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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Christmas, 1988

TO THE VETERANS OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

Nancy and I are pleased to send seasons greetings to the 27.3 million veterans of our Nation's Armed Forces and to their families and friends.

Christmas is a day of special blessings and togetherness for all Americans, a day of celebration affirming the supreme worth of sacrifice borne out of selfless love. Our Nation's veterans have a particular insight into this spiritual heart of the Nativity. Through your service in uniform, you bore such sacrifice so that no tyrant might ever crush the spirit of liberty and destroy the hope of lasting peace and goodwill among men. Many of you spent Christmases far from loved ones, uncertain when you would ever again gather with your families on this feast whose central image is that of the Holy Family.

America today enjoys the peace you sought, the peace you defended, the peace whose fruits we recently celebrated in national thanksgiving. You have given all of us a priceless Christmas gift -- bought with your toll, wrapped in your courage, and tied with your devotion, wonderful at its first opening and more highly prized with each passing year. This above all gifts is the one that speaks to us best of the meaning of that Holy Night long ago in the City of David.

This is the last time I will be privileged to send you greetings as your Commander in Chief. Let me say once more what I can never say too often: I am proud -- your fellow citizens are proud -- of each and every one of you. Nancy and I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. God bless you, and God bless America!

Ronald Reagan