



Remarks Following the City of Charlottesville's 9/11 Commemoration Ceremony
Hon. S. Ward Casscells III, M.D.
9/11/11

Dr. Saathoff, thank you. And thank you, President Sullivan, for being with us today.

This week has reminded us of the courage of our firefighters, our police, our EMTs, and our military and intelligence community, who, in the past ten years, have broken up 40 plots against targets here in the US. But the passage of ten years without another attack rests in large part on the fact that so few were attempted. Why? I think it is because the vast majority of people in this country believe that their ethnicity and religion are not threats to their safety, freedom, or success.

And for this we must give credit to the tradition of religious freedom, chiseled into law by Thomas Jefferson.

UVA has made other contributions as well. Dr. Saathoff has mentioned UVA's 8th Evacuation Hospital of Operation Torch, the tip of the US spear in WWII, in which my father served in North Africa and Italy. The hospital served for 3 1/2 years, the longest of any US field hospital, and won many awards and made many innovations.

UVA's Critical Incident Analysis Group (CIAG), led by Dr. Saathoff and advised by former Governor and Senator Chuck Robb, former Congressman and Army Secretary Jack Marsh, and former Attorney General Ed Meese, has been a model bipartisan "action tank", entrusted by our FBI and Defense Department to perform rapid, sensitive analyses of difficult national security issues.

ParadeRest, led by Elsie Thompson, has supported our returning troops, many of whom have been injured or lost comrades and find the adjustment difficult at first.

Others, too, are doing their part. In Houston four years ago, I had the honor of giving the key to a new house to a Marine corporal who had a severe head injury in Iraq. He was in a wheelchair and could not speak. But his 18-year-old sister spoke for him: "You have been for us a community of love, courage, hope, and honor." Today he can walk and speak.

But we have not succeeded in stopping the rise of Army suicides. In my opinion, our focus must be on jobs. They are the best treatment, and the best prevention.

Sadly, many people believe our returning warriors are addicted, or dangerous. In fact, most come home wiser, gentler, and fully aware that war is the last and most desperate answer to problems.

A bright spot in their lives is the generous G.I. Bill of 2009. But even before it was profitable, the Darden School had made it a point to admit returning warriors, when my Yale and Harvard kept them at arm's length.

UVA should also be proud of its JAG School, which has contributed importantly to military justice, as well as the Batten School of Leadership, Institute for Politics, and many other entities that promote the service of the country and critical thinking about the same.

One of them is ROTC, which trains citizen-soldiers. These are people who understand the importance of civilian control of the military, and of that great inscription at Arlington National Cemetery, "When we assumed the soldier, we did not put aside the citizen."

They understand the need for our military to know history and technology, to be fluent in other languages and cultures, so they can not only take a town, but rebuild it, and help its citizens govern themselves with confidence, justice, and mercy.

These citizen-soldiers have, for generations, come back to lead us, and to teach us. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and the young law student and Marine officer who would later lead our Navy and our Senate, John Warner. They studied, they served, and they led us through the storms, mainly by their ability to speak to us.

And today, thanks to great schools like this one, they continue to inspire our children. They exemplify how we have heeded one of the great lessons - attributed to Thucydides: "The nation that separates its scholars from its soldiers will have its fighting led by fools, and its laws made by cowards"

Others have done pretty well without a degree, but they had a thirst for learning, like Alexander Hamilton and Abraham Lincoln. I had the advantage of a Yale and Harvard education, but I learned tougher lessons in Army boot camp, where I struggled to keep up with kids from community and state colleges. Given the Ivy League's misgivings about ROTC, you will understand that the Army is not dazzled by a Harvard degree. But neither is it dazzled by anything else: when I was injured in Iraq, and in the ER of my own field hospital having my arm operated, I heard a middle-aged Army nurse bellow, "Three choppers five minutes out, with 6 Iraqi patients. Everyone who hasn't given blood this month will volunteer. And I need every bed. Move every non-critical patient into the hall, including that Colonel."

God bless the Army nurse, triaging without respect to rank or nationality.

In the book of Isaiah, we read: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

On 9/11/11, the United States is indebted to the University for three things: the promotion of critical thinking, the insistence on religious freedom, and the nurturing of leaders who say, "Send me".