

Government was too big and spent too much, and so he lowered taxes and spending, cut redtape, and began a peacetime boom, the longest in American history.

Some men reflect their times. Ronald Reagan changed his times. And nowhere was that more true than abroad where he championed the holy grail of liberty. Mr. President, you helped make ours not only a safer but far better world in which to live. And you yourself said it best. In fact, you saw it coming. We recall your stirring words to the British Parliament. Here were the words: "the march of freedom and democracy . . . will leave Marxist-Leninism on the ashheap of history."

Few people believe more in liberty's inevitable triumph than Ronald Reagan. None, none was more a prophet in his time. Ronald Reagan rebuilt our military; not only that, he restored its morale. And when I became President, President Reagan passed on to me the most dedicated and best equipped fighting force that the world has ever seen.

He signed also the INF treaty, the first agreement to eliminate a whole category of nuclear weapons. And it was a treaty that lay the foundation then for START I and the historic START II agreement that President Yeltsin and I signed 2 weeks ago.

Ronald Reagan sought a world where nations could talk, not die, over differences and a world of prosperity, peaceful competition, and freedom without war. And he helped achieve it, helped end the cold war.

When Ronald Reagan's favorite President died in 1945, the New York Times wrote, "Men will thank God on their knees a hundred years from now that Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the White House." Well, Mr. President, it will not take a hundred years; millions thank God today that you were in the White House.

You loved America, blessed America, and with your leadership certainly helped make America that shining city on a hill. All this explains why today Ronald Reagan becomes only the third President to receive the Medal of Freedom, the first to receive it in his own lifetime. He's a man whose life embodies freedom, who nurtured freedom as few Presidents ever have.

And so now, Mr. President, let me invite you, sir, to join me as Major Wissler reads the citation for the Medal of Freedom. Please come up.

Note: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. Maj. John Wissler, USMC, was Marine Corps Aide to the President.

Remarks on Presenting the National Security Medal to Admiral Jonathan T. Howe and an Exchange With Reporters

January 13, 1993

The President. John, welcome. This is a surprise. [Laughter] [Inaudible]—are very proud to award you the National Security Medal. And I would ask Bill Sittmann to read a very quick citation. We're sorry to blindside you like this, but the only way we knew that you'd show up is if you didn't know about it. [Laughter]

[At this point, William F. Sittmann, Executive Secretary, National Security Council, read the citation, and the President presented the medal.]

The President. Well, that is the under-

statement of the year, but we are very, very proud of you. And it is well-deserved, and great, honorable service to your country. Particularly, I want to thank you for all you've done here.

[Inaudible]—this, that goes with it. I thought you looked good sitting over there at that desk—[laughter]. I hardly got him out of there, I'll tell you. [Laughter]

Allied Action in Iraq

Now, you wanted to ask a question on the military action. Let me simply say that once again the American military, in coalition

with strong allies, has performed in a superb fashion. Our planes are all accounted for. I've not yet seen a damage assessment or results of the strike. But they did the right thing, and the coalition did the right thing. I have said before that we are determined that Saddam Hussein will abide by the United Nations resolutions, and we're very serious about that.

I can say with confidence here, and I think it's important, that I'm confident Governor Clinton, the President-elect of the United States, feels that way too. I have talked to him before these strikes hit, and he as much as told me that, and then I've heard statements out of Little Rock. But I think that's a very important message to go not just to our coalition forces, that we have every intention of working together in the future as we have in the past, but to Saddam Hussein who has violated the resolutions.

Q. Do you think it will work?

The President. Well, I don't know what "work" means, but I am confident that when I—I will continue to insist that he abide by these resolutions. We've taken action, and I hope that will convince him he must do that. And I'm as confident that President Clinton will do this and feel the same way after the 20th.

Q. Did you have any reservations, sir, doing it so close to the end of your term in office?

The President. No, absolutely not. I'm President until the 20th, and I will run foreign policy and make these kinds of decisions as long as I'm President. We will keep the new team fully informed. And I believe they've been very generous and gracious in saying that we have done that. General Scowcroft is in almost daily contact with the transition people from the national security field, and then I know Dick Cheney's had good visits with, as has Larry Eagleburger, with the people coming in. So we'll just keep it closely informed. But I have no reservations at all. You've got to do what you have to do. And there should

be no question about that.

Q. Sir, was there any particular action by Saddam that triggered the strike?

The President. Just his failure to live up to the resolutions and then his moving around of these missiles in a way that was unacceptable to the coalition of the United Nations.

Q. Are you prepared to order additional sites to be—[inaudible]—

The President. I will conduct myself until the 20th just as I have in the almost 4 years gone by, and that is, I don't say what we might or might not do. But I would think that soon Saddam Hussein would understand that we mean what we say and that we back it up. And I have no intention of changing that approach to life in the last 6 or 7 days of my Presidency.

Thank you very much. I should say I'm very proud of the pilots and those who supported the pilots. Once again, we see what superb training we have and what dedicated young people are out there. I must say I worried when I heard premature stories of this because I hesitate ever—I would never put a young flyer in harm's way because of leaked information. Fortunately the leaks that occurred on this did not result in the loss of life for any of our pilots. But I will always—I would just urge everybody to guard against that, whatever administration is here, now or in the future.

Q. Did they encounter any kind of resistance?

The President. We'll have more to say about that when we do a fuller briefing on the mission itself. But any time you divulge plans when somebody's life is at stake, it is not a good thing to do. I just never understood it. I don't like it. I saw it happen today. But that's history now. But we ought to have more responsibility when you risk the life of a single U.S. pilot.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.