DeliverFund Founder Nic McKinley Delivers Keynote at Montana State Capitol Ceremony Marking 25 Years Since 9/11

Former Air Force Pararescueman and CIA officer tells Montanans that confronting evil is an action, not a position

HELENA, MT, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- DeliverFund Founder and CEO Nic McKinley, a retired U.S. Air Force Pararescueman and former CIA officer, delivered the keynote address at the Montana Department of Justice ceremony in the Montana State Capitol Rotunda commemorating the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

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>
> *Nic McKinley, Founder and CEO of DeliverFund*

The noon ceremony honored the nearly 3,000 people killed in the attacks, along with the first responders who died trying to save them. The Montana Highway Patrol Honor Guard and the Montana State Firefighter's Association presented the colors, a wreath was placed in the rotunda, and a member of the Montana State Firefighter's Association rang a ceremonial bell above the rotunda in the solemn tradition used to mourn fallen firefighters.

McKinley opened by recalling where he stood 25 years earlier. He was at home packing for what would have been his 14th combat deployment as an Air Force Pararescueman when he heard the first plane strike the World Trade Center. Minutes later, his team leader called and ordered him to report to the squadron. Within 50 days, he was across the Atlantic on a counterterrorism mission.

Rather than recounting war stories from his 30 combined combat deployments in Pararescue and at the CIA, McKinley used his remarks to trace the ideological origins of the attacks and to argue that the central lesson of September 11 is a moral one.

"The reason 9/11 happened, both in New York and in Benghazi, is because we made a fatal error: we tried to make peace with evil, and you can make no peace with evil," McKinley said. "Evil is a worldview, and you cannot negotiate a man out of his worldview. Peace requires both parties to want it."

The heart of the address was a distinction McKinley drew between two kinds of people who both consider themselves peaceful.

"Keeping peace means you take no part, form no opinion, and take no action," he said. "Making peace means you actively confront what seeks to destroy peace. And evil will always seek to destroy peace."

He pressed the point further. "When evil has already chosen violence, refusing to answer it is not peace. It is surrender," McKinley said. "Silence about evil is itself a political act."

McKinley then turned that standard on the present, asking the audience where Americans are still attempting to make peace with evil. He named those who seek to destroy the innocence of children first among them.

He closed by pointing to the passengers of United Airlines Flight 93, who fought back against their hijackers and forced the aircraft down in a Pennsylvania field, an act estimated to have saved hundreds of lives and to have prevented an attack on the United States Capitol.

"Let us be worthy of their sacrifice," McKinley said. "Let us stand tall in the face of the evil we face today. And when we identify it, let us have the courage to answer it the way they did. Let's roll."

Speaking about what has and has not changed in the 25 years since the attacks, McKinley said the character of the country has held.

"Our culture is never going to change. America is still always going to try to be the land of the free and home of the brave, and those brave people will be taking the fight to the enemy regardless of if they have muskets or laser beams," McKinley said.

Counter, Not Anti

The line McKinley drew in the rotunda between keeping peace and making peace is the same line that defines the organization he founded.

DeliverFund is a counter-human trafficking organization, not an anti-human trafficking organization, and the distinction is deliberate. As the organization puts it: Anti: opposed to or against a particular thing or person. Counter: to act against or fight back. Being against human trafficking is a position. Countering it is a fight.

Awareness campaigns, ribbons, and statements of opposition are positions. Countering trafficking means going after the traffickers themselves. McKinley founded DeliverFund in 2014 to do exactly that, applying the counterterrorism methodology and intelligence tradecraft he

learned in Pararescue and at the CIA to the trafficking networks operating inside the United States.

Where most organizations in the field concentrate on the aftermath of the crime, DeliverFund works upstream, equipping American law enforcement with proprietary data, technology, and training, so agencies can identify traffickers, build prosecutable cases, and dismantle networks across jurisdictions. The organization works with over 9,000 officers across 1,200 jurisdictions.

It is the operational expression of the argument McKinley made beneath the Capitol dome. Identifying evil is not the finish line. Answering it is.

About Nic McKinley

Nic McKinley grew up in Montana and left the state to join U.S. Air Force Pararescue, where he served for more than a decade. He was later recruited into a specialized unit at the Central Intelligence Agency, and following the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya, he was given command of that team as team leader. In 2016, he spoke at the dedication of the Benghazi memorial in Bigfork, Montana. He founded DeliverFund in 2014. VICE Media has called him "The Real Jack Ryan." He lives in Montana with his family.

About DeliverFund

DeliverFund is a nonprofit counter-human trafficking intelligence organization. Founded in 2014 by former military special operations and intelligence professionals, DeliverFund delivers proprietary data, technology, and training to American law enforcement agencies so they can identify, investigate, and prosecute human traffickers. DeliverFund is donor-funded. Learn more at deliverfund.org.

Additional Ceremony Details

The Capitol program also included remarks from Anne Dormady, administrator of the Montana Department of Justice's Law Enforcement Academy, and Lee Johnson, administrator of the department's Division of Criminal Investigation, along with Bowen Greenwood, Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court. Members of the Helena Fire Department joined community members and first responders in the rotunda.

Governor Greg Gianforte marked the anniversary at a ceremony in Bozeman with American Legion Post 14 and the Bozeman Safety Center, ordered flags across Montana flown at half-staff, and asked Montanans to observe a statewide moment of silence at 6:46 a.m.

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