AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

in Albania. But I know, and I want the American people to know, that we could have had many more losses but for your skill and courage. Because I know that there were many occasions when our pilots avoided firing back at those who were firing on them because they were firing from heavily populated civilian areas. And I am grateful for that, as well.

So many of you deserve acknowledgement. I wish I could name you all. I probably will miss someone, but I'm going to do this anyway, because I love to hear you cheer when your names are called. [*Laughter*] It does me a lot of good—you know, we've been up for a week and we're a little tired and you get my adrenaline flowing.

So thank you to the Buzzards of the 510th Fighter Squadron—[*applause*]—the Bushmasters of the 78th—[*applause*]—the Black Panthers of the 494th—[*applause*]—the Triple Nickle—[*applause*]—the Star Warriors and Patriots and Yellowjackets from the Navy—[*applause*]—Playboys and Seahawks from the Marines—[*applause*]—the men and women deployed to Aviano from about 90 bases around America and Europe—[*applause*]—and the crews here from Spain, Canada, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. [*Applause*] You have to teach them to scream with the same fervor with which you scream. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the people on the ground, the maintenance personnel, the weaponeers, the air traffic controllers, and the Italian citizens who work on this base and make its success possible.

I do want the American press to note that some of you have demonstrated abilities that will serve you well when you return to civilian life. The 31st Civil Engineers—[*applause*]—built a tent city here in just 4 days. And it is the envy of all the urban planners back home in America. There's no crime—[*laughter*]—decent sanitation, and extremely low unemployment—congratulations. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

I want to again, in front of all of you, express my profound gratitude for our remarkable NATO Alliance of 19 nations. This was a difficult, difficult struggle for many of our countries. It is a tribute to their people and to their leaders. When I visited Spangdahlem in Germany in May, I spoke with pilots who told me how good it felt to look out of their cockpits and see aircraft from the other NATO nations lying beside them.

Now, under the leadership of General Jackson, with all 19 NATO nations working with the Russians and with many other countries, we are there in Kosovo to guarantee security, self-government, and a chance for all the people to rebuild.

Again, I want to say I am particularly grateful to Prime Minister D'Alema and the Italian people for giving us the chance to call Aviano home and for their solidarity throughout this operation. All of you know that Kosovo was not a distant crisis for the people of Italy; it was an immediate threat and a difficult one, indeed. The threat is now receding before a new vision of southeastern Europe, one in which the pull of our common humanity and the promise of shared prosperity are more powerful than the old forces of hatred and division.

I want to say a special word of appreciation to all of you in our Armed Forces for just being here. If you think about—I want you to really think about it—you think about what Kosovo was all about. People were taught to hate people who were from a different ethnic group than they were, who worshiped God in a different way. They started out by being afraid of them and misunderstanding them. Then, they came to hate them. And then after hating them for a good while, they came to dehumanize them. And once you decide that someone you're looking at is no longer a human being, it's not so hard to justify killing them, or burning them out of house and home, or torturing their children, or doing all the other things you have heard. It all starts—it all starts with the inability to recognize the inherent dignity and equality of someone who is different from ourselves.

The composition of our Armed Forces, with people from every race, every ethnic group, every religious persuasion, from all walks of life, that make up American society—the fact that our military has all of you in it is the most stunning rebuke to the claims of ethnic cleansing.

Now, we're going home. [*Applause*] I hope it's home you're cheering for and not the fact that I'm about to quit speaking. [*Laughter*]