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Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III

45th Infantry Brigade Deployment Ceremony Speech



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Thank you very much.

Governor Fallin, General Deering, distinguished visitors, men and women of the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, men and women of the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron, family members, friends, employers, members of the cabinet, members of the Oklahoma State Legislature: It's my honor and privilege to be home in Oklahoma on this momentous occasion.

Now this is a -- an historic occasion. Chief Smithson helped us go through the legacy and lineage of the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team -- a legacy that I would place against any brigade combat team in the country, active, guard, or reserve. We had the best led soldiers, officers and enlisted. We had the best equipped and we have the best trained military force on the face of the earth, right here in Oklahoma.

If you'll allow me to talk and brag a little bit about the Air National Guard part of this deployment. You know the United States Air Force didn't even become a separate service until 1947. And this unit that's deploying today, the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron, came into being in 2007. Significant in that it was the one hundredth anniversary of Oklahoma statehood. And in case you're wondering where we got the numbers, 146th ASOS, let me explain. Unlike the United States Army and the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, we don't have that lineage or legacy or history. So we're a little bit free to choose what we want to call ourselves.



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And so we chose 146th. The "1" standing for the one hundredth birthday of United -- of the state of Oklahoma when this unit was created and the "46" standing for the fact that Oklahoma is the 46th state admitted to the union. That's where the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron came from.

I'm extremely proud of these young men and women. For the first time in history, as General Deering indicated, they will be deploying in support of the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team: two Oklahoma units supporting one another. This unit bringing the awesome fire power of the United States Air Force to the fight through their coordination and liaison with the leadership of the 45th.

I think it's only appropriate that when we send Oklahomans in harm's way, as we are doing once again with the 45th, that we send the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron. We want you to know, we have your back and we watching your six.

Now let me take this uniform off just a second and speak to you as a proud parent. I know many of you know that Nancy and I have a son who is a member of the 45th. Major Colby Wyatt, S3 for the 1st of the 179. This will be his third deployment overseas, fourth deployment counting Katrina. And so for all of you moms and dads and grandmas and grandpas, brothers and sisters, friends and relatives, we know what you're going through. We've been here before and only history will tell us if we will be here again.

But I want you to know that because of that relationship that we have with -- with our son, serving the state of Oklahoma, serving the 45th, that our thoughts and our prayers are with each and every one of you. We need to make sure that we have one another's back and recognize the fact that patriots come in all different sizes, shapes, colors, not all of them wear uniforms, some of them are employers, some of them are the family members who stay at home and take of business back here in the state of Oklahoma. So thank you for being here in support of your soldier or your airman. Nancy and I will be with you in the year to come.

And I also want to close with -- with this final note: thank you for recognizing the veterans who have come before us. You couldn't help but recognize the applause that you gave the veterans that -- that have served before us. There is one particular group of veterans that I want to single out because this particular group never had the opportunity to have farewell said to them in such a context as this and they certainly did not have the recognition when they come -- came home from their war. So for all of you Vietnam veterans, welcome home.

All of our veterans have written the -- the history of military service to this country and the men and women seated beside me and behind me will carry on that tradition and that legacy. They will write a new page to the history of the Oklahoma National Guard. And what a proud history, what a proud page they will write. I look forward to the day, not long from now, when we can gather again and welcome these soldiers and airmen home from another job well done.