

territorial integrity. (Applause.)

The people in this room understand the benefits of liberty because you fought to defend it and bring it to others. As young men, many of you battled the forces of Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan on the battlefields of World War II. In those days, it would have been hard for you to imagine that the enemies you were fighting would become some of America's closest allies. Six decades later, Germany and Japan are strong democracies. They are two of our closest allies.

In your own lifetimes, you have seen firsthand the power of liberty to transform societies and yield the peace we all want. (Applause.) I believe that people in this hall believe that the power of freedom is unstoppable. I believe it because I believe in an Almighty that has given every man, woman and child on the face of the Earth freedom. (Applause.) And I know freedom yields the peace we want. If America maintains our confidence in our ideals, is willing to take the lead, freedom will once again prevail. And we'll be able to look at a generation of Americans coming up and say, we did our duty; we defended America and laid the foundation of peace for generations to come. (Applause.)

We can also be confident in every generation freedom has found brave defenders in the men and women of our Armed Forces. You know, through the years I've received a lot of heartfelt letters from our military families. One of them was from a woman in Texas named Sue Stoner. Sue's husband is a decorated Air Force veteran of Vietnam and the Gulf War. Last year during a trip to Fort Hood, the couple witnessed their six-year-old granddaughter Mikayla do something that every American should do, as well. The little girl bounded over to a wounded stranger in Army fatigues, and said, "I just wanted to say thank you for serving our country." As Mikayla's proud grandmother tells it, the soldier leaned forward on his walker, and said, "Sweetheart, I did it for you." (Applause.)

Every one of you put on the uniform for the same reason. You risked your life, you sacrificed so Americans like Mikayla could grow up in freedom. We will always honor your service. We will never forget your sacrifice. (Applause.)

This is the last time I will address a veterans convention as the Commander-in-Chief. Over the past seven, eight years -- seven and a half years, I've been honored to get to know many of your members. I've relied on your counsel. I have benefitted from your wisdom. I have been extremely grateful for your prayers.

I know you share with me a deep love for America and an awesome pride in those who defend her. When I meet with our troops, they always inspire me with their sense of duty and honor. They are America's finest citizens. (Applause.) I am confident that our troops will always be able to count on the fellowship and the support and the love of the men and women of the VFW. May God bless you, and may God bless America. (Applause.)

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