

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Posthumous Awarding of the Navy Cross and BEQ Barracks Complex Dedication in Honor of
Lance Corporal Donald Hogan
Camp Pendleton, CA
17 January 2012

When tragedy occurs on the field of battle, taking the life of one of our nation's heroes – whether a Marine, Sailor, Soldier or Airman – the details of what happened begin to mix with memories of other moments. Moments that rounded out the life that was lost. Family, friends, comrades all retell those stories in an effort to understand the loss, to remind ourselves of who was lost, but also to preserve that life in the way left to us. This is even more true when the loss occurs from courage and self sacrifice.

Courage and self sacrifice were common elements in the life and the loss of Lance Corporal Donald Hogan. We are here today to honor his sacrifice to save his fellow Marines, but also to honor his life. I have the solemn privilege of presenting a Navy Cross to his parents, Jim and Carla, to recognize his remarkable bravery in combat. But we also forever memorialize Lance Corporal Hogan by dedicating this barracks in his name.

The citation that we all just heard describes a most remarkable moment of pure selflessness. What it does not and cannot mention, is how often Lance Corporal Hogan sacrificed for others.

Although an oh-three-eleven (0311) rifleman by trade, Lance Corporal Hogan always volunteered to be in the vulnerable and open ground as the point man and carry the metal detector when his squad was tasked with finding improvised explosive devices. Earlier that Wednesday morning in late August, after his patrol was ordered to sweep a route in the Helmand

Province in Afghanistan, he again insisted on being at the tip of the spear and once more carried the metal detector.

In doing that, Lance Corporal Hogan made a choice that is unimaginable for most Americans. But it was the choice of a Marine. It was a choice borne out of a lifetime of values instilled in him by Jim and Carla. They adopted Donald at the age of five, but they didn't just adopt him, they also adopted his sister, Adrianna, and brother, Christopher. That incredible and also unselfish decision was not easy, but as Carla once said, "it was all of them or none of them." That is the same resolution and dedication that defines the Marine Corps.

As you heard from LtCol Johnson, Lance Corporal Hogan knew the Marine Corps was for him from an early age because he had that great guiding example from his father's father, James Hogan Sr., a Marine Gunny who saw combat in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. James Senior's experiences provided a lot of stories for young Donald, aided as we heard by the occasional issue of Leatherneck Magazine that I understand he would hide under his pillow when he wasn't supposed to.

When Donald joined the Marines and became a part of that extended family, Jim and Carla once again didn't hesitate to extend their family. They adopted a whole squad, maybe even a Regiment, and welcomed every Marine into their hearts and into their home just as they had for their children 19 years earlier.

That kind of devotion to others has to be what inspired Donald Hogan during those last moments and it bears repeating from the citation. "Without hesitation – without hesitation, Lance Corporal Hogan hurled his body into the nearest Marine in an effort to shield him from the effects of the imminent explosion. He then turned in the direction of the Improvised Explosive Device and placed himself in the road so that he could effectively yell verbal warnings to the rest

of his squad-mates...Mortally wounded by the explosion, Lance Corporal Hogan's extreme act of selflessness saved a Marine's life and allowed the rest of the squad to avoid the full brunt of the fragmentation from the Improvised Explosive Device."

Lance Corporal Hogan's command, humbled and awed by his actions that day, recommended him for a Silver Star.

But as the award recommendation went through the chain of command, it was very rightfully raised and I approved the Navy Cross for Lance Corporal Hogan. This is our nation's highest decoration that is bestowed by the Department of the Navy.

We will probably never know how much courage we have in each of us, but we know how much there was in Lance Corporal Hogan.

The teenage boy that graduated from high school just over these mountains in Rancho Santa Margarita, who became a Marine just down Interstate Five in San Diego, served at the tip of the spear in Afghanistan and saved the lives of fellow Marines in one profoundly brave act. It is my great honor to be a part of this tribute to his actions, and to be part of the dedication of these barracks, a tribute to his life and to his family.

The actions of Lance Corporal Donald Hogan place him in the company of the bravest, the finest Marines, who have worn the uniform of the United States Marine Corps and served our nation for 237 years. He is now a part of Marine lore, along with the great heroes of the Corps and generations of Marines, who live in these barracks, will learn of his actions and be inspired by them.

Lance Corporal Donald Hogan fully embodied the United States Marine Corps motto: Semper Fidelis...Always Faithful.