Veterans, Freedom, and the Millennium
by
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What I was asked to talk with you about tonight is how, or *if*, the rapid changes we have seen in technology lately, particularly in my area of specialty, the Internet, are having an impact on veterans and on the freedom we fought so hard to preserve. That's a big question and we don't have an unlimited amount of time to discuss these issues, so I'll just jump right in.

As I was preparing my remarks for this evening, the thought struck me that there was a time in my life when it didn't seem possible that I would even live to see the dawn of the new millennium. That was followed by the thought, "Do those of us veterans who *have* made it this far still have a responsibility to further serve our country, or can we just take it easy from here on out?" Of course, the answer to that question is: Yes, we still have a duty to serve, for even though we are no longer in uniform, we are *veteran-citizens*, and we are still under the oath we took years ago to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.

And by the way, whether you were in the service yourself or whether you are the spouse or child of someone who was in the service, as I see it, YOU are a veteran too. In many ways those who had to stay home and wait and worry had it even harder than those of us who were in uniform. So when I refer to 'veterans' tonight, I'm speaking to everyone in the room.

It wasn't until I began preparing my remarks for this reunion that I realized how much my life has been connected to veterans. Growing up in a small town in the Midwest, some of my earliest memories are of my father and his friends sitting around the kitchen table telling their World War II stories. And I can still remember the Memorial Day parade when my godfather, a WW I veteran, let me 'march' in the parade alongside him. As you may know, I served in the Navy and did a WestPac tour off the coast of Viet Nam in 1967. Then, when I was living in Tampa, Florida I produced a series of television programs about the POWs and other veterans' issues. While I have never considered myself a 'veterans activist,' I now realize that most of my best friends are vets, especially the ones I can count on in a pinch. And maybe that is one of the reasons you all felt drawn to come back for this reunion, for deep down you realize that the men and women we once served with are the people we can count on when the going gets tough, and besides that they are just a lot of fun to be around.

Sometimes it seems as though the only time servicemen, servicewomen, and veterans are really appreciated is when we have troops somewhere in the world who are in harm's way. But you and I know that a lot of the pain and agony we went through took place far behind the lines, at places like Sampson Air Force Base. So I think everyone here tonight should give themselves a pat on the back for the part they played in the overall success our nation has had in spreading freedom and democracy throughout the world. While some of the younger people today may not think we have made much progress, most of us can still remember the 'duck and cover' nuclear bomb drills in schools during the

1950s. Most of us can still remember the day the Berlin Wall went *up* as well as when it came down. Most of us can remember living in fear of the Soviet Union's first strike potential and watched as they took over the Eastern European countries. For us the Cold War was a very real war, and now that war is finally over, so it seems.

Granted, there are still a lot of problems around the world today, but no matter what you say, without the unselfish service and sacrifices that were made by the people in this room, and by other American veterans, the world would be in far worse shape. So there is nothing wrong with our giving ourselves that pat on the back. I think we all deserve a 'Well Done!' Unfortunately, our job is not yet over, for there are new threats to freedom, and many of them are to be found right here at home. So tonight I'd like to bring up a few concerns I have about our freedom, concerns that you might not have thought about. And I will suggest some ways that you, America's veterans, can continue to hold the beach-head of freedom.

On the plus side of the scorecard we see, for example, that there no longer is a Soviet Union or a Berlin Wall, even though much of Eastern Europe and some countries like Korea still have serious problems. In fact, the recent sinking of that North Korean gunboat happened just a week before my fiancée and I were to catch a plane from Seoul Korea to Saigon. And I'll be honest, I gave serious thought to canceling our trip. For some reason, the idea of getting caught in the middle of a shooting war didn't seem that exciting to me.

We did, however, travel throughout Viet Nam this past June, and what we saw there only reinforced my belief that while communism still flourishes it cannot long withstand the assaults of good old American ingenuity and technology. (I'll have more to say about that in a minute.) Now, if you travel to Viet Nam with a tour group or only go to some of the new beach resorts, you might think that politically and economically there is little difference between that country and other third world countries. But just beneath the surface things are very different.

For example, wherever we stayed, whether it was in a hotel or in a friend's house, the local police wanted our passports. And I have reason to believe this was more than just a formality. A friend we stayed with in Saigon had his visa to travel to Australia for a temporary job revoked just two days after we stayed in his home. While there is no way to know if our visit was the cause of his loosing his travel privileges, it was another reminder that freedom is still very elusive in communist countries.

Another sign of the times in Viet Nam is the fact that most of the mail, both sent and received, is first read by the police. And a significant amount of mail never gets past these censors, particularly if there is money or pictures enclosed. But guess what? Hanoi and Saigon now have dozens of "cyber-cafes" where, for a few dollars an hour, you can rent an Internet connection and send email out without it being censored. It was one of the biggest surprises of our trip to see this. And, by the way, I conducted some tests to see if the email was being intercepted before it went out on the Net, and it wasn't. Of course, the two dollars an hour these cafés charge to use the Internet is still a fortune to the Vietnamese who on average earn only $300 a year. But even so, you would be surprised at how many young Vietnamese people are to be found typing away in these cafés.

Even this little ray of freedom seemed dim, however, when we visited a school that was hidden from the police because they were teaching young Montagnard children how to read and write, something the local authorities have prohibited for reasons that were never made clear to us. While the cold war may be over, freedom is still in pretty short supply in some places. In fact, there is a significant attack on our own freedom right here in the U.S.A., and that is what I would like to focus on this evening.

What I am going to do is to point out several issues we are facing here at home today that are going to directly impact how free this nation will be twenty years from now. What I am not going to do is give you my opinions on these issues. Instead I am going to attempt to show some of the threats to freedom that I see taking place and suggest ways that you, as former and current defenders of freedom, can make a difference in the critical debates just ahead.

What I am going to do is to challenge each of you to do some homework before you completely lock in on one side or the other of an issue. And by 'homework' I don't mean that you should just continue to read only one newspaper or listen to the same newscast on television every night. The problem with that approach is that you are simply buying into the opinions of the owners of the paper or the station and their advertisers. As Americans, and particularly as veterans, I think we have a duty to go the extra mile and learn all of the facts we can about an issue before we take a stand, and one way to do this is by using the ***direct access*** to information afforded everyone through the Internet. And I'll give you some tips on how to do that.

As an example of an important issue facing us today, let's take an issue that seems to get everyone's blood pressure to rise, gun control. I picked this one first because I find it to be one of the most difficult issues on which to make a decision. On the one hand, the current rash of insane school shootings seems to argue for stricter controls. Yet I can also see why our Founding Fathers were so intent on seeing to it that our citizens have the right to bear arms. After all, without an armed citizenry we would still probably still be British subjects. So how do you balance the seemingly conflicting sides of this issue?

To begin with, you must decide whether or not this is an issue on which you want to spend some of your time. While it is easy to simply say, "Of course we have a right to own any gun we want. It's in the Constitution." That answer doesn't sit very well with a parent whose child was just murdered with an automatic weapon that was easily purchased by another minor. Or take the other side of that coin. If you think that no one should be able to own a gun, how do you counter the argument that the right to bear arms has been a part of our national heritage for over two hundred years, and that there still may be times when some of us have to defend ourselves and our families? Times, for example, like the riots we saw a few years ago in Los Angeles. Can you see why it is going to take some time and effort on your part to reach an intelligent decision on this issue?

This won't be an easy decision, but if it is important to you I think you should do more than just form a snap opinion on the issue. Don't just go along with the last person you talked with. And don't blindly accept the opinion of your newspaper's editorial or the TV commentator. You need to get on the Internet and do some research about the facts on your own before you form a personal opinion. Go to some of the Web sites that

have stories from the families of shooting victims, then go to the NRA Web site, and while you are at it check out some of the sites that discuss gun control in the context of the Second Amendment and other historical perspectives. Or you can check some of the online discussion groups which work like huge bulletin boards. For example, I did a quick check of the topic "gun control" on several discussion groups and found over 2,000 postings that were less than one week old. If you are really passionate about gun control you should join in the global discussion of this issue.

Once you have spent some time to understand all sides of the debate, make your own decision based on the facts you have gathered. Then you will not only have taken a personal stand on the issue, you will also be able to defend your stand to others by using the information you have gathered.

Is that work? Yes it is. Is having a well-informed opinion on an issue like gun control the same as spending a tour of duty overseas and fighting for freedom? No, it isn't the *same*, but in some ways it is even harder because while having well reasoned opinions about issues that affect our freedom is extremely important, it isn't always urgent. It takes initiative on your part. It means giving up a little of the time we spend on the couch watching football (which, by the way, I think is both important AND urgent). So don't be hesitant about doing some work to back up your opinions, after all what is the point of living in a society where information is freely available if you don't take advantage of it? I met a lot of people in Viet Nam who would dearly love to have the access to information that we take for granted.

If you think your right to bear arms may be in danger, then you should really be concerned about your right of privacy, if in fact you even have such a right. As you may or may not know, there is no explicit "right of privacy" granted in our Constitution. Until recently, however, the Forth Amendment has been used to protect such rights. However, recent court decisions have seriously undermined this entire amendment.

As you know, the Fourth Amendment reads:

> The right of the people to be secure in their persons,
> houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches
> and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall
> issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or
> affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be
> searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Do you know that this amendment no longer applies to your automobile, for the courts have upheld the right of the police to randomly stop automobiles and search them. While this was done under the auspices of stopping drunk drivers and the "war on drugs," it can be applied to anyone at any time. And if you happen to be a minority person driving with a Florida license tag on your car, you had better assume that you are going to be stopped and have your car searched from time to time. And this is only the tip of the iceberg. We have already surrendered a lot of our precious freedom in the apparently un-winable war on people who use drugs other than the ones the FDA and the American Medical Association have decided are best for us. And I don't mean only the illegal "pleasure" drugs. There are literally hundreds of longevity drugs, alternative cancer therapies, and cognitive enhancing drugs in regular use in other countries which have

been outlawed in the U.S. primarily because they will erode the profits of some other drug that has the financial backing necessary to get it approved by Washington.

I'm sure that the majority of the people here tonight fully support what we call the "war on drugs," but do you support it from the standpoint of your own factual research or just because the headline writers and politicians tap into your emotions? How many of you have actually looked behind these headlines to see some of the facts? Now, I'm not saying that drugs haven't seriously injured some people. What I am saying is that perhaps non-drug users have given up too much of their own freedom in the interest of electing politicians who only give lip service to "winning the war on drugs." Maybe I'm wrong about this, but unless you spend the time to dig up the real facts on your own, you won't know any more than what your local newspaper or TV station owner wants you to know.

How many of you are aware that we are now living in an age where the majority of all television stations, newspapers, magazines, and radio stations in this country are owned by just a handful of companies? On the global scale, the overwhelming majority of the world's movie and television production, cable and satellite system ownership, book publishing, magazine publishing and music production is controlled by fewer than 50 companies. And the nine largest of these firms dominate many sectors. What is more, most of these companies are involved in joint ventures with each other which further concentrates their power over the information we are fed by television, movies, newspapers, radio, and magazines.

Is this really acceptable in a democratic society? To me, that translates to 50 CEOs who have direct control over the majority of the information our average citizen receives. If you are worried about global conspiracies, maybe one you should be thinking about is the "conspiracy," if it can be called that, by global corporations to control what we see, hear, and read. And guess what, these same companies are also doing their best to take over the content of commercial Web sites. As one writer recently pointed out, "The global media cartel may be evolving into a global communication cartel."

How many of you own a computer? Do you know that the Department of Justice has recently asked Congress to authorize the police to enter your home and install software on your computer that will allow them to capture all of your passwords used in encryption programs? Remember what the Fourth Amendment says:

> ". . . and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause"

Well, this new proposal that the White House and the Justice Department have put before Congress will allow the police to install what is in essence a wiretap on your computer. And they won't have to have any more probable cause than an officer's suspicion that some day they may have to gather evidence against you for use in prosecuting you for a crime that you haven't even committed yet. The bottom line here is that our government simply doesn't want *anyone* to have *any* private information on their own home computer. How do you feel about that? Are you willing to give up all of your personal privacy just to make it appear that the government is doing something about the fact that every year more and more drugs flow into this country? How does eliminating *your*

personal right of privacy make this country a better place in which to live?   Keep in mind the fact that we are talking here about *your* privacy, not the privacy of the bad guys who can afford to hire computer experts to get around these controls.

And this is just the latest effort in the U.S. government's attempt to make it illegal for *anyone* to use encryption software on their home computer. What is really insane about this paranoia is that all of the bad guys already have a copy of encryption programs that are virtually unbreakable. Until recently it was a violation of the *Arms Control Act* to take encryption software out of the country. It is still against the law today, but now it falls under another category, since even our government was able to realize how foolish we looked to the rest of the world by classifying encryption software in the same category as a nuclear bomb.

Laws like this don't do anything to prevent criminals from using this software. All they do is cripple a lot of U.S. software manufacturers who need to include tight security in programs used for at-home banking and retail purchasing over the Internet. Just last month, under the auspices of a contest, an anonymous group of people broke the encryption routine that is used for most commercial Internet transactions today. And the reason they were able to break it so easily is that the U.S. government won't allow strong encryption keys to be used because the National Security Agency can't break them. I can go to virtually any European country and buy heavy duty encryption software off the shelf and bring it into the U.S. Yet I can't buy it from an American company and take it overseas.

Letting the FBI come into your home and install a "back door" on your computer isn't going to stop the Colombian drug lord who keeps his records on a laptop computer in his briefcase. What these attempts to keep you from maintaining your own private records will eventually do is inhibit your writing and eventually inhibit your ability to think. You see, the most effective control a government can use to suppress its people is fear which imposes self-censorship. That kind of fear changes most people's behavior and marginalizes the rest. I think it is important to keep in mind the words of James Madison when he said,

> *I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of*
> *the freedom of the people by gradual and silent*
> *encroachments of those in power than by violent and*
> *sudden usurpations.*

Some of you here tonight might think that computer privacy isn't an issue that will have any effect on your life because, not only do you not own a computer, you don't have any intention of ever letting one in your house. I know a lot of people like that, and for many of them it isn't all that bad a position to take. But if you think you can avoid the impact that the Internet is going to have on your lives just because you don't own a computer you have another 'think' coming. Since we don't have time tonight for me to get on my "Internet will change the world" soapbox, you will just have to take the following statement on faith. In my opinion, the technology we now call "the Internet" is going to have a greater impact on the lives of literally everyone on this planet than the *combined effects* brought about by the telephone, the automobiles, and television. The changes being brought about by the Internet are going to be big, really big.

Let me give you just a few small examples of how the Internet is changing the way some people live. When I first began using the Net in the late 1980's, one of the first people I sent an email to was my brother who is a university professor in Spain. Before we both had access to email we would exchange letters once or twice a year and maybe have a phone call at Christmas time. But email was easy, no stamps, no envelope, and instant delivery. We were hooked quickly and began exchanging a series of "do you remember when" messages. After we had thoroughly hashed over the past, we began discussing world affairs and other topics of mutual interest. And now, since we've been exchanging emails almost daily for a decade, the majority of our messages consist of telling each other jokes. The really nice part is that whenever we do get together in the flesh there is no "catching up" to do. We just pick up our conversation where it left off the day before.

While that is a common story, I heard of another interesting email connection from a man whose 12 year old son had an interest in raising tropical fish. Apparently the boy was having trouble keeping a particular species of fish alive, so he began searching the Internet for advice. To make a long story short, he wound up exchanging email with another young man who just happened to live in the Amazon jungle and could tell him exactly how his tribe raised this same type of fish in a nearby river.

I know some of you may be thinking that this story is a little "fishy," no pun intended. After all, who is going to believe that an Amazonian native has an email account? Well, I don't know how many indigenous people are already connected to the Net, but I know of at least one personally. A few months ago I attended a presentation given by a shaman who lives in the deep jungle of the Peruvian Amazon. You can't imagine my surprise when, after his talk, he handed me a business card which lacked a phone number but did have his email address! Believe me, the Internet is permeating every corner of this planet.

One way the Internet is going to change the way you live is in the way you shop and buy things. For example, a small business sector that has already figured out how to use the Internet is the antique trade. Even I was surprised last year when a small Florida antique dealer told me that virtually all of his business was now conducted over the Internet. And here is the most interesting part: He said that his profits had more than doubled on Internet sales because he sold his wares by auction rather than by flat price quotes.

If you own your own business and haven't checked out the new tools that have become available in the last six months then you'd better take another look, because a lot of new technology is out there leveling the playing field for the little guy. For example you will soon be hearing the acronym 'ASP.' If you are Internet-savvy you already know that an *I*SP is an Internet Service Provider. Well, and *A*SP is an *Application* Service Provider. And what ASPs are doing is renting multi-million dollar software applications to small businesses on a per-use basis. So instead of paying a couple of million dollars to set up your own catalog business on the Internet, you can pay for the use of this software per transaction, or "by the drink" as the insiders call it.

Today we are seeing businesses set up Web sites as alternative sales channels for their traditional sales methods. In the industry this is known as "dot com-ing" your business.

Whether you believe it right now or not, before too many years have passed almost all commerce will be electronic commerce. Guess what this is going to do to the little entrepreneur in Hanoi and Beijing? (And believe me, Viet Nam is *alive* with entrepreneurs.) Before their governments know what hit them, budding capitalists are going to spring up everywhere. Already you can use the Internet to do most of your travel planning for a trip to Viet Nam, and that means dealing with commercial enterprises in what is supposedly a communist country. I can still remember hearing MacNamara saying that the communists would eventually fall to our technology. Where he was off base was in thinking it was our military technology that would do them in, when the fact is it's our communications technology that will eventually do the job.

Yet I know that some of you still aren't buying into the idea of the Internet changing your life. If you don't have a personal computer in your home yet, I certainly can't blame you. There are many days when I'd like to throw mine out the window myself. But soon you will be seeing more and more "Internet appliances." These are going to take the shape of all sorts of devices, from a box that lets you surf the Web while you watch television, to your next refrigerator that automatically orders groceries when your supply gets low. Everything is going to be connected to everything else in less time than you can believe. Eventually you won't be able to avoid it. And the effects, I am sorry to report, may not all be positive unless we take a stand to protect ourselves from uninvited snooping into our daily lives by both government and business.

Did you know that there are already companies using new technology to track your surfing habits on the Web? And based on your interests, they control the advertisements you see while you surf. I'm not talking here about you filling out a form and requesting information. This technology is so "smart" that it watches what you are doing and lifts your email address without you even noticing. One thing most people don't seem to realize about the Net is that while you have the sense of viewing these Web pages in the privacy of your own home, you are actually in a public square allowing a lot of smart people to figure out what you are interested in. So if you begin getting unsolicited email from porn vendors maybe you'd better give your child a little more supervision when he is doing his homework.

There is a positive side to this situation also. For example, we are soon going to see a flood of companies offering "one-to-one pricing." What that means is the prices of many goods will no longer be firmly fixed. Instead, companies will be offering their products in auction formats or providing discounts to you based on groups to which you belong, or based on hobbies you have, and practically any combination of qualifications you can imagine. So the question then becomes, "How much privacy are you willing to give up in order to get the best deals on things you want to purchase?"

As much as you may feel threatened by some of these coming changes, you can bet that governments are the most threatened. To the power elite, allowing the world's citizens free and unfettered access to any information they want simply cannot be condoned. Take Australia for example.

In January of 2000, a new "online content law" takes effect, and it has some observers saying that Australia is on its way to becoming the Internet's "village idiot." Basically, this law will empower *anyone* who is offended by some content they find on

the Internet to file a complaint with the Australian Broadcast Association which, in turn, will meet with the country's Office of Film & Literature Classification. If these bureaucrats agree that the information is "offensive," whatever that means, the local Internet Service Providers will have to find a way to keep their customers from accessing that information. Outside of providing a lot of jobs for government censors, I don't see how this is going to benefit the citizens of Australia. Once again we have a case of socialism run amok. Why is it that parents prefer to turn over supervision of their children to a bunch of bureaucrats rather than take an active role in supervising them on their own?

And if what is going on in Australia makes you nervous, wait until you hear about what the United States already agreed to when it signed the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs. According to this convention, the U.S. Congress is *required* to make even the act of talking about possible medical uses of illegal drugs a criminal offense. And if you think the U.N. isn't aware of our First Amendment rights, here is what the convention has to say about it:

> *It should, however, be the duty of States to find a practical*
> *way of conciliation between the contradictory exercise of*
> *rights. The freedom of expression cannot remain*
> *unrestricted when it conflicts with other essential values*
> *and rights.*

Just what "essential values and rights" are they talking about here? What gives the United Nations the authority to tell the citizens of the United States that our right to freedom of speech is secondary to their right to decide what is best for us. What gives them the right, of course, is that the bureaucrats in Washington decided back in 1988 that your right to freedom of speech isn't as important as their "war on drugs." I'll get off this issue now, but let's be honest here. There is no war on "drugs." These substances could care less what the world's governments think or do. The war is on the "rights of people," all people, not just the ones who are using non-prescribed substances. And if you think freedom of expression on the Internet isn't a part of this global plan to silence dissent, I'll read one final sentence from that U.N. Convention:

> *Governments are also invited to seek the cooperation of*
> *the telecommunications industries and software providers*
> *in removing illegal subject matter from the Internet.*

Of course, the document conveniently fails to define what is meant by "illegal subject matter."

We are getting close to a very dangerous crossroad right now. Never before has a technology swept across the globe at such an incredible speed. And the speed with which it has advanced has taken the governments of the world by surprise. Only now are they waking up to the potential danger the spread of freely available information is to the established power elite. When we look at countries like China and Viet Nam, it is easy to see that the availability of uncensored information as a good thing. Remember the last days of the Soviet Union and the events at Tiananmen Square? Without thousands and thousands of FAXes being sent into those countries by people in the "free world," it is doubtful that the leaders and people involved would have had the courage to continue

their protests. And the Internet takes this freedom of information flow to even greater heights as we saw during the siege of Sarajevo where the only real news of what was happening came from a few young computer enthusiasts who were trapped in the city.

But don't think that it is only communist and fascist countries who want to suppress the free flow of information. Freedom of speech is under heavy attack right here at home as well. A couple of weeks ago Utah's Senator Orrin Hatch and that other great conservative, California's own Dianne Feinstein, introduced a bill in Congress that, if passed, has the potential of making a felon out of anyone who has a Web page and doesn't constantly check the contents of every other Web site they have links to.

For those of you who haven't yet had the personal experience of "surfing" the World Wide Web, let me explain what a "link" is. You can think of a Web page as if it were a page in a book. Remember those boring school books that had a bunch of footnotes at the bottom of the page? Well, you can think of those footnotes as a "link." So if you are reading about ceramics, for instance, and saw a footnote that read "Suzie's ceramic tips" you could just "click" on that note and have Suzie's Web page come up on your screen. In its most basic form, that is what a link is.

What the Hatch/Feinstein bill does is to make it a felony, punishable by a fine and three years in prison, for you to put any link on your Web page that connects to sites with information about where to buy "drug paraphernalia," including ceramic pipes. So if Suzie's ceramics page offered antique Persian water pipes and your site had a link to hers, you could wind up spending three years in a federal penitentiary. Even editors of news organizations that publish articles about the drug culture, treatment programs, and research studies will be subject to arrest and prosecution.

Of course, we all realize that for now, at least, we simply can't afford to hire millions of information police to check every Web site of every citizen of this country. But what a law like this does is impose self-censorship on our people, eventually eliminating our ability to think for ourselves. In the end, anyone who doesn't think like Hatch and Feinstein do will be marginalized, just like the of millions of our citizens today who self-medicate with non-FDA approved drugs. And what do you suppose is going to happen on the day these newly marginalized citizens become the majority?

As I mentioned earlier, the U.S. isn't alone in its attempt to suppress free speech. I have an Australian friend who is a botanist and author. One of the books he wrote has been banned in several Australian states because it identifies several native plants that happen to have drug-like properties. Simply possessing his book in those states will land you in prison for five years. Naturally, he is now afraid to even travel to that part of his own country for fear that their next step will be to imprison him for what is in his mind and hasn't even been written. I suspect that the good Senators Hatch and Feinstein would like to see our 50 states copy those restrictive laws. Then Congress can publish its own book telling us exactly *what* we are permitted to think about.

Do I really think something like that will happen? No, at least not that drastic. But I believe there is a very real danger here, and I don't mean the danger of a law regulating our thoughts. The danger I see is in marginalizing and making pseudo criminals out of a significant portion of our world citizens. For you see, what no government seems to yet understand is that the jinni is out of the bottle. All of the rules and laws and regulations

they can dream up can not stop the free flow of information on the Internet. Every high school in the country has at least one student who is capable of defeating attempts at Web censorship like the one used in Viet Nam. I'm not that good of a "hacker," but after checking it out, I know that even I can get through their primitive security firewall. And our own government's network security isn't that much better.

The FBI's top network security specialist once told me that there is no way we can completely control the current attacks on our government computers. The best we can do with the resources we have is to go after attackers who are obviously trying to steal state secrets to sell to the governments of other countries. But most of the break-ins, only a few of which are ever reported in the press, are done by people who are merely curious, not malicious. The last statistic I saw for the Department of Defense showed that in 1996 there were over 500,000 attempted break-ins to their computer systems, and you would be shocked to learn what a high percentage of them were successful.

The bottom line is that the Internet has become so important to global economics that it wouldn't be shut down even if it could be. And, of course, there is no longer any way to "turn it off." No single person, organization, or computer system is "in charge." The Internet is not only the largest technological artifact ever created, it is also the world's largest functioning anarchy. For example, the deep technology of the Internet is governed by protocols or technical rules of operation. Do you know where these protocols come from? They are issued by the Internet Engineering Task Force. And do you know how one becomes a member of this elite group? Just show up at their next meeting. That's it. If you want to help set Internet policy simply go to the meetings. And that has *got* to keep the power elite awake at nights.

By the way, if you think that merely regulating the Internet is going to stop pornography and hate crimes, you had better think again because a lot of the information you can find on the Net has been around in readily available books for a long time. Here are a few titles from just one book catalog:

"Vest-Busters: How To Make Your Own Body-Armor-Piercing Bullets"
"Homemade Guns And Homemade Ammo"
"Home Workshop Explosives"
"Boxing's Dirty Tricks and Outlaw Killer Punches"
"Silencing Sentries"
"The Complete Guide To Lock Picking"
"Techniques Of Burglar Alarm Bypassing"

These titles are from a catalog of thousands of "underground" books that have been readily available for years. It isn't the Internet that is "responsible" for this information being available, it just makes it much easier to find.

I guess the question comes down to what type of country you want to live in. Do you think the U.S. should be more like Australia and censor anything that any one of its citizens thinks is inappropriate? Do you want to live in a country like Viet Nam where the politburo decides what information the people may read? Or do you want to live in a participatory democracy where all voices are given a chance to be heard and, within reason, all points of view may be expressed? The key word here is "participatory." If

you don't participate in our national debate what advantage do you have over a Chinese peasant?

The point I am trying to make tonight is that we have entered a new phase of democracy, I call it the phase of the National Town Square. Next year will see our first national elections in which a significant number of our citizens will have access to the Internet. No one knows yet how, or even if, this new means of communication will have an influence on the elections, but I am predicting that it will. And I am challenging you, our veterans, to once again take the lead in defending the freedom that a participatory democracy requires.

Pick the issues that are most important to you and spend the time required to research all sides of these issues. Then use the power of the Internet and of email to communicate directly with every candidate for whom you will have an opportunity to vote. Ask them where they stand on the issues you hold near and dear. And then base your votes on the answers you receive. And I don't mean you should do this only with the candidates for national office. It seems to me that local elections are ultimately the most important, for these officials are the ones who can have the biggest impact on our daily lives. Isn't it ironic that the closer to home our government gets the less we know about the candidates. And it doesn't it also seem odd that the majority of our tax dollars go to Washington and aren't used closer to our homes? Yet it is in Washington, D.C. where most of the world's free speech policies will eventually be decided. The decisions about the Internet that are going to be made in our nation's capital over the next year or so will have a direct impact on how much information we will be allowed to access and how much personal privacy we will have. These decisions will also determine to a large degree the extent of free speech that will be allowed, not only by us but by most of the other people on this planet as well.

Those of you who have been following the privacy and free speech issues on the Internet for the past couple of years are already aware that your freedom is under attack by the power elite and the bureaucrats who support them. This is a real threat; one that is not going to fade away without a fight. And I'm afraid we can't count on anyone but ourselves to repel that threat. Sadly, and for reasons I can't fully understand, the younger people today seem to have little sense of history. They are too intent on getting better jobs and buying new things, and they seem to have little time or interest in studying history. It is you and I, the people who know what it is like to be at war, who can fully appreciate that freedom isn't something that comes without work and study and struggle.

Maybe you agree with Senators Hatch and Feinstein. That's OK. I have no argument with your right to agree with them as long as you have come to your point of view after gathering all the real, unvarnished facts you can and have formed an opinion that is uniquely yours. As they say in the business world, "If you don't set your own agenda you are going to become part of someone else's plan." To paraphrase that thought, "If you don't care enough about an issue to research it and communicate your feelings to your elected officials, then that issue will be decided in favor of someone who cares more about it than you."

As veterans, it seems we should be passionate about freedom. After all, there was a day when we were willing to risk our lives to fight for it, and many of our brothers and

sisters-in-arms gave their lives in its defense. We've come a long way in these past 50 years, but there still is work to be done. And who better to do this work than the women and men to whom freedom is more than just a word . . . it is a way of life.

I thank you for inviting me here tonight and for your attention. And most of all, thank you for your long and continued service to freest nation the Earth has ever seen. May our freedom continue to shine!