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(Myer/BE)
August 21, 1984
11:30 a.m.

*RWS and
R. Reagan
hereon*

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CONVENTION
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1984

Thank you very much for your warm welcome.

I'm delighted to have another chance to speak to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Last year, I told you that I would fly halfway around the world for the honor of meeting with the V.F.W. Well, it's not quite that far from Dallas to Chicago, but it sure is a great way to wind up a terrific week. And believe me, being with you is the perfect way to kick off the next 10 weeks.

Now before I say anything else, I want to congratulate all of you for reaching an important milestone -- your 2 million membership goal. You can be proud. For 85 years, the V.F.W. has stood united in support of the values which have made our Republic great. And today, you're doing it better than ever.

Four years ago -- right here in Chicago -- I stood before your convention, and when you think back to 1980, it's hard to forget the mess America was in, hard to forget the foolish talk of a malaise, the unfairness of runaway price increases, 21-1/2 percent interest rates, weakened defenses, Americans held hostage, and the loss of respect for our Nation abroad. It seemed that we woke up every morning wondering what new humiliation our country had suffered overseas, what disappointing economic news lay waiting for us on the front page.

We knew we couldn't continue on that road. We knew we had to change course and get America back on her feet. And we knew

peace and freedom could not be protected without cost and commitment, without perseverance and courage.

~~Believe me, to~~ ^{One can not} sit in the Oval Office ^{without realizing the} ~~is to understand the~~ awesome responsibility of protecting peace and freedom, and preserving human life. The responsibility cannot be met with half-way wishes; it can be met only by a determined effort to pursue and protect peace with all the strength that we can bring to bear.

~~This is~~ My deepest commitment, ^{is} to achieve a stable, enduring peace; not just by being prepared to deter aggression, but also by bringing steadiness to American foreign policy; by being prepared with a total commitment to pursue all possible avenues for arms reduction; by assuring economic strength helps to lead the way to greater stability ~~through~~ growth and human progress; and by having the spiritual strength and self-confidence that enables us to reach out to our adversaries.

Well, I think we've come quite a long way together. In fact, I believe we've closed the books on that dismal chapter of failed policies and self-doubt. May it never return. And it wouldn't have been possible without the V.F.W. and millions of other concerned Americans.

Gone are the days when we abandoned principle and common sense. Gone are the days when we meekly tolerated obvious threats to our peace and security. Gone are the days when we either sought ^{unsuccessfully} to achieve grandiose arms control agreements overnight or when we set our sights so low that the agreements permitted the numbers and categories of weapons to soar.

We have made a new beginning, a dramatic, far-reaching step toward a much better, safer, and more secure future.

To all of you who have served your country with such courage and distinction, and to all the young men and women who look to their future, I can tell you today from my heart: The United States of America is prepared for peace. And because we are stronger than before, young Americans can be confident that we are in a position to secure a future of peace -- not peace at any price, but a true, meaningful, lasting peace supported by freedom and human dignity.

As I said last night in Dallas, our military ^{protect freedom +} is in place for one reason, and one reason only: to keep the peace. -- to make America always, not sometimes, but always prepared for peace. None of the four wars in my lifetime, ~~and~~ none of the wars you have seen, came about because we were too strong. History shows that weakness invites tyrants to believe the price of aggression will be cheap. And while military strength alone is not enough to ensure a more secure world, without military strength there can be no effective diplomacy, negotiations, no real security, no meaningful peace.

Thankfully, our military forces are back on their feet, substantially stronger and better able to protect the peace today than they were 4 years ago.

Some may try to manipulate statistics. But they can't explain away 3,000 new tanks; or 1,000 new combat aircraft; or 1,800 new fighting vehicles; or 70 new ships; or more investments in sealift in the past 3 years than in all the other years since

World War II. Since 1980, we've made a 35-percent increase in strategic airlift and a 50-percent investment increase in ammunition. We're ^{still} not where we need to be, but we're getting there. e
X

And the payoff is in performance. In Grenada, with less than 48 hours notice, our forces successfully rescued nearly 1,000 American students, disarmed Cuban and Peoples' Revolutionary Forces, and restored the chance for democracy to that troubled island.

As one company commander of the Army's 1st of the 75th Ranger Battalion explained and I quote:

The lead assault elements had less than 24 hours between the time we were issued our final combat orders and our departure for Grenada. We fought with the equipment on which we trained. The equipment worked throughout the operation. New laser range finders gave accurate distance to targets, and the night vision devices operated up to standards. And of the 150 rangers in my company, only 2 had ever seen combat before, yet they all performed like seasoned veterans. What it all adds up to is that our highly motivated soldiers, together with excellent training and reliable weapons, gave us the combat edge.

Come to think of it, I seem to remember that it took ~~a~~ ^{some} ~~certain~~ critics ^{weeks} ~~17 days~~ to decide whether it was a good idea to rescue our students. ~~He~~ ^{They} should have asked the students -- they ^{were} ~~had~~ already ~~been~~ home for ~~2 weeks~~. ✓
✓
✓
(I kind of like this)

Well, what that young Army officer said about his own Ranger Battalion -- about being able to take on combat operations on short notice, get the job done, and get it done right -- was just as true for other units. The 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit had just embarked at Morehead City, North Carolina, for a normal rotation to the eastern Mediterranean when their orders were

changed to Grenada. ~~With no advance warning and very little time, they put together their operational plans, went ashore, professionally accomplished their mission, and then continued on their way, to Lebanon by simply announcing in their final battle report, "On to Beirut."~~

Let me give you one more example. In June 1983, our newly refurbished battleship, the New Jersey, left port to begin a short shakedown cruise in the Pacific. But her orders were soon changed: first to provide a naval presence off the coast of Central America, and then to sail to the Mediterranean in support of the multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon. After 325 days and more than 76,000 miles, she finally returned home. The New Jersey and her crew were put to the test on one of the longest peacetime deployments ever served by a U.S. naval vessel. She came through with flying colors.

And when it comes to our nuclear forces, I've said it before, and I'll say it again: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And that's why we've put forward and will continue to pursue one of the most extensive arms control programs in history.

That's why, during the months that the START and I.N.F. talks were underway, we proposed seven different initiatives. And none of these were offered on a take-it or leave-it basis. Indeed, we made a number of adjustments to respond to the stated concerns of the Soviet side.

That's why we've put forward new proposals on reducing the levels of conventional forces in Europe, on a worldwide ban on

chemical weapons, on ways to help reduce the possibility of conflict in Europe, and why we're working to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Ours is the pursuit of a stable and enduring peace.

But, at the same time, it would have been indefensible and immoral to allow the deterrent posture we need to protect the peace to continue deteriorating as it was.

Now some may insist they're just as committed to a strong deterrent, even as they would cancel the B-1 bomber and the Peacekeeper missile. They may deny that a nuclear freeze would preserve today's high, unequal, and unstable levels of nuclear weapons; and they may deny a freeze would reduce any incentive for the Soviets to return to the negotiating table and resume the search for equitable and fair reductions. But that way of thinking only reminds me of something Sam Rayburn, a very wise ^{Democrat} Speaker of the House, once said: Any jackass can kick a barn down, but it takes a carpenter to build one.

When I took office, our newest long-range strategic bomber was 19 years old. Early next month, the first B-1 bomber will roll off the production line.

In 1981, our newest strategic submarine was 14 years old. Today, three new Trident submarines are at sea, a fourth is nearing completion, and seven more are under construction -- on schedule and within budget.

When I took office, the debate on modernizing our aging land-based missiles had gone on for more than a decade. Today, we've completed five successful tests of the Peacekeeper and

deployment plans are on schedule. And let me take this opportunity to thank all of you for your much needed support in our battle for the Peacekeeper. We must make sure that no adversary ever has reason to misjudge our deterrent posture or question our resolve to protect the peace. And we couldn't have gotten this far without your help.

Now let me say a word about one of our most important safeguards of peace and freedom. I'm not talking about bullets or guns, but about heart and spirit. Once again, young Americans wear their uniforms and serve their flag with honor and pride. From the NATO lines to the Demilitarized Zone of Korea, and at bases and ports all across America and all over the world, young Americans are carrying on in your footsteps -- in the courageous footsteps of those who stood in harm's way, so that others might have a chance to find freedom, peace, and happiness.

In fact, no improvement in our military readiness has been more dramatic, or more important, than the improvement in the quality and retention of our servicemen and women.

The critics kept telling us that the all-volunteer military would never work, and as soon as the economy turned around, we'd be faced with severe enlistment and retention problems. Well, forgive me but those are the same people who were wrong on inflation, wrong on unemployment, wrong on interest rates, and wrong on the recovery. And there they go again. We're now in the 21st month of the best economic recovery since World War II, and last year was the best we've ever had for retention in both

the Navy and Air Force, and the Army's best year for recruiting. And those trends are continuing.

You know, every time I see a young serviceman or woman, I get a lump in my throat thinking how lucky we are to have them serving our country and protecting our freedom with real honor, courage, and competence.

I believe we've come too far, struggled too hard, and accomplished too much to turn back now. Once again, America is prepared for peace. And once again the world knows that America will stand up for freedom, democracy, and peace with human dignity. I don't know whether you're aware of this, but in every year from 1975 to 1980, armies largely supplied by Moscow or Soviet forces ^{THEMSELVES} invaded or seized control of a different country: first, Vietnam; then, Angola; followed by Ethiopia and Cambodia; and finally Afghanistan. Well, since 1981 that pattern has stopped -- and in 1983, Grenada was saved. Every once in a while it's important to remember that success can also be measured by the disasters which do not happen.

We can be confident that history is moving in the direction of self-government and human dignity. To paraphrase Jefferson, men and women are not born with saddles on their backs.

Political systems based on a dreadful denial of the human spirit will, in the end, fail. In our own hemisphere, 26 of 33 Latin American countries today are democracies, or are striving to become democracies. This represents 90 percent of the region's population, up from 50 percent ^{ONLY} a decade ago.

We see this yearning for freedom and democracy among the brave people of ~~Eastern Europe, in Afghanistan,~~ in Africa and elsewhere. Freedom and democracy are the flagship of the future.

~~Our country is the leader of the free world,~~ and today we're providing leadership. In my meetings with foreign leaders, they have often told me how good it is to know what the United States stands for once again.

Now, before I close, I want to thank your outgoing Commander-in-Chief, Cliff Olson, for all that he's done, and I want to congratulate your incoming Commander-in-Chief, Billy Ray Cameron. By the way, I'm sure that Cliff will tell you that the title "Commander-in-Chief" sort of grows on you.

I will always remember your strong support, it stayed rock solid even when the going was rough. But, then, you've always been a tower of strength; the V.F.W. has always set high standards, lived up to them, and looked out for America -- just as you've always looked out for the veteran.

The V.F.W. and the Ladies Auxiliary didn't become great organizations by accident. You've done it through hard work and outstanding leadership. You've done it by serving our Nation's veterans and your communities -- volunteering your services to our veterans, fighting the good fight for a strong, safe, and secure America, sponsoring youth activities, directing your highly acclaimed drug abuse and safety projects, your Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program, and so many other worthwhile projects.

I think of your patriotism and I just have to wonder: How can anyone not believe that the heart of America is good, that the spirit of America is strong, and that the future of America is great?

I wish all Americans could have stood with me this past June on the windswept cliffs of Pointe du Hoc. I wish all Americans could have felt the faith and belief, the loyalty and love of those brave men of Normandy. You know what I mean -- you're the

Veterans of Foreign Wars, you've been there. *ONE OF THE RANGERS OF 40 YRS AGO NOW 63 YEARS OLD SCALED THE 100 FT. CLIFF HE CLIMBED ON D. DAY & DID IT IN 7 MINS.*

~~You understand that we are what we are because of Normandy and a thousand other lonely battlefields. Words could never express what the patriotism of generation after generation of American heroes means for the very soul of our Nation. But you and I do know that we are free because of those who went to Omaha Beach and Guadalcanal, Mig Alley and Pork Chop Hill, Kae Sanh and the Iron Triangle.~~

I'll never stop working as hard as I can to make sure that our Nation keeps its special commitment to those who served, to those who have kept the torch of liberty burning brightly. Because of you, America's best days are still to come. And with faith, freedom, and courage, there's no limit to what America can and will accomplish. ~~And~~ I know you share my faith that, together, we will see to it that our beloved country continues to go upward and onward.

Thank you and God bless you all.

our generation, but for generation to come.

It is you better than any who know the price of freedom. I think of you those who have served our beloved country before and after us.

AA

(Myer/Elliott)
August 23, 1984
10:30 a.m.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CONVENTION
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1984

Thank you very much for your warm welcome.

I'm delighted to have another chance to speak to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Last year, I told you that I would fly halfway around the world for the honor of meeting with the V.F.W. Well, it's not quite that far from Dallas to Chicago, but it sure is a great way to wind up a terrific week.

Now before I say anything else, I want to congratulate all of you for reaching an important milestone -- your 2 million membership goal. You can be proud. For 85 years, the V.F.W. has stood united in support of the values which have made our Republic great. And today, you're doing it better than ever.

Four years ago -- right here in Chicago -- I stood before your convention, and when you think back to 1980, it's hard to forget the mess America was in, hard to forget the foolish talk of a malaise, the unfairness of runaway price increases, 21-1/2 percent interest rates, weakened defenses, Americans held hostage, and the loss of respect for our Nation abroad. It seemed that we woke up every morning wondering what new humiliation our country had suffered overseas, what disappointing economic news lay waiting for us on the front page.

We knew we couldn't continue on that road. We knew we had to change course and get America back on her feet. And we knew peace and freedom could not be protected without cost and commitment, without perseverance and courage.

One cannot sit in the Oval Office without realizing the awesome responsibility of protecting peace and freedom, and preserving human life. The responsibility cannot be met with halfway wishes; it can be met only by a determined effort to pursue and protect peace with all the strength that we can bring to bear.

My deepest commitment is to achieve a stable, enduring peace; not just by being prepared to deter aggression, but also by bringing steadiness to American foreign policy; by being prepared to pursue all possible avenues for arms reduction; by ensuring that our economic strength leads the way to greater stability through growth and human progress; and by having the spiritual strength and self-confidence that enables us to reach out to our adversaries.

Well, I think we've come quite a long way together. In fact, I believe we've closed the books on that dismal chapter of failed policies and self-doubt. May it never return. And our progress wouldn't have been possible without the V.F.W. and millions of other concerned Americans.

Gone are the days when we abandoned principle and common sense. Gone are the days when we meekly tolerated obvious threats to our peace and security. Gone are the days when we either sought to achieve overnight grandiose arms control agreements that were bound to fail, or when we set our sights so low that the agreements permitted the numbers and categories of weapons to soar.

We have made a new beginning, a dramatic, far-reaching step toward a much better, safer, and more secure future.

To all of you who have served your country with such courage and distinction, and to all the young men and women who look to their future, I can tell you today from my heart: The United States of America is prepared for peace. And because we are stronger than before, we can be confident that we are in a position to secure a future of peace -- not peace at any price, but a true, meaningful, lasting peace supported by freedom and human dignity.

As I said last night in Dallas, our military serves to protect our freedom and keep the peace. None of the four wars in my lifetime, and none of the wars you have seen, came about because we were too strong. History shows that weakness invites tyrants to believe the price of aggression will be cheap. And while military strength alone is not enough to ensure a more secure world, without military strength there can be no effective diplomacy, no meaningful negotiations, no real security, no lasting peace.

Our military forces are back on their feet, substantially stronger and better able to protect the peace today than they were 4 years ago.

We're still not where we need to be, but we're getting there.

And the payoff is in performance. In Grenada, with less than 48 hours notice, our forces successfully rescued nearly 1,000 Americans, disarmed Cuban and Peoples' Revolutionary

Forces, and restored the chance for democracy to that troubled island.

As one company commander of the Army's 1st Ranger Battalion explained, and I quote:

The lead assault elements had less than 24 hours between the time we were issued our final combat orders and our departure for Grenada. We fought with the equipment on which we trained. The equipment worked throughout the operation. New laser range finders gave accurate distance to targets, and the night vision devices operated up to standards. And of the 150 rangers in my company, only 2 had ever seen combat before, yet they all performed like seasoned veterans. What it all adds up to is that our highly motivated soldiers, together with excellent training and reliable weapons, gave us the combat edge.

Come to think of it, I seem to remember that it took critics weeks to decide whether it was a good idea to rescue our students. They should have asked the students -- for those students were already home.

Well, what that young Army officer said about his own Ranger Battalion -- about being able to take on combat operations on short notice, get the job done, and get it done right -- was just as true for other units. The 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit had just embarked at Morehead City, North Carolina, for a normal rotation to the eastern Mediterranean when their orders were changed to Grenada. With no advance warning and very little time, they put together their operational plans, went ashore, professionally accomplished their mission, and then continued on their way.

Because we were willing to take decisive action, our students today are safe, Grenada is free, and that region of the Caribbean is more peaceful and secure than before. But, let no one confuse that situation with an inescapable reality of the modern age.

When it comes to our nuclear forces, I've said it before, and I'll say it again: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And that's why we've put forward and will continue to pursue one of the most extensive arms control programs in history.

During the months that the START and I.N.F. talks were underway, we proposed seven different initiatives. And none of these were offered on a take-it or leave-it basis. Indeed, we made a number of adjustments to respond to the stated concerns of the Soviet side.

That's why we've put forward new proposals on reducing the levels of conventional forces in Europe, on a worldwide ban on chemical weapons, on ways to help reduce the possibility of conflict in Europe, and why we're working to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Ours is the pursuit of a stable and enduring peace.

But, at the same time, it would have been indefensible and immoral to allow the deterrent posture we need to protect the peace to continue deteriorating as it was.

Now some may insist they're just as committed to a strong deterrent, even as they would cancel the B-1 bomber and the Peacekeeper missile. They may deny that a nuclear freeze would

preserve today's high, unequal, and unstable levels of nuclear weapons; and they may deny a freeze would reduce any incentive for the Soviets to return to the negotiating table and resume the search for equitable and fair reductions. But that way of thinking only reminds me of what Sam Rayburn, a very wise Democratic Speaker of the House, once said: Any jackass can kick a barn down; but it takes a carpenter to build one.

When I took office, our newest long-range strategic bomber was 19 years old. Early next month, the first B-1 bomber will roll off the production line.

In 1981, our newest strategic submarine was 14 years old. Today, three new Trident submarines are at sea, a fourth was delivered in January, 6 weeks ahead of schedule, and seven more are under construction -- on schedule and within budget.

When I took office, the debate on modernizing our aging land-based missiles had gone on for more than a decade. Today, we've completed five successful tests of the Peacekeeper and deployment plans are on schedule. And let me take this opportunity to thank all of you for your much needed support in our battle for the Peacekeeper. We must make sure that no adversary ever has reason to misjudge our deterrent posture or question our resolve to protect the peace. And we couldn't have gotten this far without your help.

Now let me say a word about one of our most important safeguards of peace and freedom. I'm not talking about bullets or guns, but about heart and spirit. Once again, young Americans wear their uniforms and serve their flag with honor and pride.

From the NATO lines to the Demilitarized Zone of Korea, and at bases and ports all across America and all over the world, young Americans are carrying on in your footsteps -- in the courageous footsteps of those who stood in harm's way, so that others might have a chance to find freedom, peace, and happiness.

In fact, no improvement in our military readiness has been more dramatic, or more important, than the improvement in the quality and retention of our servicemen and women.

The critics kept telling us that the all-volunteer military would never work, and as soon as the economy turned around, we'd be faced with severe enlistment and retention problems. Well, forgive me, but those are the same people who were wrong on inflation, wrong on unemployment, wrong on interest rates, and wrong on the recovery. And there they go again. We're now in the 21st month of the best economic recovery since 1949, and last year was the best we've ever had for re-enlistment in both the Navy and Air Force, and one of the Army's best years for recruiting. And those trends are continuing.

You know, every time I see a young serviceman or woman, I get a lump in my throat thinking how lucky we are to have them serving our country and protecting our freedom with real honor, courage, and competence.

I believe we've come too far, struggled too hard, and accomplished too much to turn back now. Once again, the world knows that America will stand up for freedom, democracy, and peace with human dignity. And once again, America is prepared for peace.

I don't know whether you're aware of this, but in every year from 1975 to 1980, armies largely supplied by Moscow or Soviet forces themselves invaded or seized control of a different country: first, Vietnam; then, Angola; followed by Ethiopia and Cambodia; and finally Afghanistan. Well, since 1981, that pattern has stopped -- and, in 1983, Grenada was saved. Every once in a while, it's important to remember that success can also be measured by the disasters which do not happen.

We can be confident that history is moving in the direction of self-government and human dignity. To paraphrase Jefferson, men and women are not born with saddles on their backs.

Political systems based on a dreadful denial of the human spirit will, in the end, fail. In our own hemisphere, 26 of 33 Latin American countries today are democracies, or are striving to become democracies. This represents 90 percent of the region's population, up from 50 percent only a decade ago.

We see this yearning for freedom and democracy among the brave people of Eastern Europe, in Afghanistan, in Africa and elsewhere. The spirit of men and women to breathe free is a mighty force that cannot and will not be denied.

Our country is the leader of the free world, and today we're providing leadership. In my meetings with foreign leaders, they have often told me how good it is to know what the United States stands for once again.

Now, before I close, I want to thank your outgoing Commander-in-Chief, Cliff Olson, for all that he's done, and I

want to congratulate your incoming Commander-in-Chief, Billy Ray Cameron.

I will always remember your strong support -- it stayed rock solid even when the going was rough. But, then, you've always been a tower of strength; the V.F.W. has always set high standards, lived up to them, and looked out for America -- just as you've always looked out for the veteran.

The V.F.W. and the Ladies Auxiliary didn't become great organizations by accident. You've done it through hard work and outstanding leadership. You've done it by serving our Nation's veterans and your communities -- volunteering your services to our veterans, fighting the good fight for a strong, safe, and secure America, supporting our P.O.W.-M.I.A. efforts, sponsoring youth activities, directing your highly acclaimed drug abuse and safety projects, your Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program, and so many other worthwhile projects.

I think of your patriotism and I just have to wonder: How can anyone not believe that the heart of America is good, that the spirit of America is strong, and that the future of America is great?

I wish all Americans could have stood with me this past June on the windswept cliffs of Pointe du Hoc. I wish all Americans could have felt the faith and belief, the loyalty and love of those brave men of Normandy. You know what I mean -- you're the Veterans of Foreign Wars, you've been there.

One of the Rangers of 40 years ago, now 63 years old, scaled the 100-foot cliff he climbed on D-Day and did it in 7 minutes.

You understand that we are what we are because of Normandy and a thousand other lonely battlefields. Words could never express what the patriotism of generation after generation of American heroes means for the very soul of our Nation. But you and I do know that we are free because of those who went to Omaha Beach and Guadalcanal, Mig Alley and Pork Chop Hill, Khe Sanh and the Iron Triangle.

I'll never stop working as hard as I can to make sure that our Nation keeps its special commitment to those who served, to those who have kept the torch of liberty burning brightly. Because of you, America's best days are still to come. And with faith, freedom, and courage, there's no limit to what America can and will accomplish.

Forgive me, but before I leave, I must share something with you, because you have evoked memories too moving, too important to ignore. When we visited the Normandy beaches this past spring, we were told that French citizens came up to our veterans, actually took them by the hand, and said with tears in their eyes: We were only young at the time, but we will always remember what you did and what it has meant to us.

When I look at you, when I think of all you have lived and known and learned from your lifetime of service, a lifetime of honor, I can't help wondering: Who more than you could better understand how precious are the gifts of life, and freedom, and faith? Who more than you has the courage, and the wisdom, to help us protect these gifts for our children and for our children's children?

You are wisemen of history whose burdens have become our blessings. Your struggles preserved democracy, and, today, all of us are lifting America into a new springtime of hope. Yes, in my heart I know now it is true. America's future must be a future of peace.

Together, we will see to it that it is done.

Thank you and God bless you all.

PRESIDENT'S BACKUP COPY:

ADDRESS TO VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CONVENTION
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1984

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR WARM WELCOME.

I'M DELIGHTED TO HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE TO SPEAK TO THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS. LAST YEAR, I TOLD YOU THAT I WOULD FLY HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE HONOR OF MEETING WITH THE V.F.W. WELL, IT'S NOT QUITE THAT FAR FROM DALLAS TO CHICAGO, BUT IT SURE IS A GREAT WAY TO WIND UP A TERRIFIC WEEK.

NOW BEFORE I SAY ANYTHING ELSE, I WANT TO CONGRATULATE ALL OF YOU FOR REACHING AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE -- YOUR 2 MILLION MEMBERSHIP GOAL. YOU CAN BE PROUD. FOR 85 YEARS, THE V.F.W. HAS STOOD UNITED IN SUPPORT OF THE VALUES WHICH HAVE MADE OUR REPUBLIC GREAT. AND TODAY, YOU'RE DOING IT BETTER THAN EVER.

FOUR YEARS AGO -- RIGHT HERE IN CHICAGO -- I STOOD BEFORE YOUR CONVENTION, AND WHEN YOU THINK BACK TO 1980, IT'S HARD TO FORGET THE MESS AMERICA WAS IN, HARD TO FORGET THE FOOLISH TALK OF A MALAISE, THE UNFAIRNESS OF RUNAWAY PRICE INCREASES, 21-1/2 PERCENT INTEREST RATES, WEAKENED DEFENSES, AMERICANS HELD HOSTAGE, AND THE LOSS OF RESPECT FOR OUR NATION ABROAD. IT SEEMED THAT WE WOKE UP EVERY MORNING WONDERING WHAT NEW HUMILIATION OUR COUNTRY HAD SUFFERED OVERSEAS, WHAT DISAPPOINTING ECONOMIC NEWS LAY WAITING FOR US ON THE FRONT PAGE.

WE KNEW WE COULDN'T CONTINUE ON THAT ROAD. WE KNEW WE HAD TO CHANGE COURSE AND GET AMERICA BACK ON HER FEET. AND WE KNEW PEACE AND FREEDOM COULD NOT BE PROTECTED WITHOUT COST AND COMMITMENT, WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE AND COURAGE.

ONE CANNOT SIT IN THE OVAL OFFICE WITHOUT REALIZING THE AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY OF PROTECTING PEACE AND FREEDOM, AND PRESERVING HUMAN LIFE. THE RESPONSIBILITY CANNOT BE MET WITH HALFWAY WISHES; IT CAN BE MET ONLY BY A DETERMINED EFFORT TO PURSUE AND PROTECT PEACE WITH ALL THE STRENGTH THAT WE CAN BRING TO BEAR.

MY DEEPEST COMMITMENT IS TO ACHIEVE A STABLE, ENDURING PEACE; NOT JUST BY BEING PREPARED TO DETER AGGRESSION, BUT ALSO BY BRINGING STEADINESS TO AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY; BY BEING PREPARED TO PURSUE ALL POSSIBLE AVENUES FOR ARMS REDUCTION; BY ENSURING THAT OUR ECONOMIC STRENGTH LEADS THE WAY TO GREATER STABILITY THROUGH GROWTH AND HUMAN PROGRESS; AND BY HAVING THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AND SELF-CONFIDENCE THAT ENABLES US TO REACH OUT TO OUR ADVERSARIES.

WELL, I THINK WE'VE COME QUITE A LONG WAY TOGETHER. IN FACT, I BELIEVE WE'VE CLOSED THE BOOKS ON THAT DISMAL CHAPTER OF FAILED POLICIES AND SELF-DOUBT. MAY IT NEVER RETURN. AND OUR PROGRESS WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE V.F.W. AND MILLIONS OF OTHER CONCERNED AMERICANS.

GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN WE ABANDONED PRINCIPLE AND COMMON SENSE. GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN WE MEEKLY TOLERATED OBVIOUS THREATS TO OUR PEACE AND SECURITY. GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN WE EITHER SOUGHT TO ACHIEVE OVERNIGHT GRANDIOSE ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS THAT WERE BOUND TO FAIL, OR WHEN WE SET OUR SIGHTS SO LOW THAT THE AGREEMENTS PERMITTED THE NUMBERS AND CATEGORIES OF WEAPONS TO SOAR.

WE HAVE MADE A NEW BEGINNING, A DRAMATIC, FAR-REACHING STEP TOWARD A MUCH BETTER, SAFER, AND MORE SECURE FUTURE.

TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE SERVED YOUR COUNTRY WITH SUCH COURAGE AND DISTINCTION, AND TO ALL THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO LOOK TO THEIR FUTURE, I CAN TELL YOU TODAY FROM MY HEART: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS PREPARED FOR PEACE. AND BECAUSE WE ARE STRONGER THAN BEFORE, WE CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT WE ARE IN A POSITION TO SECURE A FUTURE OF PEACE -- NOT PEACE AT ANY PRICE, BUT A TRUE, MEANINGFUL, LASTING PEACE SUPPORTED BY FREEDOM AND HUMAN DIGNITY.

AS I SAID LAST NIGHT IN DALLAS, OUR MILITARY SERVES TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOM AND KEEP THE PEACE. NONE OF THE FOUR WARS IN MY LIFETIME, AND NONE OF THE WARS YOU HAVE SEEN, CAME ABOUT BECAUSE WE WERE TOO STRONG. HISTORY SHOWS THAT WEAKNESS INVITES TYRANTS TO BELIEVE THE PRICE OF AGGRESSION WILL BE CHEAP. AND WHILE MILITARY STRENGTH ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH TO ENSURE A MORE SECURE WORLD, WITHOUT MILITARY STRENGTH THERE CAN BE NO EFFECTIVE DIPLOMACY, NO MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS, NO REAL SECURITY, NO LASTING PEACE.

OUR MILITARY FORCES ARE BACK ON THEIR FEET, SUBSTANTIALLY STRONGER AND BETTER ABLE TO PROTECT THE PEACE TODAY THAN THEY WERE 4 YEARS AGO.

WE'RE STILL NOT WHERE WE NEED TO BE, BUT WE'RE GETTING THERE.

AND THE PAYOFF IS IN PERFORMANCE. IN GRENADA, WITH LESS THAN ~~72~~ HOURS NOTICE, OUR FORCES SUCCESSFULLY RESCUED 600 AMERICAN STUDENTS, DISARMED CUBAN AND PEOPLES REVOLUTIONARY ARMY FORCES, AND RESTORED THE CHANCE FOR DEMOCRACY TO THAT TROUBLED ISLAND.

AS ONE COMPANY COMMANDER OF THE ARMY'S 1ST RANGER BATTALION EXPLAINED, AND I QUOTE:

THE LEAD ASSAULT ELEMENTS HAD LESS THAN 24 HOURS BETWEEN THE TIME WE WERE ISSUED OUR FINAL COMBAT ORDERS AND OUR DEPARTURE FOR GRENADA. WE FOUGHT WITH THE EQUIPMENT ON WHICH WE TRAINED. THE EQUIPMENT WORKED THROUGHOUT THE OPERATION. NEW LASER RANGE FINDERS GAVE ACCURATE DISTANCE TO TARGETS, AND THE NIGHT VISION DEVICES OPERATED UP TO STANDARDS. AND OF THE 150 RANGERS IN MY COMPANY, ONLY 2 HAD EVER SEEN COMBAT BEFORE, YET THEY ALL PERFORMED LIKE SEASONED VETERANS. WHAT IT ALL ADDS UP TO IS THAT OUR HIGHLY MOTIVATED SOLDIERS, TOGETHER WITH EXCELLENT TRAINING AND RELIABLE WEAPONS, GAVE US THE COMBAT EDGE.

COME TO THINK OF IT, I SEEM TO REMEMBER THAT IT TOOK CRITICS WEEKS TO DECIDE WHETHER IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TO RESCUE OUR STUDENTS. THEY SHOULD HAVE ASKED THE STUDENTS -- FOR THOSE STUDENTS WERE ALREADY HOME.

WELL, WHAT THAT YOUNG ARMY OFFICER SAID ABOUT HIS OWN RANGER BATTALION -- ABOUT BEING ABLE TO TAKE ON COMBAT OPERATIONS ON SHORT NOTICE, GET THE JOB DONE, AND GET IT DONE RIGHT -- WAS JUST AS TRUE FOR OTHER UNITS. THE 22ND MARINE AMPHIBIOUS UNIT HAD JUST EMBARKED AT MOREHEAD CITY, NORTH CAROLINA, FOR A NORMAL ROTATION TO THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN WHEN THEIR ORDERS WERE CHANGED TO GRENADA. WITH NO ADVANCE WARNING AND VERY LITTLE TIME, THEY PUT TOGETHER THEIR OPERATIONAL PLANS, WENT ASHORE, PROFESSIONALLY ACCOMPLISHED THEIR MISSION, AND THEN CONTINUED ON THEIR WAY.

BECAUSE WE WERE WILLING TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION, OUR STUDENTS TODAY ARE SAFE, GRENADA IS FREE, AND THAT REGION OF THE CARIBBEAN IS MORE PEACEFUL AND SECURE THAN BEFORE. BUT, LET NO ONE CONFUSE THAT SITUATION WITH AN INESCAPABLE REALITY OF THE MODERN AGE.

WHEN IT COMES TO OUR NUCLEAR FORCES, I'VE SAID IT BEFORE, AND I'LL SAY IT AGAIN: A NUCLEAR WAR CANNOT BE WON AND MUST NEVER BE FOUGHT. AND THAT'S WHY WE'VE PUT FORWARD AND WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE ONE OF THE MOST EXTENSIVE ARMS CONTROL PROGRAMS IN HISTORY.

DURING THE MONTHS THAT THE START AND I.N.F. TALKS WERE UNDERWAY, WE PROPOSED SEVEN DIFFERENT INITIATIVES. AND NONE OF THESE WERE OFFERED ON A TAKE-IT OR LEAVE-IT BASIS. INDEED, WE MADE A NUMBER OF ADJUSTMENTS TO RESPOND TO THE STATED CONCERNS OF THE SOVIET SIDE.

THAT'S WHY WE'VE PUT FORWARD NEW PROPOSALS ON REDUCING THE LEVELS OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE, ON A WORLDWIDE BAN ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS, ON WAYS TO HELP REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT IN EUROPE, AND WHY WE'RE WORKING TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. OURS IS THE PURSUIT OF A STABLE AND ENDURING PEACE.

BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN INDEFENSIBLE AND IMMORAL TO ALLOW THE DETERRENT POSTURE WE NEED TO PROTECT THE PEACE TO CONTINUE DETERIORATING AS IT WAS.

NOW SOME MAY INSIST THEY'RE JUST AS COMMITTED TO A STRONG DETERRENT, EVEN AS THEY WOULD CANCEL THE B-1 BOMBER AND THE PEACEKEEPER MISSILE. THEY MAY DENY THAT A NUCLEAR FREEZE WOULD PRESERVE TODAY'S HIGH, UNEQUAL, AND UNSTABLE LEVELS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS; AND THEY MAY DENY A FREEZE WOULD REDUCE ANY INCENTIVE FOR THE SOVIETS TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AND RESUME THE SEARCH FOR EQUITABLE AND FAIR REDUCTIONS. BUT THAT WAY OF THINKING ONLY REMINDS ME OF WHAT SAM RAYBURN, A VERY WISE DEMOCRATIC SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, ONCE SAID: ANY JACKASS CAN KICK A BARN DOWN; BUT IT TAKES A CARPENTER TO BUILD ONE.

WHEN I TOOK OFFICE, OUR NEWEST LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC BOMBER WAS 19 YEARS OLD. EARLY NEXT MONTH, THE FIRST B-1 BOMBER WILL ROLL OFF THE PRODUCTION LINE.

IN 1981, OUR NEWEST STRATEGIC SUBMARINE WAS 14 YEARS OLD. TODAY, THREE NEW TRIDENT SUBMARINES ARE AT SEA, A FOURTH WAS DELIVERED IN JANUARY, 6 WEEKS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE, AND SEVEN MORE ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION -- ON SCHEDULE AND WITHIN BUDGET.

WHEN I TOOK OFFICE, THE DEBATE ON MODERNIZING OUR AGING LAND-BASED MISSILES HAD GONE ON FOR MORE THAN A DECADE. TODAY, WE'VE COMPLETED FIVE SUCCESSFUL TESTS OF THE PEACEKEEPER AND DEPLOYMENT PLANS ARE ON SCHEDULE. AND LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT IN OUR BATTLE FOR THE PEACEKEEPER. WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT NO ADVERSARY EVER HAS REASON TO MISJUDGE OUR DETERRENT POSTURE OR QUESTION OUR RESOLVE TO PROTECT THE PEACE. AND WE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN THIS FAR WITHOUT YOUR HELP.

NOW LET ME SAY A WORD ABOUT ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT SAFEGUARDS OF PEACE AND FREEDOM. I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT BULLETS OR GUNS, BUT ABOUT HEART AND SPIRIT. ONCE AGAIN, YOUNG AMERICANS WEAR THEIR UNIFORMS AND SERVE THEIR FLAG WITH HONOR AND PRIDE. FROM THE NATO LINES TO THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE OF KOREA, AND AT BASES AND PORTS ALL ACROSS AMERICA AND ALL OVER THE WORLD, YOUNG AMERICANS ARE CARRYING ON IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS -- IN THE COURAGEOUS FOOTSTEPS OF THOSE WHO STOOD IN HARM'S WAY, SO THAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE TO FIND FREEDOM, PEACE, AND HAPPINESS.

IN FACT, NO IMPROVEMENT IN OUR MILITARY READINESS HAS BEEN MORE DRAMATIC, OR MORE IMPORTANT, THAN THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY AND RETENTION OF OUR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN.

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THE CRITICS KEPT TELLING US THAT THE ALL-VOLUNTEER MILITARY WOULD NEVER WORK, AND AS SOON AS THE ECONOMY TURNED AROUND, WE'D BE FACED WITH SEVERE ENLISTMENT AND RETENTION PROBLEMS. WELL, FORGIVE ME, BUT THOSE ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO WERE WRONG ON INFLATION, WRONG ON UNEMPLOYMENT, WRONG ON INTEREST RATES, AND WRONG ON THE RECOVERY. AND THERE THEY GO AGAIN. WE'RE NOW IN THE 21ST MONTH OF THE BEST ECONOMIC RECOVERY SINCE 1949, AND LAST YEAR WAS THE BEST WE'VE EVER HAD FOR RE-ENLISTMENT IN BOTH THE NAVY AND AIR FORCE, AND ONE OF THE ARMY'S BEST YEARS FOR RECRUITING. AND THOSE TRENDS ARE CONTINUING.

YOU KNOW, EVERY TIME I SEE A YOUNG SERVICEMAN OR WOMAN, I GET A LUMP IN MY THROAT THINKING HOW LUCKY WE ARE TO HAVE THEM SERVING OUR COUNTRY AND PROTECTING OUR FREEDOM WITH REAL HONOR, COURAGE, AND COMPETENCE.

I BELIEVE WE'VE COME TOO FAR, STRUGGLED TOO HARD, AND ACCOMPLISHED TOO MUCH TO TURN BACK NOW. ONCE AGAIN, THE WORLD KNOWS THAT AMERICA WILL STAND UP FOR FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, AND PEACE WITH HUMAN DIGNITY. AND ONCE AGAIN, AMERICA IS PREPARED FOR PEACE.

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER YOU'RE AWARE OF THIS, BUT IN EVERY YEAR FROM 1975 TO 1980, ARMIES LARGELY SUPPLIED BY MOSCOW OR SOVIET FORCES THEMSELVES INVADED OR SEIZED CONTROL OF A DIFFERENT COUNTRY: FIRST, VIETNAM; THEN, ANGOLA; FOLLOWED BY ETHIOPIA AND CAMBODIA; AND FINALLY AFGHANISTAN. WELL, SINCE 1981, THAT PATTERN HAS STOPPED -- AND, IN 1983, GRENADA WAS SAVED. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT SUCCESS CAN ALSO BE MEASURED BY THE DISASTERS WHICH DO NOT HAPPEN.

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WE CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT HISTORY IS MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN DIGNITY. TO PARAPHRASE JEFFERSON, MEN AND WOMEN ARE NOT BORN WITH SADDLES ON THEIR BACKS.

POLITICAL SYSTEMS BASED ON A DREADFUL DENIAL OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT WILL, IN THE END, FAIL. IN OUR OWN HEMISPHERE, 26 OF 33 LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TODAY ARE DEMOCRACIES, OR ARE STRIVING TO BECOME DEMOCRACIES. THIS REPRESENTS 90 PERCENT OF THE REGION'S POPULATION, UP FROM 50 PERCENT ONLY A DECADE AGO.

WE SEE THIS YEARNING FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY AMONG THE BRAVE PEOPLE OF EASTERN EUROPE, IN AFGHANISTAN, IN AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE. THE SPIRIT OF MEN AND WOMEN TO BREATHE FREE IS A MIGHTY FORCE THAT CANNOT AND WILL NOT BE DENIED.

OUR COUNTRY IS THE LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD, AND TODAY WE'RE PROVIDING LEADERSHIP. IN MY MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN LEADERS, THEY HAVE OFTEN TOLD ME HOW GOOD IT IS TO KNOW WHAT THE UNITED STATES STANDS FOR ONCE AGAIN.

NOW, BEFORE I CLOSE, I WANT TO THANK YOUR OUTGOING COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, CLIFF OLSON, FOR ALL THAT HE'S DONE, AND I WANT TO CONGRATULATE YOUR INCOMING COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, BILLY RAY CAMERON.

I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR STRONG SUPPORT -- IT STAYED ROCK SOLID EVEN WHEN THE GOING WAS ROUGH. BUT, THEN, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A TOWER OF STRENGTH; THE V.F.W. HAS ALWAYS SET HIGH STANDARDS, LIVED UP TO THEM, AND LOOKED OUT FOR AMERICA -- JUST AS YOU'VE ALWAYS LOOKED OUT FOR THE VETERAN.

THE V.F.W. AND THE LADIES AUXILIARY DIDN'T BECOME GREAT ORGANIZATIONS BY ACCIDENT. YOU'VE DONE IT THROUGH HARD WORK AND OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP. YOU'VE DONE IT BY SERVING OUR NATION'S VETERANS AND YOUR COMMUNITIES -- VOLUNTEERING YOUR SERVICES TO OUR VETERANS, FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT FOR A STRONG, SAFE, AND SECURE AMERICA, SUPPORTING OUR P.O.W.-M.I.A. EFFORTS, SPONSORING YOUTH ACTIVITIES, DIRECTING YOUR HIGHLY ACCLAIMED DRUG ABUSE AND SAFETY PROJECTS, YOUR VOICE OF DEMOCRACY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, AND SO MANY OTHER WORTHWHILE PROJECTS.

I THINK OF YOUR PATRIOTISM AND I JUST HAVE TO WONDER: HOW CAN ANYONE NOT BELIEVE THAT THE HEART OF AMERICA IS GOOD, THAT THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA IS STRONG, AND THAT THE FUTURE OF AMERICA IS GREAT?

I WISH ALL AMERICANS COULD HAVE STOOD WITH ME THIS PAST JUNE ON THE WINDSWEPT CLIFFS OF POINTE DU HOC. I WISH ALL AMERICANS COULD HAVE FELT THE FAITH AND BELIEF, THE LOYALTY AND LOVE OF THOSE BRAVE MEN OF NORMANDY. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN -- YOU'RE THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, YOU'VE BEEN THERE.

ONE OF THE RANGERS OF 40 YEARS AGO, NOW 63 YEARS OLD, SCALED THE 100-FOOT CLIFF HE CLIMBED ON D-DAY AND DID IT IN 7 MINUTES.

YOU UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE WHAT WE ARE BECAUSE OF NORMANDY AND A THOUSAND OTHER LONELY BATTLEFIELDS. WORDS COULD NEVER EXPRESS WHAT THE PATRIOTISM OF GENERATION AFTER GENERATION OF AMERICAN HEROES MEANS FOR THE VERY SOUL OF OUR NATION. BUT YOU AND I DO KNOW THAT WE ARE FREE BECAUSE OF THOSE WHO WENT TO OMAHA BEACH AND GUADALCANAL, MIG ALLEY AND PORK CHOP HILL, KHE SANH AND THE IRON TRIANGLE.

I'LL NEVER STOP WORKING AS HARD AS I CAN TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR NATION KEEPS ITS SPECIAL COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO SERVED, TO THOSE WHO HAVE KEPT THE TORCH OF LIBERTY BURNING BRIGHTLY. BECAUSE OF YOU, AMERICA'S BEST DAYS ARE STILL TO COME. AND WITH FAITH, FREEDOM, AND COURAGE, THERE'S NO LIMIT TO WHAT AMERICA CAN AND WILL ACCOMPLISH.

FORGIVE ME, BUT BEFORE I LEAVE, I MUST SHARE SOMETHING WITH YOU, BECAUSE YOU HAVE EVOKED MEMORIES TOO MOVING, TOO IMPORTANT TO IGNORE. WHEN WE VISITED THE NORMANDY BEACHES THIS PAST SPRING, WE WERE TOLD THAT FRENCH CITIZENS CAME UP TO OUR VETERANS, ACTUALLY TOOK THEM BY THE HAND, AND SAID WITH TEARS IN THEIR EYES: WE WERE ONLY YOUNG AT THE TIME, BUT WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER WHAT YOU DID AND WHAT IT HAS MEANT TO US.

WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, WHEN I THINK OF ALL YOU HAVE LIVED AND KNOWN AND LEARNED FROM YOUR LIFETIME OF SERVICE, A LIFETIME OF HONOR, I CAN'T HELP WONDERING: WHO MORE THAN YOU COULD BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW PRECIOUS ARE THE GIFTS OF LIFE, AND FREEDOM, AND FAITH? WHO MORE THAN YOU HAS THE COURAGE, AND THE WISDOM, TO HELP US PROTECT THESE GIFTS FOR OUR CHILDREN AND FOR OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN?

YOU ARE WISEMEN OF HISTORY WHOSE BURDENS HAVE BECOME OUR BLESSINGS. YOUR STRUGGLES PRESERVED DEMOCRACY, AND, TODAY, ALL OF US ARE LIFTING AMERICA INTO A NEW SPRINGTIME OF HOPE. YES, IN MY HEART I KNOW NOW IT IS TRUE. AMERICA'S FUTURE MUST BE A FUTURE OF PEACE.

TOGETHER, WE WILL SEE TO IT THAT IT IS DONE.
THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

(Elliott/Noonan)
August 23, 1984
7:30 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL RADIO TALK: AMERICA'S FUTURE
SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1984

24447500
SP 332-74

My fellow Americans, the campaign of 1984 is underway. This campaign is about what it was like 4 years ago and what it is like today. But even more important, it is about the future.

I believe our Republican Party is the true party of the future, because our vision, ideas and proposals seek to bring out the best in America -- by challenging the best in our people. The Great Opportunity Party believes in challenging people to do better; the Democratic ^{LEADERSHIP?} ~~Party~~ still insists on challenging Government to grow bigger.

Our vision of a strong, secure future rests on our confidence that Americans can continue making progress toward four specific goals: strong, steady economic growth; developing the frontiers of science, high technology and space; strengthening our community of shared values; and building an enduring peace.

As a Nation, we've already begun meeting the challenges we set forth 4 years ago. I won't rehash all the problems we faced. But, from a collapsing economy, to weakening defenses, to rising rates of crime, and poor educational performance -- it was clear that America was in deep trouble. We were being led by a group of pessimists whose ideas had been threadbare for years -- and they hadn't even noticed. The realities of a changing world had long since passed them by.

We said if America is to be a successful leader in the world again, we must face up to the problems that had dragged us down. And we must begin doing that by trusting the people again. We said that, together, we must meet the challenges of reducing the growth of Government, bringing down inflation and interest rates, and cutting tax rates to create jobs and get our economy moving again -- and America has. We said we must restore America's ability to defend itself and fulfill its responsibilities as a trustee of freedom and peace in the world -- and America has.

We met our challenges before and we can meet them again. As for our first goal -- economic growth -- our position is clear. We have seen from the mistakes of the past and from the recent recovery that our economy grows best when earnings flow not to Government, but stay with the people, and in the economy. That's why we must meet the challenge of simplifying our tax system, making it more fair, easier to understand, so we can bring personal tax rates further down, not up.

With strong economic growth we will continue bringing down deficits. We must also control spending, and one tool is a constitutional amendment mandating that Government spend no more than Government takes in. Another is a line-item veto, so that a President can veto specific spending requests without vetoing an entire appropriations bill. Until the leadership of the Democratic Party supports these two long-overdue reforms, they should close their mouths forever about budget deficits.

Our second goal, developing America's next frontiers, in science, in high technology, and into the far reaches of space,

will enable us to surge forward on the crest of progress and peaceful change. We have it within our power to make astonishing advances in technology and medicine. And that will make us a more competitive, successful and healthy people.

Our greatest resources and hope for the future are the minds and hearts of our people. That's why our third great goal is to help revive America's traditional values -- faith, family, neighborhood, work and freedom. Government has no business enforcing these values, but neither must it seek, as it did in the recent past, to suppress or replace them. That only robbed us of our tiller and set us adrift. Helping restore these values will bring new strength, direction and dignity to our lives and to the life of our Nation. It's on these values that we will best build the future.

Finally, we must continue meeting the challenge of working for a more peaceful world in which individual liberty can flourish. Today, we are at peace and this is good. I have seen four wars in my lifetime. ~~Every time I think of them, I remember Pope Paul VI standing before the United Nations, when he said, "No more war, war never again." Simple enough, but it's never been better said.~~ To continue the peace we enjoy, we must show clear support for our allies; ~~we must also~~ ^{AND} exhibit strength and steadiness to those who wish us ill. ~~We will.~~

Setting goals, meeting challenges, striving for excellence, ~~were key to the success of our Olympic athletes, and they~~ are key to the endless possibilities the future holds in store for America. It's not for the Federal Government to set these goals.

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But we can help challenge Americans to challenge themselves in all areas of their lives, and, like our Olympic athletes, to reach for greatness. I'll be speaking more to you about this in the days ahead.

Until next week, thanks for listening and God bless you.