MR. PRIME MINISTER, MR. FOREIGN MINISTERS,

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS:

I AM HONORED TO WELCOME YOU TO THE WHITE HOUSE THIS EVENING ON YOUR FIRST VISIT TO WASHINGTON AS PRIME MINISTER OF THE NETHERLANDS.
OUR CAREERS HAVE MUCH IN COMMON, MR. PRIME MINISTER.

WE BOTH SPENT MANY YEARS IN THE POPULAR BRANCHES OF OUR RESPECTIVE LEGISLATURES. WE BOTH SERVED AS OUR PARTIES' LEADERS ON THE FLOORS OF THOSE HOUSES. AND NOW WE MEET HERE TONIGHT AS THE LEADERS OF OUR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS.
OUR PEOPLE ALSO SHARE A COMMON HERITAGE.  THE NETHERLANDS AND THE UNITED STATES ARE LINKED BY BONDS OF HISTORY, CULTURE AND FRIENDSHIP WHICH GO BACK EVEN FURTHER THAN THE FOUNDING OF THE UNITED STATES TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.
LONG BEFORE THEN, THE ANCESTORS OF YOUR COUNTRYMEN

ESTABLISHED AN AMERICAN SETTLEMENT WHICH, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR

THE QUIRKS OF HISTORY, MIGHT STILL BE CALLED NEW AMSTERDAM.
APPROPRIATELY ENOUGH, BOTH AMSTERDAM AND NEW YORK ARE CELEBRATING THEIR BIRTHDAYS THIS YEAR. AMSTERDAM, AT SEVEN HUNDRED, IS TWICE AS OLD AS NEW YORK, BUT BOTH CITIES STILL RADIATE THE SAME SPIRIT OF VITALITY, EXCITEMENT AND SOPHISTICATION.
THE TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES HAS BEEN MANIFESTED IN OTHER WAYS. AS WE BEGIN CELEBRATING THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, I SHOULD NOTE THAT THE NETHERLANDS WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF OUR REPUBLIC.
SO YOU MIGHT SAY THAT OUR GOVERNMENTS, AND OUR PEOPLE, HAVE BEEN BOTH FRIENDS AND RELATIONS FROM THE VERY START.

YOU ARE THE LEADER OF A COUNTRY, MR. PRIME MINISTER,

WHOSE PEOPLE ARE THE HEIRS TO A RICH AND NOBLE HERITAGE.
OVER THE CENTURIES, THE DUTCH HAVE DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN
ART, LITERATURE, SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, ECONOMICS AND
POLITICS. WE IN THE UNITED STATES ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE
BENEFITED FROM THE MANY CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUR TALENTED COUNTRYMEN.
IMMIGRANTS FROM THE NETHERLANDS CARRIED WITH THEM MORE THAN JUST
A SENSE OF THRIFT AND A LOVE OF TULIPS: THEY BROUGHT TO THEIR NEW
HOMELAND A TOLERANCE OF RELIGION, A FAITH IN JUSTICE, A LOVE OF
FREEDOM AND A BELIEF IN MAN'S GOODNESS -- QUALITIES WHICH HAVE
IMMEASURABLY ENRICHED THE LIFE OF AMERICA EVER SINCE.
I KNOW.  I HAVE WITNESSED IT FIRST HAND.  NOWHERE HAS THE DUTCH CONTRIBUTION BEEN MORE VIBRANT AND REMARKABLE THAN IN THE WESTERN PART OF MY OWN STATE OF MICHIGAN, THE AREA SETTLED BY THOUSANDS OF DUTCH IMMIGRANTS IN THE LAST CENTURY.  TO THIS DAY, MY HOME TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS BEARS THE DISTINCTIVE IMPRINT OF THOSE GENERATIONS OF BRAVE, HARDWORKING SETTLERS.
MR. PRIME MINISTER, I HAVE SPOKEN OF THE WARM

TRADITIONAL TIES OF FRIENDSHIP, TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT WHICH

LINK OUR PEOPLES. NOW I WOULD LIKE TO TURN TO THE PRESENT --

AND THE FUTURE.
TODAY, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CAUSES WE SHARE IS THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. A GENERATION AGO, NATO PROVIDED THE ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE OF SECURITY THAT ENABLED WESTERN EUROPE TO REBUILD, LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR ITS PRESENT PEACE AND PROSPERITY.
TODAY, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE, AS NATO PARTNERS,
KEEP THAT COOPERATION ALIVE TO PRESERVE WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED
SO THAT WE CAN FACE THE FUTURE SECURE, FREE AND UNAFRAID.
THROUGH THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE, WE CAN CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN OUR
COMMON DEFENSE WHILE SEEKING A FURTHER LESSENING OF TENSIONS
BETWEEN EAST AND WEST.
AND, WE CAN WORK TO BUILD THE MORE PEACEFUL, STABLE AND
PROSPEROUS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WHICH ALL NATIONS SO
URGENTLY DESIRE. IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT AND WITH THESE GOALS THAT
YOU AND I WILL MEET AGAIN AT THE NATO SUMMIT LATER THIS MONTH,
AND I VERY MUCH LOOK FORWARD TO THAT MEETING.
MR. PRIME MINISTER, I ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO STRENGTHENING THE TRADITION OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES IN THE COMING YEARS. IN THAT SPIRIT, I PROPOSE A TOAST TO YOUR HEALTH, MR. PRIME MINISTER, TO THE HEALTH OF HER MAJESTY, QUEEN JULIANA, AND TO THE LASTING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES.