

The President. We will make sure that my entourage does not get in the way of people doing their job, which will be search and rescue immediately. And rest assured, I understand that we must not and will

not interfere with the important work that will be going forward.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to Tibor Rubin September 23, 2005

Laura and I welcome you to the White House. This is a special occasion for our Nation. We're here to pay tribute to a soldier with an extraordinary devotion to his brothers in arms and an unshakeable love for his adopted homeland of America.

Corporal Tibor "Ted" Rubin—many acts of courage during the Korean war saved the lives of hundreds of his fellow soldiers. In the heat of battle, he inspired his comrades with his fearlessness. And amid the inhumanity of a Chinese prisoner-of-war camp, he gave them hope. Some of those soldiers are here today, and they have never forgotten what they owe this man. And by awarding the Medal of Honor to Corporal Rubin today, the United States acknowledges a debt that time has not diminished.

It's our honor to welcome Ted's wife, Yvonne; daughter, Rosie, a second grade teacher, I might add—[laughter]—Frank and Lai, welcome. Glad you all are here.

Vice President, thank you for coming, Mr. Secretary, we're proud you're here. I appreciate Senator John Warner, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Congressman Robert Wexler of Florida, welcome. Thank you for being here. Former Congressman Ben Gilman and Georgia are with us.

Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey; Pete Geren, acting Secretary of the Air Force; "Admiral G," Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is with us; General Pete Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the United

States Army. And Rabbi, thank you very much for your blessings.

I want to thank Ambassador Andras Simonyi, the Ambassador of Hungary to the United States, for joining us. Proud you're here. Yes. [Laughter]

So honored to have the four Medal of Honor recipients with us: Barney Barnum, with the United States Marines; Al Rascon, the Army; Bob Foley, the Army; and Jack Jacobs of the Army. Proud you're here. Thanks for being here.

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for bravery that a President can bestow. It is given for acts of valor that no superior could rightly order a soldier to perform. And that is what we mean by "above and beyond the call of duty." By repeatedly risking his own life to save others, Corporal Rubin exemplified the highest ideals of military service and fulfilled a pledge to give something back to the country that had given him his freedom.

Born in Hungary in 1929, Ted and his family were rounded up by the Nazis and taken to concentration camps when he was just 13 years old. He was taken to Mauthausen Camp in Austria, where an SS officer told the prisoner, "You, Jews, none of you will ever make it out of here alive." And many did not. Before the war was over, both of Ted's parents and one of his sisters were lost in the Holocaust. Ted Rubin survived the camp for 14 months, long enough to be liberated by U.S. Army troops on May the 5th, 1945.

These American GIs gave Ted his first real taste of freedom. Their compassion for the people in the camp made a deep impression on this teenage survivor. It was his first experience with soldiers who were fighting to protect human life. That day Ted made a promise to himself: If he ever made it to America, he would show his appreciation to this great land by enlisting in the United States Army. He did move to America after the war, and the young immigrant made good on his pledge. Even though he was not yet a citizen, he volunteered to serve his new nation in uniform, and 7 months after taking the oath of a U.S. soldier, he was sent to Korea.

The conditions were brutal. The fighting was intense, and the bitter cold was unrelenting. And it was in these grueling circumstances that Corporal Rubin impressed his fellow soldiers in the 1st Cav Division as one of the best ever to wear our Nation's uniform.

Those who served with Ted speak of him as a soldier of great skill and courage. One night near the Pusan Perimeter, Corporal Rubin had been assigned to hold a hill that was essential to the 3d Battalion safe withdrawal. For 24 hours this lone rifleman would defend the hill against an overwhelming number of North Korean forces. By his actions, Corporal Rubin inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, saved the lives of countless soldiers, and gave the unit time to withdraw.

Those who served with Ted speak of him as a soldier who gladly risked his own life for others. When Corporal Rubin's battalion found itself ambushed by thousands of Chinese troops, the Americans' firepower soon dwindled to a single machine gun. The weapon was in an exposed position, and three soldiers had already died manning it. That was when Corporal Rubin stepped forward. He fought until his ammunition was gone. He was badly wounded, captured, and sent to a POW camp. He risked his life that day to protect his fellow Amer-

ican soldiers, and his heroism helped many of them escape.

Those who served with Ted speak of him as a soldier whose many acts of compassion helped his fellow GIs survive the nightmare of imprisonment. As a teenager, Ted had taught himself how to survive the horrors of a Nazi death camp. He was resourceful, courageous, and unusually strong. And in Korea, he drew on these qualities to help keep many of his POWs alive. Whenever he could, at the risk of certain execution, Corporal Rubin would sneak out and steal food rations from the guards, and then he shared them with his fellow soldiers. Throughout this ordeal, he nursed those who were sick back to health and said the Kaddish prayers for those he buried.

And when his captors offered to release him to Communist Hungary, with the guarantee of a good job and nice clothes and plenty of food, Corporal Rubin refused. He said, "I was in the U.S. Army, and I wouldn't leave my American brothers because they need me here." Ted's decision was in character.

As a Jew and non-citizen serving in uniform, he had experienced prejudice in the Army. And he knew that the America he fought for did not always live up to its highest ideals. Yet he had enough trust in America's promise to see his commitment through. He saw it as his personal duty to live up to our Nation's promise, and by doing so, he set an example of what it means to be an American.

Many heroes are remembered in monuments of stone. The monuments to Corporal Rubin are a legacy of life. We see his legacy in the many American families whose husbands, fathers, and sons returned home safely because of his efforts. We see his legacy in the free and democratic South Korea that grew on the soil of his sacrifice. And we see his legacy in a new generation of American men and women in uniform who were inspired to their own acts of courage and compassion.

Today we remember the mother, father, and sister that Corporal Rubin lost to an unspeakable evil. We admire the determination of a young man who sought to repay his American liberators by following in their footsteps, and we recall the selfless acts that gave his comrades strength and hope in their darkest hours.

In the years since Abraham Lincoln signed into law the bill establishing the Medal of Honor, we have had many eloquent tributes to what this medal represents. I like Ted's description. He calls it "the highest honor of the best country

in the world." And today a grateful America bestows this award on a true son of liberty.

I now ask the military aide to read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; former Representative Benjamin A. Gilman of New York and his wife, Georgia; Adm. Edmund P. Giambastiani, Jr., USN, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Col. Rabbi Kenneth J. Leinwand, USA, installation chaplain, Fort Meade.

Remarks During a Briefing on Hurricane Rita in Colorado Springs, Colorado

September 24, 2005

Admiral, thank you very much for a series of briefings that really do comfort me in knowing that our Federal Government is well-organized and well-prepared to deal with Rita. I've come here to watch NORTHCOM in action, to see first hand the capacity of our military to plan, organize, and move equipment to help the people in the affected areas, in this case, of Louisiana and Texas.

We've had full briefings on the storm, it's activities. The first order of business now is to surge search-and-rescue teams, to pull people out of harm's way. Just had an assessment by General Honore, of Lake Charles, Louisiana. It got hit hard. We've got teams on the ground, beginning to analyze the situation and prepare the necessary response to stabilize the situation and, more importantly, save lives there as well.

It's very important for the citizens who have headed into east Texas to understand that even though the storm has passed the coastline, the situation is still dangerous because of potential flooding. A lot of people have left the coastline and headed into east

Texas and parts of western Louisiana. It is important for them to listen carefully to the local authorities about whether or not it is safe to return back to their home. It's going to take a while for the authorities on the ground to fully understand the impact of the flooding. And therefore, people who are safe now ought to remain in safe conditions.

At any rate, Admiral, thank you very much for your hospitality. I appreciate your leadership. I want to thank all the folks who work here in NORTHCOM for doing their duty, which is to organize and rally the assets of the of the Federal Government, to help our fellow citizens who are in need.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 a.m. at Peterson Air Force Base. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Timothy J. Keating, USN, commander, U.S. Northern Command; and Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, USA, commanding general, First United States Army.