

## *Navajo Code Talker Day Remarks 8/14/15*

I'm honored to be in Window Rock today, joined by hundreds of grateful Americans, service men and women from across the country, and of course some of the greatest individuals of our Greatest Generation: the Navajo Code Talkers.

About 73 years ago, the course of our nation's history was altered – our nation shocked and shaken to its core by an unprovoked foreign attack on our naval base at Pearl Harbor.

More than 2,300 American service members lost their lives that morning – nearly half of them crewmen from the USS Arizona.

We'll never forget that day – and just as important, we'll never forget the response *to* that day.

We'll never forget the decent, patriotic and heroic Americans who were stirred to service during World War II – each of them guided by a passion to protect their fellow countrymen and preserve our freedom.

A little over 16 million Americans would come to the aid of their nation during the Second World War.

And a little over 430 young, Navajo-speaking men would help lead us to victory.

These were men who – in most cases – had never experienced travel, had never seen an ocean, had never been trained for

military combat, and who couldn't possibly predict the warfare that awaited them.

But they went. Like the millions of Americans who defended our country during World War II, these Navajo men answered the call of duty.

They did so because they were committed to a cause greater than themselves, or any one of us individually. That cause was saving American lives, and defending American liberty.

These men were the Navajo Code Talkers -- and their bravery, ingenuity and native language would change the course of history once again – this time in our favor.

Their pride and patriotism for this country was as unbreakable as their code that helped the Allied Forces win the war.

For that, we owe them a debt that can never be repaid.

So on this day, as we celebrate the *33<sup>rd</sup> National Code Talkers Day* – and the second *Arizona Navajo Code Talkers Day*, we offer our eternal gratitude.

Few Navajo Code Talkers are still with us. So today and every day, we must honor them.

We must let them know – through words and action – that we appreciate them, that we recognize what they did for our country, and that we'll never forget it.

To them -- and to the more than 400 Navajo Code Talkers who are no longer with us, but are equally and eternally in our hearts – we thank you. Every day, we thank you.

Thanks again for the opportunity to be here. God Bless you all.