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soldiers I met earlier today from the 2d Infantry Division; readiness for our sailors in ships at sea, so vital to our efforts, particularly now, to contain the weapons of mass destruction threat of Saddam Hussein; readiness for our strategic and tactical air forces, crucial in meeting our security challenges in the Gulf, in Bosnia, here in Korea, indeed, all around the world.

Thursday is Thanksgiving. I know that your loved ones back home are thinking about you here, proud of your accomplishments, your service, your kindness, and your strength. I'm happy today to be bringing to you some prepaid phone cards generously provided by AT&T so you can call your families and friends across the ocean for free.

I hope that all Americans—all Americans, not just those who receive a call on Thanksgiving Day—as they sit down to their turkey and give thanks for all our blessings, will consider the debt of gratitude we all owe to our men and women in uniform. You have made the world a better place, and you will continue to do so. You have made us very proud, and we will continue to be very proud.

I thank you. I wish you well. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:46 p.m. at the U–2 hangar. In his remarks, he referred to M. Sgt. Tony Avalos, a flight engineer with the 31st Special Operations Squadron, who introduced the President and is credited with saving the lives of two aircraft crash victims in June; Gen. John H. Tilelli, Jr., USA, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, United States Forces Korea, and Combined Forces Command Korea; Lt. Gen. Joseph E. Hurd, USAF, Commander, and Brig. Gen. Paul R. Dordal, USAF, Vice Commander, 7th Air Force; Brig. Gen. Robert Dierker, USAF, Commander, 51st Fighter Wing; and U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Steven W. Bosworth. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Micronesian Island Leaders in Agaña Heights, Guam

November 23, 1998

Thank you very much, Governor and Geri. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to be here. I want to begin by thanking Dan and Ehlysa for their wonderful art work and all the other children who gave me this. I will read this on the way home and treasure it always.

I'd like to thank Congressman Underwood for joining us, and for joining us on the long trip to Japan and Korea we have just taken, along with Senator Baucus and Congressman Pomeroy and Congressman Abercrombie. I'd like to thank the Lieutenant Governor, Lieutenant Governor Bordallo, who is, I believe, now the longest serving member of the Democratic National Committee. We thank her for her service.

Governor Gutierrez has been a good friend of mine and a great advocate for the people of Guam. He and Congressman Underwood I think clearly give this island the most forceful, clear, and detailed advocacy that it has probably ever had. And I thank him for inviting me here. I promised him I would come, and I'm only sorry it took me so long to keep my word. I can tell you know, just looking out at this view behind you, I don't want to leave. And I'm trying to think of some reason to stay.

I'd also like to say a particular word of appreciation to the leaders of so many islands who have joined us today: Governor and Mrs. Tenorio of the Northern Marianas; Governor Sunia of Samoa; the Presidents of the sovereign states of Micronesia who are freely associated with the United States, President Nakamura of the Republic of Palau, President Kabua of the Marshall Island of Atolls, President Nena of the Federated States of Micronesia who is joined by the Governors of his States. Let's give them all a big hand. I am delighted that they are here today. [*Applause*]

As I said, I have been invited here several times by the Governor and the Congressman. Three years ago, Hillary had a chance to come here to see the beauty, to experience the hospitality, to learn about the culture. She told me and has told me regularly for the last 3 years that I needed to come to Guam. So now that I have satisfied all of my friends and my wife—[*laughter*]—I can only say it obviously took me too long to make the decision. I am honored to be here.

I know why so many call this part of the world paradise. You have some of the most

important coral reef systems anywhere in the world. And I want to commend you for your stewardship of these reefs and for creating five new marine reserves. I want to invite Governor Gutierrez as well as Governors Sunia and Tenorio to serve on America's Coral Reef Task Force, part of our efforts to preserve the quality of the oceans, the marine biology, and the purity of the oceans. It's a big, big challenge throughout the world today. And I know these Governors will serve and serve with distinction. I will also ask the Congress to support your efforts to preserve these environmental treasures.

The world admired your remarkable recovery from the record high winds of Typhoon Paka last December. I want to commend your courage and resilience. The world was also grateful for Guam's heroic response to the tragic crash of the Korean airliner in August of 1997. I'll never forget the conversations I had on the telephone with the Governor during that difficult period.

Later today I'm going to have a chance to speak about the important place Guam holds in American history, in America's family, and in America's future. I want to offer some more proposals to strengthen Guam and the people of this island for the 21st century. But since the other leaders of other Pacific islands are here with us today, I'd like to ask you to give me just a few minutes, before I come out into the crowd here and shake hands, to talk about the future of America's overall role in this part of the world.

I know Governor Tenorio; I have known him from the time we served as Governors. I know that we'll have a chance to talk about important issues in our relationship. The last time I saw Governor Sunia, he invited me to visit his island, our southernmost territory, in connection with the centennial of their relationship with the United States in the year 2000. Since that will be the first election year in a long time I won't be on the ballot, I'm going to try to take him up on that invitation. I hope I can do so.

For years, our Nation has enjoyed a close, unique, and mutually beneficial partnership with the Freely Associated States. The compacts of free association have enabled us to work together to preserve peace, to foster economic development across more than a million square miles of the Pacific. It is a relationship the United States takes very seriously.

Recently, I signed Congressman Underwood's bills guaranteeing the eligibility of students from the Freely Associated States for Pell grants and extended food aid to residents of the Marshall Islands who were harmed by U.S. nuclear testing during the cold war. I'm happy to announce that we will fulfill the final commitment made in our compact with Palau: we're allocating $150 million to build a 53-mile road to help you open your largest island, Babeldoab.

In less than 3 years, important provisions of our compacts with the Marshall Islands and the Federated States will expire. It's in our mutual interest to maintain and strengthen our ties in the new century. The United States hopes to begin formal negotiations soon so we can renew these provisions no later than next October.

Earlier this year I had a chance—[*applause*]—thank you, that's good. [*Laughter*] We have isolated applause here, depending on what I'm saying. [*Laughter*]

Earlier this year I had a chance to speak with President Nena at the opening of the U.N. General Assembly in New York. The First Lady met with President Nakamura in Washington. I understand the challenges that you're facing in building your economies. I want to encourage all the Presidents of the Freely Associated States to continue their effort to promote growth, reform, and good government. And the United States will remain a partner in all these efforts.

Again, I am proud to be in Guam at our westernmost boundary. There is an old Chamorro proverb, "Our heritage gives life to our spirit." I have learned from every person I have ever met from this part of the world that there is a proud and deep devotion to heritage. I have also sensed a very great spirit. We have much to give one another, much to learn from one another. Let us resolve to preserve all of our various heritages and our strong spirits, and walk together into the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:56 p.m. at the Government House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Carl T.C. Gutierrez and his wife, Geraldine, and Lt. Gov. Madeleine Z. Bordallo of Guam; Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio of the Northern Mariana Islands and his wife, Sophia; Gov. Tauese P.F. Sunia of American Samoa; and Presidents Kuniwo Nakamura of Palau, Imata Kabua of the Marshall Islands, and Jacob Nena of the Federated States of Micronesia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Community in Hagatña, Guam

November 23, 1998

The President. *Hafa adai* [Hello].

Audience members. *Hafa adai.*

The President. What a wonderful day. What a wonderful welcome. I am delighted to be here. I want to thank Governor and Mrs. Gutierrez; Congressman Underwood; Lieutenant Governor Bordallo; Mayor McDonald; Speaker Unpingco and members of the legislature; Chief Justice; Toni Sanford, the visit host. I'd also like to acknowledge the young singers and one not-so-young singer who sang at the beginning. I thought they were quite wonderful, and I'm sure you did, too.

I want to say that I am joined today by three Members of Congress: Senator Max Baucus from Montana, Congressman Earl Pomeroy from North Dakota, Congressman Neil Abercrombie from Hawaii. And they're glad to be here as well.

Now, you heard Congressman Underwood say that he wished he could vote for me. [*Laughter*] And I was thinking, looking out at the ocean, looking at the bay, that I can't run for President again, and Governor Gutierrez can't run for Governor again, and maybe I could come here and give Congressman Underwood a chance to vote for me for Governor of Guam. Although, I think that after the speeches Mike and Roseanne gave, I'll have to run before they're old enough to oppose me, or I wouldn't have a chance. [*Laughter*]

I was sitting here thinking about all the things that you could say about Guam, but one of the things I didn't know—I heard—Bob Underwood gave his great speech, Governor Gutierrez gave his great speech, Mike and Roseanne got up and gave great speeches—one thing you should promote is that if people come to Guam, you will teach them how to give great speeches. You may have people coming from all over the world.

Let me begin my remarks with three simple words: My fellow Americans. Over the years of our administration, the First Lady and I have logged thousands of miles visiting many, many corners of America, trying to gain a greater understanding every day of the rich diversity of our Nation. No President, however, can ever claim to have seen the breadth of America without coming here to our westernmost boundary.

When the First Lady came here a couple of years ago, she came home and said, "You know, you need to go to Guam, but if you go, you might not want to come back." [*Laughter*] Every single time I have seen either your Governor or your Congressman in the last several years—every single time—they have asked me to come to Guam. Sometimes they have done more than ask. Sometimes they have insisted. Sometimes they have expected. We were about to get to the order stage before I cried "uncle" and said, "I'm dying to come, and I will be there." [*Laughter*] I thank you for making me feel so welcome today, where America's day begins.

I would also like to say a special word of appreciation to the members of America's Armed Forces who are here with us today and for the service they give our country every day. I'm proud to be here in the centennial year of the relationship between Guam and the United States. Though 15 times zones and a vast ocean separate you from the mainland, you have played an important role in the history of America and in humanity's fight for freedom.

A little over 50 years ago, Americans looked to Guam in our newspapers, on the radio, in the letters we received from our GI's. We knew then it was vital to the future of the world that the forces of freedom liberate this island.

I have just had the great honor of paying my respects at the Memorial to the People of Guam and to the American servicemen