

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades, and mischievous pranksters,
Well, here I am, finally retiring from the military, and I must say, it feels a little like graduating high school again--except now, people worry if I'll finally learn to dress myself in something other than camouflage!

Over the years, I've had the pleasure of working with some of the finest people--and dodging the worst cooks--in the world. Who knew that MRE stood for "Meals Ready to Exit"?

I came into the service full of idealism and a slight inability to be neat. And let me tell you, my drill sergeant made sure I wouldn't leave with the latter. Luckily, I'm still an idealist--even if slightly weathered by 5 a.m. wake-up calls and endless KP duty.

To my fellow soldiers, whom I prefer to call my second family, I promise I won't hold it against you for making my push-up count as high as my age--though I won't be adding any now that I'm retired.

To my superiors -- thank you for your leadership, guidance, and for not noticing when I stole donuts from your office on late-night shifts.

And finally, thank you to my family. Your letters, calls, and care packages filled with snacks got me through more than one tough day. Now, it's my turn to cook for you--just don't expect anything fancy, or anything without a hint of sand and sun in the seasoning.

As I step into this new chapter, I look forward to next missions: tackling the world's toughest golf courses, and, of course, trying to remember what this mythical "free time" is all about.

Thank you all for being part of my journey. I promise I won't start marching away, but rather stroll casually into retirement. Cheers!