

May 15 / Administration of George Bush, 1991

Republic of Uganda. He would succeed John Andrew Burroughs, Jr.

Currently Mr. Carson serves as a member of the senior seminar at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, DC. Prior to this, Mr. Carson served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the American Embassy in Gaborone, Botswana, 1986–1990; deputy political counselor at the American Embassy in Lisbon, Portugal, 1982; and as a staff director for the subcommittee on Africa at the United States House of Representatives in Washington, DC, 1979–1982; and staff secretariat in the Office of the Secretary at the Department of State, 1978–1979. He also served as deputy chief of mission at the American Embassy in Maputo, Mozambique, 1975–1978; studied at the School of

Oriental and African Studies and the London School of Economics, 1974–1975. He served as a political officer at the United States mission to the United Nations, 1973; as a political analyst at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State, 1971–1974; and as a consular and political officer at the American Embassy in Lagos, Nigeria, 1969–1971. Mr. Carson has also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania and East Africa, 1965–1968.

Mr. Carson graduated from Drake University (B.A., 1965) and the University of London (M.A., 1975). He was born April 7, 1943, in Chicago, IL. Mr. Carson is married, has three children, and resides in Reston, VA.

Remarks on Signing the Proclamation Commemorating National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week

May 17, 1991

Good morning, fellow travelers. [*Laughter*] It's really great to see you all here, representatives of every sector of the transportation industry: road and rail, sea and air. I feel guilty walking to work from over there—[*laughter*—with all this talent here. But Sam Skinner, our very able Secretary of Transportation, I salute you, sir, and thank you for your leadership on the issue. I salute the distinguished senior DOT officials who are with us. And all our special guests, let me just say, welcome to the White House.

Among the many changes that shaped this country, transportation has really been in the lead. And your industries—your trucks, trains, ships, and aircraft—link all 50 States and, as we've seen recently, dramatically link America to the world beyond. For this year, events far beyond our shores remind us that civil transportation sustains not simply a strong economy but an America strong enough to defend its vital interests halfway around the world.

From the first days of Desert Shield to the final moments of Desert Storm, each of your industries made possible the most intensive military lift since the Second

World War. More than 4 million tons of dry cargo, 6 million tons of fuel, thousands of troops moved across America and halfway around the world.

As President, let me say that every sector of the civil transportation system—road, rail, sea, and air—contributed to the success of Desert Shield and then Desert Storm. And that contribution didn't stop when combat began. Every American shares my pride in our men and women in uniform.

But today I want to thank the pilots and the crew of nearly 90 civil aircraft that flew support missions during Desert Storm, the civilian crew members who served at sea, and all the civilian heroes in the transportation sector who pushed the limit and ventured into harm's way to get the job done. And how well they did it.

I mentioned a moment ago the connection between transportation and America's international competitiveness. And that's why back on March 6th, in my address to the joint session, I challenged Congress to act on the urgent issues facing the Nation. And I focused, not simply on critical crime bill—that one, which we really want to

have—but on transportation. And I said to Congress then, if our forces could win the ground war in 100 hours, then surely Congress can pass this legislation in 100 days.

And the clock has been ticking. And our transportation bill, thanks to Sam and many of you in this room, has made some headway in the Senate. I'm informed that the House is beginning now to move on this, but there's still a long way to go to get a satisfactory bill. And I don't have to tell you that 16 blocks between this house and the two Houses of Congress can be a long, long trip—long road in American politics. So now's the time to move a sound transportation bill out of the Congress and onto my desk. And today as we mark the special significance of transportation to America's economic welfare and international security, I ask each one of you: Please join us, join the Secretary, join me, in urging Congress

to rise to the challenges and act now.

And once again, it is my pleasure to welcome you all here to the White House. And I will now sign these proclamations declaring National Maritime Day, National Defense Transportation Day, and National Transportation Week. And then I would like to suggest to those outside of what is known as the White House complex that I walk out of here into the Oval Office, and I'd like each one of you, if you have time, to come by and shake hands and at least say hello and see my magnificent office.

Note: The President spoke at 10:18 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Transportation Samuel K. Skinner. The proclamations are listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Following a Meeting With Secretary of State James A. Baker III on Middle East Peace Talks

May 17, 1991

The President. Let me just say that I've just received a full report from Secretary Baker on his travels to the Middle East. I've also been on the phone, as has Secretary Baker, with President Mubarak of Egypt. And my assessment after hearing the report from Secretary Baker is that there is real cause for optimism.

And we will continue to work this process. We're not about to stop. We're going to continue to do that. And progress has been made. And so, when you're working a problem this complicated, you just keep on plugging away. And as I said to some of you all yesterday or the day before, a lot of this has got to be conducted with quiet diplomacy.

It's a very difficult problem the Secretary has been working. I thank him for this endless amount of travel he's put in. But the point I wanted to make, after assessing his report, is that there's reason for optimism. Good reason for optimism.

Q. What is the reason?

The President. A lot of these things have to be quiet when you're talking about diplomacy.

Q. Why can't we have any reasons?

The President. You've got some. You can see what's already been done. Everybody was writing off Saudi Arabia earlier on, and the GCC countries have made a pretty good statement.

So, there's plenty of reason. But I'm not going to go into any detail with you, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International], because I've told you that the way to solve this conundrum is to not get these parties' position by public statements.

Q. Well, will there be a peace conference?

Q. What is the next step?

Q. Will Secretary Baker go on another trip?

Q. Mr. President, are you giving any thought to inviting them to a conference in