

'Thanks for the Heroes Among Us'

A special message from VFW Commander-in-Chief Tim Borland

Nov 23, 2022

WASHINGTON — As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, I would like all of us to reflect with thankfulness in our hearts on the precious gifts of family, friends and comrades we have in our lives. Those of us who have seen conflicts around the world, know all too well just how fragile peace and security are, and can appreciate the sanctuary of our communities. It is the purpose of wartime service overseas – combating threats “over there” so our fellow Americans don’t have to see combat “over here.” So many of our brothers and sisters in arms sacrificed their lives so our citizens can live life freely. Heroes one and all.

Over this past week, peace and security was once again shattered as separate gunmen stepped into public places in two communities and tried to take as many lives as possible. As more information about these tragic mass shootings becomes available, a story of valor has emerged from the incident in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We have learned that former Army Maj. Richard Fierro, a combat veteran with 15 years of service to include tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Petty Officer 2nd Class Thomas James, a Navy Information Systems Technician, both rushed to intervene during the Club Q shooting, tackling the gunman to the ground and disarming him. James was wounded in the process, while Fierro was able to subdue the assailant until authorities arrived. These two heroes, who embody our military values and training, risked their lives to stop the threat to those around them, saving countless lives.

We salute Richard Fierro and Petty Officer 2nd Class Thomas James for their bravery and intrepidity in the face of certain danger and we are thankful that they acted when they did. I will personally seek to present the VFW Valor Award for Lifesaving, and if eligible, a free VFW life membership to both heroes for their selfless service in protecting America, yet another reminder that “Every Veteran Counts.” Our nation owes these gentlemen a tremendous debt of gratitude for their service, both in and out of uniform. It is because of them, and the many others who volunteer to wear our nation’s military cloth and fight to ensure our peace and security, that we may have a chance to enjoy the holidays with our loved ones.

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On behalf of the more than 1.5 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary, may you have a blessed Thanksgiving celebration, and remember to give thanks for the heroes among us, those who are willing to lay everything on the line to defend our freedom and our way of life.

Happy Thanksgiving.