



## Robert M. Clinger III Comments on Military Recognition

I recently had the occasion to visit the beautiful city of Atlanta for a business conference. Upon arriving at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, I had the opportunity to once again witness a great event that each and every American should experience in a lifetime—the homecoming of military service men and women from tours of duty overseas.

At the end of the long journey up the escalator in the main terminal, the brave men and women of our military were greeted by friends and family, the U.S.O., and fellow Americans—some with signs and banners, the American flag, balloons, and red, white, and blue bunting. The applause and cheers as the service men arrived were deafening. The emotion was overwhelming. I shall never forget the child running up and calling out “Daddy,” the wife with tears of joy embracing her husband, the parents with a look of relief in their eyes that their son had made it home, and the eagerness and excitement on the faces of the young men and women who were proudly wearing America’s uniform. It was a patriotic heroes welcome, as it should always be.

It was a moment in time that will forever be prominent in my mind and in my heart. It was a humbling moment. America is at war, and as a nation we are sharply divided. It is easy for us to forget that the heroes that are fighting overseas are our fellow Americans who are risking their lives for the love of and in service of their country and that their families are making sacrifices at home in the absence of their loved ones. Those who do not have someone overseas can scarcely comprehend the emotion, the worrying, and the strain that must be endured by the families and friends of our troops overseas. My experience in Atlanta is a powerful reminder of this.

Words cannot fully express how deeply that Wednesday morning July 26, 2006 touched me. I hope that fellow Americans will take a moment to reflect, as I have, on this one thought: Patriotism. Thank you to all those who were there that morning and to those who organized that gathering. I am fortunate that I was there. Let us keep our service men and women and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Lest we forget. Patriotism.

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