AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

he had shown to them. Thanks to them, after 34 years, I am proud to present you with our Nation's highest honor.

Since the creation of the Medal of Honor, roughly one in five of them have been awarded to immigrants. Today, there are over 60,000 immigrants protecting the United States in our military.

Alfred was once asked why he volunteered to join and to go to Vietnam when he was not even a citizen. And he said, "I was always an American in my heart."

Alfred Rascon, today we honor you as you have honored us, by your choice to become an American and your courage in reflecting the best of America. You said that you summoned your courage for your platoon because "you've got to take care of your people." That's a pretty good credo for all the rest of us, as well.

On behalf of all Americans, and especially on behalf of your platoon members who are here today, I thank you for what you mean to our country. Thank you for what you gave that day and what you have given every day since. Thank you for reminding us that being American has nothing to do with the place of your birth, the color of your skin, the language of your parents, or the way you worship God. Thank you for living the enduring American values every day. Thank you for doing something that was hard because no one else was there to do it. Thank you for looking out for people when no one else could be there for them.

You have taught us once again that being American has nothing to do with the place of birth, racial, ethnic origin, or religious faith. It comes straight from the heart. And your heart, sir, is an extraordinary gift to your country.

Commander, please read the citation.

[*At this point, Comdr. Michael M. Gilday, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medal. Alfred Rascon made brief remarks.*]

The President. I want to thank you all again for being here today and invite you to join our honoree and his family in a reception in the State Dining Room at the end of the hall. Thank you very much, and welcome. But don't leave until we have the benediction. [*Laughter*]

General Hicks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Col. Frank Vavrin, USA (Ret.), Chaplain Corps, 503d Airborne Battalion, who gave the invocation; and Brig. Gen. David Hicks, USA, Deputy Chief of Chaplains. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Alfred Rascon.

Statement on the Election of Stipe Mesic as President of Croatia

February 8, 2000

I congratulate President-elect Stipe Mesic on his victory in Monday's elections in Croatia. Mr. Mesic's victory is a turning point for Croatia. It brings with it the promise of genuine democracy and a normal life for Croatia's people, stronger ties between our two nations, and greater stability throughout southeast Europe. The people of Croatia have clearly demonstrated their desire to see their country take its rightful place in Europe. The United States will do everything it can to help them reach their destination. And together we will send a clear message to all the people of the Balkans that a brighter future is within their grasp.

I look forward to working closely with President-elect Mesic, Prime Minister Racan, and the new government in Zagreb.

NOTE: In the statement, the President referred to Prime Minister Ivica Racan of Croatia.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception

February 8, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you, John. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here tonight and for your support for our party. I wanted to just say a few words, and then we'll visit a little.

I did put out the budget yesterday. And I've had a great week. We had the State of the Union, and then I went to Switzerland, to Davos, to the International Economic