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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
WOMEN'S FORUM ON NATIONAL SECURITY

WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL

9:45 A.M. EDT

Mrs. Kubby, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great privilege and honor for me to be here and to participate in the Women's Forum on National Security, and I thank you very much for the opportunity.

As I look around the room on this occasion, it brings back to me the memories of previous occasions. So, I know at the very outset that we share the same vision for America, a free rising democracy, and we also share the awareness that only a strong America can stay free.

I am greatly impressed with the theme of your gathering -- Peace, a Common Purpose. This is the link that brings us together on this occasion and will be a link as we move forward to keep America strong and prepared to keep the peace.

Let me express from the bottom of my heart my thanks for your past efforts to bolster our national security. As I said earlier, I recall very vividly meeting with your group on previous occasions. You and the two and one-half million women in all of our fifty states, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Panama -- which all of you represent -- are one of the most potent and effective grass roots lobby we have for a peaceful and secure America, and I congratulate you for being here and for your never ending efforts in this very high purpose.

I know from my experience of 25 years in the Congress you do a great job. I can say without any hesitation or qualification you have my blessing and strong support and, more importantly, you have my gratitude.

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(OVER)

You have a great mission, and you have performed it well, and the American people are deeply indebted to you.

I know from your past record that you will keep up the good work, and this year it is probably more important than ever that we have your help and assistance because there are people in the Congress and people throughout the United States who will want, in one way or another -- and I do not challenge their motives -- who will seek to undercut and make less effective our military capability.

It is my deep conviction that peace depends on a strong defense, a strong Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

The new defense budget that I have submitted to the Congress is a big budget, but I can assure you from the material that has come to me and the work that I and others have done on it, it is the defense budget that is needed--is required to keep us free.

To slash that budget because of some preconceived ideas or without adequate information is a gamble with our future, our security, our freedom, and, if I may borrow your theme, to weaken the chances for our common goal of peace.

In the 25-plus years that I was privileged to serve in the Congress, I had many opportunities to meet with representatives from my Congressional district from your group, or from my state officials or, as I said earlier, the opportunities to meet with this group as a whole.

I compliment those of you who are here, and I am sure you are of the same background as the others on the knowledge, the information that you have concerning our military budget.

So, as you get some inspiration here on this occasion, I hope that you will go back to your respective states and become the missionaries that are necessary to affect people throughout the United States; that you will be able to answer the questions that people legitimately ask, that you will be able to inform those who are uninformed so that when Congress comes to act on the defense budget, it will have the support of the American people.

I can assure you that if the defense budget is slashed by those who are uninformed or those who have preconceived ideas as to what is enough, that we can get the help and assistance of people like you and those you influence to correct any errors that are made.

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If we are to call upon our young people to serve in many parts of the world -- thank goodness now in peacetime, not in war -- then we have an obligation to make certain and positive they have the best weapons, the best training. With their skills and their dedication, with the proper military equipment, that will keep the peace and protect our homes.

That wherewithal--research, development, maintenance, operations, equipment, procurement--all of that is funded by the defense budget that has been submitted to the Congress.

We are trying to attract the finest young men, and we are seeking to retain young men and women in the military so that they can do that job for us of maintaining the peace throughout the world.

It seems to me that the least we can do is to make sure that enough money is available so that they have our backing as they perform a great responsibility for you and for me and for millions of others.

I close by simply saying, I thank you. Millions of other Americans will thank you. Those that are in civilian clothes, those in the military who are at far-off outposts, or sailing the seas, or flying aircraft or digging Army or Marine Corps operations, they are the ones who will thank you because you are making it possible for them to be the best equipped, the best trained and the most alert military in the history of the United States.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 9:54 A.M. EDT)