



REMARKS BY THE GOVERNOR
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
HONORABLE RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
AT THE BICENTENNIAL BALL SPONSORED BY
THE ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

14 DE JUNIO DE 1975



Major General Salve H. Matheson, Commander, U.S. Army Readinnes, Region IV; Col. Josiah A. Wallace, Jr., Commander Fort Buchanan, Norman Louvau, President of the Association of the Army in Puerto Rico, honored guests and friends:

The date was April 19, 1775, the day that changed the course of United States history. It was the day the colonists first stood up to fight for freedom. Seven hundred british regulars who had left Boston on the night of April 18, were approaching the village of Lexington on their way to Concord. Their orders were to seize and destroy a supply of gunpowder and muskets collected by the patriots.

The movement of the British troops from Boston had been noticed and the information was passed on to Paul Revere and William Dawes, who rode ahead, spreading the alarm throughout the countryside.

Captain John Parker and his Minutemen - a group of 60 or 70 armed farmers - assembled on the Lexington Green to engage the British troops but, seeing that his men were outnumbered, he ordered them to disperse.

Then, "the shot heard around the world", rang out ... the first of the American Revolution.

Shortly after, a New England Army of militia and

volunteers began to build up around Boston. The situation prompted the provincial Congress of Massachusetts to petition the Second Continental Congress at Philadelphia to adopt the New England Army.

On June 14, 1775, the Congress adopted the Army before Boston as the Continental Army when it appointed a committee to bring in "a draft of rules and regulations for the Government of the Army". It is the 200th Anniversary of that decision which we are celebrating here tonight.

Next followed the Declaration of Independence . . . one of the greatest statements of democratic principles ever written. This document, drafted by Thomas Jefferson, proclaimed on July 4, 1776, that the 13 colonies "are, and of right ought to be free and Independent States".

For the first time in history, a young nation was undertaking the practical experiment of government by the people. The new nation declared that man has certain inalienable rights, and that for the exercise of these rights the whole political order is created by man, for man, to serve man.

In defense of these principles, the Revolutionary War was fought all along the coast from Maine to

Georgia, and Inland to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. The Army suffered many defeats, but scored important victories at Trenton, Princeton, and Yorktown.

The drafting of a constitution for the new government was the next big step in United States history. Delegates from the States gathered in the Assembly Room at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and, on September 17, 1787, the Constitution of the United States was adopted and approved. This Constitution - with its amendments - remains the fundamental law of the land.

To insure civilian control of the military, the framers of the Constitution gave the Congress the power "to raise and support armies, to (call) forth the militia, to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions, and to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such parts of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the States, respectively, the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress".

Thirty-one years after the surrender of Cornwallis

at Yorktown, the United States was once again at war with Great Britain - This time because of British impressment of United States sailors and interference with international trade.

Thereafter, the United States has engaged in many wars - the War of 1812; the Mexican War in 1846; The Civil War; the Spanish-American War.

Since the beginning of this century, our soldiers have been fighting in many different grounds, in defense of democracy, and of our treasured principles and goals.

If there is a lesson from all these wars we've fought in the past, is this: that freedom is a responsibility that each generation must accept, that each generation must defend, and the basis of that defense is still the Army - well trained and guided by the goals and principles of democracy. And the basis of the Army is the citizen-turned-soldier; in other words, each and every one of us. Let us salute the Army on its 200th Anniversary and let us salute the soldier, so that we and the Army can celebrate again in another 200 years.

Thank you.