



August 26, 2024

Greetings, Comrades. I hope this message finds you well.

On August 1, you elected me to be the 116th Commander-in-Chief in the 125-year history of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the only veteran service organization founded by and dedicated to combat veterans. Our founders, warriors of the Spanish-American War, realized in 1899 that in order for veterans to receive the benefits they were promised, they would need to organize as a group in order to petition our government to hold them accountable to their word. And so, veterans in Ohio and in Colorado came together and agreed on the purpose of what would become the VFW.

Throughout our rich history, that purpose has not changed – to care for veterans, and the widows and orphaned children of the fallen, and advocate for them in the halls of Congress and the highest seats of power in our nation’s capital.

One week ago, the VFW released a statement at my direction, calling attention to public remarks former President Trump made the day before concerning the Medal of Honor and recipients thereof. He chose to focus only on the wounds endured or death of the recipients and ignored the courageous, valorous and selfless actions for which the Medal of Honor is awarded. Because of the harrowing experiences of MoH recipients, he said receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom was much better because you have to endure less to receive it. It was the careless way in which he worded his remarks that was offensive, as it diminished the character of the recipients of our nation’s highest award, of which there is no equal. In keeping with our values, it was imperative we speak out sternly, not only on behalf of our Medal of Honor recipients, but also for Gold Star families of those awarded the medal posthumously. It was a position we needed to take and statement I still stand by.

This is not the first time we have stood up and stood out in our reproach of those who have held or seek to hold office in the administration. We were critical of FDR gutting veterans benefits in the 1930s. We criticized the Clinton administration’s draw-down of the military in the 1990s. More recently, we have had to criticize VP candidate Walz for his characterization of his service. This latest statement makes the third time we have had to directly criticize President Trump for callous remarks about service members. This is our duty under the charter of the VFW. Make no mistake – this statement had nothing to do with party affiliation, but about having the courage to say what was right.

You may recall as I delivered my acceptance speech on the last day of our national convention, I cited the vision I put forth for the future of the VFW. It was based on Commitment, Credibility, and Courage. Each of those pillars would support the Commander-in-Chief that we would serve as I ascended in the chairs.

Commitment was for CinC Tim Borland’s “Every Veteran Counts” because each member is needed to reach each goal set. No matter if it is recruiting, advocacy or service to the community, every member is important in furthering our objectives.

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Credibility was for CinC Duane Sarmiento's "Meet the Challenge" because each member needs to remind our communities of who we are. We are an organization that represents the truth as our oath affirms. We are the honorable men and women who when called to danger, we went willingly, knowing it may require sacrificing everything to the point of laying down our own lives.

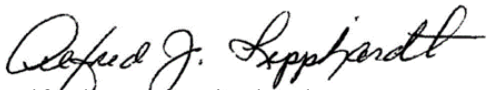
For this year, under the heading "Team Tribe 2024-2025," courage must be our watchword as each member must reach deep inside to rekindle the fire in the belly and step forward with boldness.

The theme this year is a combination of my life's mantra "Believe in what you do - do what you believe... Follow Me." We must set the example for others. We must rise above personal opinions and partisanship to do and say what is needed in this time in our country's history. I will never ask you to do anything I have not done or will not do myself as this is what leadership is all about. If we are to be an organization of consequence, it will take courage to lead the effort in making the changes we want to see in our organization and our nation.

As we move forward in this year, do not be surprised when circumstances arise that require us to take a stand. As the VFW's Commander-in-Chief, I am obligated to defend the honor of our service men and women, our veterans, our military families and our organization, and speak out when others choose to be quiet.

Thank you for your trust. Now, take courage and follow me.

Sincerely yours in comradeship,



Alfred J. "Al" Lipphardt

Commander-in-Chief

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States