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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Chicago, Illinois)

File
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For Immediate Release

August 24, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE 85th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

International Ballroom
Conrad Hilton Hotel
Chicago, Illinois

1:57 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Commander and Commander, Governor Thompson, Senator Percy, our Representatives Hyde and Martin and you, ladies and gentlemen, I 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 VFW. Well, it's not quite that far from Dallas to Chicago -- (laughter) -- but it sure is a great way to wind up a terrific week. (Applause.)

Now, before I say anything else, I want to congratulate all of you for reaching an important milestone, your two million membership goal. (Applause.) You can be proud. For 85 years, the VFW 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, 21½ 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 that 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 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. (Applause.) And our progress wouldn't have been possible without you of the VFW and millions of other concerned Americans.

Gone are the days when we abandon 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. (Applause.)

And because we're stronger than before, we can be confident that we're 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 you -- none of the wars that you have seen, came about because we were too strong. History shows that weakness invites tyrants to believe that 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 four 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 Armed Forces and restored the chance for democracy to that troubled island. (Applause.)

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And we heard stories about how, when they were escorted to the helicopters after they had lain overnight and for hours under their beds in the dormitories because of the bullets coming through the buildings, and then our rangers arrived, and when it came time to go to the helicopters, those young fellows in uniform put themselves between the students and where the firing was coming from. (Applause.)

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Now, let me say a word about one of our most important safeguards of peace and freedom, and 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.

You know, 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. They were wrong on unemployment. They were wrong on interest rates. They were wrong on the recovery. And there they go again. (Applause.) We're now in the 21st month of the best economic recovery since 1949 and last year was the best we've ever had -- (applause) -- 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. (Applause.)

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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. Now this represents 90 percent of the region's population -- up from 50 percent only a decade ago.

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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 that leadership.

In my meetings with foreign leaders, they've often told me how good it is to know what the United States stands for once again. (Applause.)

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 VFW 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 VFW 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 in your communities, volunteering your services to our veterans, fighting the good fight for a strong, safe, and secure America, supporting our POW-MIA 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.

But one of the rangers of 40 years ago, now 63 years old, the day before we arrived, scaled the 100-foot cliff that he had climbed on D-Day and did in just 7 minutes -- (laughter) -- still one of the best damn kids in the world. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

You understand that we are what we are because of Normandy and a thousand other lonely battlefields. Words could never express 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're 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. (Applause.)

MORE

Forgive me, but before I leave, I must share something with you, because you've evoked memories too moving, too important to ignore. When we visited the Normandy beaches this past spring, we were told that the French citizens came up to those veterans of ours who had returned, 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've lived and known and learned from your lifetime of service, a lifetime of honor, I can't help wondering who, more than you, can 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 wise men 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 it is true, America's future must be a future of peace. And, together, we'll see to it that it's done.

I know that your convention ended and that you remained here to receive me, and I'm most grateful to you for that. (Applause.) Thank you and God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

2:21 P.M. CDT

*File
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Speech*

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The VFW 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 in your communities, volunteering your services to our veterans, fighting the good fight for a strong, safe, and secure America, supporting our POW-MIA 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.

But one of the rangers of 40 years ago, now 63 years old, the day before we arrived, scaled the 100-foot cliff that he had climbed on D-Day and did in just 7 minutes -- (laughter) -- still one of the best damn kids in the world. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

You understand that we are what we are because of Normandy and a thousand other lonely battlefields. Words could never express 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're 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. (Applause.)

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Forgive me, but before I leave, I must share something with you, because you've evoked memories too moving, too important to ignore. When we visited the Normandy beaches this past spring, we were told that the French citizens came up to those veterans of ours who had returned, 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've lived and known and learned from your lifetime of service, a lifetime of honor, I can't help wondering who, more than you, can 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 wise men 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 it is true, America's future must be a future of peace. And, together, we'll see to it that it's done.

I know that your convention ended and that you remained here to receive me, and I'm most grateful to you for that. (Applause.) Thank you and God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

2:21 P.M. CDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

Handwritten:
J. Green
Ror/nia

FOR RELEASE: 1:30 p.m. EDT
Sunday, August 26, 1984

CONTACT: Peter Teeley
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EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS BY
VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH
AT THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CONVENTION
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SUNDAY, AUGUST 26, 1984

Thank you for your invitation to open the 63rd Annual Convention of the Disabled American Veterans. And thank you for your warm welcome.

I am deeply honored to be here today:

-- honored to share the dais with your National Commander, Dennis Joyner;

-- honored to have the chance to meet Gene Murphy, a leader in the disability movement in South Dakota and this year's Outstanding Disabled Veteran; and

-- honored to talk with the representatives of one of America's most respected organizations.

I want to express my appreciation for your support of our nation's efforts to account for our missing men from the Vietnam War. President Reagan is personally committed to end the uncertainty over their whereabouts. So am I. And so is the Congress. Our intelligence agencies have given this task the highest priority; we have opened negotiations with both Laos and Vietnam; and the American people have become increasingly aware of this tragedy. We believe it in Vietnam's own interest to resolve this painful matter, and we are encouraged by recent signs, which we hope represent a decision by Hanoi to help end the painful waiting of the families of our missing men.

I also want to take advantage of this occasion to express my appreciation to Harry Walters. He is an outstanding leader of the Veterans Administration. He has the ultimate political talent: the ability to make people want to work together with mutual respect and for mutual benefit.

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You know, the Disabled American Veterans is a unique and vital organization. Every one of you has been wounded in combat in the service of his country.

I do not want to romanticize what it means to become disabled.

Nor do I want to understate the pain of the wounds of war and the work of readjustment.

But when a man suffers a disability, he picks up an ability along the way.

His own injuries expose him to feel what is felt by others who have been damaged by life.

I was struck by something Dennis Joyner wrote recently. He talked of "the trap of society's low expectations for disabled people." Low expectations are a terrible trap, for they destroy hope. The DAV has defended against that trap by reminding each of us that when a man pursues his dream he raises society's expectations of him, but just as important, uplifts society's expectation of itself.

So I salute you -- the members of the DAV -- not only for what you've given this country in time of war but, also, for the dream, for the vision, that, through your example, you've given America in time of peace.

Today I want to talk with you briefly about a dream a vision that we all share -- the dream and vision of a world at peace.

And let me be very clear right here: I hear a lot of people -- including Mr. Mondale and Ms. Ferraro -- talk as if peace and weakness means the same thing.

The Soviets have a 3 to 1 lead over us in land based strategic missiles. But these people want to cancel the MX.

The Soviets fly modern Backfire bombers. Our Air Force flies 30 year old B52s. But these people want to cancel the B1 bomber.

The Soviets have been deploying in Europe one SS-20 intermediate range missile with three warheads a week since before this Administration took office. Until last November we had put none in place. But these people want to halt NATO deployment of the Pershing II and cruise missiles, not to mention the Trident II.

Well, Mr. Mondale and Ms. Ferraro may advocate a defense policy with no backbone, but it's not what President Reagan and I

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want. President Reagan and I believe that America's strength is the surest guarantee of America's peace -- and the world, too.

It's also the best way to get arms reduction agreements that lead to both sides reducing arms.

And that's our goal. In June 1982, in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks we proposed a one third reduction in all ballistic missile warheads. More than two years ago in the Intermediate Nuclear Force Talks we proposed to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons from Europe. In April at the U.N. Conference on Disarmament in Geneva I presented draft treaty for the banning of all chemical weapons from the earth.

But we've also insisted that the United States bargain from a position of strength. It seems to me just simple common sense that if you're really serious about arms reduction, you fund all those weapons systems our opponents want to scrap.

You know, this debate -- peace through strength versus peace through weakness -- is not a new debate. It's as old as our nation.

There's a story about George Washington. Washington, as you may remember, in addition to being commander of our army during the Revolution and our first President also chaired the Constitutional Convention in 1787. In the course of that Convention, one delegate moved that the standing army be restricted to 5,000 men at any one time. As presiding officer Washington could not offer a motion or an argument. So he turned to another delegate and whispered: "Move to amend the motion to provide that no foreign enemy shall invade the United States at any time with more than 3,000 troops."

America listened to Washington's wisdom then, as -- I believe -- America will listen to President Reagan's wisdom this year.

I believe America will say this year that, yes, the best guarantee of peace on earth is a strong United States confident of the values for which each of you has given so much.

Which is just to say that I believe that America will continue to honor the sacrifices that each of you has made for America's freedom and the world's peace.

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POW/MIA
Speech

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Salt Lake City, Utah)

For Immediate Release

September 4, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE 66TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

Salt Palace
Salt Lake City, Utah

11:12 A.M. MDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. It's wonderful to be back with you today. All of you in the American Legion have served your country honorably in time of war, but you've also served her nobly in time of peace by making the American Legion one of the most important and effective civic organizations in our country's history. (Applause.)

I salute you today, as do all Americans. You know, one of the great things about the American Legion is the broadness of your agenda. While you pay special attention to matters of military readiness and foreign policy, any issue of the American Legion magazine shows how well informed all of you try to be about a broad range of domestic issues, and it's on the broad range of issues that I want to talk with you today. So for a few moments, let's talk about the unfinished business that awaits us as a nation and as a people.

I think we can all be proud of the economic progress America's made in the past few years. I won't bother to recite here all the statistics about how the inflation, interest rates, and unemployment have come down, or the many indicators that demonstrate America's current economic expansion, because the real question you and I must now ask ourselves is how can we solidify the gains we've made and ensure that the prosperity we're now enjoying will endure not just for the rest of this decade, but on into the next century.

To do this, we have to make sure the federal government never goes on a spending spree like the one it was on when we came into office. Just in case you've -- (applause) -- well, I was going to say just in case you've forgotten, but evidently you haven't forgotten -- (laughter) -- federal spending nearly tripled in the decade of the seventies. Taxes doubled in the five years before we took office.

The liberals in Washington, who were so sure that we could spend ourselves rich and drink ourselves sober, were surprised to see the economic mess they'd created. They didn't understand the real problem in Washington and the real reason for our recent economic woes was really very simple -- in fact, if this sounds familiar, maybe it's because I've been saying it for so long: Government is too big and it spends too much money. (Applause.)

MORE

Now, no one feared government's tendency to spend and tax and become the oppressor of the people more than those who built this nation. They had lived with the anxiety of a collapsing currency and runaway inflation. And that's why the Founding Fathers gave us that remarkable constitution that placed so many checks and balances on government. But they also wisely provided for an amendment process through which later generations could perfect the constitutional system. Well, the performance of government in the last few decades shows the constitution needs a little perfecting and the people need a lot more protection from the fiscal transgressions of government.

I think that all of you know that the balanced budget amendment would put sharp restrictions on federal spending, that it would force the federal government to do what so many states and municipalities and all average Americans are forced to do -- to live within its means and stop mortgaging our children's future. (Applause.) So, today I'm asking for your support and help. We need the balanced budget amendment. We need it for America's future. Is that contrary to the ideas of the Founding Fathers? No, it isn't. When the constitution was adopted, Thomas Jefferson said there was an oversight -- it should have contained a clause forbidding the government from borrowing.

Second, we need to give the office of the Presidency the powerful tool it needs to cut out the porkbarreling and special interest expenditures buried in those catch-all appropriation bills the liberals in the Congress are so fond of. Today, I'm asking for your support and help. We need the line-item veto. We need it for America's future. Now, is that a wild experiment? (Applause.) I asked, is that a wild experiment, as some have suggested? No. Forty-three governors have that right. I had it when I was governor. And it works.

Finally, our current tax system burdens some too heavily while permitting others to avoid their fair -- or to avoid paying their fair share. It makes honest people feel like cheats and it lets cheats pose as honest citizens. It encourages the underground economy and wastes millions of manhours on forms and regulation. It drives money needed for growth and investment and jobs into unproductive tax shelters; it is an obstacle to entrepreneurial spirit and economic expansion. To put it simply, our tax system is unfair, inequitable, counterproductive and all but incomprehensible. (Applause.) Even Albert Einstein had difficulty with his Form 1040. (Laughter.) And he said, "This is too difficult for a mathematician. It takes a philosopher." (Laughter.) (Applause.)

So let's end the trauma of April 15th. Let's stop the nightmare of tangled regulations and twisted requirements that every American faces at income tax time. Let's make it possible to bring everybody's tax rates further down, not up. And, today, I'm asking for your -- (applause) -- I'm asking for your support and help. We need a simplified tax code. We need it for America's future.

MORE

Now, as we get America on the road again economically, we also need to return her to the respect for the sound values and traditional beliefs that account for her greatness. And to accomplish this, we must rectify two of the greatest wrongs of the past few decades. First, we must rid ourselves once and for all of the old liberal superstition that crime is somehow the fault of society and not the wrong-doer who preys on innocent people. (Applause.)

Now, we've already appointed some very fair but tough-minded judges. And I just wish there was time to report to you in detail on the efforts on the tough new steps this administration has taken against drug trafficking and organized crime. What it all means is that we're putting more career criminals in prison than ever before. So it should be no surprise that for the first time in many years, the crime statistics are coming down and staying down, and have been coming down for two years in succession. (Applause.) Yet critical legislative initiatives against crime remain right where they've remained for the last three years, dead in the water in the House of Representatives.

Our Comprehensive Crime Control Act includes bills calling for bail reform, tougher sentencing, justice assistance to states and localities, improvement in the insanity defense, and major reforms affecting drug trafficking, prison crowding and forfeiture. All of these reforms, and others we've forwarded, are badly needed and constitutionally sound. In fact, our initiatives, the core crime bill, passed the Senate by a vote of 91 to 1. But in the House of Representatives, the liberal leadership keeps them bottled up in committee.

So today, I'm asking your support and help. We need this tough, new anti-crime legislation. We need it for America's future. (Applause.)

And when I keep saying, we need your support and help, what I mean is that there are people in Washington that need to hear from you. You know, it is not necessary to make some of them see the light, as long as you make them feel the heat. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

Now, there's another major wrong that's done to traditional American values that needs to be corrected. Our forefathers were religious people. And they were also enlightened enough to realize the follies of religious intolerance. What they did, on the one hand, was to erect a wall in the Constitution separating Church and state. And on the other hand, they provided in the same document for the free exercise of religion. They knew that morality derives chiefly from religious faith, and that no government -- or that government no more should handle religious expression than it should show preference for one religious group over another. Now, I can't think of anyone who favors the government establishing a religion in this country. I know I don't. But what some would do is to twist the concept of religion, freedom of religion, to mean freedom against religion. (Applause.)

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So let me repeat what I've always believed: Religion is one of the traditional values which deserves to be preserved and strengthened. We are and must remain a pluralistic society. When we speak of church and religion, we speak of them with a small "c" and a small "r," so as to include within the constitutional protection all churches and all religions. The unique thing about America is that every single American is free to choose and practice his or her own religion or to choose no religion at all, and that right must not and shall not be questioned or violated by the state. (Applause.)

We must protect the rights of all our citizens to their beliefs, including the rights of those who choose no religion. That is why our administration opposes any required prayers in schools. At the same time, we call for the right of children once again to pray voluntarily in our public schools and that's -- (applause) -- and that stand is in the spirit of the Constitution as our forefathers wrote it and as we have lived it for most of our history. Let us restore that balance.

So today, again, I'm asking your support and help. We need the prayer amendment; we need it for America's future. (Applause.)

But in addition to strengthening our economy and reasserting traditional American values, our agenda for the future must promote economic growth by extending new opportunities to all our citizens. Right now, this administration has before the Congress a series of measures that would give us a great start in this direction. But, once again, these are measures that have been held up by the liberal leadership in the Congress, and once again we're going to need your help to get them moving: First, tuition tax credits for the parents of parochial or independent school children; second, the federal enterprise zones bill that will provide jobs and opportunity for those in our inner cities; and, third, a youth employment opportunity wage, so that young people, especially minority youngsters, can get that first job they need to begin their climb up the economic ladder. (Applause.)

So today I'm asking again your support and help. We need tuition tax credits, enterprise zones, and youth employment opportunity wage. We need them for America's future.

And, finally, let me turn to a matter I know is of special interest to all of you, America's national security, the safety of her people, the right to a future of peace and freedom. We've come a long way in the past few years in restoring our margin of safety -- I mentioned at this convention in 1980 that we needed this. Today, every major commander in the field agrees that America's military forces have better people who are better armed, better equipped, better trained, with better support behind them. (Applause.)

Now, besides moving to restore the strategic balance, we've added tanks, fighting vehicles, combat aircraft, and we've also added some 70 ships to the U.S. Navy. We will have 600 ships four years from now if the Congress honors our budgetary requests.

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In the past three years, we have added to our sealift capability more than in all the years since World War II, and our 1983-85 budgets reflect a 100 percent increase in sustainability funding which will significantly increase staying power for all our armed services. (Applause.)

Now, just take Europe alone -- we can now deliver 25 percent more tonnage there in case of crisis, and we've improved our air sortie rate by 60 percent. And both on land and in the air, we have more accurate weapons, newer equipment than ever before. Now, these are the kind of things which will make sure we never have to cross the nuclear threshold.

Yes, our defenses are being restored. And so, too, are our alliances. We have completely reoriented American foreign policy, imbuing it with a new energy and moral purpose. And in the process, we have rallied our friends throughout the world. Even as we've successfully resisted Soviet expansionism, we've opened a wide series of diplomatic initiatives that will eventually bear fruit, not just in arms control treaties, but in arms reduction treaties. (Applause.)

And, most of all, we've been candid about our -- the differences between our way of our life and that of totalitarian systems. We've carried on the struggle of ideas. We have spoken up for freedom. We're determined to keep America a beacon of hope to the rest of the world and to return her to her rightful place as a champion of peace and freedom among the nations of the earth.

But now, there are four important things we must do to move forward with the gains we've made in foreign policy. First, we must complete the task of military modernization and improved readiness. This is directly related to the prospect for arms reductions. In the past, we've succeeded best when we've bargained from strength.

We have a moral obligation to pursue technological breakthroughs that could permit us to move away from exclusive reliance on the threat of retaliation and mutual nuclear terror. We must pursue vigorously research on defensive technologies that can permit us to intercept strategic ballistic missiles -- fired deliberately or accidentally -- before they reach our own soil or that of our allies. (Applause.) Now, some are calling this Star Wars. Well, I call it prudent policy and common sense.

Second, we must maintain our traditional alliances. Our interests and NATO's are complementary. Their strength helps us, and vice versa.

Third, we must continue to work hard toward balanced and verifiable arms reduction treaties with the Soviets, treaties that will be made all the more feasible by maintaining our resolve to keep our defenses strong.

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Fourth, we must continue our forward strategy for freedom and speak up for human dignity whenever it's threatened. I preach no manifest destiny, but I do say we Americans cannot turn our backs on what history has asked of us. (Applause.) Keeping alive the hope of human freedom is America's mission and we cannot shrink from the task or falter in the call to duty. In the past four years, we've offered renewed hope to millions of people in developing lands and we're beginning to see them turn away from the East and toward political and economic systems based on personal freedom. So we must not be apologetic about our nation's commitment to freedom. We must present to the world an America that is not just militarily strong, but an America that is morally powerful, an America that has a creed, a cause, a vision of a future time when all people of the world will have the right to self-government and personal freedom. (Applause.)

So, today, again, I ask your support and help. We need to continue to restore our strength, to pursue emerging technologies, to consolidate our alliances, to move forward energetically with strategic arms negotiations and, most of all, to continue proclaiming the American dream of human freedom to the entire world. We need these things, and we need them for the sake of America's future. (Applause.)

Another subject of great interest to Legionnaires is the POW-MIA issue and your responsible support -- (applause) -- your responsible support of our efforts and the National League of Families is greatly appreciated. We've made some recent progress with both Laos and Vietnam, and we'll continue our highest priority efforts until we achieve the fullest possible accounting of these brave men. (Applause.)

And, by the way, I want to add something that also needs to be said here. The men and women veterans who've proudly served their country in the military have earned more than simply the respect of their countrymen; they have earned the benefits to which they're entitled, including veterans preference in government employment. (Applause.) And as long as I'm President, those will be the policies of the United States Government. (Applause.) And I want you to know that for as long as I'm President, the door of the Oval Office is open to you, to your leaders, and to your concerns. (Applause.)

You know, I can't leave this discussion without thanking all of you in the American Legion for the enormous help that you've given us on the Central American issue. It's been a long struggle and, thanks to your efforts, we're finally making progress. But the struggle isn't over yet. There are still those in the Congress who want to hinder our attempts to help El Salvador and there is also a move underway to desert the freedom fighters in Nicaragua. So on this issue and many others, I hope you'll think about sending a reminder to the Capital this year; I hope you'll think about ending that stalemate in Washington by voting this year for responsible candidates at the Congressional level, so that this administration can have a Congress it can work with and our agenda for the future can become reality. (Applause.)

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I think you join me in my belief in this agenda for America's future. It's one that will create growth, opportunity and progress at home and pursue peace and freedom abroad. From reducing the growth of government to supporting prayer in our classrooms, we aim to strengthen families, local communities, private institutions and voluntary organizations. Our goal is to reaffirm traditional American values while we get government out of the way of our people and their boundless capacity for change, innovation and progress. (Applause.) Our hope is to keep alive America as a beacon of hope, a shining city in a world grown weary of war and oppression.

I wanted to speak to all of you today about the future because I believe the things so many of you struggled for so valiently have not just endured, they have grown and prospered and turned brighter with the years. What a change from only a few years ago when patriotism seemed so out of style. I'm not sure anyone really knows how the New Patriotism came on so quickly, or when and how it actually began.

Was its seed first planted that day our POW's, who had braved a horrendous captivity in North Vietnam, came home, said, "God bless America," and then actually thanked us for what they said we had done? Or was it at the 1980 Winter Olympics and the miracle of Lake Placid; you remember the chants of "U.S.A." and the hockey team that didn't know it couldn't do the impossible? Or maybe it was that unforgettable moment when, after 444 days of captivity, our Iranian hostages came home to parades and freedom.

Well, wherever the new patriotism came from, there can be no gainsaying its arrival. Maybe you've seen the television show "Call to Glory" that celebrates Air Force officers serving in "the twilight struggle" of the Cold War? Or maybe you've heard country singer Lee Greenwood's new song, "God Bless the U.S.A.," whose first verse -- (applause) -- his first verse says it so well: "If tomorrow all the things were gone I'd worked for all my life,/And I had to start again with just my children and my wife,/I'd thank my lucky stars to be living here today,/ 'Cause the flag still stands for freedom and they can't take that away." (Applause.)

And I wonder if anyone can forget that scene on the White House lawn last November shortly after the Grenada rescue operation. What a change it was to see young students praising and thanking our military, and, as my friend Paul Laxalt recently noted, what a change to see graffiti on foreign walls that doesn't say "Yankee Go Home," but says, "God Bless America." (Applause.)

Or how about those young men and women on our Olympic team this summer? Who's ever said more about this country than those young American -- (applause) -- can we forget those young American sprinters who swept the 200-meter race, and then, led by Carl Lewis, went around the track with a flag, embraced their families, and then knelt to pray? And what about the moment when they introduced George Foreman, the former Olympic champion who was brave enough to wave a tiny American flag at the 1968 Olympics when he had won his fight after there had been a demonstration previous to that in which there was no flag-waving?

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The news accounts described how the fans in Los Angeles rose and cheered, filling the old arena with an emotional ovation that brought tears to many. "All I've ever tried to tell anyone", George Foreman said, "is that I'm not a black man or a white man or anything else. All I've ever been was an American." (Applause.)

And for me, there was that visit to Normandy earlier this year, where I read the letter of a loving daughter who had promised her father, a Normandy veteran who had died of cancer eight years earlier, that someday she would go back to Normandy for him. She would see the beaches and visit the monuments and plant the flowers at the graves of his fallen comrades. "I'll never forget what you went through", she had told her father

, "and, Dad, I'll always be proud." Well, reading her letter was one of the hardest speeches that I ever gave. But I'm sure you, of all people, understand. For many of you, even though your days of military service are receding, there are still reminders like that, poignant and piercing.

It's always been so for old soldiers. There's a story told about General Grant during the final weeks of his life. He had begun his last journey by train to upstate New York, and the newspapers were already filled with headlines, "Grant is dying." He was in a race against time, hoping to finish his memoirs and give his family back the financial security lost by those he had trusted too well.

And outside of Albany, coming around a bend, his train halted briefly. It was near a flagman's shanty. The flagman came out and looked up to the train window into the General's eyes. The flagman waved his arm. There was no hand. "General, I lost that with you in the wilderness", the flagman said, "and I'd give the other one to see you well." Well, as Grant's wife and the doctor wept, the old General's lips tightened and his hand went up quickly as he took his hat off in a final salute to an old comrade.

Nimitz and Halsey, MacArthur, Bradley, Patton, Ike -- they're all gone now. And boys who stormed the beaches for them at Normandy or Iwo are grandfathers now. Korea, too, fades into memory. And even Vietnam now belongs less to journalists or politicians than to scholars and historians.

In the book by Gene Smith, in which that story about General Grant is recounted, there's another story about an old soldier. His name was R.J. Burdette. And he returned years later to an old battlefield, one he had told his wife he could find stone-blind. But when he got there, there was grass and violets. It was May, and children were playing on what he recalled as a shell crater. And although in his memory, he wrote, there was still the day of "might and strength and terror, it was gone."

Well, I know you join me in a prayer today that for America such days and places are gone forever. (Applause.) That as much as we honor those who died to make us free, we also fervently also hope that such sacrifice will never again have to be asked for, and that the day is not far off when there will be no new battlefields to visit and no old soldier stories to hear.

Some will say that such hope is in vain, that the weight of history or human experience is against us. Well, I don't believe it's too much to hope that the years ahead will bring peace and freedom, not just for the people of this "kindly, pleasant, greening land" called America, but for all mankind. (Applause.)

Thank you, and God bless you all. (Applause.)

REMARKS BY SECRETARY WEINBERGER
AT THE
VETERANS DAY CEREMONY
ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

*File
Speeches*

11 NOVEMBER 1984

MR. ALVAREZ, GENERAL BALLANTYNE, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS
AND FELLOW VETERANS, IT IS A GREAT HONOR TO REPRESENT
PRESIDENT REAGAN AT THIS SOLEMN CEREMONY THAT MEANS SO
MUCH TO ALL AMERICANS.

WE HAVE GATHERED HERE IN THIS HALLOWED PLACE TO
REMEMBER THOSE WHO RESTORED PEACE AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR --
THE ELEVENTH HOUR OF THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE ELEVENTH
MONTH, IN THE YEAR 1918.

WE HAVE GATHERED NOT TO CELEBRATE WAR. WE HAVE
GATHERED TO CELEBRATE THE END OF WAR.

OUR NATION COULD HAVE CHOSEN TO COMMEMORATE AMERICA'S

VETERANS ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF A GREAT BATTLE. BUT
INSTEAD WE REMEMBER OUR VETERANS ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF A
GREAT SILENCE -- THE DAY THE GUNS AT LAST WERE STILL AND
ALL WAS QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

ON THAT DAY 66 YEARS AGO A YOUNG AMERICAN PRIVATE
TRIED TO PUT INTO WORDS WHAT HE AND HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS
FELT. HE WROTE,

"WE JUST STOOD UP AND DIDN'T SAY A WORD. IT FELT
JUST LIKE WHEN YOU HAVE DROPPED YOUR PACK AFTER A
HIKE, AND STRAIGHTENED OUT YOUR BACK, AND SEEMED
JUST TWICE AS LIGHT AS ANY BIRD . . . BUT ALL WE DID
WAS STAND AND STARE AND STARE. JUST STARE AND
STAND AND NEVER SAY A WORD."

TO EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM IN A
DISTANT LAND, THERE COMES A MOMENT OF SILENCE.

FOR SOME IT CAME THE DAY THE TROOP SHIP FINALLY LEFT
FOR HOME. FOR OTHERS IT CAME WHEN THEY PULLED OFF THEIR
DOG TAGS, AND PUT THEM AWAY FOREVER IN THE BOTTOM OF A
DRAWER. BUT ALWAYS WITH THAT SILENCE COMES SADDNESS:
THE MEMORY OF THE FACE OF A FRIEND WHO DID NOT RETURN
HOME SAFE FROM THE WAR, A FRIEND WHO NEVER SHARED THE JOY
OF KNOWING HOW IT FELT "WHEN YOU DROPPED YOUR PACK," WHEN
WAR FINALLY GAVE WAY TO PEACE, AND FREEDOM STOOD PRESERVED.

BUT TO MANY OF US, I SUSPECT, THAT MOMENT OF SILENCE
CAME MONTHS OR YEARS LATER. ONE NIGHT WE LOOKED AT
THE FACE OF OUR SLEEPING CHILD, AND SUDDENLY WE FOUND
OURSELVES PONDERING THE SOBER LESSONS OF HISTORY. LET
US TODAY RESOLVE NEVER TO IGNORE THOSE LESSONS.

IN NOVEMBER 1918 AMERICANS CELEBRATED THE END OF THE WAR TO END ALL WARS. BUT WAR DID NOT COME TO AN END. ONE GENERATION LATER MILLIONS OF US MARCHED OFF TO WHAT WINSTON CHURCHILL WOULD ALWAYS CALL "THE UNNECESSARY WAR." IT WAS UNNECESSARY NOT BECAUSE WE COULD HAVE TOLERATED AN AXIS VICTORY. IT WAS UNNECESSARY BECAUSE WE HAD FAILED TO SIGNAL BY DEEDS AS WELL AS WORDS THAT WE WOULD NOT ALLOW SUCH A VICTORY.

AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II AMERICA'S LEADERS TOOK THIS LESSON TO HEART AS THEY FACED AGAIN THE AWESOME TASK OF SECURING A LASTING PEACE. IT WAS AWESOME ABOVE ALL BECAUSE THEY NOW HAD TO LIVE WITH THE TERRIBLE KNOWLEDGE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS -- KNOWLEDGE THAT COULD BE NEITHER BANISHED, NOR LEFT TO THOSE NATIONS WHICH WERE LEAST APPALLED BY ITS PROSPECT.

THOSE POSTWAR LEADERS UNDERSTOOD, AS PRESIDENT REAGAN UNDERSTANDS TODAY, THAT THERE COULD BE NO WINNERS IN A NUCLEAR WAR. THEIR RESPONSIBILITY, THEN AS NOW, WAS TO ENSURE THAT THESE WEAPONS WERE NEVER USED. THEY DID THIS BY MAINTAINING THE FORCES AND STRENGTH NECESSARY TO CONVINCE ANY ADVERSARY THAT THE COSTS OF AGGRESSION WOULD BE FAR HIGHER THAN ANY POSSIBLE BENEFIT. THIS STRATEGY WAS CALLED DETERRENCE, AND FOR ALMOST FORTY YEARS NOW IT HAS KEPT THE PEACE BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS.

BUT TODAY, AMERICA'S LEADERS ALSO HAVE TO FACE OTHER CHALLENGES TO OUR HARD-WON PEACE AND FREEDOM. IN A WORLD WHERE RELIGIOUS, NATIONAL, AND RACIAL DIVISIONS PERSIST, WHERE POVERTY BREEDS DISCONTENT AND GREED SPURS AGGRESSION, THE SOVIET UNION HAS CONTINUED TO SEEK AND SOMETIMES REAP A FRUITFUL HARVEST. AND AS WE HAVE

LEARNED IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND IN OUR OWN HEMISPHERE, THE THREATS POSED BY SUBVERSION AND TERRORISM ARE BOTH HARD TO DETER AND HARD TO COUNTER.

THE YOUNG AMERICANS WHO TODAY STAND GUARD FOR FREEDOM AT KOREA'S DEMILITARIZED ZONE OR GERMANY'S FULDA GAP BEAR A HEAVY BURDEN -- HEAVIER, IN MANY WAYS, THAN THAT BORNE BY THOSE OF US WHO SERVED IN THE BATTLES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THEY KNOW THAT AMERICA CANNOT REST FROM HER RESPONSIBILITIES. THEY KNOW THAT PEACE AND FREEDOM WILL BE PRESERVED ONLY IF WE MAINTAIN A CONSTANT VIGILANCE, ONLY IF WE REMAIN EVER PREPARED TO FIGHT THE WAR WE ARE DETERMINED WILL NEVER COME.

BUT THERE IS ONE BURDEN THAT THESE YOUNG AMERICANS DO NOT BEAR TODAY. THEY DO NOT BEAR THE BURDEN OF WONDERING WHETHER THE AMERICAN PEOPLE UNDERSTAND OR

APPRECIATE THEIR SACRIFICE. AS THEY WALK DOWN THEIR HOME
TOWN STREETS IN UNIFORM, THEIR NEIGHBORS' SMILES REFLECT
A REAWAKENED PRIDE AND PATRIOTISM. AMERICA IS BACK.

EVEN AS WE HONOR THOSE WHO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY TODAY,
SO WE ARE HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED IT, SO BRAVELY AND WITH
SO LITTLE REWARD, JUST YESTERDAY.

IN JUST A FEW HOURS, THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS WILL GATHER
AT THE VIETNAM VETERANS' MEMORIAL ^{AS IT IS FORMALLY TURNED} TO UNVEIL A STATUE HONORING
^{over to the ~~with~~ our government.}
OUR HEROES FROM THAT PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT WAR. ^{The memorial and} THIS STATUE
^{is} ~~WILL~~ BE A FITTING TRIBUTE TO SOME OF THE FINEST, BRAVEST
MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE EVER WORN THIS NATION'S UNIFORM.
BUT IT WILL BE MORE THAN THAT. THIS STATUE AND THE
MEMORIAL IN WHICH IT STANDS ARE AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT A
NATION THAT FORGETS THE SACRIFICES OF ITS HEROES RISKS
ITS VERY EXISTENCE.

INSCRIBED

WE MUST NEVER FORGET. WE MUST NEVER FORGET THE
NEARLY 2,500 AMERICANS STILL MISSING AS A RESULT OF THE
THEIR NAMES ARE ON THE MEMORIAL WITH A SPECIAL SYMBOL.
VIETNAM WAR. ^ ACCOUNTING FOR THESE AMERICANS IS, AND
MUST REMAIN, A MATTER OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY FOR THE
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

AND WE MUST NEVER FORGET THOSE WHO HAVE RETURNED HOME.
THE VETERANS OF OUR WARS WHO ARE WORKING TO REBUILD THEIR
LIVES. AS A NATION WE HAVE COMMITTED OURSELVES TO GIVE
THEM THE SCHOOLING, THE JOB TRAINING, AND THE OTHER
BENEFITS THAT THEY HAVE SO RICHLY EARNED. WE CANNOT
AND WILL NOT GO BACK ON THOSE PROMISES.

FINALLY, LET US NOT FORGET A VERY SPECIAL GROUP OF
AMERICANS WHO HAVE RECEIVED FAR TOO LITTLE ACCLAIM: OUR
WOMEN VETERANS. TODAY BEGINS THE VERY FIRST CELEBRATION
OF NATIONAL WOMEN VETERANS RECOGNITION WEEK: A FITTING -- AND

LONG OVER-DUE -- TRIBUTE TO AMERICA'S NEARLY 1.5 MILLION
LIVING WOMEN VETERANS. I AM PARTICULARLY PROUD
THAT MY WIFE JANE IS A MEMBER OF THAT SPECIAL GROUP OF
VETERANS. SINCE WE MET WHILE SHE SERVED AS AN ARMY
NURSE IN THE PACIFIC, I HAVE SPECIAL REASON TO BE THANKFUL
FOR WOMEN VETERANS.

SO WE HAVE GATHERED HERE TODAY TO RENEW OUR MEMORIES
OF THE SACRIFICE, PATRIOTISM, AND HONOR OF THOSE MEN AND
WOMEN WHO SERVED IN AN EARLIER DAY. SUCH IS THE RIGHT
AND PROPER CUSTOM ON VETERANS DAY.

BUT LET ME PROPOSE IN CLOSING THAT WE DEPART A
LITTLE FROM CUSTOM NOW TO PAY A NEW TRIBUTE. LET US
PAUSE TO RECOGNIZE NOT JUST THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US
AND DEFENDED OUR FREEDOM. LET US ALSO RECOGNIZE THOSE
TO WHOM THE TORCH OF LIBERTY IS BEING PASSED: OUR CHILDREN.

ONCE WE HEARD IT SAID THAT THE BLOOD RAN THINNER IN
THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF MEN WHO FOUGHT AT ANZIO, THE
CHOSAN RESERVOIR, AND IN THE IA DRANG.

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT.

AS WE SAW IN LEBANON, AS WE SAW IN GRENADA, HEROES
ARE NOT ONLY FOR HISTORY. YES, WE SORROW THAT AMERICAN
BLOOD MUST AGAIN BE SHED FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM. BUT
WE REJOICE THAT COURAGE AND PATRIOTISM LIVE ON, AS STRONG
OR STRONGER THAN EVER, IN THE HEARTS OF YOUNG AMERICA.

IT IS MY DREAM THAT SOMEDAY WE WILL HAVE NO MORE
VETERANS OF WAR TO HONOR, BECAUSE WE WILL HAVE NO MORE
WARS.

I KNOW THAT YOU SHARE THIS DREAM. FOR VETERANS
HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT WAR. WE DO NOT SPEAK OF WAR'S
ROMANCE; IF WE SPEAK OF WAR AT ALL, WE REMEMBER THE MUD,
THE EXHAUSTION, AND THE HORROR OF WATCHING FRIENDS DIE.

BUT AS WE LOOK TOWARD THE DAY WHEN THE GUNS ARE
FOREVER SILENT, LET US BE THANKFUL THAT A NEW GENERATION
OF AMERICANS STANDS READY TO ASSUME THE BURDEN OF FREEDOM.
YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM A SPLENDID HERITAGE. AND THEY ARE
ITS WORTHY HEIRS.

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

Childress
8323
Speeches

November 10, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT

FROM: ROBERT M. KIMMITT *Boh*
SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks: Ceremony at
Vietnam Veterans War Memorial

The NSC has reviewed the attached Presidential remarks at the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial ceremony and has made some suggested edits.

Attachment

As stated

cc: Richard G. Darman

URGENT**WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM**DATE: 11/9/84

ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY:

2:30 P.M. TODAYSUBJECT: REMARKS: CEREMONY AT VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

(11/9 - 12:30 draft)

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MURPHY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEESE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BAKER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ROGERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEAVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEAKES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
STOCKMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVAHN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VERSTANDIG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHITTLESEY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FULLER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	HENKEL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERRINGTON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ELLIOTT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McFARLANE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McMANUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please provide any edits directly to Ben Elliott by 2:30 p.m. today, with an information copy to my office.

Thank you.

RESPONSE:

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
Ext. 2702

(Noonan)
November 9, 1984
5:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: CEREMONY AT VIETNAM VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1984

Senator Warner, thank you very much. And may I thank you also for the crucial personal support you gave to the building of this memorial. I extend the thanks of the Nation also to Jan Scruggs, ^{Jack}[John] Wheeler, and Bob Doubek, for their leadership in that fine cause.

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, my remarks today will be brief, because so much has been said over the years, and said so well, about the loyalty and valor of those who served us in Vietnam. It has occurred to me that only one very important thing has been left unsaid, and I will try to speak of it today.

It is almost 10 years now since U.S. military involvement in Vietnam came to a close. Two years ago our Government dedicated the memorial bearing the names of those who died or are still missing. Every day the families and friends of ^{these}[those] brave men and women come to ^{this site}[the wall], and search out a name, and touch it. The memorial reflects as a mirror reflects, so that when you find the name you are searching for, you find it in your own reflection. And as you touch it, from certain angles, you are touching too the reflection of the Washington Monument, or of the chair in which great Lincoln sits.

Those who fought in Vietnam are part of us, part of our history; they reflected the best in us. No number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them justice, but it is good for us that we honor them, and their sacrifice. And

it is good that we do it in the reflected glow of the enduring symbols of our republic.

The fighting men depicted in the statue we dedicate today -- the three young American servicemen -- are individual only in terms of their battle dress. All are as one, with eyes fixed upon the memorial bearing the names of their brothers in arms. On their youthful faces -- faces too young to have experienced war -- we see expressions of loneliness, and profound love, and a fierce determination never to forget.

The men of Vietnam answered the call of their country. Some of them died in the arms of many of you here today, asking you to look after a newly-born child or care for a loved one. They died uncomplaining. The tears staining their mud-caked faces were not for self-pity but for the sorrow they knew the news of their death would cause their families and friends. As you knelt alongside his litter and held him one last time, you heard his silent message. He asked you not to forget.

Today we pay homage not only to those who gave their lives but to their comrades present today and all across the country. You didn't forget -- you kept the faith. You walked from the litter, wiped away your tears, and returned to the battle. You fought on, sustained by one another and deaf to the voices of those who did not comprehend. You performed with a steadfastness and valor that veterans of other wars salute; and you are forever in the ranks of that special number of Americans in every generation that the Nation records as true patriots.

Also among the servicemen and -women honored here today is a unique group of Americans whose fate is still unknown to our Nation and their families. Nearly 2,500 of the names on this memorial are still missing in Southeast Asia, and some may still be serving. Their names are distinguished by a cross, rather than the diamond. Thus, this memorial is a symbol of both past and current sacrifice.

The war in Vietnam threatened to tear our society apart; and the political and philosophical disagreements that animated each side continue, to some extent. It has been said that these memorials reflect a hunger for healing. I do not know if perfect healing ever occurs, but I know that sometimes, when a bone is broken, if it is knit together well it will in the end be stronger than if it had not been broken. I believe that in the decade since Vietnam the healing has begun, and I hope that before my days as Commander in Chief are over, the process will be completed.

There were mistakes and missteps in the manner in which we carried out and ended the Vietnam War. There were great moral and philosophical disagreements about the rightness of the war. And we cannot forget them because there is no wisdom to be gained in forgetting. But we can forgive each other, [and ourselves, for those things that we now recognize may have been wrong.] And I think it's time we did. There has been much rethinking by those who did not serve, and those who did; there has been much rethinking by those who held strong views on the war, and by those who did not know which view was right. There has been

rethinking on all sides, and this is good. And it is time we moved on, in unity and with resolve -- with the resolve to always stand for freedom, as those who fought did, and to always try to protect and preserve the peace. And we must in unity work to account for those still missing, and aid those returned who still suffer from the pain and memory of Vietnam.

We must, as a society, take guidance from the fighting men memorialized by this statue. The three servicemen are watchful, ready and challenged -- but they are also standing, forever, together.

And let me say to the Vietnam veterans gathered here today: When you returned home you brought solace to the loved ones of those who fell. But little solace was given you. Some of your countrymen were unable to distinguish between our native distaste for war and the stainless patriotism of those who suffered its scars. But there has been a rethinking there, too, and now we can say to you, as a Nation: Thank you for your courage, and thank you for being patient with your countrymen. Thank you for continuing to stand with us, together.

The men and women of Vietnam fought for freedom in a place where liberty was endangered. They put their lives in danger to help a people in a land far away from their own. Many sacrificed their lives in the name of duty, and honor, and country. All were patriots who lit the world with their fidelity and courage. They were both our children and our heroes.

We will never, ever, forget them; we will never forget their devotion and their sacrifice. They stand before us marching into

Page 5

time, and into shared memory, forever. May God bless their souls.

I will now sign the document by which this memorial has been received by our Government.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTION

November 9, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT M. KIMMITT

FROM: KARNA SMALL *KS*SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks: Ceremony at
Vietnam Veterans War Memorial

We have reviewed the Presidential remarks at the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial ceremony and have made some minor suggested changes. Ben Elliott's office was advised by telephone.

PC Childress *GS* provided changes; Sigur concurs.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memo to Ben Elliott at Tab I.

Approve *K* Disapprove

*Changes transferred
to new draft.*

Attachment

TAB I Memo to Ben Elliott with attached
Presidential remarks *nm 11/10*

1984 NOV 11 12:30

(Noonan)
November 9, 1984
12:30 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: CEREMONY AT VIETNAM VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1984

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Included in the thousands of servicemen and women honored here today is a unique group of Americans whose fate is still unknown to our Nation and their families. Nearly 2,500 of the

names on this memorial are still missing in Southeast Asia and some may still be serving. Their names are distinguished by a cross, rather than the diamond. Thus, this memorial is a symbol of both past and current sacrifice.

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We will never, ever, forget them; we will never forget their devotion and their sacrifice. They stand before us marching into time, and into shared memory, forever. May God bless their souls.

I will now sign, on behalf of the people of the United States, the document by which this memorial is received by our Government.