

take the money from both sides.” [Laughter]

But this has been a very special evening with emphasis understandably on the Gulf. And it’s great to have so many members of the press back from the Gulf in time for this Gridiron. I know many of the reporters out there were roughing it lately. Sam Donaldson, though, said it wasn’t so bad staying at the Sheraton Riyadh. In fact, he said the towels were so fluffy that he could barely get his suitcase shut. [Laughter]

Some air war, wasn’t it? I’ve just learned the three words every Iraqi pilot dreaded the most: Cleared for takeoff. [Laughter]

What a crowd. I haven’t gotten so many laughs since my last speech on domestic policy. [Laughter] Thank you.

Now the attention is turned back to the homefront, maybe Wolf Blitzer can go back to his real name. [Laughter]

I’m glad that politics ’92 didn’t rear its ugly head too much tonight. Well, it did a little bit. And I understand that there is speculation already about the ’92 race. In fact, just the other day, Jim Palmer sent a telegram to George McGovern. It read: “Heard you were considering a comeback. Stop.” [Laughter]

No, but it has been a special evening. I notice that Bernie Shaw was sitting at the table instead of under it. [Laughter]

All kidding aside, though, really it has been, I think, the most enjoyable Gridiron in many, many years. Barbara and I enjoy ourselves always. I must say that, with all respect to the two skits and to Ambassador Strauss and to Secretary Baker, I think that the most moving part, the most wonderful

part of the evening, was the tribute to the troops. And there was a special line in it, you may have heard in the beginning: “Through the fog of distant war shines the strength of their devotion.” And as I’ve said before, our soldiers and our sailors and our airmen and our marines and our coastguardmen embodied the ideals of honor and bravery and duty and country, and were willing to sacrifice for the sake of those simple words. And they liberated a nation abroad and helped transform a nation at home.

So, once again, Budge, my congratulations to you, sir. Thank you for a very special, enjoyable Gridiron evening. And may God bless the families of all those soldiers that we lost in action.

Thank you all very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. in the Presidential Ballroom at the Capital Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State James A. Baker III; Robert Strauss, former chairman of the Democratic Party and former Special Representative for Trade Negotiations; Saud Nasir al-Sabah, Iraqi Ambassador to the United States; advice columnist Ann Landers; reporters Sam Donaldson of ABC News and Wolf Blitzer of Cable News Network; retired baseball player Jim Palmer, who had recently attempted a comeback; former Senator George McGovern, a former Democratic Presidential candidate; Bernard Shaw, one of CNN’s reporters in Baghdad, Iraq, during the early stages of the Persian Gulf conflict; and Godfrey “Budge” Sperling, Jr., president of the Gridiron Club. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Signing the Greek Independence Day Proclamation March 25, 1991

The President. Thank you very much for the welcome. Please be seated. It’s a great pleasure to see so many friends here today. Of course, a very special pleasure just now to welcome Archbishop Iakovos back to the Oval Office. He’s been there on several oc-

casions since I’ve been President; certainly before, many times. But it gave me an opportunity to express my respect and appreciation for him. He’s been a wonderful friend and a good counselor on very important matters.

I want to salute Ed Derwinski. He's not Greek but he was a former Member of the Congress. [Laughter] He's got a lot of friends in the Greek-American community, I'll tell you. And I also am delighted to see Ambassador Zacharakis who's here—another man who's doing a superb job.

And I might say, before we get into the festivities of the day, that I'm very comfortable and pleased with the relationship between Greece and the United States. And I have great respect for Mr. Mitsotakis, who is doing a superb job. I hope you will convey that to him, please, Mr. Ambassador.

But here we are to designate this day again, March 25th, Greek Independence Day. March 25th marks several turning points in history. And just as Americans and Greeks share many common values, we each hold this date in special reverence for the strides we've made in the name of freedom.

It was in the spring of 1584 that the first colonists set sail from England in search of new opportunities and independence. One hundred and seventy years ago, the Day of Annunciation, 1821, the Greek banner of revolt was first raised in the successful uprising in the name of liberty.

The shared significance of this date is more than a coincidence. It is just one example of the common ideals and values the people of Greece and America hold so dear: freedom, democracy, human rights, and justice. And under the current leadership of Prime Minister Mitsotakis, with whom I had the pleasure of meeting twice last year, the relationship does, as I said earlier, continue to flourish. And I hope that he and I will meet soon again.

I'd like to take a moment to thank the people of Greece for their support and cooperation in this historic coalition effort to liberate Kuwait from ruthless aggression. The people of Greece can take great pride in their country's role in protecting the rule

of law.

And so now, after again saying how pleased I am to see so many friends here today for this occasion, it is my pleasure to put pen to paper and proclaim Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy.

[At this point, the President signed the proclamation.]

The Archbishop. Mr. President, on behalf of the 3-million-strong Greek Orthodox community in the United States, I offer to you our most humble thanks for signing once again today, the 25th of March, 1991, after 170 years from the Greek independence—the first—proclamation which calls all of us to uphold the ideals and values upon which the ancient Greek and the modern American concept of democracy is founded.

We ask you to accept our warmest reassurance of our continued commitment to the full support of your historic efforts to have freedom and justice ultimately prevail, and follow the foundation for the new world order for which you so arduously labor.

God bless you. This is our prayer—constant prayer—Mr. President, and inspired strength to you as you lead the world towards a state of permanent peace.

The President. Thank you all.

Note: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Demetrios A. Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America; Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edward J. Derwinski; Christos Zacharakis, Greek Ambassador to the United States; and Prime Minister Constantinos Mitsotakis of Greece. The proclamation is listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.