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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
MARINE CORPS WAR MEMORIAL CEREMONY

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

11:31 A.M. EST

Jim Wilson, distinguished Members of the House and Senate, Secretary Clements, Secretary Middendorf, Mr. Gagnin, Mr. Dueldon, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Two hundred years ago today, by an act of the Continental Congress, the United States Marine Corps was born. Less than four months later, on March 3, 1776, 234 leathernecks made the first U.S. Marine Corps amphibious landing.

Today, we honor the Marine Corps and the Bicentennial of its uncommon valor. The heroic spirits of the Corps is preserved in the magnificent Iwo Jima monument which stands before you. It raised our spirits even as those brave Marines raised our flag on that eventful day.

This is an historic vantage point. We can see nearby Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place of so many of America's servicemen and women, all who gave their last full measure of devotion to the United States.

Across the Potomac from here is a panorama of our past, present and future. The Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials and the Washington Monuments represent, along with other historic structures, our past.

Our present can be seen in the daily work of our Government and the life of the Nation's great capital city.

Our future is epitomized in the timeless ideals which all of these places and all of these people represent.

Today, we remain true to the ideals of the Marine Corps, which have fought to preserve in distant countries and on remote battlefields. The United States Marines for two centuries have heard and heeded the call of our country. They have created an esprit de corps which is unrivaled in any military service in the world.

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The Corps has become a living monument to bravery and self-sacrifice. Much of the world's history in these past two hundred years has been marked by turmoil and by violence. We, the American people, will have paid a high price, not only for our own freedom but for that of others.

Always the Marine Corps faithfully stands guard when liberty is threatened.

Let me assure you here and now that the American people and your President stand behind you. You will be supplied with the most modern and advanced ships, weapons, equipment and training in the world today. Our aim is not to train America's youth for war, nor to develop weapons to kill. My aim -- and our aim -- is to develop the military strength which is our mightiest hope for peace.

The United States must be constant and credible when we speak of American strength at home and on our seas of the world. You have stated it best to your recruits: "Nobody likes to fight, but somebody has to know how."

I do not know what events the next two centuries will bring to our country, but I do know this: It is for us, the living, to raise new monuments, new hopes and new courage, new ideas and new ideals for our children and for their children.

We must leave a heritage worthy of our inheritance. Americans will be called on to show great self-discipline and self-sacrifice in the years ahead. We will be put to many tests around the world. The global economy must be stabilized. The world need for energy must be balanced with the necessity to preserve our global environment. World industrial production needs must be met by judicious use of our available global resources.

We must win the race of food against famine. We must assure peace rather than suffer war. We must preserve the ideals of liberty and freedom against the challenges from hostile ideology. We must be a people not only of an historic past, but of a heroic present, to face squarely the new ideals, the new realities of today's world. We are only at the dawn of an American future.

The Marine Corps has established a legacy of heroic deeds, not in brass and stone, but in the courage and in the sacrifice of more than three million Marines, men and women, who served our Nation faithfully.

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These deeds are not forgotten. They link the past, present and future and are embodied in the American spirit of freedom.

The spirit of freedom is not only in this monument, but in our hearts, always faithful, semper fidelis, to the cause of freedom.

Let us pray that that same motto, "always faithful," may always be the mark of each and every one of us now and forever.

I salute you all, and all Marines everywhere, on your two hundredth birthday.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 11:38 A.M. EST)