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Proclamation 7021—50th Anniversary of the National Security Act of 1947

September 15, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The United States emerged from the crucible of World War II to face a political and military landscape changed forever by the events of that conflict. The Soviet Union, a vital ally during the war, was fast becoming an actively hostile and dangerous opponent. And, as the most economically and militarily powerful nation on earth, the United States bore the awesome responsibility of preventing the onset of another and even more destructive world war.

Recognizing these harsh new realities, and wise in the hard lessons of recent history, President Truman and America's other civilian and military leaders determined to create the structures and programs that would guarantee our national security and promote lasting world peace. The result of their efforts was the National Security Act of 1947. This single historic piece of legislation created four extraordinary institutions that continue to serve America superbly a half-century later: the Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council.

The complex task of coordinating the operations of ground, sea, and air forces during World War II demonstrated the need for unified direction of America's Armed Forces in the postwar world. The National Security Act answered that need by establishing the Department of Defense. Under the civilian control of the Secretary of Defense, and fortified by the collective experience, knowledge, and strategic guidance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the three military departments within the Department of Defense—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—began to work together as a powerful team to integrate the operation and administration of all our Nation's Armed Forces.

Today, the Department of Defense has realized in large measure the objectives stated in the National Security Act. The Armed Forces and the unified commands have achieved a remarkable degree of integration in organization and operations and remain the best-trained, best-equipped, and best-prepared fighting force in the world. Our men and women in uniform stand ready to preserve America's freedom and protect our national interests whenever and wherever they are threatened.

The Second World War also proved the critical importance of air power to the defense of our Nation. With the creation of the United States Air Force as an independent armed service within the Department of Defense, the National Security Act helped to ensure America's mastery of the skies. In the subsequent 50 years, the courage and dedication of the men and women of the United States Air Force have been a constant source of pride and reassurance to the American people.

With equal devotion, the men and women of the Central Intelligence Agency have enabled America to meet the challenges of global leadership for the past half-century. Providing ten Presidents and their administrations with the strategic intelligence to make informed decisions vital to the security of our Nation, these dedicated public servants helped America to fight and win the Cold War. Today, in a world no longer burdened by superpower confrontation, they remain vigilant in the face of more diffuse and complex dangers: from aggression by rogue states and terrorism to the spread of weapons of mass destruction and international drug trafficking.

In creating the National Security Council, the National Security Act of 1947 provided the President with an invaluable forum for the consideration and coordination of domestic, foreign, and military policies related to America's security. Supporting the President, his Cabinet, and his other close advisors with sound judgment, analysis, and advice, the men and women of the National Security Council can reflect with pride on five decades of unparalleled service to our Nation. Through the East-West confrontations of the Cold War to the threshold of the 21st century, the National Security Council has played a vital role in protecting our Nation's

security and in preparing us for the challenges of the future.

As we observe the 50th anniversary of the National Security Act of 1947, we pay tribute to the vision and determination of a generation of American civilian and military leaders. Working together, they established the remarkable institutions we celebrate this week; institutions that have helped to secure the peace and prosperity that America enjoys today. The success of their efforts and of the historic legislation enacted half a century ago is reflected in an outstanding record of achievement: nuclear war averted, the Cold War won, and the nations of the world turning to democracy and free markets.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 14 through September 20, 1997, as a time to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Security Act of 1947. I call upon all Americans to observe this anniversary with appropriate programs and activities celebrating the accomplishments of this legislation and honoring the service and sacrifice of the thousands of dedicated Americans who have strived to carry out its mandate for the past five decades.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

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Remarks at the 50th Anniversary of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia

September 16, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much, Director Tenet, Mrs. Tenet, Mr. Berger, Mr. Brandon, Senator Shelby, and Congressmen Gilman, Bishop, and Goss, and Congresswoman Harman. Someone told me that Secretary Cohen was here, but I haven't seen him yet. I will acknowledge him whether he is or not. He's a great friend of this agency.

To the men and women of the CIA family, past and present, I am delighted to be with you here today. I appreciate what George Tenet said. The last couple of years, I've been glad to see anybody or anything turn 50. [*Laughter*] Someone I know extremely well is turning 50 this year, along with the CIA, but it is still a classified state secret. [*Laughter*]

When George was sworn in, he promised to uphold the highest standards of this agency to deliver intelligence that is clear, objective, without regard to political consequences. That's just exactly what we want from our intelligence community, what we've come to expect from George, and what I have come to expect from all of you. I thank you very much for your service on this 50th anniversary.

Today we salute the men and women of the CIA for service, sacrifice, and selfless dedication on behalf of our Nation. We look back on the contributions of the agency in promoting America's interests and preserving peace. We commit ourselves on the verge of a new century to help keep America the world's leading force for freedom and peace in the future no less than in the past.

When President Truman created the CIA under the circumstances that George mentioned a few moments ago, few could have imagined how the world would look a half-century later. Two years after the Second World War, Europe was still in ruins, economies in turmoil, the Iron Curtain descending. The values upon which our Nation was founded and for which we had fought so dearly seemed under siege from Europe to Asia. But now Europe is at peace, Russia increasingly is our partner, the cold war belongs to the past. The tide of market democracy has reached the shores of every continent.

For the first time in history, more than half of all the world's people live under governments of their own choosing. Former adversaries are becoming new allies; former rivals, new partners and friends. I think it is important on this day to note, without res-