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Thanksgiving Address to Troops, 11/22/90 [OA 6027]

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McNally/Simon/Dooley  
Nov. 15, 1990  
Draft Five (B:MARINES)

**PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: TELEVISED THANKSGIVING ADDRESS  
FORWARD MARINE BASE, SAUDI ARABIA  
THURSDAY, NOV. 22, 1990, 3:00 P.M.**

Like you, Barbara and I always try to spend Thanksgiving with our own family, a family of which we're very proud. But after spending the morning visiting with the men and women of our Army, Air Force, and Navy -- and with the Marines here today -- there could hardly be a more proud moment than sharing Thanksgiving with this family -- this American family. \\ We are here because we believe in freedom. We are here because we believe in principle. And we are here because we believe in you.

((This is quite a crowd. But I can't help but think of the warning one soldier gave comedian Steve Martin last month. True story. He said: "You'd better be funny. We've got bullets!"\\ Well, you better be nice to me -- I've got Norman Schwarzkopf.)

As we gather, it is dawn in America. Soon mothers and fathers across the land will rise to set coffee on the stove and turkeys in the oven, and so begin a day of thanksgiving and remembrance. Driving by the farms and the cities in the early morning light, the windows all look the same. But inside each house and apartment there are people with stories to tell, there are families bound together in hope and love. And believe me on this: hour by hour, day by day, in all those homes, in all those families, you here in the desert are very much on their minds.

Thanksgiving is the oldest, some say the most American of holidays, dating back to our very origins as a people. It comes

without fireworks or presents, without colored lights or colored eggs, without costumes or masks or midnight horns.

It is a day apart from all others. A day of peace. A day of thanks. A day to remember what we stand for -- what it means to be an American -- and why our forbearers sacrificed so much to cross an ocean and build a great land.

And on this day, having left your families, it is fair for you to ask "Why are we here?" And I have not one answer -- but four -- four key reasons why we're here making a stand in defense of peace and freedom -- instead of home watching Denver play the Detroit Lions. Four rules actually -- four simple rules that were inspired by a letter Barbara and I received from the grandparents of a three-year-old New Hampshire kid named Kyle Averill. Kyle knows his daddy's over here fixing planes. But he knows something else, too. Because when a picture of the Iraqi dictator appeared on the evening news, he told his grandparents: "He's the bad man -- 'Sadly Insane.'" \\\

It seems that even a three-year-old, almost instinctively, understands why we must face down this dictator. So here are four rules -- rules we've lived by as a nation -- rules I think even Kyle would understand.

Rule #1: Stand Up To Bullies. At its core, our mission is about fighting aggression -- and preserving the sovereignty of nations. We must ensure that Iraq's aggression is not rewarded. Because a bully unchecked is a bully unleashed.

Last August, for the second time in less than 10 years, the

world's most brutal dictator set out to wipe another country from the face of the Earth. Kuwait awoke to smoldering ruins and cold-blooded troops, the fire and ice of Saddam Hussein.

Now Kuwait is struggling for survival, an entire nation held hostage. Maybe you can strike a name from the maps. But you can't strike a Nation from the hearts of its people. The invasion of Kuwait was without provocation. The invasion of Kuwait was without excuse. And the invasion of Kuwait will not stand.

What we're confronting is a classic bully, who thinks he can get away with kicking sand in the face of the world. So far we've acted with restraint, as is our way. But the bully is making the mistake of his life if he confuses an abundance of restraint with a lack of resolve. \\\

Rule #2: Stick Together. Our mission is also about keeping our word, and standing by old friends when they ask for our help. Because Iraq's aggression is not just a challenge to the security of Kuwait and other Gulf neighbors -- but to the better world we all hoped to build in the wake of the Cold War. \\\

Last year, on a snowy Thanksgiving Eve at Camp David, I spoke to the American people about the newly fallen Berlin Wall -- and the chunk that sits on my desk as a reminder of America's steadfast role in the world-wide explosion of freedom. But now the march of freedom is threatened by a man clearly bent on gaining a chokehold on the world's economic lifeline. We just saw it in Czechoslovakia, where the progress of their peaceful revolution has already been damaged by the shockwaves from Iraq's

aggression. We're not talking about the price of our gas -- but our hopes for our kids. We're talking about the kind of world we want to live in.

Rule #3: Stop The Terror. We've all heard of atrocities in Kuwait that would make the strongest among us weep. Mass hangings. Babies pulled from incubators and stacked like firewood on the floor. Kids shot for failing to display photos of Saddam. It's gut-wrenching. But though Iraqi outrages have turned our stomachs -- we will not turn our backs. \\\

And we won't walk away while Iraq toys with U.S. hostages. It's time to stop the terror. Time to put an end to Saddam's cruel bazaar -- bartering in human beings as in the days of slave trade. For if we let Iraq get away with this now -- Americans will pay a price in future hostage-taking for decades to come.

Last, Rule #4: Freedom isn't Free. Saddam Hussein is pouring every petro-dollar in his warchest into weapons of terror and mass destruction. And now we've learned he's developed the capability of arming ballistic missiles with chemical and biological weapons.

No President is quick to order American troops abroad. But there are times when any nation that values its own freedom must confront aggression. Sometimes it's a question of some pain now to avoid even worse pain later. In World War II, the world paid dearly for appeasing an aggressor who should -- and could -- have been stopped. We're not going to make that mistake again. \\\

As in World War II, the threat to American lives from a

seemingly distant enemy must be measured against the nature of the aggression itself. A despot who seeks not to honor God -- but to play God. Whose first act in office was to execute some of his closest friends. Who has used or threatened force against all his neighbors. Who has gassed his own people, innocent women and children, unleashing weapons of mass destruction considered unthinkable in the civilized world for over 70 years.

Think of it: No one knows what innocents Saddam Hussein will attack in the future, or what new weapons of mass terror he will buy for his arsenal down the road. But we do know this: **Saddam Hussein has never possessed a weapon he didn't use. \\\**

Four simple rules. Any one would be enough to explain why Iraq's unprincipled, unprovoked aggression must not go unchallenged. Taken together, it's a compelling case for your mission.

Over the past four months you have launched what history will judge as one of the most important deployments of allied military power since 1945. And I have come here today to personally thank you. The whole world is watching. And the whole world is with you. \\\

A united world has spelled out its objectives in 10 U.N. Security Council resolutions. To force Iraq to comply, we and our allies have forged a strong diplomatic, economic, and military strategy. But the regime still hasn't gotten the message. Maybe they're confused by their own propoganda -- this ridiculous radio broadcast the Marines labelled "Baghdad Betty." \\\ ((All she plays are oldies. So one guy suggested we send Iraq a tape

of "M.C. Hammer" and a note that says: "This is how we entertain ourselves -- just imagine how we fight.")) \\\

We still hope for a peaceful settlement. But we must make all options credible. It may take the sight of cold hard steel to get him to face the cold hard facts. So you're here to "pump up the volume" -- to ensure the coalition an adequate, offensive military option. Like the man says: "It's hammer time." \\\

The world is still a dangerous place. And those in uniform will always bear the heaviest burden. I know something of what you endure. The waiting. The uncertainty. The demands of family and military life. We want every single American home. And this we promise: No American will be kept in the Gulf a single day longer than necessary. But we won't pull punches: We are not here on an exercise. This is a real-world situation. And we're not walking away until our mission is done.

I think of Lt. Mary Danko, a flight nurse who volunteered for Saudi Arabia. Her husband, a C-130 navigator, was already flying in support of Desert Shield. When asked if leaving their young baby with relatives was a hard thing to do, Mary said: "We're needed. It's the right thing to do." When someone asked: "But what about the kid?" Mary explained: "We're doing it for the kid." \\\

As we meet, it is dawn in America. Church bells ring -- an hour of prayer, a day of rest, a nation at peace. And especially today, there is no way Americans can forget the contribution you are making to world peace, and to our country. Whenever we see

"Old Glory" snapping in the breeze, we think of you. Whenever we hear the words of "The Star-Spangled Banner," we think of you. Whenever we enjoy the boundless opportunities of a free country, we think of you. \\\ Year after year, on this special day, no doubt each of you has given thanks for your country. This year, your country gives thanks for you. \\\

And so I would ask at this moment -- of all who are here, of all who can hear my voice, of all faiths and all walks of life -- today is Thanksgiving -- and please join with us now as we bow our heads in a brief moment of silent prayer. \\\

[[PAUSE]]

This has been an unforgettable visit. Not an hour will pass that you will not be on my mind. And just remember, you may be out of America's sight, but you will never be out of America's heart. And so we leave you -- with a lump in our throats -- and a prayer on our lips. God bless you and watch over you. And God bless the United States of America.

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