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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT THE U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY'S 119th COMMENCEMENT
CADET MEMORIAL FIELD
U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT
MAY 17, 2000

Thank you very much. Secretary Slater, Admiral Loy, Rear Admiral Teeson, Captain Dillon, Senator Dodd, distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps, Dr. Haas, members of the faculty and staff and honored guests; the friends, family and members of the Class of 2000.

I want to begin by complimenting Cadet Christopher Burrus on what I thought was a remarkable speech, showing the devotion to the Coast Guard and the country that every American can be proud of.

I would also like to thank the family members who are here for standing behind these cadets for four years, and for making it possible for them to be here.

This is a highly appropriate place for me to give what is, for me, a very nostalgic address. It is the last speech I will ever give as President to a graduating class of one of our military service academies.

This class came to Washington and marched in my second inaugural parade. I pledged to use this term to build a bridge to the 21st century. And in so many ways, the first class of the 21st century represents that bridge.

I have been personally deeply indebted to the Coast Guard because of the military aides I have had every year I've been President through the Coast Guard office. The last one, Pat DiQuattro, Class of '88, is here with me today. They have all been outstanding people, and it made me think more and more of the Coast Guard.

You can be proud of the road you have traveled from Swab Summer to today. You've survived academic rigors, countless games of football and volleyball against officers. Even golf balls and dog food in the wardroom. For those of you who, like me, are somewhat less literate in these matters, that is cadet-speak for hard-boiled eggs and corned beef hash.

You have, as we have heard, done extraordinary volunteer work. 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 of 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."

I can't help noting that you were also the first class in history to have an advisor who had a recurring role on Baywatch. Now, Eric Kowack chose to give up that difficult duty, come back and teach classes on personal finance for those of you who don't become TV stars.

I have been told that your spirit as a class is so strong that this class received more letters from opposing class presidents complaining about heckling at soccer games, than any other class in the history of this academy. It's really nice to know you feel bad about it. I don't know if any of you got in trouble for that, but pursuant to long-standing tradition, I hereby grant amnesty to all candidates marching tours or serving restrictions for such minor offenses.

As the first Coast Guard class of the 21st century, you will face a new set of challenges to America's security, values and interests, though your mission will be consistent with the long and storied history of America's defenders. The waters off this shore have seen a lot of that history.

In the West Wing of the White House, just a few feet from the Oval Office, there's 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. You might be interested to know that three of those ships were named The President, The United States and The Congress. History tells us the President was the fastest ship. But, unfortunately, the Belvidera got away anyway, because at a crucial moment The President suffered significant damage. We're not sure exactly what caused it, but I am curious to know where Congress was at the time.

I ask you to compare that picture with the picture to be painted in these same waters this summer, when the Eagle leads ships from more than 60 nations -- including our adversary in 1812, Great Britain -- into New London Harbor. The biggest, broadest gathering of its kind in history, a strong symbol of the global age in which you will serve.

It is a wonderful sign of these times that two of the cadets who graduate in this class today come from Russia and Bulgaria, nations that were our adversaries when they were in elementary school -- and neither they nor we think twice about it; we know it's a good thing.

Globalization is tearing down barriers and building new networks among nations and people. The process is accelerated by the fact that more than half the world's people live in democracies for the first time in history; and by the explosive advance in information technology that is changing the way we all do business, including the Coast Guard.

Just for example: a mere decade ago a cadet assigned to a buoy tender had to go through an elaborate process to place the 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.

The very openness of our borders and technology, however, also makes us vulnerable in new ways. The same technology that gave us GPS and the marvelous possibilities of the Internet 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 of dollars in damage.

The central reality of our time is that the advent of globalization and the revolution in information technology have magnified both the creative and the destructive potential of every individual, tribe and nation on our planet.

Now, most of us have a vision of the 21st century. It sees the triumph of peace, prosperity and personal freedom through the power of the Internet, the spread of the democracy, the potential of science as embodied in the human genome project and the probing of the deepest mysteries of nature, from the dark holes of the universe to the dark floors of the ocean.

But we must understand the other side of the coin, as well. The same technological advances are making the tools of destruction deadlier, cheaper and more available. Making us more vulnerable to problems that arise half a world away: to terror; to ethnic, racial and religious conflicts; to weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking and other organized crime.

Today, and for the foreseeable tomorrows, we, and especially you, will face a fateful struggle between the forces of integration and harmony, and the forces of disintegration and chaos. The phenomenal explosion of technology can be a servant of either side, or ironically, both. Of course, our traditional security concerns have by no means vanished; still, 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; to be vigilant that regional conflicts do not threaten us.

In this scenario, one of the biggest question marks of the 21st century is the path China will take. Will China emerge as a partner or an adversary? Will it be a society that is opening to the world and liberating to its people, or controlling of its people and lashing out at the world?

Next week, the Congress of the United States will have a once in a lifetime opportunity to influence that question in the right way. There are brave people in China today working for human rights and political freedoms. There are brave people within the government of China today willing to risk opening the Chinese economy knowing that it will unleash forces of change they cannot control.

For example: in a country of 1.3 billion people two years ago, there were just 2 million Internet users; last year there were 9 million. This year there will be over 20 million. When over 100 million people in China can get on the Net, it will be impossible to maintain a closed political and economic society.

If Congress votes to normalize trade relations with China, it will not guarantee that China will take the right course. But it will certainly increase the likelihood that it will. If Congress votes no, it will strengthen the hand, ironically, of the very people the opponents of this agreement claim to fight. It will strengthen the hands of the reactionary elements in the military and the state-owned industries who want America for an opponent, to justify their continued control and adherence to the old ways and repression of personal freedom.

I believe that a no vote invites a future of dangerous confrontation and constant insecurity. It also, by the way, forfeits the largest market in the world for our goods and services and gives Europe and Japan all those benefits we negotiated to bring American jobs here at home.

Granting China permanent normal trading relations, it's clearly in our economic interests. But from your point of view, even more important, it is a national security issue for stability in Asia, peace in the Taiwan Straits, possible cooperation with China to advance freedom and human rights within the country and to retard the proliferation of dangerous weapons

technology beyond it. It is profoundly important to America's continued leadership in the world. That's why all former Presidents, without regard to party, as well as former Secretaries of State, Defense, Transportation, Trade, National Security Advisors, Chairs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff support this legislation.

It illustrates a larger issue I want you to think about today, which is the importance of a balanced security strategy with military, diplomatic and economic elements. I have worked hard to adapt our security strategy to the 21st century world, with all its possibilities and threats. Last year, as part of that effort, I asked the task force to conduct a fresh look at the roles and missions of the Coast Guard. What are you going to do in this new world, anyway? The task force found that a flexible, highly-motivated Coast Guard continues to be vital to our security.

We often see personally our reliance on the Coast Guard. During floods in North Carolina, after Hurricane Floyd; after the tragedies of Egypt Air and Air Alaska. Today, in the 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. And the more we travel, and the more we are connected together, the more those responsibilities and opportunities for service will rise.

So your class will play an even larger role in defending and advancing America's security. It is very important to me, as the Commander in Chief, that each and every one of you understand the threats we face, and what we should do to meet them.

First, international terrorism is not new, but it is becoming increasingly sophisticated. Terrorist networks communicate on the worldwide web, too. Available weapons are becoming more destructive and more miniaturized, just as the size of cell phones and computers is shrinking -- shrinking to the point where a lot of you with large hands like mine wonder if you'll be able to work the things before long. You should understand that the same process of miniaturization will find its way into the development of biological and chemical, and maybe even nuclear weapons. And it is something we have to be ready for.

As borders fade and old regimes struggle through transitions, the chance for free agents looking to make a profit on weapons of destruction and personal chaos is greater. In this sort of environment, cooperation is profoundly important -- more vital than ever. We learned that in the days leading up to the millennium.

We are joined today by the Ambassador from Jordan to the United States, Dr. Warwan Muasher. He's sitting here behind me; he's an excellent representative of his country. And I want to tell you a story that, unfortunately, will not be the last example you will have to face.

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 learned this plot was linked to 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, which cost the lives of Americans and hundreds of Africans.

A short time later, a customs agent in Seattle discovered bomb materials being smuggled in to the U.S. -- the same materials used by bin Ladin in other places. Thankfully, and thanks to Jordan, New Year's passed without an attack. But the threat was real, and we had to cooperate with them, with the Canadians, with others throughout the world.

So the first point I wish to make is, in a globalized world, we must have more security cooperation, not less. In responding to terrorist threats, our own strategy should be identical to your motto: *semper paratus*, always ready.

Today, I'm adding over \$300 million to fund critical programs to protect our citizens from terrorist threats; to expand our intelligence efforts; to improve our ability to use forensic evidence, to track terrorists; to enhance our coordination with state and local officials, as we did over New Year's, to protect our nation against possible attacks. I have requested now some \$9 billion for counter-terrorism funding in the 2001 budget; that's 40 percent more than three years ago, and this \$300 million will go on top of that. It sounds like a lot of money. When you see the evidence of what we're up against, I think you will support it, and I hope you will.

We also have to do all we can to protect existing nuclear weapons from finding new owners. To keep nuclear weapons and nuclear materials secure at the source, we've helped Russia to

deactivate about 5,000 warheads, to strengthen border controls and keep weapons expertise from spreading. But Russia's economic difficulties have made this an even greater challenge.

Just for example, I know you know that when you decided to become a Coast Guard officer, you made a decision that you would not be wealthy. But let me give you some basis of comparison. The average salary today of a highly-trained weapons scientist in Russia is less than \$100 a month. Needless to say, there are a lot of people who'd like to develop nuclear weapons capability who are ought there trying to hire those folks.

The programs that we fund in joint endeavors to secure the Russian nuclear force and the materials, and to do other kinds of joint research, help to give such scientists a decent living to support their families. And I think we have to do even more to help them turn their expertise to peaceful projects. We shouldn't just depend upon their character to resist the temptation to earn a living wage with all of their knowledge and education. And we have asked Congress for extra funding here to help Russia keep its arsenal of nuclear weapons secure.

Still, we have to face the possibility that a hostile nation, sooner or later, may well acquire weapons of mass destruction and the missiles necessary to deliver them to our shores. That's what this whole debate over whether we should have a limited national missile defense is all about. Later this year, I will decide whether we should begin to deploy it next spring, based on four factors that I will have to take into account.

First, has this technology really proved it will work? Second, what does it cost and how do we balance that cost against our other defense priorities? Third, how far advanced is the threat; how likely is it that another nation could deliver long-range ballistic missiles to our shore within three years, five years, 10 years, what is the time frame? And, finally, what impact will it have on our overall security, including our arms control efforts in other areas, our relationships with our allies in other countries around the world?

I also want you to know, as I said earlier, we've got to be ready for the prospect of biological and chemical warfare. We saw that in the sarin gas attack in Japan four years ago. We've established a national defense preparedness office to train first responders, using new technology to improve our ability to detect these agents quickly. And we're doing all we can to see that poison gas and biological weapons are, in fact, eliminated from the face of the Earth.

We have to do the same when it comes to problems in cyber security. Today, critical systems like power structures, nuclear plants, air traffic control, computer networks, they're all connected and run by computers. Two years ago, we had an amazing experience in America and around the world -- we saw that the single failed electronics link with one satellite malfunction disable pagers, ATMs, credit card systems and TV and radio networks all over the world. That was an accident. The Love Bug was not an accident.

So to protect America from cyber crime and cyber terrorism, we have developed a national plan for cyber security, with both public and private sector brains putting it together. We're asking for increased funding to implement this plan to protect our vital networks. That's something else I hope you will support.

We talk about computer viruses and often forget the world is also threatened by physical infection like malaria, TB and AIDS. Some people questioned me when our administration announced a couple of weeks ago that we considered the AIDS crisis a national security threat. But let me just give you a couple of examples.

In Africa alone, there are 70 percent of the world's AIDS cases. The fastest growing rate of AIDS is in India, which happens to be a nuclear power. In Africa, some countries are actually hiring two employees for every job, on the assumption that one of them is going to die from AIDS. In other African countries, 30 percent of the teachers and 40 percent of the soldiers have the virus. In addition, millions of people suffer from malaria; and about a third of the world has been exposed to TB, a disease that can reach our shores at the speed of jet travel.

With malaria, people now discuss in common parlance, airport malaria -- something people can get in any international airport in any country in the world because we're all traveling around and bumping into people from other countries. These diseases can ruin economies and threaten the very survival of nations and societies. I think meeting this public health challenge is a moral imperative and a national security concern.

I issued an executive order last week to help make AIDS drugs more affordable to people in poor countries. I propose that we give a generous tax credit to our private pharmaceutical companies to give them an incentive to develop vaccines for things like AIDS, malaria and TB, because the people who need it

most can't afford to pay for it. If we help them pay for it, we can save millions of lives and strengthen our security; if we don't, we will dramatically increase the chances of chaos, murder, the abuse of children, the kind of things we have seen in some of the terrible tribal wars in Africa in the last couple of years.

Finally, there's one more global challenge I want you to think about that I think is a security challenge. The challenge of climate change. Nine of the 10 warmest years since the 15th century were recorded in the 1990s -- nine of the 10 warmest years since the 15th century. Unless we change course and reverse global greenhouse gas emissions, most scientists are convinced that storms and droughts will intensify as the globe continues to warm. Crop patterns will be disrupted, food supplies will be affected; the seas will rise so high they will swallow islands and coastal areas -- and if that happens, all the Luders training in the world won't save us.

I want you to laugh, but I want you to listen. This is a huge challenge that can become a national security challenge. If we value our coastlands and farmlands we must work at home. If we value the stability of our neighbors and friends, and the rights of people around the world, particularly in island nations, to live their lives in peace according to their cultures and religious faiths, we must work with other nations. This is a global challenge.

And the good news is, we don't need to put more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere anymore to grow the economy. All we need is the vision and will and discipline to do the job.

Finally, we have to deal with the global challenge of narco-trafficking and drugs. We have to do a lot here at home: zero tolerance for drug use, treatment for those who suffer, punishment for those who profit. But we also have to fight these big drug cartels, and the criminal empires they finance. Ninety percent of the cocaine consumed in America, two-thirds of the heroin seized on our streets comes from our through just one country: Colombia.

Now, Colombia has a courageous new President, Andreas Pastrana, who has asked for our help to finance his comprehensive "Plan Colombia" to fight drugs, build the economy and deepen democracy. I've asked Congress to give \$1.6 billion to pay our share of Plan Colombia over the next two years. The House has passed a bill; I hope the Senate will do so as soon as possible. It is a national security issue.

For Colombia, Latin America's oldest democracy, is not just fighting for its peoples' lives and its way of life, it's fighting to preserve stability in the entire Andean region, and it's fighting for the lives of our kids, too. So, again, it's not in the Department of Defense budget in a direct way, or in the Department of Transportation budget in a direct way, but it directly affects our national security and I hope you will support it.

In all these challenges, the Coast Guard will play a vital role. You always have. In the 18th century, the predecessor to today's Coast Guard manned anti-slavery patrols and coordinated tariff collection for a young nation. In the 19th century, you assumed responsibility for search and rescue, marine inspection and quarantine laws.

In the last century, the 20th century, you arrested rum-runners during Prohibition, enforced environmental laws, interdicted drugs and even delivered Marines to the beaches at Normandy. We're trying to make sure you can do your job in the 21st century. My 2001 budget requests another \$376 million for the Coast Guard, the largest one-year increase in 20 years, including a 34 percent increase to buy ships.

I will also 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 challenges that face us. We cannot meet threats to the future with a Coast Guard fleet from the past.

Let me say just this last point. We cannot accept the fact that the burden of protecting America's security falls solely on the shoulders of those who stand watch on our borders and coastlines, on the high seas or our allies' home ground, that it involves only immediate threats to our security.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, some people have been saying, we don't need to play such an active role in the world anymore, or worry about distant conflicts or play our part in international institutions like the United Nations. I want to ask you what you think the alternative is: a survivalist foreign policy, build a fence around America and retreat behind it; a go-it-alone foreign policy, where we do it our way, and if people disagree with us, we just don't do it at all. I profoundly disagree with both.

Do you remember the story I told you about the millennium, and the help we got from Jordan, and the work we did with Canada?

It wouldn't have mattered what we had done; if they hadn't helped us, we'd have had bombs going off here as we celebrated the millennium. We have got to be more involved in a cooperative way with other nations to advance our national security.

America has been called a shining city on a hill; that doesn't mean our oceans are moats; it doesn't mean our country is a fortress. If we wait to act until problems come home to America, problems are far more likely to come home to America. I hope when you leave here today as new officers, you will be convinced that more than any previous time in history, your nation must be engaged in the world -- paying our fair share, doing our fair share, working with others to secure peace and prosperity where we can, leading where we must and standing up for what we believe.

That's why I support the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. I hope the Congress will ratify it next year. That's why I've worked to relieve the debts of the poorest nations of the world, and to help them build their economies and their educational systems; why we have worked to expand trade with Africa and the poor Caribbean nations, to deepen our economic ties to Latin American and Asia; why we work for peace in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, for democracy in Haiti, and an end to ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo; for reconciliation between North and South Korea, India and Pakistan, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. They may be along way from home but, more and more, as the years go by, you will see that in an age of globalism, our values and interests are at stake in these places as well.

Almost 40 years ago, President Kennedy stood on the deck of the Eagle, and that day, he said this: "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 you in the greatest age of possibility in human history. You are the generation chosen by providence to lead the Coast Guard into the new century. Your class motto says: *Ducentes viam en millennium* -- leading the way into the new millennium. Now you have the preparation to do it. You clearly have the courage and character to do it. I pray you will also have the vision and wisdom to take your motto and truly make it your own.

Good luck, thank you for your service, and God bless you.