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to become a pioneer in blood preservation. And today you honor an African-American doctor at Johns Hopkins University who is truly one of the outstanding physicians of our time.

All these people show us that we don't have a person to waste, and our diversity is our greatest strength in the world of today and tomorrow. Now, members of the class of 1997, it is your time. It is up to you to honor their legacy, to live their dreams, to be the investigators, the doctors, and the scholars who will make and apply the discoveries of tomorrow, who will keep our science rooted in our values, who will fashion America's greatest days. You can do it. Dream large. Work hard. And listen to your soul.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at Hughes Field. In his remarks, he referred to Earl Richardson, president, and Harry Cole, chairman, board of regents, Morgan State University; Gov. Parris Glendening and Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy-Townsend of Maryland; and Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and an Exchange With Reporters

May 19, 1997

The President. Let me say that the United States is very, very appreciative of the leadership that Secretary General Solana has shown in negotiating this NATO–Russia Founding Act. We are excited about the partnership. It is consistent with what we believe NATO should be doing. It is consistent with our plans to expand NATO. And I think the Secretary General has done a marvelous job, and I'm looking forward to having this chance to talk with him about our meeting, I guess a week from today, in Paris, to celebrate the NATO–Russia partnership and then, of course, the Madrid summit this summer.

Secretary General Solana. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind words. What you did is a prudent thing. [*Laughter*]

The President. Go ahead.

NATO

Q. Mr. President, not to put too much of a damper on your enthusiasm, but some people are quite critical of the—questioning this NATO expansion. They're saying it will create more tension and cost more money and give us less security in the long run. Can you give assurances that this is not the case?

The President. Well, it's a question of what you believe. I believe that we have had a long cold war and two world wars in the 20th century and a 19th century full of heartache and bloodshed because people were arguing over territory in Europe. And we now have a chance to create a European Continent where nation-states, for the first time, say they're going to respect each other's borders and work together on common security problems, as we are all doing together in Bosnia. And it seems to me, to find a framework which accomplishes that and which also keeps the United States and, I might add, Canada tied to the security and the freedom and the territorial integrity of Europe, is an extraordinary achievement and gives us a chance to write a whole new chapter in the 21st century different from the one we have just written.

So I just simply disagree with those; it's a difference of opinion. I think that we're right and I believe history will prove us right and I'm prepared to take the decisions and live with the consequences.

Base Closings

Q. Mr. President, do you feel, as the Secretary of Defense does, that more bases need to be closed, more military bases? That is a politically, of course, unpopular idea.

The President. I believe that the Secretary of Defense has done a good job on this quadrennial review. And what he has shown is the following. If we're going to keep a defense budget that is modest and take care of the men and women in uniform and continue to modernize our weapons system so we will maintain the kind of technological superiority we enjoyed in the Gulf war—and hopefully, never even have to fight a Gulf war again in the near future—to do that within the dollars available, we're going to have to continue to reorganize the military. And he's going to present that to the Congress

and we will debate it and discuss it but I think there are going to have to be some difficult decisions in the future. We can't balance the budget and continue to invest in the things that we need, whether it's new weapons systems or education, without continuing to restructure the underlying governmental support system.

Let me remind you that, on the civilian side we've reduced the size of the Federal Government by 300,000 since 1993, and as a percentage of the civilian work force, it's now as small as it was in 1933 when President Roosevelt took office before the New Deal. So this is a restructuring that you see going on all over the world; it has to be done in America in the Government, and the Defense Department can't be fully exempt from it. They've managed it brilliantly, and I think they've done a good job. And it's not just the Secretary of Defense, it's also the Joint Chiefs. They've all worked on this. They believe it's in our national security interests, and I'm going to do my best to be supportive.

Most-Favored-Nation Trade Status for China

Q. Mr. President, supporting MFN for China, how will you reconcile that support with the human rights record of China?

The President. I think we're more likely, as I've said repeatedly, I think we're more likely to have a positive influence on China by engaging them than we are by trying to isolate them. I think it's a simple judgment.

Russia-NATO Agreement

Q. Boris Yeltsin said today that he would reconsider his agreement with NATO if former republics like the Baltic States were to join NATO. Is it of concern to you?

The President. I think—look, let's just take this—we're moving in the right direction. We've got an agreement that speaks for itself with Russia. And if we can continue to work with a democratic free Russia led by a man like Boris Yeltsin, I think you'll see a more peaceful world. And I think we'll harmonize these things as we go along. You can't resolve every issue at ever moment. We're moving in the right direction, and I'm quite comfortable that we're going to get there.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Young Presidents and World Presidents Organizations

May 19, 1997

Thank you very much. Please be seated. First of all, welcome back to Washington. I'm delighted to see you. I always enjoy meeting with this group. I think a lot of you know that at least—I've identified at least three errant members of my administration who have been associated with YPO, Erskine Bowles, Mack McLarty, and Phil Lader. There may be more, and if there are, they'd probably like to be back with you instead of over here with me. [*Laughter*]

I will try to be succinct about what I want to say. I know that the Treasury Secretary and others are coming on in a few moments to talk about the details of our budget agreement and some of the other issues that are cooking around here in Washington today. But I'd like to use this opportunity to make an official announcement about China. And let me just sort of set the stage by saying I think that our country has three huge questions that we are in the process of answering as we move into a new century and a very different time.

One is, how are we going to preserve a structure of opportunity for the next generation to keep the country going and growing? The second is, what kind of society are we going to be? Is this country going to work as a whole? Can we deal with problems of crime and welfare and the intergenerational responsibilities as the baby boom generation retires? And can we learn to live in what is rapidly becoming the world's most rapidly multiracial, multireligious, multiethnic democracy? There are four school districts in America now where the children come from more than 100 different ethnic groups in one school district. And the third great question is, are we prepared to do what it takes to see the United States continue to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity? Because ironically, at the end of the cold war, because we are not in two