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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
REMARKS TO
THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD ACADEMY COMMENCEMENT
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT
MAY 17, 2000**

Acknowledgements: Secretary Rodney Slater, Admiral James Loy; Rear Admiral Douglas Teeson; Captain William P. Dillon; Distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps; Dr. Haas; all the members of the armed forces who are here; honored guests; family and friends; and most of all, the class of 2000. Let me start by saying congratulations.

This is the appropriate place for me to deliver my last service academy speech as President. This class came to Washington and marched in my second Inaugural parade. I was honored that day to salute you as fourth class cadets. And I'll be even prouder at the end of this ceremony to salute you as officers. Before we begin, I want to hear you salute the people who stood behind you the past four years - your families and friends.

The road between Swab Summer and today has been long. You survived the rigors of academic life -- and the Superintendent's challenge to "Go Books."¹ You survived countless games of football and volleyball against the officers -- even though I'm told they trounced you every time.² You even survived golf balls and dog food in the wardroom. Now, for those of you who don't know what that is, that's cadet-speak for hard-boiled eggs and corned beef hash. In an informal poll, it was voted the meal most likely to make it over the rail of the Eagle.³ But after four long years, now comes the hardest part: sitting through the commencement speech. I will make one promise: I will not speak longer than it takes the average cadet to complete the spring Road Rally.

It's not going to be easy, because this class has a lot to be proud of. You have succeeded in a rigorous environment, trained to be superb officers. You've done extraordinary volunteer work, for which I am grateful. You placed first among universities at one of America's most prestigious national science competitions. You engineered Solar Splash, the top-ranked solar powered boat in the nation this year. Four of your classmates were All-American athletes. And one of your classmates even found fame and fortune on "The Price is Right."

You are also the first class in history to have an advisor who had a recurring role on the t.v. show Baywatch. Such is the love of cadets for New London that Eric Kowack chose to give up that tour, come back, and teach classes on personal finance.

But it is at soccer games where your spirit came out the most. As I understand it, this class received more letters from opposing class Presidents complaining about heckling at soccer games than any other class in history. I'm not sure if any of you got in trouble for that. But

¹ "Go Bears" is the school's rallying cry at sports games, but the Superintendent likes to say "Go Books."

² At a dinner-dance this past weekend for graduating seniors, class advisor Eric Kowack told cadets that the officers "trounced the cadets every time" they played pick-up games together.

³ The Eagle is the tallest ship flying the Stars and Stripes in America. It's the ship all cadets train on, and earn their "sea legs" on.

pursuant to longstanding tradition, as Commander in Chief, I hereby grant amnesty to all candidates marching tours or serving restrictions for minor offenses.

This class was destined to be special, because it is the first Coast Guard class to graduate in the 21st Century. Today, I want to talk about the challenges we face today, about how we can protect our nation and uphold our values in the face of changing threats to our national security.

The waters off this shore have seen a lot of history over three centuries. When you walk into the West Wing of the White House, hanging about 30 feet from the Oval Office is a painting of the first naval battle of the War of 1812. It happened off the coast of New London. That day, a British frigate called the *Belvidera* was chased by five American warships. Interestingly, three of those ships were called the *President*, the *United States*, and *Congress*. History tells us the *President* was the fastest ship. But unfortunately, the *Belvidera* got away because at a crucial moment, the *President* suffered significant damage. Now, I'm not sure exactly what caused it. But I am curious to know where *Congress* was at the time.

Compare that to the picture that will be painted in these same waters this summer, when the *Eagle* leads ships from more than 60 nations -- including Great Britain -- into New London Harbor. It will be the biggest, broadest gathering of its kind in history. Rather than coming in war, those ships will be sailing in peace. It is a strong symbol of the age we are living in today.

This is a time of great hope. For the first time in history, more than half the people of the world live under governments of their own choosing. It is a wonderful sign of the times that two of the cadets who are graduating today come from nations (Russia and Bulgaria) that were our adversaries when they were in the fifth grade -- and we don't think twice about it.

We are in the midst of a profound revolution, the most sweeping since the Industrial age. Globalization is tearing down barriers and building new networks among nations and people. And globalization itself is driven by a revolution in technology, particularly information technology. It's changing the way we all do business - including the Coast Guard. A decade ago, a cadet assigned to a buoy tender had to go through an elaborate process to place buoys. Three people would stand back to back, tracking horizontal sextant angles and then comparing those readings to hand-drawn navigational grids - with a lot of yelling back and forth. Today, all that work is done instantly by satellites and computers through the Global Positioning System.

This revolution can empower individuals in incredible ways. In America today, unemployment is less than four percent. At the Native American reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, it's 70 percent. In part, this is because the people there don't want to leave the land of their ancestors. But last Christmas, I bought some gifts on-line from Pine Ridge. With the Internet, they have the potential to spread the beauty of their culture without leaving their land.

But last week, we saw a very different example of how technology has changed our lives. The same Internet that is empowering Pine Ridge also apparently empowered a student sitting in the Philippines to launch a computer virus that -- in just a few hours -- spread through more than 10 million computers and caused billions in damage. Here is a central reality of our time: the advent of globalization and the revolution in technology have magnified both the creative and the destructive potential of every individual on the planet.

Most of us have a vision of the 21st century world that sees the triumph of peace, prosperity and personal freedom. We have amazing new tools like the Human Genome Project to realize ancient dreams: to lift lives, prevent disease, and protect our environment.

But we must understand the other side of the coin: the same advances bringing the world together also are making the tools of destruction deadlier, cheaper, and more available to those who wish us harm. They are making us more vulnerable to problems that arise half a world away, to terror, weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking and other organized crime. Today, we face a fateful struggle between the forces of integration and the forces of disintegration. And the phenomenal explosion of technology can be the servant of either side -- or both.

Let me be clear: our traditional national security concerns have by no means vanished. We must manage our relationships with great and potentially great powers in ways that protect and advance our interests. We must continue to maintain strong alliances, to have the best-trained, best-equipped military in the world, and to be vigilant that regional conflicts do not threaten us.

One of the big question marks of the 21st Century is China. Will China emerge as a partner or an adversary, as a society that is opening to the world or making trouble in the world? Next week, we have an historic opportunity to influence that question in the right way. China has agreed to open the largest market in the world in order to join the World Trade Organization. We can accept that opening or reject it. If Congress votes to normalize trade relations with China, it will help move China in the right direction. But if Congress votes no, it would be inviting a future of dangerous confrontation and constant insecurity while foregoing an opportunity that could keep our economy growing.

Remember: America has just four percent of the world's population. Ninety-six percent of our customers live beyond our borders, and if we are going to continue to prosper, we must continue to sell to the world. This agreement with China gives us the opportunity to sell to a country with one-fifth of the world's people. For the very first time, our companies will be able to sell and distribute goods in China without having to relocate their factories here. That will allow us to export products without exporting jobs.

And what do we give China in return? We do not lower our tariffs one cent. We do not in any way, shape, or form make it easier for China to sell products in America. We do not give up any safeguards that protect our market now. All we must do is formally grant the same normal trade relations we give to 132 other countries. If we don't, China still gets into the WTO. But the benefits of its open market will flow to our trade competitors. America will be left behind.

But this is about more than economics. It's about the kind of world we want to build. This agreement is so overwhelmingly in our economic interest, if we reject it, the Chinese will view it as a vote for confrontation over cooperation. It will set off a downward spiral that could upset stability in Asia, diminish the chance of dialogue across the Taiwan Strait, and deflate hopes for a more constructive relationship between the U.S. and China. We will find ourselves confronting each other across Asia and the world. With or without normalized trade, we must protect our security and defend our values. But voting to isolate ourselves from a fifth of the world will make that world a more dangerous place. I am going to do my best next week to convince Congress to support this agreement.

While we deal with old threats, over the past eight years, I have also worked to adapt our national security strategy to respond to new threats to our security. This has required recognizing that flexibility is as important in this new world as force.

There is nobody who understands that need better than the Coast Guard. Last year, I ordered a task force to conduct a fresh look at the roles and missions of the Coast Guard. It found that a flexible, highly motivated Coast Guard was vital to ensuring the safety and security of the American people in the 21st Century.

It is the Coast Guard that we see most – during floods in North Carolina after Hurricane Floyd; after the tragedies of Egypt Air and Air Alaska. Today -- in an average week -- you and your fellow coasties will seize more than \$60 million worth of dangerous drugs; board 630 vessels for safety checks; intercept hundreds of illegal immigrants; investigate 119 marine accidents; respond to more than 260 hazardous chemical spills; assist more than 2,500 people in distress; and save 100 lives. That's why the American people should be very, very proud of the United States Coast Guard.

The class of 2000 will play an increasing role in defending and advancing America's security. It is important that you understand the new threats we face.

The threat of terrorism is not new. What is new is that international terrorism is becoming increasingly sophisticated. Terrorist networks communicate on the World Wide Web. Available weapons are more destructive. As borders fade and old regimes struggle through transitions, the chance for free agents looking to make a profit on weapons of destruction is greater.

In this environment, international cooperation is more vital than ever. We saw an example in the days leading up to the Millennium. We are joined today by Jordan's Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Warwan Muasher. Last December, working with Jordan, we shut down a plot to place large bombs at locations where Americans might gather on New Year's Eve. . . We then learned that this plot was linked to the terrorist camps in Afghanistan and the organization created by Osama bin Ladin, the man responsible for the 1998 bombings of our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. A short time later, a customs agent in Seattle discovered bomb materials being smuggled into the US -- the same materials used by bin Ladin elsewhere. Thankfully, New Year's passed without an attack. But the threat was real. Such cooperation must continue.

In responding to terrorist threats, ^{Today} our strategy is identical to the Coast Guard motto -- "semper paratus" -- always ready. ^{to add over \$300 million to end} Today, I am sending Congress a request for an additional \$230 million ^{critical programs} to protect our citizens from terrorist threats. These new funds will expand our efforts to collect information about potential terrorist activity; improve our ability to use forensic evidence to track terrorists, and improve our coordination with state and local officials -- as we did over New Year's -- to defend our nation against possible attacks. This request comes on top of the \$9 billion in additional funding I requested for counter-terrorism in my 2001 budget, which is an increase of more than 40 percent from just three years ago. The message is clear: if you try to bring your terror to these borders, we will find you, we will arrest you, and we will make you pay. ^{Global budget and new programs}

We've also done all we can to prevent old weapons from finding new champions. To keep nuclear weapons and materials secure at the source, we've helped Russia deactivate almost 5,000

nuclear warheads; to strengthen border controls, and keep weapons expertise from spreading. Do you know what the average salary of a highly-trained weapons scientist in Russia is today? Less than \$100 a month. We have a choice: we can do even more to help them turn that expertise to peaceful projects, or pray that all of them resist the temptation to market their expertise to those who wish us harm. Common sense says to help them. That's why we have asked Congress for additional funding to help Russia keep its nuclear weapons materials secure.

But the possibility that a hostile nation may acquire weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them to our shores is becoming real. So later this year, I will decide whether we should begin deployment of a limited national missile defense system next spring. I will base that decision on four factors: First, is the technology sound and has it been demonstrated to work? Second, what does it cost and how does that balance against other defense priorities? Third, what is the state of the threat, the likelihood that another nation could deliver long-range ballistic missiles to our shore? And fourth, what impact will it have on our overall security, including arms control and our relationships with our allies and others around the world?

There is also the threat of biological and chemical weapons. The terrorist attack we saw in Japan four years ago – when sarin gas was dropped in a subway of innocent people – underscored this danger. That is why we have established a national defense preparedness office to train the first responders to such an attack, and why we're using new technology to improve our ability to detect these agents quickly should they ever be released. It's why we've done all we can to see that poison gas and biological weapons are eliminated from the face of the earth.

The same vigilance is required for cyber-security. Fifteen years ago, critical systems like our power structures, nuclear plants, air traffic control, and computer networks were separate and manually operated. There actually was a man in overalls sitting in a shed working the valves for the local reservoir. Today, all of these systems are connected and run by computers. Two years ago, we saw the enormous impact of a single failed electronics link when one satellite malfunction disabled pagers, ATM's, credit card systems, TV and radio networks worldwide.

That was an accident - but the Love Bug doesn't seem to be an accident. The destruction one person can bring about today using a computer is virtually unlimited. So we have been working to build a public-private partnership to protect America. We have developed a national plan for cyber-security. At the White House, we have brought together top minds from both the public and private sector. And I have sought increased funding to protect our vital networks. I hope Congress helps us pass it, because we must continue to stay ahead of the game.

Not all of the new threats we face come from individuals or nations that wish us harm. We've talked about new viruses - but the whole world today still is threatened by age-old infections like malaria and TB, and new ones like AIDS. In Africa alone, some countries are actually hiring two employees for every job on the assumption that one of them will die of AIDS. In other countries, 30 percent of the teachers and 40 percent of the soldiers have the HIV/AIDS virus. And it's not just AIDS – TB has infected one third of the world – two billion people – and the disease can reach our shores at the speed of jet travel.

These diseases threaten the survival of entire nations and societies. They can ruin economies. Meeting the global public health crisis is a moral imperative. And given the risk of instability and turmoil it poses to entire regions, it is a national security concern.

Last week, I issued an Executive Order that will help make AIDS drugs more affordable to people in impoverished countries. But the ultimate solution to this crisis must include the development of vaccines. Today, there's no incentive to make costly investments in vaccines for people who cannot afford to buy them. That is why I have proposed that we provide a generous tax credit that would enable us to say to private industry, if you develop vaccines for AIDS, malaria, and TB, we will help to pay for them. If we do that, we'll save millions of lives.

There's another global challenge that will greatly affect the 21st Century: the challenge of climate change. Nine of the 10 warmest years since the 15th century were all recorded in the 1990s. And if you think that's a coincidence, I'm sending you back for an extra year's study of statistics and logic. Unless we change course, most scientists are convinced both storms and droughts will intensify. Crop patterns will be severely disrupted, affecting food supplies. And the seas will rise so high that they will swallow islands and coastal areas. If that happens, all the Luders [LOO-Ders] training⁴ in the world won't save us. If we value our coastlines and farm lands, we must work at home and with other nations to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Finally, if Americans are to be secure in the new century, we must win the war against drugs. Most of that work must be done here at home, with zero tolerance for drug use, treatment for those who suffer and punishment for those who profit. But we must also fight international drug cartels and the criminal empires they finance.

Today, 90 percent of the cocaine consumed here and two-thirds of the heroin seized on our streets comes from or through one country, Colombia. Now, Colombia has a courageous new President, President Andreas Pastrana. He is asking for our help. He has worked with experts to put together what he calls "Plan Colombia." It's a comprehensive plan to fight drugs, build the economy, and deepen democracy. I've asked Congress to give it \$1.6 billion over two years. The House has passed this bill and today I call on the Senate to do the same as soon as possible. For Colombia is not just fighting for its people's lives; it is fighting for our lives. If that's not worth the investment, I don't know what is.

On all of these issues, as one of America's five armed services, the Coast Guard has a vital role. Each time America has been challenged by new threats, the Coast Guard has met them. In the eighteenth Century, the predecessor to today's Coast Guard manned anti-slavery patrols and coordinated tariff collection for our young nation. In the 19th Century, you assumed responsibility for search and rescue, marine inspection, and quarantine laws. In the 20th Century, you arrested rum runners during Prohibition, enforced environmental laws, interdicted drugs, and even delivered marines to the beaches of Normandy.

That's why we are working with Congress to secure additional supplemental funds for this year to enhance readiness. That's why my 2001 budget requests an additional \$376 million for the Coast Guard – which represents the largest one-year increase in Coast Guard funding in 20 years – including a 34 percent increase in the money you need to buy new ships. And that's why I am going to recommend to the next President that America continue to support the Coast Guard's Deep Water Project, so you have the ships and planes you need to meet the challenges that face

⁴ Ocean sailing training all cadets receive in third class year

us. We can't meet the threats of the future with a Coast Guard fleet from the past. This is an investment we must make to ensure our security in the 21st Century.

We must also ensure that the burden of protecting America's security doesn't fall solely on the shoulders of those who stand watch on our borders and coastlines. I've mentioned quite a few new threats to our security today. But there is another threat as old as our country itself. It is the risk that we will see the world beyond our borders only as a source of danger and therefore to be avoided, that we will fail to see the extraordinary opportunities of an age in which our values of democracy and free markets are finally ascendant.

With the Cold War over, some people say we don't need to play an active role in the world, or to worry about distant conflicts, or play our part in international institutions like the UN. Their alternative is either a survivalist foreign policy -- build a fence around America and retreat behind it -- or a "go-it-alone" foreign policy, where we do it our way or we won't do it at all. I profoundly disagree with both. America has been called a shining city on a Hill, but that doesn't mean our oceans are moats, and it doesn't mean our country is a fortress - nor should it be. If we wait to act until problems come home to America, they are far more likely to come home to America. And so the new threats we face are not an argument from pulling back from the world. No less than any time in our history -- perhaps more -- America must be engaged in the world, working with others to secure peace and prosperity where we can, leading where we must, and standing up for what we believe.

Nearly 40 years ago, John F. Kennedy stood on the deck of the Eagle, and reminded cadets that there is not a single person "who has sailed any of our lakes or oceans who has not at one time or another been the beneficiary of the faithful service of the Coast Guard." Today, that great tradition falls to all of you.

Think about it: for the thousands of cadets who went before you, who served our nation in times of war and in times of peace, you are the generation that has been chosen by Providence to lead this Coast Guard and this nation into a new century. Your class motto says it all: "Ducentes viam en millennium." Leading the way into the new millennium. Take that motto and make it yours. Good luck and God bless you.

One of the big question ^{marks} of the 21st Century is China. Will China emerge as a partner or an adversary, as a society that is opening to the world or ~~locking out~~ the world? Next week, we have ~~a once in a lifetime~~ opportunity to influence that question in the right way. If Congress votes to normalize trade relations with China, it will help move China in the right direction. But if Congress votes no, it ~~will strengthen the hand of the hard liners in China who are opposed to change at any cost.~~ It would be inviting a future of dangerous confrontation and constant insecurity ~~and~~ foregoing an opportunity that could keep our economy growing.

Remember: America has just four percent of the world's population. Ninety-six percent of our customers live beyond our borders, and if we are going to continue to prosper, we must continue to sell to the world. This agreement with China gives us the opportunity to sell to a country with one-fifth of the world's people. For the very first time, our companies will be able to sell and distribute goods in China without having to relocate their factories here. That will allow us to export products without exporting jobs.

And what do we give China in return? ~~Almost nothing.~~ We do not lower our tariffs one cent. We do not in any way, shape, or form make it easier for China to sell products in America. We do not give up any safeguards that protect our market now. All we must do is formally grant China ~~Permanent Normal Trade Relations status~~ the same ~~arrangement~~ we give to 132 other countries. ~~And if we don't, China will still get into the WTO. But the consequences it made to us will all go to Europe and Japan. America will be left behind.~~

But this is about more than economics. ~~This is one of the most important national security decisions Congress has had to make in a long time.~~ This agreement is so overwhelmingly in our ~~favor~~, if we reject it, the Chinese will see it as a vote for confrontation over cooperation. It will set off a downward spiral that could ~~disrupt stability~~ in Asia, diminish the chance of dialogue across the Taiwan Strait, and deflate hopes for a more constructive relationship between the U.S. and China. We will find ourselves confronting each other across Asia and the world. With or without normalized trade, we have to be vigilant in protecting our security and defending our values. ~~But everything I have learned about human nature in my life tells me that we have a much better chance of achieving our goals with China if we approach it with an open hand rather than a clenched fist. I am going to do my best next week to convince Congress to extend that hand and support this agreement.~~

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