

## VETERANS DAY MSG - 2013

Retired Chiefs of Staff, Leader of the Opposition Brig Granger, senior officers retired and current officers, Force Sergeant Major, veterans, ex-soldiers, ex-GDF, distinguish guests, all. The serving officers and men and women of the GDF have gathered here this morning to honor all our veterans. The words of our monument read "**to our fallen heroes and those who have served**". On behalf of all officers and other ranks I wish to thank you for your service to the Guyana Defence force and to our nation. We are fully aware of the sacrifices, hardships, and inconveniences endured by you, our early officers and soldiers, as you made your contribution to the maintenance of law and order in Guyana and the preservation of our territorial integrity - especially during the Ankoko occupation, Rupununi Rebellion, the New River intrusion, and the patrolling of our territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone. You before us, have rendered exemplary service to our nation, safeguarding our national patrimony. Whether you served in the Volunteer Force, playing an important role in our transition from colony to independent state, whether you served in the Guyana People's Militia, which was a vital component of our national security system, we also say thank you and do recognize your service today.

The leadership of the GDF remains aware of the challenging existence of many of our veterans and ex-soldiers. While success stories abound, many of our men and women suffered an uneven transition from military to civilian life, not to mention the fact that once you are blessed with a long life after your military service you will find it increasingly difficult to avoid the obstacles of debility, destitution and demise.

All Chiefs of Staff notwithstanding the Defense and national security demands of

their time remained preoccupied with the welfare issues of our veterans. For example, the Veterans Affairs Department was established by RADM Best. I recall Brigadier Edward Collins getting the Joint Services Housing Coop Society to provide the land for the National Veterans Home, which is today a reality because of the substantial contribution from the Government of Guyana, serving members of the GDF, and local and overseas organizations and individual donors to this worthy charitable cause embarked upon by the then Guyana Veterans Foundation. As your current Chief of Staff, I have already secured assurance from the Secretary of the Defence Board that the monthly operational costs of this home will be provided for in the 2014 National Budget. This covering of the operating cost and the prior substantial contribution during the construction are testimony to our Government's continued commitment to work with the GDF to address welfare matters of veterans. This home remains a powerful example of what can be achieved if we in the GDF work with the government and local veterans organizations. We now must occupy all the vacant bedrooms in the National Veterans Home.

Finally, as Chief of Staff I will embrace and support the work of all the local veterans organizations be it the Ex-GDF Benevolent Fund, the Guyana Legion or the EX-GDF Guyana as we believe that we must commit ourselves to work for the better welfare of our Veterans. May we all reflect and reminisce on our service to the GDF and our Nation. Thank you.