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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON


June 22, 1983

RECEIVED

JUN 22 1983

SCHEDULING
OFFICE

MEMORANDUM FOR FRED RYAN

FROM MORTON C. BLACKWELL 
SUBJECT: Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention

We are headed for a major problem with the VFW.

Having spoken earlier this year to a national meeting of the American Legion, the President is almost forced politically to address the VFW national convention this summer.

I understand the President was tentatively scheduled there but he is now scheduled to be in California on their requested morning of August 15.

We have gone back to the VFW to get other possible times. Virtually any time August 15, 16, 17 or 18 would do.

The VFW, frankly, has been more supportive of the President than the American Legion. Yet we have paid more attention to the Legion. In my view it would be very damaging if we do not get the President to the VFW convention.

cc: Faith Ryan Whittlesey

REGRET
Date 6/22/83

VFW

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 22, 1983

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cc: Faith Ryan Whittlesey

Memo
from the desk of

COOPER T. HOLT

June 14, 1983

The enclosed copy of my telegram to Ed Meese relative to the invitation extended to the President by our National Commander, Bob Currieo, is forwarded for your information and possible assistance.

Cooper

WU INFOMASTER

VFW WSH

0034691165 0858EST
WASHINGTON, D. C. JUNE 14, 1983
PMS MR. EDWIN MEESE, III
COUNSELLOR TO THE PRESIDENT
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20500

DEAR MR. MEESE

ON MARCH 17, 1983, OUR NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, JAMES R. "BOB" CURRIEO, WROTE TO THE PRESIDENT INVITING HIM TO KEYNOTE OUR ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION TO BE HELD IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, ON MONDAY, AUGUST 15, AT 11 A.M. AS OF THIS DATE WE HAVE HAD NO REPLY TO THAT INVITATION.

I HAVE, HOWEVER, TRIED ON TWO OR THREE OCCASIONS TO MAKE A DISCREET INQUIRY AS TO THE PRESIDENT'S AVAILABILITY ON THAT DATE--FOR AWHILE I WAS ENCOURAGED IN THAT I WAS TOLD THE INVITATION WAS ON THE CALENDAR--NOW, I AM TOLD IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO ATTEND.

THIS LATEST INFORMATION HAS NOT ONLY UPSET OUR NATIONAL COMMANDER BUT EVERY TOP OFFICIAL ON THE NATIONAL AND STATE LEVEL OF OUR ORGANIZATION. WE THINK WE HAVE EVERY GOOD REASON TO BE UPSET.

WE HAVE STUCK WITH THE PRESIDENT ON ALL NATIONAL ISSUES, INCLUDING THE BUDGET, THE MX MISSILE, CENTRAL AMERICA, NUCLEAR FREEZE--YOU NAME IT, WE HAVE BEEN WITH HIM.

I AM SURE YOU REALIZE, ED, THAT OUR DELEGATES TO OUR NATIONAL CONVENTION (SOME 16,000) HAVE NOT SEEN THE PRESIDENT SINCE HE WAS ENDORSED BY OUR POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE BACK IN 1980--AGAIN, I HOPE YOU WILL RECALL, ED, WE ARE THE ONLY VETERANS ORGANIZATION WITH SUCH A COMMITTEE.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO SAY, ED, FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR PARTY AND OUR LEADERSHIP WE MUST HAVE THE PRESIDENT AT OUR NATIONAL CONVENTION. I HOPE AND PRAY YOU WILL ASSIST US.

PLEASE LET ME HEAR FROM YOU.

SINCERELY YOUR FRIEND,

COOPER T. HOLT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
VFW WASHINGTON OFFICE
200 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002
PHONE - 543-2239

ACCEPTED
00000

1-PC

no, Pres will be in Calif.

*VFW & Auxiliary Aug 15
6 of 7,000*

*Aug 15 thru 18 -
for 4,000 people
men only.
Hilton Ballroom*

Telex Western Union Telex

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

TO: MEMBERS OF THE 98TH UNITED STATES CONGRESS

FROM: JAMES R. CURRIEO, NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

DATE: 27 JULY 1983

Having just returned from an intensive fact-finding visit to El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica, I am deeply convinced of two facts of life that, literally, jump out at you. These facts are:

(1) the problem in Central America is not the United States or United States policy. It is Nicaraguan Marxism in service to Soviet-Cuban regional military imperialism. Nicaragua poses an area-wide threat -- a veritable "Revolution Without Frontiers" as their rhetoric describes it and, as such, must be neutralized; and

(2) the dissension and division here at home over our Central American policy is a predictable by-product of much of our prestige media rigidly applying a "Vietnamese" yard stick to an entirely different local and regional situation.

Military Marxism, in my view, can be defeated without a single U. S. soldier being called upon to fight if we (a) fund and supply the ammunition and equipment requested by the Administration for El Salvador, and (b) if we stop "shooting ourself in the foot" by adhering to the arbitrarily low figure of 55 trainers. (There are some 2,000-plus Cuban military in Nicaragua making the current trainer ratio about 36 communists: 1 U. S.)

As for the Nicaraguan "Contras," I spoke with Alfonso Robelo and other early Sandinista, anti-Somoza individuals. These brave freedom fighters want nothing more than what we in the United States take for granted.

I am closely considering going to the VFW membership to solicit "person to person" funds for transmittal to the "Contras." The symbolism of such non-governmental support would be of great importance.

A last word: a deadly game, not of our own making, is underway in Central America. There will be a "winner" and a "loser" and the world will know the difference.

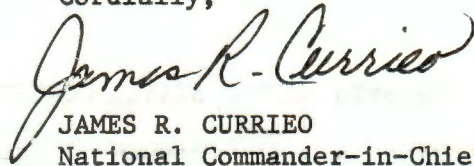
★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★

VFW MEMORIAL BUILDING ● 200 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E. ● WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002 - 5799 ● AREA CODE 202-543-2239

As one deeply informed American diplomat pointed out to me: "Central America is like a loaded shotgun pointed at our soft under-belly. Our job must be to make certain this shotgun never goes off."

Defeat here for U. S. national interests is out of the question. Please advise.

Cordially,


JAMES R. CURRIEO
National Commander-in-Chief



Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS *Release*

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(27 JULY 1983)

VFW LEADER: WAKE UP AMERICA!

James R. Currieo, National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, used the theme of a popular TV show to describe "what our beloved country needs to do to confront and to neutralize the Nicaraguan-based 'Revolution Without Frontiers' that threatens to engulf much of Central America.

"I have recently returned from an intensive mission to Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador. As always, refugees flee from their communist oppressors. I have seen and spoken with Nicaraguan peasants -- not wealthy land-owners -- who have escaped the Sandinista 'Gulag' by fleeing to Honduras."

"Commander Currieo concluded by noting -- "and I hope not too bitterly" -- that much of our "prestige media is performing a positive disservice when it comes to Central America. As a seasoned American diplomat in the area explained it: 'Central America is like a shotgun pointed at our soft under-belly. We must make certain this shotgun never goes off.'

"The Reagan Administration is right on Central America and many of those who frame our daily news are wrong. It is that simple and that deadly. America had better wake up!"

VFW chief backs Reagan's policy in Central America

By Bill Kling
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, just back from an inspection trip to Central America, said yesterday the American people "would probably demand a couple of divisions of troops down there" if they understood the seriousness of the communist threat so close to the United States.

"If the American people — the American public — only knew what was in store for them in this country, their safety in this country, they would not only demand that the fleet would be in the Caribbean and the Pacific area, but would probably demand a couple of divisions of troops down there," James Currieo of Sierra Vista, Ariz., told reporters after a 15-minute meeting with President Reagan in the White House.

Currieo expressed concern about news coverage of Central America, including the guerrilla war in El Salvador and subversion of the region by the Nicaraguan Sandinista government, and information being channeled to the American public.

Currieo went to the White House to urge Reagan to speak Aug. 15 at the VFW's national convention in New Orleans. Reagan accepted, overruling staff aides who earlier declined the VFW's invitation "on the basis of logistics," Larry Speakes, White House deputy press secretary, said.

The VFW commander said he "had certain reservations" about United States policy toward Central America before he made his trip, "possibly that we were not doing quite the right thing," even though his 2 million-member organization has endorsed a strong anti-communist stance for Latin America.

"After returning from Central America, I am convinced we are doing the right thing," Currieo said. "There's no question in my mind about it. We met with refugees and



VFW Commander James Currieo speaks to the press outside the White House yesterday after reporting on his recent trip to Central America and inviting President Reagan to address the VFW convention next month.

others who indicate that ... (there are) 2,000 to 3,000 terrorists right now being trained in Nicaragua, as well as Cuba. They will be ready to go through Central America as well as Mexico and into the United States."

"I read news accounts ... of how the military troops, the Salvadoran troops, were burning buildings and burning crops and killing animals," he said. "I was in San Vicente last Friday. There's no indication of that. I've traveled throughout that community, throughout the coun-

tryside. I saw no indication of buildings being burned or had been burned. So there's something wrong someplace."

Currieo said he "walked freely through the streets of San Salvador. ... I think we're getting a distorted view of actually what's taking place."

Reagan will fly to the VFW convention in New Orleans from La Paz, Mexico, after meeting with Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid. Reagan then plans a three-week vacation in California.

EMBASSY

From page one

ists. We do not care," the terrorists' communique said.

"The freedom-loving and the revolutionary Armenian youth have resolved not to allow the enemy a moment of rest. The armed struggle is the only means of securing the self-determination of our people."

Armenia is now divided between Turkey, the Soviet Union and Iran, but there are large concentrations of Armenian exiles in Lebanon and the United States.

The embassy on Avenida das Descobertas also houses the residence of Turkey's ambassador. The post was vacated July 1, and no replacement has been named.

Residents of the embassy area reported intensive exchanges of gunfire and grenade-like explo-

sions during the attack.

"I was on duty at the door when a man approached me very closely without saying anything, pulled out a pistol and began firing," said embassy guard Abalio Ferreira Pereira, 23, from his hospital bed.

In Washington, the State Department said the attack illustrated the need for "the international community to take strong measures to bring an end to such vicious acts of terrorism."

OMB, Labor dispute spurs call for probe

By Dwight Cunningham
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

An Office of Management and Budget decision rejecting a Labor Department proposal to monitor performance in its new \$3 billion training program for youths and disadvantaged workers has spurred a call for a congressional

ment officials worked to devise an alternate plan that would satisfy both OMB's "paperwork reduction" requirement and federal oversight of the job-training program, AFL-CIO spokesman Rex Hardesty said the federation was "extremely disappointed that a federal role continues to be abdicated in job training."

OMB notified Labor Dept. and

partnership envisioned by the JTPA."

Frank, when told by a reporter of OMB's rationale, replied that it was "total nonsense," because representatives of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Governors' Association and the National Association of Counties all agreed that their members were eager to take on the burden that OMB is unwilling for them to bear.

Without the discipline of national reporting standards that measure actual performance, its proponents contend local program operators may be tempted to go for high placement rates, regardless of whether participants are really trained.

COVE

From page one

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From page one

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Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS Release

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(18 JULY 1983)

JANE FONDA: AN ADMINISTRATION VIP?

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Mr. James R. Currieo, National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, today called upon James M. Beggs, Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), "to explain fully and promptly" just what NASA thought it was doing when Jane Fonda and her husband were given red carpet VIP treatment at the recent launching of the space shuttle "Challenger."

Currieo continued by expressing his "distaste and contempt" for this callous NASA publicity ploy.

The VFW leader concluded by associating himself "totally and proudly" with a recent Congressional Record insertion by Arizona's Congressman Bob Stump, which follows.

(MORE)

NASA'S VIP LIST

HON. BOB STUMP
OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 1983

Mr. Stump. Mr. Speaker, the planned landing site of the Space Shuttle was not the only aspect of this recent and historic mission to be overcast by dark clouds.

I would like to enter in the RECORD and bring to the attention of my colleagues and the American people the following article from the Arizona Republic regarding VIP's at the shuttle launch.

THE OTHER JANE FONDA

Millions of fawning Americans have lionized actress Jane Fonda by buying her diet and exercise book, thereby adding to her considerable wealth and making her a best-selling author.

There is another Jane Fonda, however, one that she might want to forget, but one whom others cannot forget.

Fonda was the darling of extreme left wing groups who took her anti-American venom deep into the enemy camp in North Vietnam during the war, and willingly consorted with communists to aid and abet their propaganda, even as American prisoners of war were rotting and being tortured in nearby camps.

Arizona Rep. John McCain is one whom will never forget.

McCain, a third generation naval hero, was a prisoner of the North Vietnamese (his Navy jet having been shot down while on a mission) when Fonda arrived in Hanoi for a visit with her communist hosts.

McCain refused to meet with Fonda when she was in Hanoi with the communist hosts, and thereby contribute to the communist propaganda triumph.

For refusing to share the spotlight with Fonda, McCain's captors broke both of his arms.

McCain has now written the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, protesting NASA's decision to "showcase" Fonda and her husband, radical Tom Hayden, as Very Important Persons at last Saturday's launching of the space shuttle CHALLENGER.

(OVER)

McCain does not argue the right of Fonda and Hayden to attend the space launching.

But he correctly questions the judgment of NASA in honoring Fonda and Hayden, given her record as a willing and unapologetic propagandist for a wartime enemy.

McCain will always carry a deformed arm as a result of Fonda's visit to North Vietnam.

As for Fonda, she merely has become more famous and immensely wealthier.

July 14, 1983

file
VFW

Dear Jim:

I am writing to thank you for your recent comments in support of our policy in Central America.

No one can doubt the commitment of your organization to the cause of peace. Of all Americans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars are the most conscious of the tragedy and folly of war -- and the most determined to prevent one from occurring in Central America. That's why I especially appreciate your support for our policy, which has four basic goals:

- to support democracy, reform and human freedom,
- to support economic development,
- to support the security of the region's threatened nations, and
- to support dialogue and negotiation, both among the countries of the region and within each country.

I know that your personal leadership, and the leadership being offered by all the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, will help us immeasurably in gaining support for the firm and responsible policy we are pursuing. Please extend my warmest thanks and best wishes to all members of your organization. God bless you.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

Mr. James R. Currie
National Commander-in-Chief
Veterans of Foreign Wars
of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

cc: Morton Blackwell
RR/RDC/CAD/RCH/AVH/emu -- 4pman

VETERANS NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Cooper T. Holt
Executive Director
VFW Washington Office

The annual hoax that all World War II veterans will get a refund for GI insurance even if they have let it lapse has been seen around the country.

The notice tells veterans to contact a Captain Prosser in Philadelphia for a special dividend of .65 per \$1,000 for each month of service.

The VA automatically pays dividends to holders of GI insurance remaining in force. No special refund is forthcoming and no application is necessary.

- - - - -

The Senate has reported a bill to increase compensation and DIC by 3.5 percent in April, 1984. The House of Representatives has indicated a 4.1 percent increase. While veterans will get an increase equal to the actual inflation rate (probably 3.5) the amount will not be known until a conference is held with both houses represented.

In another action in this bill the Senate moved further increases to December of each year with the check being received by January 1 of each year.

- - - - -

The U.S. Air Force has announced that no significant mortality differences exist between members exposed to herbicide defoliant Agent Orange and other groups of people not so exposed.

The announcement was based upon a study to investigate possible health effects from exposure while spraying in Vietnam. However, the Air Force pointed out that the fact that adverse effects have not yet been detected does not imply that something will not be found in the future.

The study only dealt with mortality rates and not with diseases or disability rates or with genetic problems.

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One of the few bills dealing with funds signed by the president was the VA 1984 budget authorization. With minor exceptions which may be remedied by supplemental legislation, veterans fared well compared to other programs.

The big increase came in the VA medical care construction program and will allow new and renovated VA medical care facilities.

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A recent report by the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that the reported incidence of multiple myeloma, a form of cancer, among veterans of the occupation forces stationed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki constitutes no greater an incidence than that in the general U.S. population.

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The VFW was able to save many of the items proposed to eliminate veterans preference in reductions in force in the federal government.

Recent revised proposals extend bump rights from one to five grade intervals for disabled veterans rated 30 percent or more and extends the appraisal period for government workers from one to three years.

Charge rings wrong on Hill

Bob Packwood, of Tim Wirth, D-nerved Thursday general Communi- sion decision phone users to y \$2 to \$4 sur- about to reach every telephone is country," said

Packwood, who warned that "some people are going to be in danger of having no phone at all."

Currently, profits from long-distance calls heavily subsidize local phone service — \$9 billion a year, according to one estimate.

But under a court order, AT&T divorces its local compa-

nies on New Year's Day. That leaves someone to make up that subsidy — either consumers or long-distance carriers such as Sprint and MCI Communications.

Under the FCC plan, consumers and long-distance carriers would split the subsidy cost — hence the \$2 and \$4 access charges for consumers.

Under the Packwood-Wirth plan, the long-distance carriers would pick up the entire subsidy — a politically popular move.

It's an unpopular move with the long-distance carriers.

"We know it will increase our costs and therefore drive up our rates," said Gary Tobin, MCI spokesman.



By Lee Anderson, Special for USA TODAY
S: Glenn Ohrlin, cowboy from Arkansas, sings at a osium at the Library of Congress Thursday.

uch early movie luck Jones, Tim n Maynard who d music into the t, the popularity ovies produced called "synthetic," many of which th the real West ey were written ey songwriters. t, who was one of ticated compos- t Fence Me In," try.

that the display hit "don't draw

but the commercial Western music of the movies."

At the same time as the cowboy song was being commercialized, however, authentic Western music was making a transformation through the band of Bob Wills, who added an up-tempo, dance beat to Western music to produce what is called "Western" or "Texas" swing.

But the audience had had enough history. As one woman put it: "Let's hear some music." And with that, Junior Daugherty, New Mexico State Grand Champion fiddler, and his fam- ily took off in a lively tune.

Angry VFW nails Reagan for no-show

By Ann Devroy
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — With one move, President Reagan has angered the 1.9 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars, a group he is counting on to support his Central American policies, and handed that forum to a major political opponent, Sen. John Glenn of Ohio.

The national commander of the VFW, James Currieo, has informed the White House that he will sharply criticize Reagan for skipping the VFW's annual convention in New Orleans next month during his California vacation.

In a bitter letter to the White House, Currieo reminded Reagan aides that his organization is considering whether to conduct a major fund-raising drive to help the rebels who are fighting the government of Nicaragua.

Currieo, in fact, is in Central America this week on what a VFW spokesman calls a "fact-finding trip" related to that drive. He is visiting the countries the administration strongly backs in that region: El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras.

The VFW will decide at its convention whether to conduct the major fund-raising drive through its 10,000 local chapters.

Currieo's spokesman said the organization — which en-

dorsed Reagan in 1980 and has routinely backed his foreign policy and defense initiatives — was led to believe the president would keynote the annual convention.

Currieo's letter calls the president's refusal a slap in the face to veterans, and warns that he intends to read a copy of the letter in full to the convention before Glenn appears as replacement keynoter.

Thorne H. Marlow, director of public affairs at the VFW, said of Glenn: "Our folks empathize with him as a former military man and as an astronaut."

White House officials, who have not yet sent a reply to the letter, would not say who made the decision on the convention.

One conceded that several aides in the White House, attuned to the president's re-election campaign, had recommended that Reagan attend the convention by making a quick trip to Louisiana from his California ranch, but the recommendation was rejected.

Glenn was invited and accepted shortly after Reagan declined the invitation.

The politics of the situation is causing some head-shaking in the White House, where Glenn is still considered the toughest potential opponent to the president because of his appeal to many of the constituency groups, such as the veterans, that Reagan counted among supporters in 1980.

file

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(New Orleans, Louisiana)

For Immediate Release

August 15, 1983

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO
84TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF
THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

← file

Rivergate Exhibition and Convention Center
New Orleans, Louisiana

9:55 a.m. CDT
10:55 a.m. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. (Applause) Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you for that warm greeting and that applause and since that applause is coming from veterans I have to ask, is it for how I am doing my job, or how I am doing on the Late Late Show in Hell Cats of the Navy. (Laughter)

Whenever I meet with the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I remember what the poet Yeats said: "Think where man's glory most begins and ends and say my glory was I had such friends." It's great to be among you once again. (Applause) As you know, someone in my shop originally turned down this invitation without my knowledge. Now it seems there were some logistic problems about flying from the tip of Baja, Mexico, to Louisiana, and then back to California this afternoon. Well, let me say, and I want them to keep their ears open and hear this, I would fly halfway around the world for the honor of meeting with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Applause)

I haven't forgotten your support in 1980, and all you have done since. And as a demonstration of our common goals, after my remarks today I am going to sit down here in front of this audience and sign the Emergency Veterans Job Training Act of 1983. (Applause)

Three years ago this week I stood before your convention and said nothing would mean more to me as President than to live up to your trust. I have tried to maintain the faith that our men and women in uniform must have in their commander-in-chief. The greatest privilege of this office has been to lead those who wear America's uniform. (Applause)

MORE

And while Ann Griffiths is sitting here, let me just say: We are determined to account for every serviceman who wore America's uniform in Southeast Asia. This Administration will not forget their sacrifice, and we will not rest until their families can rest. (Applause)

Three years ago when I spoke to you, I pledged that peace -- a peace in which freedom could flourish and justice could prevail -- would be our highest priority. I also spoke of the need to provide a stronger defense for the American people. At the time, those were words of hope. Today, those words are the national security policy of this country.

I would like to report to you on the progress we have made in these areas, because there is no more appropriate forum for such a report. No organization has devoted more energy to America's well-being and security than the VFW. Your uniforms may be in mothballs, but your readiness to assist your country is spit and polished.

In 1980, the people made it clear they wanted a new direction in foreign affairs. Yet, changing America's foreign policy is a little like towing an iceberg. You can only pick up speed as the frozen attitudes and mistakes of the past melt away.

We began by letting the world know what we stood for once again. Winston Churchill said of his service in World War II, the nation "had the lion's heart. I had the luck to give the roar." Well, America is the lion's heart of democracy. We have an obligation to give that democracy a voice, even an occasional roar.

For too long our Nation had been mute to the injustice of totalitarianism. So we began speaking out against chemical warfare inflicted on the people of Afghanistan and Southeast Asia, against broken treaties, against the denial of human liberties. We began speaking out for freedom and democracy and the values that all of us share in our hearts.

Some critics said that this was a return to the rhetoric of the past. Well, if that is the case, then Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn and all of those who have suffered to speak the truth are my compatriots and I am honored to be counted among them. This Nation cannot simply ignore the suffering of oppressed peoples and remain true to our basic strengths and principles. We cannot follow a foreign policy based in the self-delusion that problems would not exist if we did not mention them.

We cannot abdicate our obligation to speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves.

And you know it is amazing. In my meetings with foreign leaders and their ministers, they have told me how good it is to know what the United States stands for once again. (Applause) They may not always agree with us but they respect us. And there is a growing recognition abroad that America once again will stand up for her democratic ideals. Our country is the leader of the free world, and today it is providing that leadership.

But our responsibilities are not only moral, they are practical. One of our most crucial national security objectives was to turn American's economic decline

around. Yes, that is a national security objective and it remains a key one. A country that is weak internally cannot meet its obligations externally.

I am pleased to report that we are economically stronger today than we were at your last convention. We have a growth strategy for America: We called it economic recovery. Some who didn't think it would work dubbed it Reaganomics. Well, inflation is down from double digits to 2.6 percent -- for the last twelve months, the lowest rate in sixteen years. The prime interest rate was 21-1/2 percent when we took office, it's about half of that now.

Taxes have been reduced and with our indexing reform, inflation will never again push families into higher and higher tax brackets. We don't need tax increases. We need spending restraint. And as I have said a few times lately, I know our program is working, because they are not calling it Reaganomics any more. (Laughter and applause)

Basic industries like housing, construction, and autos are getting back to business. In fact, Lee Iacocca has even paid back that billion dollar loan seven years early.

Unemployment is still too high but it is heading down. Last month's drop was the biggest in 23 years. More Americans are on the job than at any time in the U.S. history. Economists can argue about the semantics -- strong recovery, steady recovery, robust recovery. But what matters most is that Americans have regained confidence in the economy and we are going to make sure they keep that confidence.

Another of our objectives has been to restore America's defense strength. I don't need to educate this audience on how strength keeps peace, but it can be explained in one word -- deterrence. When I spoke to you last, the United States had planes that couldn't fly, ships that couldn't leave port, and military personnel who couldn't wait to get into civilian clothes.

Well, today, American's military is back on its feet and prouder than ever. We are acquiring and keeping very good people. Today, more of our new recruits are high school graduates than ever before in the history of our military. Retention is also way up. So far this year, 70 percent of those we hoped to retain have reenlisted. In 1980, the figure was only 55 percent.

Yes, the hard-hit economy accounted for a portion of these increases but the economy didn't raise the dignity and morale our our service men and women, or restore their pride in military service. I have heard it from generals and I have heard it from privates. That morale, discipline and unit cohesion have all improved dramatically. Once again, it's an honor to wear the uniform, and our service men and women know it. And I hope that makes you as proud as it does me. (Applause)

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New equipment is now entering the inventory; training is way up, maintenance backlogs are being reduced and combat readiness rates have surged.

We have made real progress. And I am delighted to report it is across the board. America is safer and more secure today than three years ago.

There is something I want to get off my chest and it deals with the headlines about the Pentagon paying \$100 for a 4 cent diode or \$900 for a plastic cap. Now what is missing, or buried in all of these stories about waste is that this Administration is the one that found these abuses, the abuses that have been going on for years.

It was Cap Weinberger's people -- Defense Department auditors and inspectors -- who ordered the audits in the first place and conducted the investigations. We are the ones who formed a special unit to prosecute Department of Defense fraud cases. And in just an 18-month period, the Department has obtained 50 convictions. And this doesn't count the number of settlements that have been made. (Applause)

Our task is to sustain our defense effort. Some would have us slow down just when we are about to achieve what our security requires. Remember the 1970s when there were those who argued that we should forego a wide range of modern weapons systems -- airplanes, missiles, a variety of equipment -- because there was something better on the drawing board for the future? Well, look where that got us. It got us where we were three years ago. You can't protect America and her people with drawing boards.

But look out, some people are still talking about drawing boards. They would have us forget the MX missile and wait for a small, mobile missile which wouldn't be operational until the 1990s. That small missile will provide better long-term stability and deterrence. I am for it and we need it. But drawing boards for tomorrow won't give the Soviets incentives to negotiate reductions in nuclear arms today. (Applause)

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So I am asking you, give us your strong support as we approach the next round of the MX this autumn. and together we will help keep America secure and free.

Another of our goals has been to strengthen our western alliances economically and militarily. We have significantly improved our economic relations with the industrial democracies. And I am certain the recent Williamsburg Summit will become known as the recovery summit. At Williamsburg we established a unified strategy for pursuing our common economic interests -- protectionism, to fighting inflation, and we agreed on security concerns as well. We agreed to cut the flow of military relevant technology to those who would use it against us and reduce dependence on any one energy source. We agreed to end the practice of giving subsidized interest rates to the Soviet Union. The minimum loan rate is now set four full percentage points higher than it was before.

And at home we are working to bring interest rates down. But we have pushed them up for the Soviets.

By the way, did you hear that the Communists now have a million dollar lottery for their people? The winners get a dollar a year for a million years. (Laughter) (Applause)

You know there is a story I would like to tell you. I have become a collector of stories that the Russians are telling among themselves which reveal a great cynicism about their system. And this one has to do with a commissar, they are telling, who went out to a collective farm, grabbed the first worker there that he saw. And he asked him about life on the farm and all. The fellow said, "It is wonderful, Commissar." He said, "Any complaints?" "No, no complaint at all." "What about the crops?" "Oh, the crops? Never been better." "The potatoes?" "Commissar, comrade, if we piled all the potatoes up in one pile they would reach the foot of God." The commissar said, "Just a minute. This is the Soviet Union. There is no God." He says, "That is alright. There are no potatoes." (Laughter)

Our western military alliances are stronger than they have been in years. In Europe, despite pressure and propaganda, NATO has stood firm in pursuing the dual objectives of arms reduction and defense. NATO today is more confident in its ability to preserve its strength and promote the peace. We in the industrial democracies have forged a clear sense of purpose for our economic and military safety.

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We still have disagreements, but for the first time in a long time we have unity on where we are going and I call that real progress. Of course, another of our objectives is arms control. We have launched the most sweeping proposals for arms control since nuclear weapons became a threat.

In our search for peace, we have more negotiations currently under way with the Soviets than any Administration in history. At the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks in Geneva, we have proposed deep cuts as well as extensive confidence building measures to reduce the possibility of any accidental misunderstandings. In contrast to previous agreements which simply dealt in ceilings, the Soviet Union now, for the first time, is willing to talk about actual reductions.

The same hard work is proceeding on intermediate range nuclear forces in Geneva. And in Vienna, the Soviets have shown some movement on the verification needed to reduce conventional forces. However, we must recognize that the search for real arms reductions involve complex, time-consuming negotiations. This is the occupational hazard of diplomats and especially those who deal with the Soviet Union. But if I can assure you we will keep chipping away and inching along. We are deeply committed to arms reductions. As we remain firm in our objectives, we will be flexible in our approach. And with the support of the VFW and the support of the Congress, we will achieve what we all want -- a reduction in nuclear weapons.

Our next objective concerns the United States responsibility as peacemaker. This commitment currently is most visible in Central America. In spite of the discouraging hype and hoopla that you often hear, quiet, solid progress is being made in Central America. Bob Curcio, recently returned from a trip there, and I believe he has reported to you on that trip. I know he has referred to news accounts, saying he thinks we are all getting a distorted view of what is actually taking place.

Well, Bob is absolutely right. You wouldn't know from some of the coverage that the greatest portion of our aid to Central America is humanitarian and economic. You wouldn't know that democracy is taking root there, and I don't blame the media alone because in many cases they are just reporting the disinformation and demagoguery that they hear coming from people who put politics ahead of national interests.

The countries of Central America are working hard to develop and defend their democracies. I am sure you recall the March '83 Constituent Assembly elections in El Salvador. Eighty percent of those eligible to vote took part in the elections despite incredible intimidation and threats from the guerrillas. In neighboring Honduras, an elected government took office last year. Costa Rica, of course, already is the democratic jewel of Central America.

We support democracy, reform, and human freedom.

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We support economic development. We support negotiations. We support any avenue that will give the people of that region a more free and prosperous future.

"The problem in Central America is not the United States or United States policy." You see, there I go again borrowing from your National Commander because that is what Bob said. We are doing everything we can to build peace and prosperity. Our Caribbean Basin Initiative is designed to help the nations there help themselves through trade and private investment. The Soviet and Cuban Caribbean Basin initiative, on the other hand, is to brutally impose communist rule and deny individual freedom. Do you have any doubt which initiative the people in Central America would choose?

Because of this aggression, we also support a security shield for the area. The security shield is very much like a program that is springing up all over the United States -- the Neighborhood Watch. The Neighborhood Watch is where neighbors keep an eye on each other's homes so outside trouble makers and bullies will think twice. But our policy in Central America is like a neighborhood watch. But this watch does not protect someone's silverware. It protects something more valuable -- freedom.

Our policy is to help people toward a better life -- to help them toward liberty, to help them reverse centuries of inequities, to help them toward peace. And let me say, with all the conviction I can muster, America would not be America if we abandoned the struggling neighbors here in our own hemisphere. (Applause)

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Elsewhere in the world, we also search for peace. The tragic conflict in the Middle East has one bright spot -- peace between Israel and Egypt was finally concluded in April of 1982, thanks to the American diplomacy that went to work in the Camp David talks. Today our peace-keeping forces in the Sinai along with those of our allies are rarely mentioned because they are doing their job in keeping this once volatile area quiet. Unfortunately, the same is not yet so for Lebanon. But whatever progress towards peace we have made in that country is largely due to our Marines who along with peace-keeping troops from France and Italy are striving to give Lebanon a chance to pull itself together. Our diplomats continue to search for agreement among bitterly divided opponents.

Yes, America has an active national security program and it is working.

May I just interject here that there have been some charges made that we are building weapons and spending money on defense but we don't have any plan. So we are not just building weapons like you would go in and shop for something off the counter and say, "Let's buy that or buy that." That isn't true. We have carefully worked out a strategy that is based on what we think are all the possible contingencies that could affect our national security. And then our military planning and our weapons purchases are based on that strategy.

But to secure the peace and prosperity we all seek, we cannot sit back and hope that somehow it will just happen. We can't be apologetic when we are acting in our own and the free world's interests. We must pursue our goals with strong leadership and a clear sense of direction.

Let me explain by way of a true story what guides this Administration in its conduct of foreign affairs. Most of you fought in the Second World War or Korea or Vietnam. You fought in places like Anzio, and Pork Chop Hill, and Danang. A thousand painful stories emerge from war -- one tale of British POW's who built a Japanese railway in Thailand was made famous as the Bridge on the River Kwai.

Well, there really is a River Kwai. Near its banks is a cemetery, the final resting place for those who died building that bridge and that railway. Many of the graver markers are inscribed with nothing more than a name and a service number. Yet, now and then there is a small monument, built by a mother or father, or a widow, who trekked half way around the world searching for a marker with a very special service number. On one of these monuments erected by a woman named Irene are the following words: "To the world, you were only one; but to me you were the world."

My fellow citizens, my friends, let us always remember when we speak of America's security, we speak of individuals; when we speak of freedom, we speak of the freedom of individuals. I feel a sacred trust to America's soldiers and citizens alike. I feel a sacred trust to protect their lives and their liberty.

Our Nation also has a sacred trust -- to defend and develop democracy. And as long as this Administration is

responsible for the Nation's foreign policy, we will protect the freedom of our own citizens and we will pursue liberty for all people. (Applause)

Now, before I thank you for inviting me here I am going over and I am going to sit down at this table that you have probably wondered about . And I am going to hope (Applause) -- I am going to hope this microphone is turned on.

This bill which I am about to sign, the Emergency Veterans Job Training Act of 1982, will provide targeted job training for unemployed veterans of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. The legislation is above and beyond the partisan jobs bill that I signed earlier this year and other Administration programs to promote opportunities for our veterans. This bill provides incentives to employers to train veterans by defraying part of the costs of training. But this is not just a training program. The employer who participates must employ the veteran on a permanent basis after the training is completed.

As I said earlier the Nation has a special commitment to those who have served in the military. And that commitment includes not only our continuing respect but practical assistance as well. This program will aid veterans at the same time it aids the many small businesses that will participate.

You have already heard one speech by me. So I won't give you another. But a couple of days ago I was at Fort Bliss in El Paso. As I drove through the base on the way into town the road was lined with servicemen and women and their families. I felt a great pride in them and what they are sacrificing for America. And I feel the same way about the veterans that we are about to help today. They did their best for us, now we must do our best for them. Now you can see that they are guaranteeing that I am going to sign this. (Laughter and Applause) And God bless all of you.

Thank you very much for letting me be here and God bless America.

END

10:20 A.M. CDT

11:20 A.M. EDT