

*I'm proud to be
an American
The day after 9/11
& week before 9/11*

and salute our vets
ARMED FORCES DAY
1991

*Different
recognition of
troops presence our
freedom -
honor those
who gave the supreme
sacrifice*

On this, the 42nd time we've set aside this day to recognize the millions who have served in America's military forces, there are countless reasons for celebration—beginning, quite obviously, with the dramatic deployment of Desert Shield and the astonishing military victory of Desert Storm.

Think for a moment about the story the numbers tell. During the first 90 days of deployment, from August to October, our military moved 1.3 million tons of equipment and 200,000 troops from all over the world to logistical and tactical bases in Saudi Arabia. Also, there was the call-up of over 100,000 reservists and National Guardsmen to active duty, which entailed brief, but intense, training periods in the United States before shipment overseas with their equipment.

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To give concrete meaning to those numbers and the magnitude of the task, think of a town roughly the size of Jefferson City, Missouri. Imagine its people, vehicles, household goods—everything—loaded on ships, moved 6,000 miles, and then unloaded, put back together, and made to work. And that happened within the first 30 days of deployment. For most of us, that's an incomprehensible logistical feat by itself, but the flow continued unabated, including troops and equipment from Germany as well as the United States. By the end of January, the numbers had swelled to 3 million tons and 539,000 troops.

our Armed Forces today have proven themselves to be as good as any ever, and a force that went about accomplishing its mission in a way we all can feel good about.

One ~~sergeant~~ platoon leader wrote home

"Find the families of anyone in my platoon who is killed and try to console them," he asked of his parents. "To a man, they have excelled in a bad situation, and their families should mix some pride with their sadness."

A bad situation; pride with sadness; ~~and yet they still went.~~

^{He} His letters painted a clear portrait of an officer proud of his men. He didn't want glory or fame for himself, only that his troops would be more than names on a gravestone if they were killed.

Yet while there are tyrants like Saddam Hussein, there will always be wars. The mettle of the American people and our commitment to human freedom and dignity will certainly be tested again. But on this day, let's not forget the ones who cannot be here to join us. And in honor of that tank platoon leader's request, let's commit ourselves to never letting them become just names on a gravestone.

My Country 'tis of thee
Sweet land of liberty
Of thee I sing Land
where my fathers died
Land of the just men's pride
From every mountain side
let freedom ring.