



News Release

U.S. ARMY SUSTAINMENT COMMAND

March 11, 2009

“The Big Machine”

Our industrial contributions through the Eyes of a Soldier during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom

ROCK ISLAND, Ill. – I was approached by CSM(R) Spencer to write an article about the impact that industry has had on our fight during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. It is with great pleasure that I tell the story not only as a Command Sergeant Major and a leader but through the eyes of a Soldier.

My father Charlie Blake was a machinist for more than 40 years and I grew up watching him build and repair many critical items for industry with steel and other materials for the coal mines and chemical plants.

I was always amazed at what he could do with a few machines, some raw stock, his mind, his bare hands and the determination of a warrior. Watching my father as a man gave me a great appreciation for hard-working Americans and how truly talented people were in our country.

Just like many other people I have met in industry during my 26 years in the military, he took pride in each and every job and part that he repaired. That part was a symbol of his good name and his contribution to “The Big Machine” -- the United States Industry Power -- and the pride of our country.

In fact, those same values and principles of pride he personally passed on to my little brother who now runs the very same shop. I tell the story to provide some insight into my real overall appreciation for what our men and women in industry actually have done for us (the American Soldier) every day, behind the scenes for the greater good of all.

I jumped at the challenge to write this article as my opportunity to tell the whole story from the eyes of a Soldier and leader by those who

have gained so much, and to bring honor to the American worker and industry for their tremendous contributions to our survival and ability to protect freedom and our way of life.

Let there be no mistake: I have seen firsthand the raw power and determination of the enemy pitted against the courage, honor, and sure will of our Soldiers in battle during many different types of engagements. Our Soldiers ability to defeat them at every challenge is directly contributed to not only their will to win but; the tools in which they have been supplied to win it with!

The edge comes from the power of “The Big Machine” the American worker and industries direct contribution to the fight. What makes a man or woman face fear? The *belief and confidence of knowing that there is a reasonable chance of success* and they have the *means and the abilities to defeat and dominate* that fear.

As I traveled the battle space and worked alongside Contractors and Department of the Army Civilians who were working side-by-side with Soldiers, sharing their burdens and providing them the most up-to-date technology, equipment, and materials possible to provide this edge.

It reminded me of what was missed? Everyone who gave us the edge can't see through our eyes and supports the Global War on Terrorism through faith of deed alone!

The great thing about being with the Soldiers is you see into the eyes of the person who is appreciative of your work; it brings pride to yourself and gives purpose and motivation. Just like the Soldier or leader who you gave the edge to faces the fear, and looks into the eyes of the child or family in dire need in a war-torn and devastated country, expecting help, desiring to be saved.

We share the same purpose, the same pride -- we see through each other's eyes!

“The Big Industrial Machine” oh what an edge it really is! Imagine a Soldier reaching into a burning vehicle without Fire Retardant Gloves to save a buddy whose life depends on their willingness to reach in?

What about the company, who researched the material and technology, tested it to the strictest standards possible, manufactured the material, sewed and packaged the gloves and produced them in every size possible so no Soldier went without, or had to suffer burns because they instead did to save their buddy?

Or the workers in every department of every factory who knew these gloves would be on the hands of Warriors in harm's way and worked tirelessly to ensure they were perfect. Or what about the metal industry who responded so fast and worked in extreme conditions to produce the armor plate to protect our vehicles and to adapt to the challenges of our enemies.

Imagine driving down a highway in a 7,500 gallon Fuel Tanker without armor and huge bombs planted along the highway! How could you ever hope to survive the devastation? Many Soldiers did with the help of industry!

Was it money? Or was it the edge they gave willingly to America's Sons and Daughters? As a leader of Soldiers I would debate this with anyone, as the same men and women in those factories are as proud and as determined as my Dad was!

Or the Eyeglasses the Soldiers wear to protect themselves from being blinded, the materials, technology, time and tooling to make them. Or what about the technological edge and dominance that our forces can bring to bear, seeing through the night, engaging the enemy farther than they can engage us?

Or the medical technology and materials alone that saved countless lives that would have been lost had it not been for our industries and workers efforts. Mothers and Fathers across our great country should sleep better knowing their son or daughter has the best because of your efforts. I know I did!

Yes it was you the workers and industry as a whole who gave us the edge and the ability to adapt to trends on the turn of a dime to create technology and develop solutions to defeat those who challenge our right to freedom and our beliefs. You helped us save the lives of our Soldiers and gave us the ability to protect innocent people!

Yes behind "The Great Industrial Machine" lies the pride of our nation, the American worker and our fabulous industry.

We, the Leaders of Soldiers, will be forever indebted to all of you who rose to the challenge and met our every need, worked tirelessly with pride and determination to provide us the continuous technology edge to win. Without your support, effort, pride and dedication we are nothing and would have suffered greatly.

I myself have an immense appreciation and respect for all of your efforts and I am forever grateful on behalf of every Soldier. I humbly thank you and it is my distinct honor to serve with you, and for you, every day.

- Respectfully CSM Stephen D. Blake, United States Army Sustainment Command.

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