

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON HIS ARRIVAL
AT
JACKSONVILLE NAVAL AIR STATION

11:25 A.M. EST

Admiral Green, Captain Bernstein, Mayor Tanzler, Senator Chiles, Congressman Burke, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

First, I am deeply grateful for the warm welcome by Admiral Green and all of you from the Jacksonville Naval Air Station. I am most appreciative, on behalf of Mrs. Ford and myself, that so many of you have come out on a Sunday on this occasion.

As all of you know, I am in the process of having further very important meetings with President Sadat of Egypt. It is quite interesting, in my judgment, that I am meeting this afternoon with a man who represents a country whose history goes back literally centuries and centuries and centuries.

At the same time, I am in a part of our country where we have some contrast between the old and the new. Jacksonville is a relatively modern city, historically, and certainly a very progressive city in our development of our great country.

But, not far from here we have the oldest city in the United States -- St. Augustine. So, in a relatively small part of this great country, we have a history that goes back from the very beginning and a community that represents progress and tremendous enthusiasm and drive.

I believe this shows the diversity of America, and this diversity in this great country is one of our strengths as we meet the challenges both at home and abroad.

But, we cannot, in this country, solve our problems at home or meet our commitments internationally if we don't have a strong national defense program. It is vitally important for peace that we have a national defense program second to none.

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All of you at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville perform a great service in that regard. I know of the missions and responsibilities you have here. You have the helicopter antisubmarine warfare unit that does a tremendous job. You have the long-range naval capability in the antisubmarine area. You have nuclear powered naval vessels.

This Naval Air Station is a vital part of our total national security capability, and what you do here protects 214 million Americans and, on behalf of them, I thank you for your contribution.

A long, long time ago, I was a part of the Navy. I was very proud of that association for some 47 months. I learned a lot. I hope I contributed a little, but I know from firsthand experiences the trials and tribulations of serving in our uniformed services.

The men and women who serve do a superb job, but the wives and the children of men in the service -- Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard -- are likewise making a great contribution because I know of the sacrifices they make over the years in performing their part of this service, and I thank them for what I know they do.

Let me say, in conclusion, that the meetings that I am having today and the ones that I had earlier in the week with President Sadat relate to a better and more peaceful world. But, I can go and have these discussions and these talks from a position of strength, and all of you are a very vital and important part of that strength.

So, it makes my job easier, it makes our country more secure, to know that we have people like you serving in our national security forces.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 11:32 A.M. EST)