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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE
UNIFORMED SERVICES UNIVERSITY
OF THE
HEALTH SCIENCES

NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER
BETHESDA, MARYLAND

3:32 P.M. EDT

Thank you very much, Dave Packard, Senator Strom Thurmond, my good friend Eddie Hebert, Secretary Schlesinger, Secretary Mittendorf and other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I feel greatly honored to have the opportunity of being here on this very historic day when the hopes of so many, for so many years, finally is coming to fruition.

I know from first-hand experience how long and how hard Eddie Hebert worked on this legislation in the House of Representatives. As he left the podium, he observed that the first year he introduced it I was a freshman in the House of Representatives, and that is a long time ago. (Laughter)

But Eddie, of course, would recognize first that many, many other Members of Congress joined with him and gave him the kind of support on both sides of the aisle and at both ends of the Capitol, and as a consequence, the joint Uniformed University of Health Sciences becomes a reality. And, of course, we recognize that many, many people in the medical profession likewise, even up to this date, have made significant contributions to this concept and to this facility.

I know that those who have worked so hard and so long must have a wonderful feeling to be here at this time for this groundbreaking here in the shadow of some of the greatest medical facilities this country or any country has -- the National Naval Medical Center here at Bethesda, the National Institutes of Health, the National Library of Medicine. This is a fitting part of that complex we have right in this area.

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Now we have gathered here today to launch a new venture that will continue our long, long tradition of providing outstanding medical care to the men and women who wear our country's uniform.

I was the beneficiary of it a long time ago in the Navy. I was as a Member of Congress, and I am today. And I can say without hesitation or qualification that the medical service for our people in uniform is the best, and I thank all of you for all of those who have been the beneficiaries.

Now, by bringing together men and women from the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, I think this new facility will perform another vital function. It will give members of the three Services -- three proud and independent Services -- the opportunity to work together for a common goal without foresaking their separate traditions. And they won't have to foresake, either, the distinctive personal identifications with the individual branches that they serve.

This University will encourage, in my judgment, cooperation between the Services without reducing their independence or their integrity. It is a bold innovation and true, in my judgment, to the best traditions of the Armed Forces.

I am here to say a few words and to participate in the groundbreaking to express my faith in what I believe will prove to be true -- a great American undertaking, one that we can all be proud of, and one that will pay great human dividends in the form of outstanding health care for the men in our Uniformed Services as well as humanity on a global basis.

This is a proud day for the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, but I think equally important, a proud day for all the American people that they serve so well.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 3:37 P.M. EDT)