR LATER.

HAVING SAID ALL THIS, I THINK I MAY HAVE REACHED A CROSSROAD WHERE I SENSE THAT YOU'RE WANTING TO ASK ME SOMETHING LIKE, OKAY, YOU'VE TOLD US THAT WE ARE AS COMMITTED TO WHAT WE DO JUST AS DOCTORS AND LAWYERS ARE. SO HOW COME WE ALWAYS SEEM TO BE GETTING IT IN THE NECK MORE THAN THEY DO?

FRANKLY, I'M NOT SURE I HAVE THE ANSWER TO THAT. ABOUT THE ONLY THING I CAN SAY IS THAT IF THE ALL NEGATIVE CRITICISM YOU RECEIVE WAS AS EQUALLY AS TRUE OF THOSE TWO PROFESSIONS, THAN I WOULD HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION WOULD BE DEAD....AND THE OTHER ONE PERCENT WOULD BE IN JAIL.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT IN MY SERVICE TO THE PRESIDENT AND IN MY ROLE WITH THE DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL, I'VE HAD THE CHANCE TO COME IN CONTACT WITH MANY LEVELS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. AND WHAT I'VE COME TO LEARN IN THE COLLECTIVE SENSE IS JUST THE OPPOSITE OF THOSE STALE CHARGES OF INCOMPETENCE, MALAISE AND THE WHOLE REST OF THE NINE YARDS.

WHAT I FOUND, IN FACT, WERE PEOPLE WHO DESPITE LIMITED RESOURCES, DESPITE ADVERSE CONDITIONS AND DESPITE WORKLOADS LARGE ENOUGH TO STUFF A HERD OF ELEPHANTS, SOMEHOW WERE ABLE TO GET THEIR JOBS DONE, AND BY MY LIGHTS, DONE WELL.

NOW IF THAT DOESN'T FIT THE DEFINITION OF COMMITMENT, SOMEONE IS GOING TO HAVE TO TELL ME WHAT DOES.

FOR THOSE WHO MAY THINK THAT I'M BELLOWING IN THE WIND, I WOULD LIKE THEM TO CONSIDER THIS.

WHY ELSE WOULD,
ON THANKSGIVING EVE, TWO OF YOUR OWN FROM THE DENVER REGIONAL OFFICE SADDLE UP ON A COMMERCIAL JET AND HEAD OUT OVER THE PACIFIC. AND WHILE THOSE WHO LIKE TO SLING ARROWS WERE HOME WITH THEIR FAMILIES ON THANKSGIVING DAY, THESE TWO MEN WERE IN MICRONESIA SETTING UP THE MACHINERY ^{TO} ~~THAT WOULD~~ HELP PEOPLE RECOVER FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF A TYPHOON WHICH LEVELLED THE ISLAND CHAIN OF THE STATE OF TRUK.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
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GENERAL BECTON, OTHER DISTINGUISHED PLATFORM GUESTS, AND ESPECIALLY TODAY'S HONOREES, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE AND A RARE PRIVILEGE TO HAVE BEEN ASKED TO JOIN YOU THIS MORNING FOR WHAT I BELIEVE IS NOT ONLY AN OCCASION OF SIGNIFICANCE TO YOU, BUT TO ALL OF THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRY.

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AFTER ALL, THIS IS YOUR DAY. AND WHILE I'M HONORED TO BE AMONG THE HONORED, I'LL TRY TO KEEP WHAT I HAVE TO SAY AS BRIEF AS I CAN.

THERE ARE, OF COURSE, A COUPLE OF THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO FIRST

PASS ALONG TO YOU, AND ONE OF THEM CONCERNS A COUPLE OF WORDS THAT I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT A LOT LATELY, AND WHICH I BELIEVE ENCOMPASSES ALL THE REASONS WHY YOU ARE HERE TODAY. THE WORDS ARE COMMITMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS.

I KNOW MANY OF YOU HAVE HEARD THESE WORDS COUNTLESS TIMES~~S~~, AND LIKE YOU, I KNOW THAT THEY CAN BE SO OVERWORKED TO THE POINT OF BECOMING MEANINGLESS. AND WHAT MAY BE EVEN WORSE, I KNOW THAT THEY ALSO CAN MEAN A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS TO A LOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

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AND MARK THIS. THEY WOULDN'T BE HOME THE NEXT DAY FOR THE LEFTOVERS, NOR THE DAY AFTER THAT, NOR FOR SOME DAYS TO FOLLOW. AND I'D ALSO BET YOU THAT ON CHRISTMAS DAY, SOME OF THEIR COUNTERPARTS WILL LIKELY BE DOING THE SAME THING IN SOME OTHER PART OF OUR COUNTRY, JUST AS THEY ARE DOING NOW IN CALIFORNIA,

LOUISIANA, AND TEXAS.

I COULD GO ON A LITTLE LONGER ABOUT COMMITMENT, BUT I BELIEVE THIS EMPHASIZES MY EARLIER POINT ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED PUTTING THEIR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AHEAD OF THEIR PERSONAL COMFORTS.

ONE PROBLEM WITH ALL OF THIS, OF COURSE, IS THAT OFTEN THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO REALLY KNOW ABOUT THIS KIND OF COMMITMENT IS US. AND IN THE END, THAT'S PROBABLY THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, BECAUSE WHAT MARKS THE CALIBER OF A PROFESSIONAL IS NOT WHO ELSE KNOWS, BUT ONLY THAT HE OR SHE UNDERSTANDS.

AT THE VERY OUTSET OF MY REMARKS, I PROMISED THAT I WOULD BE AS BRIEF AS POSSIBLE. BY NOW, YOU KNOW I LIED.

ACTUALLY, I AM ABOUT READY TO LET YOU GET TO THE MORE IMPORTANT BUSINESS AT HAND. BUT BEFORE I WIND THIS UP, I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH A FEW CLOSING THOUGHTS.

I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE SOME WITHIN OUR RANKS WHO REGARD YOUR AGENCY AS A DWARF AMONG GIANTS. YOUR NUMBERS ARE SMALL AND YOU HAVE ALMOST NO REGULATORY POWERS. AND I DO KNOW THAT PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY, YOURS HAS BITTEN THE BULLET THE HARDEST IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, AND YET BY YOUR RESOURCEFULNESS AND DEDICATION YOU HAVE STILL MANAGED TO DO AND DO WELL WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN MANDATED TO GET DONE, AND NO ONE CAN

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I ALSO DO KNOW THAT WHILE YOU DON'T CARRY A REALLY BIG REGULATORY STICK, YOUR AGENCY IS CHARGED WITH THE AWESOME CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING THE CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT ^{MENT} SHOULD OUR COUNTRY FIND ITSELF IN A CRISIS THAT WOULD REQUIRE IT, AS WELL AS WITH PLANNING FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR PROPERTY.

TO ME, THAT'S NO SMALL ^{TASK} ~~JUNK~~ OF CHANGE. NOR IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CIVIL DEFENSE PLANNING, AIDING PEOPLE IN THE TIME OF DISASTER AND, IN SHORT, ALL YOUR OTHER PROGRAMS THAT ARE CHARGED WITH ENSURING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR NATION.

-MORE

SO EVEN IF YOU'RE SMALL IN NUMBER, YOU ARE LARGE IN HEART. AND NO MATTER WHATEVER ELSE MAY BE SAID, THAT IS SOMETHING IN WHICH THAT I BELIEVE YOU CAN AND SHOULD TAKE PRIDE.

I WOULD BE SOMEWHAT REMISS AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, IF I FAILED TO ALSO MENTION THAT DESPITE PROBLEMS OF THE PAST, IT'S MY FEELING THAT FEMA'S OLD WOUNDS ARE ~~STARTING~~ HEALING. YOU'VE OVERCOME ~~THE~~ ENORMOUS ADVERSITIES ~~OF~~ THE PAST AND BY THE JOB YOU ARE DOING TOGETHER, ~~YOU~~ ARE BUILDING ON THE RESPECT OF THOSE WITH WHOM YOU WORK.

NOW I DON'T THINK THAT HAPPENED BY ITSELF. SOMEONE WITH THE COURAGE OF HIS CONVICTIONS, SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT AFRAID TO TACKLE A TOUGH JOB, SOMEONE WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF LEADERSHIP, HAD TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.

SO BEFORE WE GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF HANDING OUT YOUR AWARDS, I WOULD LIKE TO HAND OUT ONE OF MY OWN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WOULD YOU PLEASE JOIN ME IN SALUTING YOUR DIRECTOR FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, GENERAL JULIUS W. BECTON, JR.

~~OKAY, NOW I'M REALLY ABOUT READY TO GIVE IT UP.~~ ^{FINALLY,} I WOULD
JUST LIKE TO LEAVE THOSE WHO NOW ARE ABOUT TO BE HONORED WITH
THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL I HAVE SAID ABOUT PROFESSIONAL
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AND THOSE OF YOU ~~WHO ARE~~ BEING HONORED TODAY AS THE "BEST
AMONG THE BEST," I KNOW, RICHLY DESERVE THOSE AWARDS. FOR
TODAY, YOU SHOULD ENJOY THEM TO THE FULLEST MEASURE.

^{BUT} I WOULD ONLY ASK THAT IN YOUR MOMENT OF CELEBRATION YOU
REMEMBER ^{SOMETHING ELSE} ~~THIS ONE THING.~~ BEFORE YOU WERE SINGLED OUT FROM
AMONGST YOUR PEERS, SOMEONE ALONG THE LINE RECOGNIZED THAT
QUALILTY IN YOU AND CHARGED YOU WITH A RESPONSIBLITY THAT YOU
HAVE CARRIED OUT WITH DISTINCTION.

AND SO I WOULD LEAVE YOU WITH THE THOUGHT THAT ^{JUST} AS THEY PUT
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YOU ARE BEING RECOGNIZED FOR TODAY IN THOSE WHO WILL SOMEDAY
FOLLOW YOU.

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH.

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IN OUR SOCIETY, IT HAS GENERALLY BEEN TAKEN AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH THAT THE ONLY TRUE SECULAR PROFESSIONS ARE MEDICINE AND LAW.

AND WHY WE HAVE COME TO ACCEPT THIS IS BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT THOSE WHO ENTER THESE TIME-HONORED PROFESSIONS ARE BOUND TO AN OATH OR CANON OF ETHICS WHICH COMMITS THEM TO PUT THEIR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES ABOVE THEIR PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS.

SO HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOU? ASIDE FROM THE GOOD DOCTORS AND LAWYERS THAT ARE PART OF THE FEDERAL SERVICE, I WOULD NOT BE SO FOOLHARDY AS TO SUGGEST THAT THE SKILLS YOU BRING TO YOUR JOB MIGHT BE THE SAME AS THOSE THAT THEY BRING TO THEIRS. I MAY THINK SO, BUT I'M NOT ABOUT TO SUGGEST IT AND HAVE THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION COME DOWN ON MY BACK.

BUT WHAT I WILL SUGGEST TO YOU IS THAT WHEN YOU ENTERED THE FEDERAL SERVICE, YOU TOO BROUGHT SKILLS AND TALENTS AND YOU TOO SWORE AN OATH THAT NOT ONLY BOUND YOU TO A PROFESSION OF HIGH CALLING, BUT COMMITTED YOU TO SUBJUGATE YOUR PERSONAL INTERESTS TO YOUR SWORN PROFESSIONAL DUTIES.

I DON'T KNOW HOW OTHERS FEEL ABOUT IT, BUT TO ME NO ONE CAN PLEDGE A GREATER ALLEGIENCE OR COMMIT TO A MORE SACRED TRUST THAN TO THE SERVICE OF HIS OR HER COUNTRY. AND ON THIS LEVEL, THAT TO ME PUTS YOU ON A PEDESTAL WITH ANY PROFESSION ANYWHERE, BAR NONE.

AT THIS POINT, IT OCCURS TO ME THAT I MIGHT BE RUNNING THE RISK OF SEEMING TO BE OVERLY PATRIOTIC, ESPECIALLY BEFORE A GROUP OF SEASONED PROFESSIONALS LIKE YOUSELVES. YOU SHOULD KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT IF I THOUGHT THAT I HAD TO WAVE THE FLAG AT YOU, I DON'T THINK YOU WOULD BE HERE TODAY.

AND I DON'T THINK YOU WOULD BE HERE TODAY, EITHER, IF YOU THOUGHT I WAS IMPLYING THAT EVERYONE IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY SHARES THE SAME LEVEL OF COMMITMENT. NOT EVERYONE DOES, OF COURSE. BUT THEN, AGAIN, THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF OTHER PROFESSIONS OF SWORN TRUST. AND IN THE END, THOSE WITH LESSER RESOLVE USUALLY GET WEEDED OUT SOONER OR LATER.

HAVING SAID ALL THIS, I THINK I MAY HAVE REACHED A CROSSROAD WHERE I SENSE THAT YOU'RE WANTING TO ASK ME SOMETHING LIKE, OKAY, YOU'VE TOLD US THAT WE ARE AS COMMITTED TO WHAT WE DO JUST AS DOCTORS AND LAWYERS ARE. SO HOW COME WE ALWAYS SEEM TO BE GETTING IT IN THE NECK MORE THAN THEY DO?

FRANKLY, I'M NOT SURE I HAVE THE ANSWER TO THAT. ABOUT THE ONLY THING I CAN SAY IS THAT IF THE ALL NEGATIVE CRITICISM YOU RECEIVE WAS AS EQUALLY AS TRUE OF THOSE TWO PROFESSIONS, THAN I WOULD HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION WOULD BE DEAD....AND THE OTHER ONE PERCENT WOULD BE IN JAIL.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT IN MY SERVICE TO THE PRESIDENT AND IN MY ROLE WITH THE DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL, I'VE HAD THE CHANCE TO COME IN CONTACT WITH MANY LEVELS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. AND WHAT I'VE COME TO LEARN IN THE COLLECTIVE SENSE IS JUST THE OPPOSITE OF THOSE STALE CHARGES OF INCOMPETENCE, MALAISE AND THE WHOLE REST OF THE NINE YARDS.

WHAT I FOUND, IN FACT, WERE PEOPLE WHO DESPITE LIMITED RESOURCES, DESPITE ADVERSE CONDITIONS AND DESPITE WORKLOADS LARGE ENOUGH TO STUFF A HERD OF ELEPHANTS, SOMEHOW WERE ABLE TO GET THEIR JOBS DONE, AND BY MY LIGHTS, DONE WELL.

NOW IF THAT DOESN'T FIT THE DEFINITION OF COMMITMENT, SOMEONE IS GOING TO HAVE TO TELL ME WHAT DOES.

FOR THOSE WHO MAY THINK THAT I'M BELLOWING IN THE WIND, I WOULD LIKE THEM TO CONSIDER THIS.

ON THANKSGIVING EVE, TWO OF YOUR OWN FROM THE DENVER REGIONAL OFFICE SADDLED UP ON A COMMERCIAL JET AND HEADED OUT OVER THE PACIFIC. AND WHILE THOSE WHO LIKE TO LING ARROWS WERE HOME WITH THEIR FAMILIES ON THANKSGIVING DAY, THESE TWO MEN WERE IN MICRONESIA SETTING UP THE MACHINERY THAT WOULD HELP PEOPLE RECOVER FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF A TYPHOON WHICH LEVELLED THE ISLAND CHAIN OF THE STATE OF TRUK.

AND MARK THIS. THEY WOULDN'T BE HOME THE NEXT DAY FOR THE LEFTOVERS, NOR THE DAY AFTER THAT, NOR FOR SOME DAYS TO FOLLOW. AND I'D ALSO BET YOU THAT ON CHRISTMAS DAY, SOME OF THEIR COUNTERPARTS WILL LIKELY BE DOING THE SAME THING IN SOME OTHER PART OF OUR COUNTRY, JUST AS THEY ARE DOING NOW IN CALIFORNIA, LOUISIANA AND TEXAS.

I COULD GO ON A LITTLE LONGER, BUT I BELIEVE THIS EMPHASIZES MY EARLIER POINT ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO PUT THEIR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AHEAD OF THEIR PERSONAL COMFORTS.

THE PROBLEM WITH ALL OF THIS, OF COURSE, IS THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO REALLY KNOW ABOUT THIS KIND OF COMMITMENT IS US. AND IN THE END, THAT'S PROBABLY THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, BECAUSE WHAT MARKS THE CALIBER OF A PROFESSIONAL IS NOT WHO ELSE KNOWS, BUT ONLY THAT HE UNDERSTANDS.

AT THE VERY OUTSET OF MY REMARKS, I PROMISED THAT I WOULD BE AS BRIEF AS POSSIBLE. BY NOW, YOU KNOW I LIED.

ACTUALLY, I AM ABOUT READY TO LET YOU GET TO THE MORE IMPORTANT BUSINESS AT HAND. BUT BEFORE I WIND THIS UP, I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH A FEW CLOSING THOUGHTS.

I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE SOME WITHIN OUR RANKS WHO REGARD YOUR AGENCY AS A DWARF AMONG GIANTS. YOUR NUMBERS ARE SMALL AND YOU HAVE ALMOST NO REGULATORY POWERS. AND I DO KNOW THAT PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY, YOURS HAS BITTEN THE BULLET THE HARDEST IN LAST TWO YEARS, AND YET BY YOUR RESOURCEFULNESS AND DEDICATION YOU HAVE STILL MANAGED TO DO AND DO WELL WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN MANDATED TO GET DONE.

I ALSO DO KNOW THAT WHILE YOU DON'T CARRY A REALLY BIG REGULATORY STICK, YOUR AGENCY IS CHARGED WITH THE AWESOME CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING THE CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT SHOULD OUR COUNTRY FIND ITSELF IN A CRISIS THAT WOULD REQUIRE IT, AS WELL AS WITH PLANNING FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR PROPERTY.

TO ME, THAT'S NO SMALL HUNK OF CHANGE. NOR IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CIVIL DEFENSE PLANNING, AIDING PEOPLE IN THE TIME OF DISASTER AND, IN SHORT, ALL YOUR OTHER PROGRAMS THAT ARE CHARGED WITH ENSURING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR NATION.

-MORE

SO EVEN IF YOU'RE SMALL IN NUMBER, YOU ARE LARGE IN HEART. AND NO MATTER WHATEVER ELSE MAY BE SAID, THAT IS SOMETHING IN WHICH THAT I BELIEVE YOU CAN AND SHOULD TAKE PRIDE.

I WOULD BE SOMEWHAT REMISS AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, IF I FAILED TO ALSO MENTION THAT DESPITE PROBLEMS OF THE PAST, IT'S MY FEELING THAT FEMA'S OLD WOUNDS ARE STARTING HEAL. YOU'VE OVERCOME THE ENORMOUS ADVERSITIES OF THE PAST AND BY THE JOB YOU ARE DOING TOGETHER, YOU ARE BUILDING ON THE RESPECT OF THOSE WITH WHOM YOU WORK.

NOW I DON'T THINK THAT HAPPENED BY ITSELF. SOMEONE WITH THE COURAGE OF HIS CONVICTIONS, SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT AFRAID TO TACKLE A TOUGH JOB, SOMEONE WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF LEADERSHIP, HAD TO RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.

SO BEFORE WE GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF HANDING OUT YOUR AWARDS, I WOULD LIKE TO HAND OUT ONE OF MY OWN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WOULD YOU PLEASE JOIN ME IN SALUTING YOUR DIRECTOR FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, GENERAL JULIUS W. BECTON, JR.

OKAY, NOW I'M REALLY ABOUT READY TO GIVE IT UP. I WOULD JUST LIKE TO LEAVE THOSE WHO NOW ARE ABOUT TO BE HONORED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL I HAVE SAID ABOUT PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT AND ALL THAT I BELIEVE IT ENGENDERS IS REFLECTED IN YOU IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE.

AND THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE BEING HONORED TODAY AS THE "BEST AMONG THE BEST," I KNOW, RICHLY DESERVE THOSE AWARDS. FOR TODAY, YOU SHOULD ENJOY THEM TO THE FULLEST MEASURE.

I WOULD ONLY ASK THAT IN YOUR MOMENT OF CELEBRATION YOU REMEMBER THIS ONE THING. BEFORE YOU WERE SINGLED OUT FROM AMONGST YOUR PEERS, SOMEONE ALONG THE LINE RECOGNIZED THAT QUALILTY IN YOU AND CHARGED YOU WITH A RESPONSIBLITY THAT YOU HAVE CARRIED OUT WITH DISTINCTION.

AND SO I WOULD LEAVE YOU WITH THE THOUGHT THAT AS THEY PUT THEIR FAITH IN YOU, YOUR RESPONSIBILTY TOMORROW WILL BE TO INSTILL AND REINFORCE THE SAME DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT THAT YOU ARE BEING RECOGNIZED FOR TODAY IN THOSE WHO WILL SOMEDAY FOLLOW YOU.

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH.