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Remarks to Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland

April 1, 1993

Thank you very much, Admiral Lynch, men and women of the brigade. I'm delighted to be here. They say there's no such thing as a free lunch, but I thought as President I'd come here and test the theory.

In a few moments I am going to deliver a speech, as Admiral Lynch has already said, to the newspaper editors of our country about our Nation's purposes in the world and specifically about what we should be doing now to promote democracy in Russia and in the other Republics of the former Soviet Union. The struggle to build free societies in those new nations is probably the great security challenge of our age, one of the greatest opportunities the United States will have. And how we do this job, in many ways, will shape the future that you will have in our Armed Forces.

I believe we must do what we can to support the reform movement and to support democracy, a precious commodity anywhere in the world. And that is why my first trip out of the United States as President will be to Vancouver, Canada, this weekend to meet with the Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

The success of the changes that he and the other reformers are advancing will ultimately have an impact on the life of every American but especially an impact on your lives. If Russia can continue to be a partner with us addressing global concerns and dousing the flames of regional crises, then it is less likely that you and the men and women under your command will have to be sent into harm's way during my term or under some future President.

I respect the difficulty and the danger of the work that the men and women of our armed services perform. I understand that in a new way now, because last month I watched the flight operations on the deck of the United States ship *Theodore Roosevelt*. And I was deeply saddened a few days after I was there to learn that five naval aviators lost their lives returning to the *TR* from operations in support of our presence in the former Yugoslavia.

The conflict in that region and those we see elsewhere remind us that we have entered a new world that will test us in new ways. Our Navy will play an important role in getting us past those tests, as it has throughout our history. To help the men and women in our Navy perform effectively and safely, we will need talented, committed leadership as never before.

Leadership can take many forms. It can be command of a ship or a submarine, of an aviation squadron, or of a naval base. It can show itself in training commanders by teaching leadership to the next generation of midshipmen as your instructors are doing here at the Academy. Whatever form it takes, your leadership will make an important contribution not only to the Navy but to the security of our great Nation. This is a new and a hopeful world but also one where there is still danger. I want you to know that I'm proud of you and the work you do, and so is the Nation you have chosen to serve.

Finally, although I'm sure this doesn't apply to any of you here, I read this little sign. As you might imagine as I travel around the country, I'm used to seeing such signs. [*Laughter*] Some of them are not altogether favorable. That's a good part of our democracy, that people feel free to express their views.

One of the most compelling signs that I saw was on the way from the airport the other day in New York State to the home of President Franklin Roosevelt in Hyde Park. And there were hundreds of people standing along the road in 8 degree temperature, and one person was holding a sign that said, "Just do something." So that's what I'm going to do.

In the tradition followed by Commanders in Chief in visits to the service academy, I hereby grant amnesty to the members of the brigade—the last thing the Superintendent said before I got up here was to finish the sentence so that it would not be a total and complete amnesty—from all punishments for all 4000-level conduct offenses. And even though this is April Fools' Day, that's not April fools.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. in Bancroft Hall at the U.S. Naval Academy. In his re-

marks, he referred to Rear Adm. Thomas C. Lynch, USN, Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Remarks to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Annapolis
April 1, 1993

Thank you very much, Mr. Topping, distinguished guests at the head table, ladies and gentlemen. I want to say a special word of thanks and acknowledgement to the Superintendent of the Naval Academy, Admiral Lynch, who's here with us and who came up with me. He just gave me something I was told even a politician couldn't get in this country anymore, a free lunch. [*Laughter*]

I just had lunch with 4,000 of the finest young men and women in this country or in any country, who are here at the Naval Academy. I went around the table, the table where I was sitting, and I asked every one of the young men and women who were seated at my table why they decided to come to the Naval Academy. And I wish every one of you could have heard their answers. It would have moved you immensely.

And as I go now to meet with President Yeltsin in Vancouver, I will be even more freshly reminded about what the stakes are, because as much as any group of Americans, those young people about to enter our Nation's Armed Forces have a very great stake in what will occur.

I'm delighted to be here with all of you who do so much to shape what our people think and even to give them access to what they need to know about these and other important issues. Had we met last year, if my voice had been in full flower, we doubtless would have talked almost exclusively about the economic issues facing America. And I am quite mindful of the fact that I am the first member of my party for a very long time who received a majority of the editorial endorsements of America's newspapers. That is something that I took very seriously. I was honored to receive them. And I can only hope that a year or so from now, those of you who did it will still be glad you did. In my heart of hearts, I hope that those of you who didn't will be sorry you didn't. [*Laughter*] But today, in this magnificent place in this wonderful State, I might also say I'm delighted to be joined here by my former colleague in the Governors' Association and my friend Governor Don Schaefer, the Governor of Maryland. Thank you for being here.

I want to talk to you about the events in Russia, about our policies toward the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, and about my meetings with President Boris Yeltsin this weekend. But first, I wish to speak about America's purposes in the world. That is not something we often examine, for it is human nature to focus on daily affairs most of the time. In our own lives, we do our jobs, we raise our children, we nurture our relationships, we struggle with the dilemmas of the moment one day at a time. Yet we are each guided by some sense of purpose, drawn from our families and our faith, which shapes the millions of small events of our life into a larger work that bears the imprint of our character.

And so it is in the life of a nation. Decisions command attention. Crises drive action. But it is only with an overriding sense of purpose, drawn from their history and their cultures, that great nations can rise above the daily tyranny of the urgent to construct their security, to build their prosperity, to advance their interests, and to reaffirm their values.

A clear sense of purpose is most essential, yet most elusive, at times of profound global change. A half a century ago, our Nation emerged victorious from the Second World War to discover itself in wholly unfamiliar terrain. The old empires of Europe and Asia were gone. A new Communist empire loomed. Ours was the only economy in the world still strong and dominant.

Former Secretary of State, the late Dean Acheson, later described it as a time of "great obscurity." Yet in that dim obscurity, he and George Marshall and President Harry Truman and other leaders in both political parties saw