Douglas McDermott: It is great to have a chance to be with you. I'd like to thank both Frank and Rick for the opportunity. Those three boxer dogs—just for a fun fact for you, one is named Captain Bing; the second is Sergeant Major because every captain really deserves a good, you know, sergeant major; and the other's just Meg. You know, so we had to have a Meg. But those three dogs and their background—some of the dogs that we've had have been called Generals. There've been some Majors, you know, that we've worked with, one of which was also named Patton because my father had a chance to serve under General Patton.

An honor, really, it is to have a chance to be with you. I tried to shake as many hands as I could prior to this event and to thank you for your service and, as Frank mentioned, our gift of gratitude.

I wanted to share a quick story of my father, and then we'll have a chance to look at some of the slides. My father is Henry Leland McDermott. He served his mission just before World War II to the Northwestern States Mission, 1938. When my father returned, he had waiting at his home, the day that he received a chance to be home from his mission, his draft notice for the U.S. Army. My father immediately went into boot camp, and he served his country in the U.S. Army. But one of the things that really touched and impressed me was his service in World War II. He served under the command of General Patton as a master sergeant and was in one of the last offensives against Germany.

When I and my brother watched the movie *Patton* as a child—we were there with my father, my brother and I, and we intently watched that movie, *Patton*. And at the end I remember asking my dad—my brother was the younger brother. His name's Keith, as Frank mentioned. Most of my family had been military peace officers. We have FBI. We have highway patrol. We have—you name it, we had it. I am the black sheep. I just want you to know that.

But in the family, as we asked my father, "Tell me a little bit about General Patton," the room became extremely quiet. Only twice have we ever asked my dad two questions about the military, and they both became quiet. So we learned very quickly not to ask my dad much about the experiences. But he did say about General Patton, he said, "Yes, son," what he was told of "Old Blood and Guts" was absolutely correct. He goes, "Our blood, his guts. And we accomplished every mission, every task that he had given to us."

When my father returned from World War II, he entered the University of Utah here locally and got his degree. He also joined the Utah National Guard. Once he graduated, he was commissioned second lieutenant of artillery. Once Korea came around, my father was retrained as a combat infantry engineer, and he served in the most northern section of Korea for 12 months. At the end of that 12 months, the commanding officer called my father to his office and looked at his record and

asked, "Leland, why are you here?" And my father's simple answer was, "They asked me and I'm here."

My father was redrafted primarily as an officer, and he went to Korea. But what was interesting was when my father came home, he got his master's degree and he became a professor of mathematics. When I was called on my mission, I remember going into my father's office. And there he visited with me in reference to his service time in World War II, his service time in Korea, some of the things he witnessed, what he experienced. And then he shared with me why it's such an honor to be with you this evening. He said, "Son, the one thing that I wish, if I could do over—it was offered, but I became a professor—was to finish my career as a U.S. Army officer as a chaplain."

I honor him this day in honoring all of you for your service and those sweet wives who actually support what you do. What you do is something of greatest value to those men and women who come to you for counsel. I wish to thank you and honor you at this time.

One of the people I wanted to thank is Brandon for your music and the meaning and the purpose which you gave. Absolutely beautiful, and I want you to know that I appreciate that to no end.

One of the things in my genealogy, besides having an opportunity to find out about the military and peace officers back to the 1200s—my mother did genealogy, and that was exciting to hear—one of the other things we had was musicians. I'm not one of them, either. I just want you to know that. When my mother led the choir, she would always come up and tell me, "Son, I love you. Just don't sing in my choir." Now, my father's voice wasn't any better, but I'd ask, "Well, what about Dad?" She says, "He's my husband. You're my son." So I learned that great lesson very early in life. Then the others were machinists or other things, that we could find. So that was an interesting opportunity.

Well, for the blessings of liberty in your theme, "Strengthening Faith and Families," I hope that I will have an opportunity to share with you some thoughts that you can take back with you as chaplains that will be able to assist the lives of one.

The gift of gratitude that we wish to present—we have an opportunity to actually present through our foundation, called the Gift of Gratitude McDermott Foundation, an opportunity of artwork, which is one of my passions, and having a chance to give back. I hope I'll be able to share with you this evening how it will tie into your theme that you'll be having over the next few days.

I'd like to start with the power of the Book of Mormon, which President Thomas S. Monson stated in his last conference, the key is power (see "The Power of the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 86–87). Also, the concept that Joseph Smith said it was "the keystone [to] our religion" (introduction to

the Book of Mormon). And why? Because I wanted to also read Ezra Taft Benson as a President, what he said. He said, "I have a vision of artists putting into film, drama, literature, music, and [painting the] great themes and great characters from the Book of Mormon" ("Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon," *Ensign,* Nov. 1988, 6). I hope to be able to share with you some of those themes and some of the artwork that we have commissioned to see if they might be of value for yourself.

First of all, the artist. Scott Snow. We commissioned him back in 1999. He was commissioned to do seven works of art from the Book of Mormon, but all from the book of Alma. He's a graduate locally here in Utah, from Utah State. He owns a business with a partner. But Scott Snow has been asked to do these works of art plus the last remaining four that I'll have him do, and I'll share a little bit about that as well.

Scott is a descendant of an Apostle, Erastus Snow. What's interesting of Erastus is that he was asked to settle St. George. The picture that you see is a painting that Scott did of his ancestor, and he's given us the permission to also see that.

So back to the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. These paintings, which we hope to make into your theme, are themes around liberty, freedom, the right to worship, faith, prayer, making and keeping promises. The goals of these works of art are primarily to help the viewer to visualize and feel the power of the concepts and precepts taught therein and also to inspire, to uplift, to offer hope, to encourage faith, to visualize service, to show and appreciate commitment, and lastly, to articulate love in action.

The first work of art is from Alma 46:13: "And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the [lands]."

This is our first work of art that we try to share with our gift of gratitude to those who are veterans and those who are currently serving in the military. We present this work of art to many nonmembers, and this is what I will share with you. When the nonmembers receive this work of art, their first comment is, "We feel the power of this work." So we have had an opportunity to have great stories. I must share with you, my wife's cousin and also someone who I call as a friend is Chaplain Harms. Chaplain Harms has helped me over the years to get recommendations. The effect that that has made over time has been immense. To have recommendations of individuals that we can present these works of art to has been a tremendous blessing.

I want to point out that you can't really see, but I want you to look up, and perhaps you can see the concept. What is on the hand, Chief Captain Moroni's left hand? What is there that you see him wearing? A ring. What we wanted to present was not only Chief

Captain Moroni, a great warrior, a man of God, but he was a husband and he was a father. So this work of art tries to present that to those that are presented the opportunity of understanding *For the Blessings of Liberty*. So here you see the ring on the hand of Chief Captain Moroni. Try to visualize as you get a little bit closer.

The second work of art, from Alma 56:27, is titled *Covenant of the Fathers, Faith of the Sons*. But I'll read to you the verse it comes from: "And now it came to pass in the second month of this year, there was brought unto us many provisions from the fathers of those my two thousand sons." Now, this work of art was presented for several reasons. One is, what is the world trying to teach about fathers today? What is the meaning that they're trying to portray? Fathers are worthless. Fathers have no value. It goes on and on.

We know the two thousand stripling warriors, the great value the mothers were, but what about the fathers? The fathers not only brought supplies, but they gave the encouragement. I remember the story that was given to me as a child. Who were these fathers who made the covenants? They were once great warriors. Some of these warriors were elite warriors. And so I was taught as a child—right or wrong, I was taught as a child—where did these children, these sons, learn how to fight with exactness, how to defend and become great warriors? I was taught as a child, it was the fathers. So I tried to depict this concept, right or wrong, but with the great faith of the mothers. Here is the work of art.

You'll see that the two thousand stripling warriors are on the right-hand side and the fathers are on the left. The first work of art, *For the Blessings of Liberty*, took one year. When it was completed, it was actually displayed at the Museum of Church History and Art for six months. This work of art took five years for the artist to complete. Five years. Now, you might think, "Well, why five years?" Each of the two thousand, there's not one that is the same. The artist took that time. Once this work of art was completed, it was exhibited for six months at the Conference Center. These two of the seven have what we use with our gift of gratitude for veterans and those currently serving.

Now, with the second, and seeing the first, what my wife, Lorie, and I would like to do is, as we honor each one of you—in your package, you will see a write-up of one of the two works of art. This evening, when you leave, each of you will take home for your families a work of the first work of art or the second work of art as a gift of gratitude for your service to our country, to our people, and to God.

One of my favorite passages of scripture is King Benjamin's comment. As I professionally speak for a living, I speak a lot in the South, and I have an opportunity to have many of my audiences memorize this quote even though they know nowhere where it's found. That is, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). It's our way of thanking you. A gift not expected

but deserved is how we wish to present our gift to all of you this evening. So again, thank you for your service.

The third painting is called *Defending Liberty*. I'll read first its passage: "And Moroni went to the city of Mulek with Lehi, and took command of the city and gave it unto Lehi. Now behold, this Lehi was a man who had been with Moroni in the more part of all his battles; and he was a man like unto Moroni, and they rejoiced in each other's safety; yea, they were beloved by each other, and also beloved by all the people of Nephi" (Alma 53:2). What I was hoping to do here with this work of art is to show two great generals embracing. Depending on where you're sitting in the office, you can actually see the eyes of Chief Captain Moroni gazing directly at the other general, the man he loved, Lehi.

Now, an interesting, fun fact. All seven of the works of art that we have commissioned from the artist Scott Snow, not one is of the same work in the Church. So each one has its own uniqueness which we are trying to do. Here, this work of art—many of you chaplains, how many times have you had someone come into your office who told and wept of the man that he lost, the comrade on his right or on his left? My father shared with me from his experience in Korea that he almost lost all the men under his command in Korea. That was really tough. You have the opportunity to reach out and touch the one, and that was one of the purposes of this work of art.

The next work of art is titled *Conferring the Mantle of Liberty*, and it is from Alma 62:42–43. It states, "Moroni yielded up the command of his armies into the hands of his son, whose name was Moronihah; . . . he retired to his own house that he might spend the remainder of his days in peace." Those of you who have retired, may you be blessed with the same blessing. May you enjoy the ends of your days in peace.

The artwork of Chief Captain Moroni giving a blessing to his son Moronihah—there is an opportunity to share the concept of a father and son, but two in uniform, and having a chance to bless his son for the mantle that he would receive and perhaps give him that special blessing as a father.

The next painting is also military, but is not of Moroni but of Alma the Younger. It's from Alma 2:29–31, and it reads:

"And it came to pass that Alma fought with Amlici with the sword, face to face; and they did contend mightily, one with another.

"And it came to pass that Alma, being a man of God, being exercised with much faith, cried, saying: O Lord, have mercy and spare my life, that I may be an instrument in thy hands to save and preserve this people.

"Now when Alma had said these words he contended again with Amlici; and he was strengthened, insomuch that he slew Amlici with the sword."

If you'll take notice of Alma the Younger, where is he looking upwards in this concept of his prayer? He's looking up to God. He's making a promise with God, a commitment that he knew he would fulfill. How many of you have had an opportunity to hear of a story of a soldier, a warrior, that has come unto you to visit with you because of his commitment he made to God in that foxhole or that experience that took place? One of my greatest stories and favorite stories as a child was of Neal A. Maxwell—he was army; my father was army—the story that he told of when the battle became so tough and he had volunteered as a mortar team. One of the things my father taught me was, in the army or in any branch of the service, don't ever volunteer. How many times have you heard that? Don't volunteer.

Well, here is Neal A. Maxwell. They are needing mortar people, and they ask for a volunteer. Neal A. Maxwell stood up with some of his friends, says, "Hey, we'll do that." Do you think they really knew what they were volunteering for? No. Just like the other part of the military, my father says you don't ever want to volunteer because you never know what's going to happen. But my father did tell me to volunteer always, and I have striven to do that all the days of my life—volunteer first and foremost to serve, to give back.

Well, the story that made me impressed as a child was when the fierce battle took place. And Neal A. Maxwell, as this soldier, saw the shells coming in, and they went in a pattern. My father taught me what a pattern was because he was an artillery officer. When they hone in, they know that after three, usually you're toast. That means they have honed in where you're at, and the next rounds will be your life. Well, there was roughly a few yards away—I think Neal A. Maxwell shares it was, like, five yards away—that a round came in, and he knew what they had done. They had honed in; his squad knew that they were going to be hit next.

He jumped out of his foxhole, went down the small area where he was at. It was kind of steep. He jumped out, went down that small hill, and then he looked around and he goes, "All right. What should I do next?" He ran back up, went back in his foxhole. What helped me understand is when he got in the foxhole, he didn't lie down. He knelt in prayer.

Neal A. Maxwell in his prayer, he made a commitment to God. One of those stories is why this impressed me with Alma the Younger. He made commitments with God of what he would do the rest of his days. I know that he did not know until, I believe, 1996 of the prayer of his mother while he was overseas during this drastic time of conflict. His mom and dad were always ones that would pray at night. One particular evening—they don't recall the official date or the time, but they were in bed and the mother said, "We have to get up. We have to pray for Neal right now. He's in horrible danger." They knelt in prayer, and they prayed that the Lord would save the life of their son.

It wasn't until 1996 that Neal A. Maxwell even heard the story and tried to put together that possibly that was the same time that he knelt in prayer that he could have that trade-off. I bet you many of you had made that same trade-off in your lives.

Number-six painting. We're back to Moroni so that you can share the real joy of liberty and the freedom. It's from Alma 60:36. It says: "Behold, I am Moroni, your chief captain. I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country. And thus I close mine epistle."

This painting depicts the second epistle of Chief Captain Moroni and his intentness of defending the cause of freedom. Elder Lynn G. Robbins helped me to title this particular work of art. This work of art is also in his home, in his office that he has in his home. If you can look at the intensity of Chief Captain Moroni, did he fear anyone? I don't believe so. And here he made sure the epistle was one that they understood.

One of the opportunities I have when I travel is to speak to the youth. I try to offer—as many stake presidents or bishops that I can when I travel—to let them know I'll free up an evening and I will speak to the youth. The purpose is to help them gain a love for liberty, help them gain a love for freedom, help them gain a love for freedom of religion, and help them realize that the stories found in the Book of Mormon are true and that they can grasp that through visualization of even the simple things of artwork.

Number-seven painting. The seventh painting is not in a military theme—the only one that is not, of these first seven paintings from the book of Alma that we've commissioned Scott Snow to paint. But it is the promise made by Alma the Younger, similar to the promise made by Neal A. Maxwell when he first promised that he would serve a mission when he went home. He made other promises, but that promise was to serve a mission. How many of us have had that same opportunity to have a promise and then commit to it? I strive to teach the youth that if you make a commitment with God, do not break it at any cost. This was the painting that we made.

Here it says: "And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance. And they broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them" (Alma 14:26). Here is the seventh painting depicting the commitment and promise that Alma had with his companion, a missionary companion, so to speak.

Now, one of the ways I try to share my love is with the Book of Mormon promise. These artworks are all from the Book of Mormon promise to help individuals to visualize, to see, to appreciate. But I wanted to read that to you this evening. It says:

"Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been

unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder [them] in your hearts.

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:3–5).

When I speak to the youth, I want them to feel the power of the Holy Ghost through art and through concept.

I loved the comments by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf in the Air National Guard devotional that he gave back in February 2009: "You who are my brothers in arms but not of my faith might be surprised that the statute on top of our temples, the angel Moroni, is a statue of a soldier. I believe there is considerable significance that all of the righteous men whom the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ might have chosen to abridge the records of the Nephite civilization into the Book of Mormon, which has great relevance in today's world, He chose Mormon and Moroni, two soldiers, for that sacred work" (in "Peace Is Desire of the World," *Church News*, Feb. 14, 2009, 3, 13).

One of my very favorite scriptures that I had as a youth, which helped me to truly appreciate the love that I had for Moroni—my favorite one—is who he is, who he was, and, for me, helped me to understand that the Savior had him as His friend. It said if all men were like unto Moroni, that Satan would never have power over the hearts of men (see Alma 48:17). I remember, as a child, my father reading that and saying, "Be like unto Moroni. Be like unto Moroni, for the power of hell will shake." He shared with me that Moroni was a friend of the Savior. That helped me as a youth to understand what I wanted to become and what I wanted to be like.

I wanted to share with you the last four works of art and have an opportunity to leave with you a poem written by a retired lieutenant colonel. The work of art that is being done right now—we have four left that are not from the Book of Mormon, but the first one is in the New Testament. *Commitment to Serve*. Now, this is just the sketch. What do you notice about the Savior's foot? The front one, what is it doing? It is moving forward. What is His behind foot doing? Pushing off. The commitment to serve. What we wish to do with this work of art is try to depict the Savior's very first day of full-time service. Behind Him will be Mary, Joseph, His tools all neatly behind, children waving Him on. To try to explain, the Lord is one that will teach us, always, commitment to serve.

The second work of art, from the Old Testament, is around a promise of Joshua 14, of Caleb—again, as a child, one of my greatest stories to help me appreciate and respect

those who served in uniform. My father taught me to actually respect every man and woman who ever was in uniform or those who are serving in uniform. Caleb as a scout and as a warrior—the theme will be *Reward for Faithfulness*. The Lord, when He gives a promise, He will never not give that reward. We'll show Caleb at age 40 as a scout. We will show Caleb at 85 as a warrior looking up to the mountain. On one side will be Moses, on the other side will be Joshua, and the theme of the promise is reward for faithfulness.

The next one is also from the Old Testament, a plea. Why this is so sacred to me is, it comes from Elijah's story in 1 Kings 19:4–8. Suicide. The key is *The Lord Has a Better Way.* I know that this subject was addressed in 2015. I think it was by General Burton. In 2016 another chaplain—I believe it was Jensen—had a chance to share in reference to their theme. I wish to honor them for their theme. One of the things that I had tried to do, when we find out of a mother whose son has committed suicide, I am the one that tries to personally hand-deliver that gift of gratitude to the mother for the sacrifice of her son and to let her know how grateful her country, her people, and God are for his service. So I hope that this one can have a chance to help you as chaplains, but I also have thoughts of helping the youth so they'll reconsider suicide.

The last one that I will be doing, number four and final, is the prayer, a warrior's prayer of General George S. Patton, the "weather prayer." I know that each one of you chaplains could cite that word for word. I won't take the time to cite it, but what a great respect my father taught me of that prayer, because he was part of those troops that needed the weather to have a chance to be cleared. He was with General Patton once that weather prayer was completed. The depiction of this one will literally have General Patton kneeling in prayer, with that weather prayer that was written by those two chaplains—it could have been any one of you—but those two chaplains that worked for this weather prayer and gave it. And yet the faith that General Patton had, he wanted to save those men.

I mentioned that I wanted to leave with you a poem that I was given permission to share by a lieutenant colonel who is retired now and was a JAG colonel. It's from his book, *Title of Liberty,* that he has not yet published. But he gave me permission to read this poem, "Reflections on America, Her Freedoms, and Those Who Have Kept Us Free." You see a picture of Lieutenant Colonel Southam and then what he looks like today.

His poem, "God's Warriors—Chaplains":

"Mortals measure things with rulers and scales, devices made by men— The height of a building, the speed of a plane, the length of a human life. There is a security in this—the knowing about lines and times and shapes. The simplicity of the tangible has made it so.

"But God measures men with a scale not made by human hands—

The depth of faith, the reach of service, the adherence to eternal law. There is grace in this—something which goes beyond all that man can do. The reality of the spiritual has made it so.

"Consider the soldier at war—sighting down the barrel of his weapon— Far in the distance he can eliminate a threat with little or no difficulty. It is simply a matter of computation—a fusion of angles, speed, and distance. The detachment of technology has made it so.

"But men are not machines, and targets are not persons unlike the shooters. Both live and love and yearn for home and hearth, for family and friends. There is a sadness in it all—an awareness that we have done this to each other. The images of violent death and injury have made it so.

"So God's warriors wrestle with mortality against the backdrop of eternity. These chaplain brothers realize that scales made by men are crude at best In trying to weigh the anguished questions of men shocked by war. The challenge of their appointment has made it so.

"These men of cloth and covenant echo the truth that intangibles are real— That love, hate, happiness, sorrow, repentance, and forgiveness are such realities. And when soldiers learn that God knows and loves them, even in war, it helps. The work of a chaplain is to make it so."

Your work is great, perhaps greatly unappreciated. I appreciate it. My wife appreciates it. We hope that you will enjoy the gift of gratitude that each one of you will take home, either *For the Blessings of Liberty* or *Covenant of the Fathers, Faith of the Sons.* If you'd like to ever see some of those works of art, Wednesday at the worship chapel, or the worship center just down the street in Fort Williams, we'll have delivered and hung all seven of the works of art in another way of showing our appreciation and gratitude.

May I leave with my own personal testimony? I share with you, I was the black sheep in my family. It wasn't by choice. Vietnam, my senior year of high school was the last of the draft. I then went to play football in college. I got hurt because of—similar to Alma the Younger, I prayed. And you don't want to pray for something you really want to have an answer for. I prayed if God wanted me to serve a mission, He would cripple me. Now, I know that sounds really stupid, so don't teach your children that.

Well, the first thing that happened, I had my left foot hit my left thigh. Now, for those of you who are chaplains and not medics, that's the wrong way to bend your leg, I promise you. It was the opposite way. My foot hit my thigh. I remember in prayer telling my Heavenly Father, "I can run just as well on one leg as I can two. If You really want to cripple me to know that I'm to serve, that's what has to be done." It took me a year to rehab, and that's the reason why I went to a junior college where my father was a

professor. I had rehabbed, and there I was playing my first year of college ball. Sure enough, stupidity asked for that same commitment. I said, "You know, I'm able to run with both legs again. If You really want to have me go serve a mission, You're going to have to cripple me."

Well, the Lord answered my prayers. He chipped my tailbone right off. Those that know that sitting down, it's important to have a tailbone—running, carrying that football, it's even more important. You need a tailbone. Well, He answered my prayers. I went and I knelt and prayed with all my heart, and I got my answer. He had answered my prayers already. And I went to go and serve a mission. Of all places, where I served was under President Kenneth W. Godfrey in the Pennsylvania Pittsburgh Mission. I was, since second grade, a Pittsburgh Steelers fan. I know there's a lot of things happening in the NFL right now. I've shared my love of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Well, the Lord calls me to the Pennsylvania Pittsburgh Mission. What a great sense of humor. In my letter, in one of the paragraphs—no joke—this is what it said by the Brethren: "I, Elder McDermott, will tract the number of seats in the Pittsburgh Steelers' stadium." What a great sense of humor. My first year of my mission, I did just that. I tracted enough for every door in the Pittsburgh Steelers' stadium. I was permitted to get into homes that my companions could not get into because of that. I still remember when I left, I read my letter to my mission president, Kenneth W. Godfrey. He said, "Elder McDermott, my entire three years, no one's ever had that as a paragraph in their mission. God really has a sense of humor. He sent you to me." So I knew President Godfrey thought I had a sense of humor, too, so I do too.

In closing, I wish to share my testimony of the greatness of your work, the greatness of your mission. And the gift given, not expected, is the greatest of all gifts, for King Benjamin was absolutely correct: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God." I say this humbly in Jesus Christ's name, amen.

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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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