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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON HIS ARRIVAL AT
BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE

2:50 P.M. CDT

Joe Waggoner, Governor Edwards, Congressman Breaux, General Hoban, Mayor Cathy, Mayor Allen, Mr. Shanley, all of these wonderful young people here, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me say at the outset that I am just delighted to be here and to participate in the 28th annual holiday of Dixie Festival, and I am obviously very proud and very honored to be the first President of the United States to speak in the Shreveport-Bossier area, and I express my deepest appreciation for your wonderful, wonderful welcome.

I was very, very happy to be able to accept the invitation of Congressman Joe Waggoner to be with you during this festival. Joe is a very old and very dear friend of mine, a former colleague of mine, in the House of Representatives, and over the years that we were associated with one another, I highly respected his advice, his assistance, which has been invaluable to me while I was in the Congress, as well as in the White House.

Joe, I thank you for this friendship, as well as this assistance.

May I say to your great Governor, I likewise appreciate his friendship and his help and assistance, and he has been helpful not only as your Governor, but when we served together in the House of Representatives.

To John Breaux, who I have known for a shorter period of time, I say to all of you, he is in the mold of the fine Congressional delegation that you have representing you from the great State of Louisiana.

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As I look from way down there to way down there, I can't express adequately or sufficiently well the gratitude and appreciation that I have for all of you coming here, the younger people, the older people, just all of you.

It is nice to get out of Washington once in a while and see the American people like this.

Barksdale Air Force Base stands as a shining example of national security at its very best and as a tall, tall monument to the cooperative efforts of the citizens of this area and of the military.

As the home of the Strategic Air Command's 8th Air Force, Barksdale serves as one of the cornerstones of our defense system.

I am very proud of the people in this area who have helped to make this base one of the very finest in the nation, and I congratulate not only the military, but the civilians who live and work here and make this a vital part of our national security system.

All of us, whether civilians or the military, have a vitally important part to play in keeping America strong, America free, America secure and America at peace.

The motto of the Strategic Air Command will serve as well for all of us: "Peace is our profession." As President, I am committed, deeply committed, to keeping America sufficiently strong to carry out three essential objectives:

First, we must be ready and able to protect our own vital security interests, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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Second, we must be ready, we must be able to deter aggression.

Thirdly, we must be ready, we must be able to keep the peace and maintain our precious freedom.

As Congressman Joe Waggoner, as former Congressman Ed Edwards and as John Breaux knows, my own knowledge, my own concern and my own record in supporting a strong national defense does not go back merely a few days, a few weeks or even a few months, but all the way back to January of 1949 when I first went to the Congress of the United States.

For 25 years in the Congress I stood for, I spoke for and I voted for a strong national defense capability. For 14 years, as my former colleagues in the Congress well know, I served on the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Department of Defense, which each year examined in great detail every single defense program, policy and then provided the appropriations for the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines, and always, in those years, I came down strongly on the side of strength for our military capability, and I am very proud of that record.

During the years before I became Vice President, as minority leader of the House of Representatives I fought openly and hard year after year for maximum military strength. In the last two years, as your President, in support of your own superb achievements here at Barksdale, I have recommended to the Congress to approve the two largest defense budgets in the history of the United States, and I pledge to you today that as long as I hold this honored office I intend to see to it that the United States will never become second to anybody, period.

Unfortunately, the United States Congress has not shared that goal in recent years. A majority in the Congress have slashed defense expenditures by \$50 billion over the last 10 years, despite my efforts, Joe Waggoner's efforts, Ed Edwards' efforts, and the fine efforts of many others.

No one knows better than you -- those of you in uniform and those who serve here in a civilian capacity and those of you who live here in this community -- the needs for strength and modernization in the field of strategic warfare and strategic weapons. That is why we are now finally completing the testing of the world's most modern and capable strategic bomber -- the B-1.

That is why I have proposed replacing our older tactical aircraft with newer and more capable aircraft, including a new air combat fighter.

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That is why I have proposed increasing the purchase of air-to-air, air-to-ground missiles and why we intend to follow through on the plans for a new attack helicopter.

There are other essential weapons systems in the works as well, in the Army, in the Navy, in the Marines, not as a provocation for war but as our best insurance for peace.

As a major world power, we in America have an obligation to maintain peace and security both here and abroad. We cannot hope to meet that obligation through irresponsible actions or rash behavior. Our strength will be meaningful only if it is matched with our resolve -- our resolve to keep the peace, our resolve to preserve and defend our precious freedom.

We cannot shrink from the responsibilities which our position in the world has thrust upon us. Our role is too important, too crucial to be shirked or ignored. I know that all of you here particularly understand that role and that each of you is willing and able to keep America playing that vital role.

Beyond our unsurpassed military capability, we also have the greatest industrial capacity in the history of mankind. Our farmers out-produce the farmers of any other nation of any other period in world history. We lead the world in education, science and technology. But, even more importantly, we have the greatest moral, spiritual resources in any modern nation, and as we enter our third century of independence let us build on those great strengths and leave a heritage, a heritage of progress and peace so, so great that future generations can make the same commitment that we make today.

That commitment can be simply stated, each and every one of us can say with conviction and dedication: We are proud of America and we are proud to be Americans.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 3:00 P.M. CDT)