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a couple of years to stabilize their democracy, to develop their economy, and then let's take a look at it.

Would it be better if, going into the 21st century, we had a NATO that had more membership in the southern flank to deal with those problem areas that are just beyond our borders? Of course, it would. Do we have a good chance to get there? Yes, we do. That doesn't mean that we should do it now because people might feel bad if they don't get in, because I think what we have to do is have a mature relationship with all these countries and keep working with them to get them ready—to get them ready.

I hope that eventually we will have many more countries in NATO and a much closer relationship with the countries beyond our borders that choose not to seek membership, like Russia.

Palma de Mallorca

Q. Mr. President, you will have a brief stay in Palma de Mallorca, together with——

The President. Yes. I'm very excited.

Q. ——the royal family of Spain. What do you expect to discover in the Mediterranean Sea?

The President. Beauty, mystery. [*Laughter*] Rest. [*Laughter*] I'm very much looking forward to it. The King and the Queen have been very kind and gracious to Hillary and to me and to Chelsea for as long as we've been here, and they were kind enough to come down and be there when we're there. And we're looking forward to it. I've never been there, and I'm very excited.

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much. Enjoy Spain.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:23 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A portion of this interview could not be vertified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a Madrid Summit Sendoff by American Veterans

July 3, 1997

Thank you very much. I know a good doctor. United States Navy. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice President, Commander Frank, Colonel Harmon, Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, Ambassador Richardson, Mr. Berger, General Shalikashvili and General Ralston and members of the Joint Chiefs; to the distinguished veterans and community leaders here, especially to Judge Waters. You know, when he told that horse story, I nearly fell out of my chair. [*Laughter*] But you didn't know what I was thinking. [*Laughter*] I was thinking, there have been several days here in the last 4½ years when I would be grateful just to have been called what that doctor called him. [*Laughter*]

Before I begin, I would like to state what I hope is obvious now, but I've never said it formally, and that is that I intend to nominate Deputy Secretary Goldberg to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs. We have been friends for many years. He did a superb job as the State director of veterans affairs in our home State. He was a good partner and support to Jesse Brown, who fulfilled his promise to me to be a Secretary for as well as a Secretary of Veterans Affairs. And I believe that Hershel will serve in that great tradition, and I thank him for agreeing to do so.

Tomorrow, as the Vice President said, we will commemorate Independence Day and the Declaration of Independence, which I recommend everyone read every Independence Day. The words still ring out of our abiding belief in the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And we have a lot to celebrate on this July 4th. We are at peace. We are more prosperous than we have been in a generation, our liberty more secure than ever. And for the first time throughout the world—for the first time in our time, there are more people living under governments of their own choosing than are living under dictatorships. That is an astonishing thing, that the dream of our Founding Fathers, articulated so powerfully

221 years ago tomorrow, has now come within the reach of more than half the people on the globe.

Next week we will take a historic step to secure that freedom for more people than ever before at home and abroad when we invite new democracies from Central Europe to join our alliance at the NATO Summit in Madrid. I thank those who have spoken before me for their support. Together with our efforts to build NATO's ties to Russia and to Ukraine, and through the Partnership For Peace with so many other of Europe's democracies, we're working to create a continent of Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace for the first time since nation-states appeared on that continent.

Our Nation has labored and sacrificed for this goal for more than five decades now, and now it is within reach. So in Europe next week we'll have the chance to strengthen the values we all hold dear: freedom, democracy, security. Our work in Madrid will be a capstone of our Nation's leadership throughout the 20th century and a cornerstone for a new age of possibility in the 21st century.

I saw in one of the papers today a poll that said that only 6 percent of the American people felt that they followed events in NATO closely and thought they knew a lot about it. In a way, that is a stunning tribute to the success of NATO, for no NATO member has ever been attacked. If it had not been so, a lot more people would know about NATO.

Now the time has come for us to make sure more Americans understand the significance of NATO to our security, understand the role it can play in the future, and understand why it is profoundly in the interest of the American people to go forward with this expansion. And all the people on this stage today and all of you in this room today have helped to make a significant contribution to that work. But I hope when you leave here, you will continue to speak about it to your friends and neighbors, to the members of your organizations, to the people with whom you come in contact.

There are four reasons why NATO enlargement is consistent with our values and supports our interests. First, it will make our alliance stronger and better able to address the challenges to Europe's security. As has already been said, if we haven't learned a single, solitary other lesson from the 20th century, surely we have learned that our future and Europe's are inevitably intertwined.

A NATO that embraces Europe's new democracies will be more capable of carrying out its missions, defending the territory of its members, addressing conflicts that threaten our common peace. The Czechs and Poles served beside American soldiers in the Gulf war. Already, the Czech Republic, Poland, hungary, Romania, the Baltic States, and many other Central European countries that seek to join NATO are contributing troops to our NATO peacekeeping mission in Bosnia.

Indeed, we could not have deployed our troops to Bosnia as smoothly and swiftly as we did without the critical help of Hungary and our staging ground at Taszar, which I had the privilege to visit shortly after it was established. By bringing new and capable democracies into NATO and deepening our cooperation with others who are not members at this time but are part of our Partnership For Peace, we build a stronger alliance for all future challenges to transatlantic security.

Second, enlarging NATO will plainly help to secure the gains of democracy in Europe. NATO can do for Europe's east what it did for Europe's west after World War II, provide the kind of climate necessary for freedom and prosperity to survive and to grow and flourish.

Third, enlarging NATO clearly will encourage prospective members to resolve their differences peacefully, and that will reduce the chances of further conflicts in Europe. Already, the very prospect of NATO membership has helped to convince countries in Central Europe to improve ties with their neighbors, to settle border and ethnic disputes, any one of which could have led to a conflict in a different time and under different circumstances.

Finally, enlarging NATO will erase the artificial line in Europe drawn by Stalin at the end of World War II. And NATO will now help Europe to come together in security, not be kept apart in instability. NATO's doors will remain open to all those willing to shoulder the responsibilities of membership so

that we do not replace an old division in Europe with a new one. And this is also critically important. The decision the NATO allies will make in Madrid must not be a one-time decision.

Today let me again say I thank the American Legion for its support. As the largest American veterans organization, many of your members fought to liberate Europe or to defend freedom there during the cold war. And you know that this makes it less likely that future generations will be called to fight and die in Europe.

I thank the Reserve Office Association. Your endorsement speaks clearly to the American people because it is you who could be called out of your civilian lives to make good on our commitments. And you have recognized that enlargement will make us safer and stronger.

There are those who say the Central European nations who will be invited to join NATO are not ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. But with all respect, they are wrong. The nations we are considering for membership share our values and our aspirations. They have shown that time and again. They also have the capacity to do what is required of NATO members.

As you have heard today, in 1944, in the weeks after D-Day, American and allied troops in Normandy sought to encircle 20 of Hitler's finest divisions, and some of the fiercest fighting of the war resulted. Our forces raced to seal the final gap between them and to prevent the enemy from escaping into the French countryside. Two units got the job done: one an American infantry division, the other a Polish armored division, survivors of the invasion of their land who joined forces with the allies.

That gap was closed when the Poles finally linked up with the U.S. 90th Infantry at Chambois. The first American they encountered was the man who introduced me today, Captain Laughlin Waters. Now, once the pocket was shut there was another furious battle as the Panzers tried to break out. The Polish First Armored Division held a critical hilltop against a wave of counterattacks. When the Poles ran out of antitank rounds, they moved forward and repelled the enemy with only their rifles and their courage. After the battle of Falaise Gap, 325 Polish soldiers were buried near where they fell. By these graves in the heart of Western Europe, allied soldiers raised a simple sign of tribute which said in English, "A Polish battlefield."

Judge Waters, your presence here today, 53 years later, reminds us of the character of those we are about to add to NATO, of the values and interests I talked about before. They remind us of our own freedom, democracy, and security. They, too, have fought and died for freedom and democracy, for ours as well as their own. They have fought and died for the freedom and democracy we celebrate tomorrow. Our ties, therefore, have been forged in blood. And just as they were strong allies in World War II, they will be again.

So, Judge Waters, just as you and your men closed the Falaise Gap at Chambois, we must now close another gap, the gap of hope that has divided Europe since the end of World War II. We must give Europe a chance to live free and undivided for the first time ever. That is what we will do next week and in the months and years ahead, as we continue to work with Europe's democracies, strengthen NATO, and adapt it to the missions of the 21st century.

Your presence here today has made our success much more likely, and therefore, you will have something else to celebrate tomorrow on our Independence Day.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph J. Frank, national commander, the American Legion; Herb Harmon, president, Reserve Officers Association of the United States; and Laughlin Edward Waters, Senior Judge, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Statement on the Resignation of Ambassador Molly Raiser as Chief of Protocol

July 3, 1997

It is with great sadness that I accepted today Ambassador Molly Raiser's resignation as Chief of Protocol, effective July 24. But it is with even greater thanks and pride that