

Joe ([00:15](#)):

Hello, everyone. Welcome. As a Reagan National Defense Forum attendee, we each received the 2021 RDNF Challenge Coin. And inscribed on are these words from President Reagan's first inaugural address in 1981, "When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do so, we have the best chance of never having to use that strength." President Reagan knew that a nation that is prepared for any conflict, strong enough to win any war, is a nation less likely to have to go to war. That is the essence of peace through strength. The Reagan Foundation makes it our mission to ensure this proven philosophy serves as a guide for America's Defense and National Security leaders, regardless of party for generations to come.

Joe ([01:03](#)):

And the Ronald Reagan Peace Through Strength awards, honor those whose service advanced that vision. This award has been presented to some of our nation's most exemplary leaders and distinguished statesmen. A vice president, secretaries of defense, secretaries of state and members of Congress. Tonight, we will present the Peace Through Strength award to two more leaders of the highest caliber. The award itself features a bronze eagle perched on a granite base. The eagle, a favorite of President Reagan's represents a strength and courage America has shown throughout our history. In the eagle's talon is an actual piece of the fallen Berlin wall. It is a reminder of America's role in bringing freedom to the oppressed or breaking down the barriers to democracy and liberty. I have the honor today of presenting this year's first Peace Through Strength award.

Joe ([01:51](#)):

For 26 years, Mac Thornberry represented the 13th district of Texas in the United States Congress. For 26 years he was a champion for the men and women of our armed forces and his strong foreign policy. He was a longtime member of both the House Intelligence Committee and the House Armed Services Committee. When he rose to the chairmanship of the Armed Services Committee, he worked to streamline the defense department acquisition to enhance innovation in the military and to get new technologies into the hands of the war fighter faster. He was always looking beyond the horizon, striving to prepare America for threats to come. He led in creating the National Nuclear Security Administration to improve management of the nation's nuclear weapons complex. He introduced to bill to establish the Department of Homeland Security six months before the attacks of 9/11. And he helped prepare the military to defend the nation in the domains of space and cyber.

Joe ([02:42](#)):

Early in his career, Mac Thornberry served in the Reagan administration. He worked at the state department as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs. So it's something of a homecoming that he's now an integral part of the Reagan Foundation family. By virtue, his service as Chairman and ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, he has been a co-chair of many Reagan National Defense Forums. Our military is stronger, better equipped and better prepared and our country is safer, thanks to the leadership of Mac Thornberry. For his Reaganess vision, his nonpartisan approach, his innovative spirit and his strategic mind, we're honored to present this Ronald Reagan Peace Through Strength award to Chairman of Mac Thornberry.

Mac Thornberry ([03:22](#)):

Very nice.

Joe ([03:24](#)):

Thank you.

Mac Thornberry ([03:33](#)):

Thank you. Thank you, Joe for that generous introduction. I have to admit however that I'm somewhat intimidated by this award, especially by the ranks of prior recipients, present company included. And that feeling extends to Secretary Work, who has and is contributing to our nation's security in many ways in and out of uniform. I should probably just say ditto and take my seat and I'd be better off. Nonetheless, I'm incredibly grateful and incredibly honored by this, while knowing that whatever useful I may have done over the years has been because of those I've had the privilege of working with, again, present company definitely included, and because of the love and support and patience of my family, especially my wife, Sally. Each visit to this library is very moving to me and I'm grateful to John Heubusch and the trustees, not only for presenting President Reagan and his accomplishments so well, but for keeping them relevant and inspiring for all of us today.

Mac Thornberry ([05:03](#)):

I first got to see Ronald Reagan in person when I was in high school. He came to the Texas panhandle to campaign for the first Republican to ever represent our area in Congress. He rode around through the crowd, shaking hands on horseback, which I thought was really cool as a high school kid. The Congressman ended up losing his reelection that year, but from that day to this, I have admired and learned from, and been inspired by the example of Ronald Reagan. Of course, no phrase or ideas more associated with him than, Peace Through Strength. That bipartisan approach led to our success in the Cold War and I think it still applies to our challenges today. Timeless truths clearly spoken resonate through the ages.

Mac Thornberry ([05:57](#)):

Because I'm feeling bold in august company, I'm going to propose a slight amendment to that phrase and make it, Peace and Prosperity Through Strength. Now, my amendment is not exactly original, President Washington said in a State of the Union, "If we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war." Timeless truths clearly spoken.

Mac Thornberry ([06:29](#)):

I think one of our failures in recent decades, and I include myself in this indictment, is not adequately explaining to and remind the American people how their lives are not only safer and freer, but also longer, healthier and more prosperous, because we decided after World War II to keep a strong military and to stay engaged in the world. It's too easy for us to forget and too easy for us to lose what has been accomplished in the decades since we made those decisions.

Mac Thornberry ([07:05](#)):

So what kind of strength leads to peace and prosperity in 2022? Well, national strength obviously includes a robust economy, innovative diplomacy, trade policy that reflects our strategic interest among and other things. But we can't hide from the fact that it is military power that undergirds and brings credibility to everything else. The first ingredient of military strength that enables peace and prosperity is of course our people. We must keep those who serve and their families who also serve first. And we

have to take care of the whole person. There are some disturbing signs these days related to our ability to continue to recruit, retain, support and enable the best and brightest of our nation. They are our greatest advantage and their devotion to duty sets a high bar for all the rest of us.

Mac Thornberry ([07:58](#)):

Strength also requires a vibrant ecosystem of innovation, where government, industry and investment work closer together than ever before, to develop and get the best technology and systems that our whole country can produce into the hands of the war fighters. We're not there yet. We don't yet move at the speed of relevance, either in decision making or in equipping our war fighters. We talk about innovation, disruption and risk taking and there are a few pockets that do, but too few. And a few pockets here. And there are not going to allow us to keep up with China.

Mac Thornberry ([08:38](#)):

And because old habits die hard, I've got to remind everybody that we'll never develop the kind of vibrant, innovative ecosystem we need unless there is predictable adequate funding from the federal government for that effort. To be strong, we also have to have creative strategies and concepts across all domains on everything from strategic nuclear deterrence, to information operations and disinformation that we talked about earlier today, and not allow ourselves to get locked into a predictable mindset, which Napoleon called, the unforgivable sin of a commander. Professional military education and war gaming has never been more crucial and incredible new modeling and simulation capabilities allow us to test approaches that we could never have even considered before.

Mac Thornberry ([09:34](#)):

Today's strength means that we continue to form and nurture alliances and partnerships of many kinds. And that includes a broader definition of the defense industrial base with companies from allied and partnered nations. And strength that enables peace and prosperity, particularly in our democracy, requires approaches that are consistent with our values. As we develop and utilize new technologies such as AI, it must be done in a way that is consistent with who we are and what we believe. Staying true to our values requires our national leadership to continuously educate and explain, and remind us about what Americans have done in the past, calling us to be worthy of their efforts, and about what we're doing now and why it matters in the future. As is true in our personal lives, whether military, civilian, leader, citizen, true strength rests upon a culture of service over self. With that culture everything else falls into place, without it, everything falls apart.

Mac Thornberry ([10:46](#)):

Of course, the opposite of strength is weakness. And we have adversaries always probing, sometimes with a bayonet, sometimes with a bot farm, looking for our weaknesses and trying to exploit them. It's pretty clear that our greatest weakness these days is our internal divisions and polarization. Adversaries see that and they're trying to take advantage of it and even make it worse. Unfortunately, we give them too much help. Much of this boils down to of the question as it did in Washington's day, of whether a free people can govern themselves.

Mac Thornberry ([11:24](#)):

I spent this fall as a resident fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard's Kennedy School, where my topic was the intersection of politics and national security. The students and I, as you can imagine, talked a lot about political dysfunction. I told them, I believe that there are deep societal insecurities

involved that are going to take a while to diagnose and repair, but in the meantime, each of us can help a little bit in our daily lives, by at least not adding to the problem and making it worse. Isn't it funny that one of the keys to defending this great nation is a little bit of personal restraint and self control from each of us in what we say and in what we share. But actually, the founders knew that too. In looking at our divisions in partisanship and other problems, some see the decline of America, but I draw inspiration and hope and context from history, particularly three historical figures whose bus, some of y'all may have seen in my office.

Mac Thornberry ([12:37](#)):

The first, Lincoln surely faced a tougher time than any of us and still he guided us through. His example from the past and my interactions with students who are our future, give me renewed hope that we can and will get our democracy back in order. The second leader, President Reagan of course, gave us the blueprint to follow peace and prosperity through strength. And the third figure offers us the inspired resolve we need. Just after the war, Winston Churchill told a audience in New York, that strength is granted to us all when we are needed to serve great causes. We have a great cause and it's the reason this annual defense forum was created in the first place.

Mac Thornberry ([13:30](#)):

A few years ago here, Secretary Ash Carter told me about a brief visit he'd just had with the young serviceman who had met his plane when it landed. He was trying to decide whether to reenlist or not. And as they were talking back and forth, Secretary Carter told him, "Just remember, there is no higher calling, no more noble way that you can spend your days, than help protect your fellow citizens and defend their freedom." That's another timeless truth clearly spoken. That's our great cause. Whatever our role, in or out of government, each of us is needed and nothing we do is more important than that. Thank you.

Roger Zakheim ([14:20](#)):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are few you people in this world who truly understand the inner workings of the Department of Defense. Fewer still, are those who have navigated the department with ease and expertise of our next honoree. So integral was his leadership that Secretary Mattis asked him to continue his service, probably not something he wanted to do, which began under Secretary Carter in the Obama administration into the first six months of the Trump administration. From 2014 to 2017, Robert O. Work served the nation as a 32nd US Deputy Secretary of Defense, a truly demanding role that requires overseeing the day to day business of the Pentagon and developing the Pentagon \$700 billion defense program.

Roger Zakheim ([15:49](#)):

But Bob Work is far more than a capable executive, as we all know here, he's a strategic thinker, the rear breed of leader who brings an academic mind, military experience and a manager's practicality to any set of problems. In the defense and intelligence community, he is widely celebrated for his work on the Third Offset Strategy, which aimed to restore US conventional overmatch over strategic rivals and adversaries, something he introduced here at the Reagan National Defense Forum. And he focused on few such as artificial intelligence, robotics and big data, before it was cool to say those words.

Roger Zakheim ([16:41](#)):

As he explains, not only the most the Americans, the American military have the superior equipment, we must also have the best information to act faster and more effect than our adversaries. The Reagan Foundation Institute has benefited tremendously from his insights. In 2019, he co-chaired the inaugural Reagan Institute Center for Peace Through Strength task force, which produced a report detailing recommendations for developing and strengthening the national security innovation base.

Roger Zakheim ([17:20](#)):

Bob Work served for 27 years in the Marines, retiring as Colonel in 2001. From 2009 to 2013, he was the 31st United States Under Secretary of Navy. In his career, Secretary Work has been awarded the Defense Department's Distinguished Public Service award twice, the National Intelligence Distinguish Public Service award and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Distinguish Civilian Service award. We're proud to add one more award to your shelf, Mr. Secretary. For his past service, from present leadership and for his embrace of the values of Peace Through Strength, we are proud to present this award to a mastermind of defense policy, a leader who thinks about the challenges of tomorrow, a tireless public servant and scholar, Secretary Robert Work. Congrats Bob, well deserved. I'm so happy you're getting this.

Robert O. Work ([18:36](#)):

Thank you everybody. Well Roger, thank you for that overly kind and overly long introduction. If you could please send me a transcript, I'm going to keep it from my obituary. Now, a couple of months ago, we received a phone call. I was up in my office, received a phone call and my wife said, "Hey honey, you got a phone call." I said, "Who is it? Do you know?" She said, "Yeah, there's this guy named Roger Zakheim?" I said, "Tell him I have COVID." Because as he said, Roger will always come, every time I get a call, I'm afraid he's going to say, "Hey, we've got this task force coming up. We really could use you as the co-chair. It's not going to be that much of a heavy lift. Please, please, please." And you all know him, he's so irrepressible, I can't say no to him.

Robert O. Work ([19:28](#)):

So, with some trepidation I took the call and he said, "Hey, we would like to honor you with the Peace Through Strength award." Now my first thought was, "He's punking me." And my second was, "He's dangling the award and then he's going to ask me to do something." I said, "Well played Roger." But the third, just like Chairman Thornberry said, when I think about all of the incredible American leaders who have received this award, I wasn't certain I could stand with them. I was a Second Lieutenant. I remember, we'd have, our platoon sergeants, they're saying, "Okay, I know some of you think you want to be a Marine Corps General, but let me tell you something, it's easier to become the Deputy Secretary of Defense than a Marine Corps General." And I mean, who knew?

Robert O. Work ([20:30](#)):

So 40 years later as I am leaving on my last day as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, by that time I had adopted Thomas Edison's quote, where he was talking about how it took him so many times to create a light bulb that he finally patented. And the quote was, "I have not failed, I just found 10,000 ways that don't work." So after my surprise, I was just absolutely delighted, pleased and honored to be given this award.

Robert O. Work ([21:14](#)):

And any award associated with President Ronald Reagan is a singular honor. And the other thing that I knew was going to happen, is I was going to share today with Chairman Thornberry, who was known as one of the most, foremost and ardent supporters of our United States military and he's just one of the most delightful human beings in Washington, DC. Now, President Reagan is my true life hero. I can state with certainty that I would not be standing here to day if it wasn't for President Reagan. We've talked a lot about peace through strength, and generally people think of the Strategic Defense Initiative and the way he masterfully played the Soviet Union in the 1980s leading up to the end of the Cold War. But not for me, because by timing and circumstance, he became known to me as the savior of the all volunteer force. And as Secretary Austin said today, the all volunteer force is the true foundation of strength in our armed services.

Robert O. Work ([22:28](#)):

Now, I was commissioned in August, 1974, the draft expired in July of 1973. Draftees served for two years. So the last draftee left the force in July of 1975. I arrived in my first duty station in Okinawa in August of '75, so I consider myself a plank owner of the all volunteer force. Now people forget today that the all volunteer force was an experiment. No one knew if it was going to work. And let me tell you, the first six years, the all volunteer force, it was rough and there was no guarantee of success.

Robert O. Work ([23:15](#)):

The thing that bedel the force the most was our drug problem, stemming from Vietnam. In 1973, 42% of person in Vietnam admitted to using opioids in the year before and several of, and many of them said that they were dependent. In 1974, we began random urinalysis testing. But when we first started it, it was a clinical program to find service men and women who had a drug problem so that we could help them. In 1980, the DOD health survey went across all of the different units in the United States military and between 27 and 38% of all the service members in all the units said they had used some type of drug in the past 30 days. And in 1981 on the USS Nimitz, there was a horrific accident. Seven planes were destroyed, 11 damaged, \$150 million in material damage, but worse, 14 sailors were killed and 48 injured. The investigation said that drugs were the cause and six of the dead sailors had drugs in their body immediately after the accident. So I'm telling you, I mean, the drug problems we had were just unbelievable.

Robert O. Work ([24:50](#)):

Right behind that was alcoholism. It was a big, big problem. The service generally encouraged heavy drinking. On Friday evenings, you would go to the battalion office hour, I mean, happy hour. And the happy hour, you were pretty much expected to just drink until you dropped. DUIs were often overlooked. Any servicemen could drink on base regardless of their age, up until 1982. The liberty incidents we had were just unbelievable. We were in constant fear in Okinawa that Marines were going to do something, that we're going to aggravate our Japanese hosts to the point where they would ask us to leave. So you had drugs, you had alcoholism and racism.

Robert O. Work ([25:47](#)):

Six weeks before I arrived on Okinawa, there was a humongous race riot at Camp Schwab. There were rebel flags festooned throughout the barracks and the N-word was used all the time. Then there was sexism, there were strippers in all of the clubs on bases, at least I was told there were. And there were Penthouse and Playboy centerfolds throughout the barracks, and worse in the workplace where young Marine women would work. The overall quality of the volunteers that were coming in, pay was not all

that great. And so, we didn't have a lot of high school grads, many, many mental category group four, which is the lowest cat, well, cat five is the lowest, but category four is generally the lowest category on the aptitude test that we allow in the service. There were thieves, UAs, unauthorized absences, AWOL, officers of the day would be accompanied by armed Marines to make sure that they were safe.

Robert O. Work ([27:12](#)):

And let me tell you, the most scared I was in my first tour, back then, if you were a Second Lieutenant, you would be made the disbursement officer every two weeks, you would come up. And you would have to go down and get just this big pile of cash. And then you'd come back and you'd hand out the cash to the Marines. And there were always people trying to rob the dispersing officers. It wasn't quite as good as any of the movies you see today. But in fact, I remember there was one case where two Marines hit the disbursement officer, got onto a moped and they drove away, but they had practiced it so much they ran out of gas.

Robert O. Work ([28:03](#)):

It was also very difficult to hit our reenlistment quotas. All of us, Second and First Lieutenants were saying, "Hey, you got to get these Marines to stay." It was very, very difficult to do it. And by 1978, 1979, for a short period of time, if a Marine enlisted they were made a Sergeant. Now, for those of you in the military, you know that our NCOs are like the white blood cells of the all volunteer force. They are the things that help you repair damage in the body of the force. And when you start just telling someone, "Okay, if you can breathe, you're a Sergeant." You're asking for trouble. Your white blood cell count goes way down.

Robert O. Work ([28:51](#)):

So by 1980, I mean, I wasn't really certain, I was going to continue on active service in the Marine Corps, but I got orders to Hawaii, I had just been promoted to captain, so I said, "Okay, I'm going to give it a go." And then 1981 came, and I swear to God, it was like the Paul had been lifted. Now I know that President Reagan didn't sit at a National Security Council and say, "Okay, this is what we're going to do." But he was the boss and this is what happened.

Robert O. Work ([29:25](#)):

On December, 1981 Deputy Secretary of Defense Carlucci said, writes out a memo and says, "Commanders, you are authorized to take punitive action of anyone who comes up with a positive drug test, to include discharge and courts marshal." That was astounding. We knew who the druggies were, now we could go after them and get rid of them. And then there was a program called the Expeditious Discharge, that's the way it was called in the Marine Corps and the Army, the Navy called it Pumping the Bilges. And yeah, I don't know what the Air Force had, maybe they didn't have any bad guys. I don't know.

Robert O. Work ([30:10](#)):

But what would happen is, if you had two non-judicial punishments, administrative punishments, you could be severed, you could be rolled out of the service in 30 days. So as a company, I was a Battery Commander, I was in charge on artillery battery of 105 millimeter howitzers, we were about 120 Marines. Man, I am telling you, between getting rid of the druggies and being able to go after the bad guys, we cleaned out the shaft really fast. And then the President, he gives these two huge pay raises. I can't remember whether it was '81 and '82 or '82 and '83. I think one was 10% and one was 15%. And it

was cool to be in the military again. People are responding to the President's optimism about America and about having peace through strength. It was cool to be in the military again. And I don't want to get all biblical, but it reminds me of Isaiah, the Old Testament and the Lord said, "Who will go for us? Whom shall I send?" And I said, "Here I am Lord, send me." I know that because I watched it in Fury.

Robert O. Work ([31:32](#)):

But from 1981 and '82 every year, the quality of the force got better. More high school graduates, more category one and category two, the highest aptitude folks. Then we got new gear that worked, we got new trucks, we got new HMMVs, we got new machine guns, we got new rifles, we got new sleeping bags. I mean, it was like Christmas, every month we get something new. And we got rid of all the old Vietnam crap. And then it was all about war fighting, it was peace through strength. We were going to demonstrate to the Soviets that if they wanted to go, we were ready to go. We started the National Training Center in the Army, Red Flag in the Air Force, Comp Two X, Top Gun in the Navy. And we trained, and we trained, and we trained. By 1985, only 8.9% of service men and women said they had drugs in the last 30 days. By '88, it was down to 4.8%. And between '82 and '88, all the bases in the United States, the drinking age went up to 21, which really helped us.

Robert O. Work ([32:46](#)):

I remember thinking when Saddam Hussein said, "Okay, I want to have the mother of all battles." I said, "You do not know what's coming down on your head." We had the best troops, the best NCOs, the commanders, the finest gear, the best training. I said, "You don't know the whirlwind that you're going to reap here." As President Reagan said, "No arsenal, no weapon in the arsenals of the world is as formidable as the will and courage of free men and women." And Secretary Panetta, who was a recipient of this award, when he received the award and he said, "And that is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have." Can I get an amen?

Robert O. Work ([33:32](#)):

Now many of you, I tell this story all the time. So I apologize for those of you who have heard it, but there's a story, it's based on truth, there might be some embellishments, but it happened in Afghanistan. A Marine patrol led by a Sergeant, probably to 22 years old, leading 10 to 13 Marines between the ages of 17 and 20. They were on a patrol in Afghanistan. They come up to a rise and down below, on the plane below them is a donkey cart, four Afghan civilians and it looks as though they're digging something at a intersection. And everyone immediately assumed that they're planting an IED. So all the Marines looked to the Sarge, "What are we going to do, Sergeant?" He said, "We're going to get in a squad wedge, we're going to go down this hill. Be ready, but we're going to see what they do."

Robert O. Work ([34:39](#)):

So the Marines start down the hill, the Afghan nationals see them and they scatter running away, leaving the donkey cart. They get to the donkey cart and in the cart are explosive materials and the Marines are totally bummed out because they're saying, "We let these guys get away. We have failed in our mission." And the Sergeant said, "Not yet. Unhook the donkey." So they unhook the donkey and the donkey starts meandering down the road. "What do we do now, Sergeant?" "We're going to follow that donkey." They follow the donkey to a nearby village. The donkey stops in front of a hut. The Sergeant tells the squad to stack up. They go in, there are four Afghan nationals, they scrub them for explosive residue, they all test positive and they take them into custody. And they take them to the battalion command post. And the battalion commander here's this story and he goes, "Sergeant, this was brilliant."

What made you think of this?" He paused for a second and said, "Well, sir, I grew up on a farm and I'm a Sergeant in Marine Corps, I've been following jackasses my whole life."

Robert O. Work ([35:53](#)):

Now, when I tell this out in like a Chamber of Commerce, they go, "That's a terrible story. I mean, this Marine just said that Marine officers were all jackasses." And I said, "No, no, no, no, no. You have to understand what this story says." First of all, these Marines were mission oriented. They wanted to get the job done. Second, they were extremely disciplined, they could have fired on the four Afghan nationals, but the rules of engagement wouldn't let them do that unless they knew for certain that they were combatants. They're incredibly innovative. I mean, they come up with stuff that just blows your mind every day. And they have a wicked sense of humor and they're unafraid to turn it on their superiors

Robert O. Work ([36:39](#)):

Now I could tell a story like this, about a soldier, about sailors, about airmen, guardians, Marines, coast guardsmen and the DOD civilians who guard our nation every day. But I'm a Marine, so I tell a Marine story. Those are the type of men and women that guard us every day. So I would like to thank John and Roger, and the trustees, and Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute for this singular honor. I'd also like to thank all those who made this venue so memorable, it's just an unbelievable gathering of people and ideas. And I'd like to thank everybody here in the office, because I mean, in the audience, because whether you know or not, you're all part of the all volunteer force too and you contribute to our national security every day. Last but not least, go Navy, beat Army.