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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT DEDICATION OF
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

FT. McNAIR, D.C.

2:40 P.M. EST

Thank you very much. Admiral Bayne, Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Clements, distinguished Service Secretaries, Members of the Joint Chiefs, members of the military, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a very high honor and a very rare privilege for me to be on this campus for the dedication of the National Defense University. I thank you for the invitation and for this opportunity.

I was reminiscing a bit on the way over. I recall very vividly the number of opportunities that I have had in the past to come and enjoy an exchange with members of the faculty and members of the student body. I had the feeling all the time of a creative atmosphere, both at the War College and at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. I enjoyed the opportunity to say a few words, and even more, the benefit of the questions and answers that were certainly helpful to me, and I trust of benefit to the students.

But today's ceremonies mark the historic union of these two fine colleges into one university. In the years to come this new institution will be an institution that will set new standards of excellence for American military education.

General Scowcroft was telling me as we came over that in February of 1903, President Teddy Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of the present home of the National War College, the building in which we are holding these ceremonies. During that ceremony, he spoke eloquently of America's awesome responsibilities in its new position as a world power. He warned, and most appropriately, that we could not properly bear those responsibilities unless our voice is potent for peace and for justice with the assured self-confidence of the just man armed.

In 1960, during the final months of the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower, he came to dedicate the new home of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. During that ceremony he declared that our first priority task was to develop and sustain a deterrent commanding the respect of any potential aggressor and to prepare to face resolutely the dangers of any possible war.

Today, national defense, as I said the other night in the State of the Union message, remains our first priority. Strong, capable military and civilian leadership plays a crucial role in maintaining that security. Over the years -- and I have been fortunate during my term in the Congress and as Vice President and as President, to have an exposure to military personnel, those who formerly came before the

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committee on which I served and those that I have observed in my previous position and this one -- I can say without hesitation or qualification that I have admired the high, high caliber of those who serve in the Armed Forces and those, likewise, who serve in positions of great responsibility in the Executive branch.

But in the process of being a member of Congress I did, from time to time, meet firsthand the graduates from both the colleges of this university. It was interesting to me that some 5,600 men and women have already graduated from the two schools. According to the records, most of your predecessors and yourselves arrived after 20 years of valuable public service, and most departed to assume even higher and greater responsibilities.

It was interesting to me that over one-fourth of the military graduates had been selected for Flag or General officer rank and over one-fourth of the Foreign Service graduates achieved Ambassadorial rank. This is a tribute to the colleges and to the personnel who attended each of the two institutions. But as we look down the road, it is essential to our Nation's future security that special, dedicated men and women be given the time and the opportunity for studying, learning, and reflection.

Here you do have an opportunity to consider the formulation of our national security policies and management of our resources that are essential to our security and America's role in the world.

It seems that as you go through the process here at this new institution you must not only face the question of what do I know, but perhaps more importantly, what do I believe? The National Defense University is not only dedicated to knowledge and to learning, it is dedicated to basic American beliefs, and to preserve those beliefs our country must be strong militarily, equally strong industrially and morally. Military strength will preserve our freedom and world peace depends on a strong America.

I am greatly privileged to be the first American President since Dwight D. Eisenhower to leave office while America is at peace. For that I am grateful to you, as all Americans are grateful to all in the military and those in the other services that have corresponding responsibilities. We do look to you to continue your outstanding contribution to our national security.

Admiral Bayne, as one of my last official acts as President, let me now hand over to you the coat of arms symbolizing learning, strength and patriotism so that we can appropriately dedicate the National Defense University.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 2:50 P.M. EST)