

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY
July 27, 1975

JULY 26, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary
(Bonn, Germany)

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO U. S. AND F. R. G. TROOP PICNIC
KIRCHGOENS, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

I am proud to be here with the tankers, infantry, and artillery of one of the largest and most powerful combat brigades in Europe. And I am also delighted to meet your families. As your Commander-in-chief, I am now issuing orders that tomorrow, Monday, all members of this brigade who participated in recent maneuvers at Grafenwoehr will be given an extra day off.

Let me say a special word of commendation to our German partnership units. I thank you for the cooperation you are extending to the United States forces. Together, you have developed outstanding skills and qualities that make first-rate fighting men. I am pleased that you are learning from each other. And I am also very pleased to meet your charming wives.

I deeply appreciate the high standards of performance and morale of the NATO forces as represented by the Germans and Americans here today. I thank the Federal Republic and the State of Hesse for the warm hospitality extended to me and to all Americans stationed here.

There is a deep satisfaction for me in this meeting. It is rewarding to see at firsthand this evidence of our two countries cooperating within NATO for the common defense. It is you, together with the other forces of the alliance, who are making our collective security a reality.

As we pursue peace, I am aware that not all the problems in Europe and the world have been solved. And I am convinced that under present circumstances, the best guarantee for peace is a strong defense. As President, speaking here in the presence of our allies, I affirm today that I will not allow our armed forces to be weakened. You deserve the best equipment. And you deserve the strongest support of the citizens you defend.

Chancellor Schmidt and I will travel to Helsinki in the next few days to attend the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is not by accident that I stop here first to consult with our allies--nor that I now affirm anew our commitment to Berlin. I assure the people of Berlin from this military base which the soldiers call "The Rock" that I stand solid as a rock behind our commitment to the freedom of Berlin.

Secretary Kissinger spoke for me when he affirmed our policy on his recent visit to Berlin. And our national unity and determination in this regard were voiced there earlier this year by Senator Humphrey and Senator Scott.

Soldiers, do not underestimate the importance of your mission and its meaning for the entire world. You are the defenders of peace. You have my support and my respect. You are doing a great job. You have boosted my morale.

Thank you for inviting me.

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