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Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Speech File Draft Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1993

OA/ID Number: 13477
Folder ID Number: 13477-010


Folder Title:
Veterans of Foreign Wars, 3/6/89 [1]

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	25	6	1	4

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 3/1/89 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: c.o.b. 3/1/89

SUBJECT: REMARKS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MCCLURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUNUNU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NEWMAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCOWCROFT 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PORTER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	STUDDERT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BATES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	UNTERMAYER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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DEMAREST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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HAGIN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please provide your comments/recommendations directly to Chriss Winston's office (Rm. 122, x2930) with an info copy to my office by c.o.b. TODAY. Thank you.

RESPONSE:

March 1, 1989

TO: Chriss Winston
NSC concurs, with suggested changes as marked.


Brent Scowcroft

James W. Cicconi
Assistant to the President
and Deputy to the Chief of Staff
Ext. 2702

cc: James Cicconi

1000 MAR -1 PM 1:47

(McGroarty)
March 1, 1989
10:30am
dan1

REMARKS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS WASHINGTON CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 6, 1989

Thank you. (Acknowledgements, Secretary-designate Derwinski, Mr. Cooper Holt, Executive Director of VFW, Mr. Larry Rivers, Commander-in-Chief, VFW.) It is always an honor to meet with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The love of liberty is the birthright of all men -- certainly of all Americans. That is why our nation owes a special debt of gratitude to its veterans, who freely and courageously took up the defense of freedom.

I am especially pleased to welcome the Department of Veterans Affairs to a place in the cabinet. It is a sign of America's commitment to her veterans -- of the importance we place in repaying, in some way, the sacrifices veterans have made in answering their country's call.

I want to speak this morning about a matter of the utmost importance to the VFW: keeping America strong -- today, and into the 21st Century.

Opinion is nearly unanimous that today is a time of transition in world affairs. That means our powers of

observation and analysis -- our ability to sort out change and continuity -- will be put to the test.

When it comes to predicting the future, Winston Churchill's rule is still the best. "I always avoid prophesying beforehand -- because it is much better policy to prophesy after the event has already taken place."

That's sound advice. We can't predict the future -- but we must do all we can to turn the opportunities it presents to our advantage.

I am confident we can.

We are, as you know, in the midst of a ~~serious and~~ ^{series of} systematic strategic review. I've asked the members of my national security team to look hard at the international landscape -- and to look forward, to assess the combination of security threats, technological change, and political and economic developments that will shape our security horizon well into the next century.

I am convinced that this important exercise will have lasting benefits on our national security strategy. In my address to Congress last month, I set a ninety-day deadline for ^{important work.} this ~~review~~ I won't rush the final result. The insights ~~to~~ ^{we}

A little misleading. It's not one comprehensive review but a series of reviews

Some parts will be done before 90 days

will ^{gain} ~~provide~~ into the forces we will face in the decades ahead
are worth waiting for.

Today, I want to speak about the foundations of an adequate national defense program, about the world we live in, and the challenges and opportunities we'll encounter -- and about the approach I'll take on issues integral to our national security.

Budget
message was
Feb. 9

First, the foundations. ^{A month} ~~Nearly two months~~ ago, I presented to Congress a defense spending plan that is sound, and makes sense -- both strategically and fiscally. As a sign that my Administration is serious about the deficit, I called for a freeze in defense spending in 1990, adjusting only for inflation. I am well aware that our national strength rests ultimately on the health and vigor of the American economy, and I mean to preserve both.

But our crucial military modernization plans -- and the diverse defense commitments we must keep -- cannot be achieved without additional defense funding. That is why my budget plan follows the freeze for 1990 with real increases of 1 percent in 1991 and 1992, and a 2 percent increase for 1993.

My aim is to put defense spending on a modest, manageable path of growth -- one that will allow us to modernize and maintain forces that are formidable, flexible, and ready.

Now, we've all heard the critics who tell us America can't afford the defenses I'm talking about. Well, the critics are wrong. The defense expenditures I am calling for are well within our economic means.

But in the defense debate, what we can and can't afford isn't just a matter of economics. It's a matter of vital national security, and America's place in the world. I say:

-- We can't afford to continue the downward trend in defense spending. 1989 is the fourth straight year defense spending has declined in real terms. We've worked hard to rebuild America's strength -- and it's paid off. Today, America is strong, its voice is heard, and the values we stand for are more secure.

-- We can't afford to mistake a more stable international environment as proof we can spend less on national security. The secret to our success can be summed up in a single word: strength. Let's sustain the military strength that helped turn the world situation around.

-- And finally, we can afford adequate defenses. The defense budget I am calling for in 1990 represents 5.5% of our annual GNP. That's a far smaller share of our national wealth than the United States spent on defense at any point throughout the 1950s or 1960s -- periods of rapid and sustained economic growth.

The bottom line is not a question of cost, or a question of resources. It is simply a question of will.

You have my word: as long as I'm President, America will stand fast and on the front line in defense of freedom.

Too rosy

Today, ~~the world scene looks relatively stable and secure~~
Around the world, a number of long-standing regional conflicts are closer now to resolution than ever before. The stirrings of freedom, and the advance of democratic rule are evident and undeniable. In the economic sphere, the free market is increasingly seen as an engine of growth and development unmatched by any other system.

Yes, freedom is on the march. But there are still forces arrayed against it -- regimes whose interests and systems are at odds with our own and with our allies'. And the spread of ~~weapons of mass destruction~~ ^{chemical and biological weapons} -- along with the means to deliver them -- is likely to make the flashpoints that always exist more dangerous than ever before.

We don't call CW a weapon of mass destruction

On the key issue of change within the Soviet Union, there are still far more questions than answers. There is no doubt that the changes taking place are significant and far-reaching -- but it is equally true that the ultimate outcome of the events unfolding in the USSR remains uncertain.

New
expanded
agenda

My view is that we should press for progress that contributes to a more stable relationship between the U.S. and USSR -- whether in the areas of arms ^{reduction,} ~~control~~ human rights, ~~(or)~~ regional conflicts, ^{and other global challenges.} But we must combine our readiness to build better relations with a resolve to maintain defenses adequate to secure our interests. America and her allies must recognize that -- even in light of the military cuts proposed by President Gorbachev -- the Soviet Union remains the most formidable military power facing the free world.

We must be ready to cope with change and favorable opportunities -- and ready in any event to defend our interests and ideals.

What this means in terms of national security should be clear:

We need to maintain and modernize our forces -- ^{Nuclear} ~~strategic~~ and conventional. For America and its allies, a survivable nuclear force will remain the ultimate deterrent of aggression.

We need to make a concerted effort to turn our technological strengths into a source of advantage to our national security. And that includes ^{vigorous} ~~an active and aggressive~~ pursuit of SDI.

Wrong
word!

We need to make an active effort in arms control -- to strive for increased stability at lower levels of armaments.

Oppose
Schroeder
amendment

But I will strongly oppose legislative attempts to withdraw US troops from Europe unilaterally. Unilateral disarmament is not the path to peace, security and freedom.

We need to keep our forces ready and well-trained. Our dedicated servicemen and servicewomen deserve no less.

We need to reform our procurement process to deliver a dollar's worth of defense for every dollar we spend. The place to begin is to follow through on the sensible reforms suggested in the Packard Commission report ~~on defense management~~ ^{of}

the findings of the defense management review now underway.

And we need to maintain the alliance of like-minded nations that has helped us keep the peace in the post-war era. As strong as we are, America cannot go it alone. Our allies in Europe and in Asia share a common form of government, and a common interest in peace and freedom. We must continue to work together to sustain the great collective strength and sense of common purpose that have created the conditions for unparalleled peace, freedom, and prosperity.

For forty years, our alliance structure has been the cornerstone of American security. Now, perfect agreement will never exist in an alliance of free nations. But there can be no doubt that the benefits of alliance far outweigh the inevitable differences of interest and outlook -- and the partnership of free nations has never been a more potent force than it is today.

Before I close today, I want to focus for a moment on a threat no less real than the adversaries you have battled.

DON
SNIDER
(NSC) →

I am speaking about that insidious threat to our society and our values: drug abuse. The notion that America is a nation at peace is only partly true, as long as the violence and destructive power of drugs assaults our communities.

I have sworn myself and members of my Administration to wage a war on drug abuse. This war is unconditional -- and this war must be won.

I mean to mobilize all our resources, and wage this war on all fronts. We're going to combat drug abuse with education, treatment, enforcement and interdiction -- and, yes, with our nation's Armed Services when that is what it takes. We need to break the deadly grip of drugs where it exists, and prevent the drug scourge from taking hold.

The VFW can help. Two million members, 10,000 chapters nationwide -- the VFW is a well-respected member of communities across our nation.

Today, I call on you to form a community of action. "For America, whatever it takes" -- that's the proud motto of the VFW.

You've fought for your nation once. Your nation needs you again. Today, I want to enlist you in the anti-drug campaign.

-- Meet with other leaders in your community: church and clergy, law enforcement officers. Tell them the VFW volunteers are ready to help.

-- Go to the schools. Put the full weight of the VFW behind the anti-drug education effort that provides our children the reasons and the will-power they need to resist drugs.

-- Speak to your state and local elected officials. Urge them to make the passage of strong anti-drug legislation a priority.

I'm reaching out to you, so I want to extend my help as well. Bill Bennett, the point man in our anti-drug campaign, stands ready to meet with VFW leadership, to share ideas that can help you map a strategy.

*insert on
SO youth*

The VFW has proven many times over its dedication to the health and well-being of our nation. [Ⓟ] I know we can count on the veterans of America to help us wage and win the war on drugs.

Veterans share a special bond. We have seen the face of war. We know its terrible costs. We know that Americans never willingly choose conflict. But we know as well that we must be ready and willing to respond when our interests and ideals come under threat.

Let me be clear. I prefer the diplomatic approach. Nations can and should explore every avenue toward working out their differences without resort to force or military intimidation.

But I am also a realist. I know that there is no substitute for a nation's ability to defend its ideals and interests.

Too often, we hear that we face a stark choice in coping with conflict. We can pursue a diplomatic solution -- or we can seek a resolution through military means. One, we're told, is incompatible with the other.

Well, this doesn't square with real-world experience. The fact is that diplomacy and military capability are complementary -- not contradictory. I know that creative diplomacy can help us avert conflict -- and I know that negotiations stand the greatest chance of success when they proceed from a position of strength.

The fundamental lesson of the decade now drawing to a close is simply this: strength secures peace.

America can continue to be a force for peace and stability in the world -- provided we stay strong.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

01 MAR 1989

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RESPONSE:

SMS
no comments

James W. Cicconi
Assistant to the President
and Deputy to the Chief of Staff
Ext. 2702

1989 MAR -1 PM 1:45

(McGroarty)
March 1, 1989
10:30am
danl

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 6, 1989

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We need to make an active effort in arms control -- to strive for increased stability at lower levels of armaments.

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no comment →

REMARKS:

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RESPONSE:

ok
grsw

James W. Cicconi
Assistant to the President
and Deputy to the Chief of Staff
Ext. 2702

1989 MAR -1 PM 1:40

(McGroarty)
March 1, 1989
10:30am
dan1

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MARCH 6, 1989

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But our crucial military modernization plans -- and the diverse defense commitments we must keep -- cannot be achieved without additional defense funding. That is why my budget plan follows the freeze for 1990 with real increases of 1 percent in 1991 and 1992, and a 2 percent increase for 1993.

My aim is to put defense spending on a modest, manageable path of growth -- one that will allow us to modernize and maintain forces that are formidable, flexible, and ready.

Now, we've all heard the critics who tell us America can't afford the defenses I'm talking about. Well, the critics are wrong. The defense expenditures I am calling for are well within our economic means.

But in the defense debate, what we can and can't afford isn't just a matter of economics. It's a matter of vital national security, and America's place in the world. I say:

-- We can't afford to continue the downward trend in defense spending. 1989 is the fourth straight year defense spending has declined in real terms. We've worked hard to rebuild America's strength -- and it's paid off. Today, America is strong, its voice is heard, and the values we stand for are more secure.

-- We can't afford to mistake a more stable international environment as proof we can spend less on national security. The secret to our success can be summed up in a single word: strength. Let's sustain the military strength that helped turn the world situation around.

-- And finally, we can afford adequate defenses. The defense budget I am calling for in 1990 represents 5.5% of our annual GNP. That's a far smaller share of our national wealth than the United States spent on defense at any point throughout the 1950s or 1960s -- periods of rapid and sustained economic growth.

The bottom line is not a question of cost, or a question of resources. It is simply a question of will.

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Yes, freedom is on the march. But there are still forces arrayed against it -- regimes whose interests and systems are at odds with our own and with our allies'. And the spread of weapons of mass destruction -- along with the means to deliver them -- is likely to make the flashpoints that always exist more dangerous than ever before.

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My view is that we should press for progress that contributes to a more stable relationship between the U.S. and USSR -- whether in the areas of arms control, human rights, or regional conflicts. But we must combine our readiness to build better relations with a resolve to maintain defenses adequate to secure our interests. America and her allies must recognize that -- even in light of the military cuts proposed by President Gorbachev -- the Soviet Union remains the most formidable military power facing the free world.

We must be ready to cope with change and favorable opportunities -- and ready in any event to defend our interests and ideals.

What this means in terms of national security should be clear:

We need to maintain and modernize our forces -- strategic and conventional. For America and its allies, a survivable nuclear force will remain the ultimate deterrent of aggression.

We need to make a concerted effort to turn our technological strengths into a source of advantage to our national security. And that includes an active and aggressive pursuit of SDI.

We need to make an active effort in arms control -- to strive for increased stability at lower levels of armaments.

We need to keep our forces ready and well-trained. Our dedicated servicemen and servicewomen deserve no less.

We need to reform our procurement process to deliver a dollar's worth of defense for every dollar we spend. The place to begin is to follow through on the sensible reforms suggested in the Packard Commission report on defense management.

And we need to maintain the alliance of like-minded nations that has helped us keep the peace in the post-war era. As strong as we are, America cannot go it alone. Our allies in Europe and in Asia share a common form of government, and a common interest in peace and freedom. We must continue to work together to sustain the great collective strength and sense of common purpose that have created the conditions for unparalleled peace, freedom, and prosperity.

For forty years, our alliance structure has been the cornerstone of American security. Now, perfect agreement will never exist in an alliance of free nations. But there can be no doubt that the benefits of alliance far outweigh the inevitable differences of interest and outlook -- and the partnership of free nations has never been a more potent force than it is today.

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I have sworn myself and members of my Administration to wage a war on drug abuse. This war is unconditional -- and this war must be won.

I mean to mobilize all our resources, and wage this war on all fronts. We're going to combat drug abuse with education, treatment, enforcement and interdiction -- and, yes, with our nation's Armed Services when that is what it takes. We need to break the deadly grip of drugs where it exists, and prevent the drug scourge from taking hold.

The VFW can help. Two million members, 10,000 chapters nationwide -- the VFW is a well-respected member of communities across our nation.

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You've fought for your nation once. Your nation needs you again. Today, I want to enlist you in the anti-drug campaign.

-- Meet with other leaders in your community: church and clergy, law enforcement officers. Tell them the VFW volunteers are ready to help.

-- Go to the schools. Put the full weight of the VFW behind the anti-drug education effort that provides our children the reasons and the will-power they need to resist drugs.

-- Speak to your state and local elected officials. Urge them to make the passage of strong anti-drug legislation a priority.

I'm reaching out to you, so I want to extend my help as well. Bill Bennett, the point man in our anti-drug campaign, stands ready to meet with VFW leadership, to share ideas that can help you map a strategy.

The VFW has proven many times over its dedication to the health and well-being of our nation. I know we can count on the veterans of America to help us wage and win the war on drugs.

Veterans share a special bond. We have seen the face of war. We know its terrible costs. We know that Americans never willingly choose conflict. But we know as well that we must be ready and willing to respond when our interests and ideals come under threat.

Let me be clear. I prefer the diplomatic approach. Nations can and should explore every avenue toward working out their differences without resort to force or military intimidation.

But I am also a realist. I know that there is no substitute for a nation's ability to defend its ideals and interests.

Too often, we hear that we face a stark choice in coping with conflict. We can pursue a diplomatic solution -- or we can seek a resolution through military means. One, we're told, is incompatible with the other.

Well, this doesn't square with real-world experience. The fact is that diplomacy and military capability are complementary -- not contradictory. I know that creative diplomacy can help us avert conflict -- and I know that negotiations stand the greatest chance of success when they proceed from a position of strength.

The fundamental lesson of the decade now drawing to a close is simply this: strength secures peace.

America can continue to be a force for peace and stability in the world -- provided we stay strong.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 3/1/89 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: c.o.b. 3/1/89

SUBJECT: REMARKS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MCCLURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUNUNU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NEWMAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCOWCROFT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PORTER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	STUDDERT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BATES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	UNTERMAYER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BREEDEN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>PINKERTON</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<u>WINSTON</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CICCONI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<u>ROGERS</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DEMAREST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FITZWATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GRAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HAGIN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please provide your comments/recommendations directly to Chriss Winston's office (Rm. 122, x2930) with an info copy to my office by c.o.b. TODAY. Thank you.

RESPONSE:



The Deputy Administrator
of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420

March 1, 1989

Denise Schwarz
Cabinet Affairs
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Schwarz:

Thank you for the opportunity to review President Bush's remarks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Washington Conference on March 6, 1989.

Defense as a topic for this audience is appropriate, however, not addressing veterans issues, which is the real concern of the 6,000 delegates who will be in attendance, truly would be a missed opportunity.

Politically, I do not recommend that the President use this speech without modifications. I have attached proposed language that would be an appropriate addition to the speech to more adequately address the concerns of the audience. Modification of the speech to include these brief remarks on veteran's issues, would not detract from the main message.

Please call me on 233-5514 to discuss how best to incorporate the President's position on vital Veterans Administration issues, such as the medical care funding shortfall and benefit programs.

Sincerely Yours,

Anthony J. Principi
Deputy Secretary-designate

PROPOSED INSERT FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH 2

Today, there are six times as many veterans alive as there were when the VA was created in 1930. Counting their dependents and survivors, about one-third of our population now has an immediate family involvement in veterans affairs.

This special population deserves and must have the attention of their government -- beginning at the top. A cabinet position for veterans means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has the kind of access necessary to get the job done.

Ed Derwinski's already come to see me to discuss some of the challenges facing us in veterans programs. And I can tell you Ed's a strong advocate for veterans.

In this context, I want to say I certainly understand the compelling needs of our veterans -- and the importance of providing them with timely benefits and services -- and especially with quality health care.

With the pressures the country is under to solve our massive Federal deficit, we may not be able to do everything we'd like to do in the way of adding resources for veterans programs ...

... but I'm here to tell you I don't intend to compromise -- in any way -- the words of Abraham Lincoln, upon which our veterans benefits system is founded:

"... to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

NOTE: The current VFW membership stands at 2.3 million, with 750,000 auxiliary members. The use of these figures would strengthen the paragraph which discusses VFW involvement in the community.

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RESPONSE:

1989 MAR -1 PM 1:45

(McGroarty)
March 1, 1989
10:30am
dan1

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 6, 1989

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Opinion is nearly unanimous that today is a time of transition in world affairs. ~~That means our powers of~~

~~observation and analysis -- our ability to sort out change and continuity -- will be put to the test.~~

When it comes to predicting the future, Winston Churchill's rule is still the best. "I always avoid prophesying beforehand -- because it is much better policy to prophesy after the event has already taken place."

That's sound advice. We can't predict the future -- but we must do all we can to turn the opportunities it presents to our advantage.

I am confident we can.

We are, as you know, in the midst of a serious and systematic strategic review. I've asked the members of my national security team to look hard at the international landscape -- and to look forward, to assess the combination of security threats, technological change, and political and economic developments that will shape our security horizon well into the next century.

I am convinced that this important exercise will have lasting benefits on our national security, [✓]strategy. In my address to Congress last month, I set a ninety-day deadline for this review. I won't rush the final result. The insights it

✓
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Weicher
X 587:

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Yes, freedom is on the march. But there are still forces arrayed against it -- regimes ^{+ those of} whose interests and systems are at odds with our own and with our allies[?]. And the spread of weapons of mass destruction -- along with the means to deliver them -- is likely to make the flashpoints that always exist more dangerous than ever before.

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Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 1, 1989

MEMORANDUM FOR CHRISS WINSTON
DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR COMMUNICATIONS

FROM: PATRICIA MACK BRYAN *PMB*
ASSOCIATE COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks: Veterans of
Foreign Wars, Washington Conference

Pursuant to your staffing memorandum of today, Counsel's Office has reviewed the above-referenced draft remarks. We have no legal objection to the contents of these remarks.

cc: James W. Cicconi

1989 MAR -1 PM 1:47

(McGroarty)
March 1, 1989
10:30am
dan1

REMARKS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS WASHINGTON CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 6, 1989

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For forty years, our alliance structure has been the cornerstone of American security. Now, perfect agreement will never exist in an alliance of free nations. But there can be no doubt that the benefits of alliance far outweigh the inevitable differences of interest and outlook -- and the partnership of free nations has never been a more potent force than it is today.

Before I close today, I want to focus for a moment on a threat no less real than the adversaries you have battled.

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The VFW can help. Two million members, 10,000 chapters nationwide -- the VFW is a well-respected member of communities across our nation.

Today, I call on you to form a community of action. "For America, whatever it takes" -- that's the proud motto of the VFW.

You've fought for your nation once. Your nation needs you again. Today, I want to enlist you in the anti-drug campaign.

-- Meet with other leaders in your community: church and clergy, law enforcement officers. Tell them the VFW volunteers are ready to help.

-- Go to the schools. Put the full weight of the VFW behind the anti-drug education effort that provides our children the reasons and the will-power they need to resist drugs.

-- Speak to your state and local elected officials. Urge them to make the passage of strong anti-drug legislation a priority.

I'm reaching out to you, so I want to extend my help as well. Bill Bennett, the point man in our anti-drug campaign, stands ready to meet with VFW leadership, to share ideas that can help you map a strategy.

The VFW has proven many times over its dedication to the health and well-being of our nation. I know we can count on the veterans of America to help us wage and win the war on drugs.

Veterans share a special bond. We have seen the face of war. We know its terrible costs. We know that Americans never willingly choose conflict. But we know as well that we must be ready and willing to respond when our interests and ideals come under threat.

Let me be clear. I prefer the diplomatic approach. Nations can and should explore every avenue toward working out their differences without resort to force or military intimidation.

But I am also a realist. I know that there is no substitute for a nation's ability to defend its ideals and interests.

Too often, we hear that we face a stark choice in coping with conflict. We can pursue a diplomatic solution -- or we can seek a resolution through military means. One, we're told, is incompatible with the other.

Well, this doesn't square with real-world experience. The fact is that diplomacy and military capability are complementary -- not contradictory. I know that creative diplomacy can help us avert conflict -- and I know that negotiations stand the greatest chance of success when they proceed from a position of strength.

The fundamental lesson of the decade now drawing to a close is simply this: strength secures peace.

America can continue to be a force for peace and stability in the world -- provided we stay strong.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

DRAFT #1.

Towler?
a veteran?

1st
DRAFT
after CW changes

(McGroarty)

February 28, 1989

8:00am

dan1

REMARKS: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS WASHINGTON CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 6, 1989

Thank you. {Acknowledgements, Secretary-designate Derwinski, Mr. Cooper Holt, President of VFW.} It is always an honor to meet with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The love of liberty is the birthright of all men -- certainly of all Americans. That is why our nation owes a special debt of gratitude to its veterans, who freely and courageously took up the defense of freedom.

I am especially pleased to welcome the Department of Veterans Affairs to a place in the cabinet. ^{of} That is a sign of America's commitment to her veterans -- of the importance we place in repaying, in some way, the ^e sacrifices veterans have made in answering their country's call.

I want to speak this morning about a matter of the utmost ^{importance} to the VFW: keeping America strong -- today, and into the 21st Century.

Opinion is nearly unanimous that today is a time of transition in world affairs. That means our powers of observation and analysis -- our ability to sort out change and continuity -- will be put to the test.

When it comes to predicting the future, Winston Churchill's rule is still the best. "I always avoid prophesying beforehand -- because it is much better policy to prophesy after the event has already taken place."

That's sound advice. We can't predict the future -- but we must do all we can to turn the opportunities it presents to our advantage.

I am confident we can.

We are, as you know, in the midst of a serious and systematic strategic review. I've asked the members of my national security team to look hard at the international landscape -- and to look forward, to assess the combination of security threats, technological change, and political and economic developments that will shape our security horizon well into the next century.

I am convinced that this important exercise will have lasting benefits on our national security strategy. In my address to Congress last month, I set a ninety-day deadline for this review. I won't rush the final result. The insights it will provide into the forces we will face in the decades ahead are worth waiting for.

Today, I want to speak about the foundations of an adequate national defense program, about the world we live in, and the challenges and opportunities we'll encounter -- and about the approach I'll take on issues integral to our national security.

First, the foundations. Nearly two months ago, I presented to Congress a defense spending plan that is sound, and makes sense -- both strategically and fiscally. As a sign that my Administration is serious about the deficit, I called for a freeze in defense spending in 1990, adjusting only for inflation. I am well aware that our national strength rests ultimately on the health and vigor of the American economy, and I mean to preserve both.

But our crucial military modernization plans -- and the diverse defense commitments we ~~cannot fail to~~^{must} keep -- cannot be achieved without additional defense funding. That is why my budget plan follows the freeze for 1990 with real increases of 1 percent in 1991 and 1992, and a 2 percent increase for 1993.

My aim is to put defense spending on a modest, manageable path of growth -- one that will allow us to modernize and maintain forces that are formidable, flexible, and ready.

Now, we've all heard the critics who tell us America can't afford the defenses I'm talking about. Well, the critics are wrong. The defense expenditures I am calling for are well within our economic means.

But in the defense debate, what we can and can't afford isn't just a matter of economics. It's a matter of vital national security, and America's place in the world. I say:

-- We can't afford to continue the downward trend in defense spending. 1989 is the fourth straight year defense spending has declined in real terms. We've worked hard to rebuild America's strength -- and it's paid off. Today, America is strong, its voice is heard, and the values we stand for are more secure.

-- We can't afford to mistake a more stable international environment as proof we can spend less on national security. The secret to our success can be summed up in a single word: strength. Let's sustain the military strength that helped turn the world situation around.

-- And finally, we can afford adequate defenses. The defense budget I am calling for in 1990 represents 5.5% of our annual GNP. That's a far smaller share of our national wealth than the United States spent on defense at any point throughout the 1950s or 1960s -- periods of rapid and sustained economic growth.

The bottom line is not a question of cost, or a question of resources. It is simply a question of will.

You have my word: as long as I'm President, America will stand fast and on the front line in defense of freedom.

Today, the world scene looks relatively stable and secure. Around the world, a number of long-standing regional conflicts are closer now to resolution than ever before. The stirrings of freedom, and the advance of democratic rule are evident and undeniable. In the economic sphere, the free market is increasingly seen as an engine of growth and development unmatched by any other system.

Yes, freedom is on the march. But there are still forces arrayed against it -- regimes whose interests and systems are at odds with our own and with our allies'. And the spread of weapons of mass destruction -- along with the means to deliver them -- is likely to make the flashpoints that always exist more dangerous than ever before.

~~And~~ on the key issue of change within the Soviet Union, there are still far more questions than answers. There is no doubt that the changes taking place are significant and far-reaching -- but it is equally true that the ultimate outcome of the events unfolding in the USSR remains uncertain.

My view is that we should press for progress that contributes to a more stable relationship between the U.S. and USSR -- whether in the areas of arms control, human rights, or regional conflicts. But we must combine our readiness to build better relations with a resolve to maintain defenses adequate to secure our interests. America and her allies must recognize that -- even in light of the military cuts proposed by President Gorbachev -- the Soviet Union remains the most formidable military power facing the free world.

We must be ready to cope with change and favorable opportunities -- and ready in any event to defend our interests and ideals.

What this means in terms of national security should be clear:

We need to maintain and modernize our forces -- strategic and conventional. For America and its allies, a survivable nuclear force will remain the ultimate deterrent of aggression.

We need to make a concerted effort to turn our technological strengths into a source of advantage to our national security. And that includes an active and aggressive pursuit of SDI.

We need to make an active effort in arms control -- to strive for increased stability at lower levels of armaments.

We need to keep our forces ready and well-trained. Our dedicated servicemen and servicewomen deserve no less.

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