

1988 and executed by pro-Iranian terrorists in 1989; Dennis Ross, Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department; Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; President Francois Mitterrand of France; King Hussein I of Jordan; and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati of Iran.

Statement on Signing the Persian Gulf Conflict Supplemental Authorization and Personnel Benefits Act of 1991

April 6, 1991

I am pleased to sign into law S. 725, the "Persian Gulf Conflict Supplemental Authorization and Personnel Benefits Act of 1991." This legislation authorizes the appropriations that the Administration requested for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. It also authorizes \$655 million over 5 years to increase selected benefits for the men and women who served this country, and the world, during the Persian Gulf conflict.

The Act provides the Secretary of Defense authority to use funds contributed by other countries to offset the incremental costs of U.S. operations in the Persian Gulf. It also authorizes the appropriation of \$15 billion in U.S. funds to a Persian Gulf Conflict Working Capital Account. These monies will be used to cover the costs of the Persian Gulf conflict not met by the contributions of other countries.

The Act increases certain benefits for military personnel and veterans who served during the Persian Gulf conflict. This benefit package, which is fully consistent with the Budget Enforcement Act, was crafted in bipartisan negotiations between the Administration and the Congress.

Our service men and women performed with extraordinary ability and valor in the Persian Gulf. Their success is an inspiration to us all. This Act increases the pay of those who faced the greatest danger, smooths the transition for those returning to the work force or the educational system from the Persian Gulf, and increases the level of higher education benefits for veterans and reservists.

Specifically, the Act increases the military separation allowance and imminent danger or hostile fire pay for those who served

during the Persian Gulf conflict. The families of all American service men and women who were covered by Servicemen's Group Life Insurance and were killed in the line of duty during this period will receive a special death gratuity of up to \$50,000. Activated reservists without adequate health insurance will receive 1 month of transitional health care coverage when discharged. The Act also grants our newest wartime veterans eligibility for veterans' pensions and our combat veterans eligibility for readjustment counseling, and it makes up to \$100,000 in life insurance coverage available to our servicemembers and to those who become veterans after the date of enactment of this bill. Reemployment rights for disabled veterans are also being strengthened.

Increased educational assistance payments for active duty personnel and reservists are an integral part of this package. In addition, the Act authorizes the Secretary of Education to extend the grace and deferment periods for repayment of Federal student loans and the eligibility period for certain Federal grants for activated reservists who served during the Persian Gulf conflict. It also encourages colleges and universities to provide tuition credits or refunds for students who were called to active duty and were unable to complete their courses.

S. 725 also permits the Secretary of Defense to exceed the authorized military end-strength levels for FY 1991. For FY 1992 and beyond, we intend to meet the military end-strength levels projected in the February 1991 Budget.

This act requires a report to the Congress relating to the conduct of the coalition effort. We have been open with the Con-

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gress about our conduct of the Persian Gulf conflict and will continue to provide the Congress with information to the maximum extent consistent with the discharge of my constitutional responsibilities.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
April 6, 1991.

Note: S. 725, approved April 6, was assigned Public Law No. 102-25.

Remarks Commemorating the National Days of Thanksgiving in Houston, Texas

April 7, 1991

Dr. Payne, thank you, sir. Barbara and I are delighted to be here on this very special day of National Day of Thanksgiving.

Almost as soon as the peace was shattered in the Gulf last August, prayers for peace began at St. Martin's. First were special prayers on Sundays, and then in the mid-week services. And by January, I'm told there were daily prayers. And the Sunday school children sent handmade Christmas cards to our men and women in the Gulf, and the church sent along prayer books and crosses. And Houston, as we saw all across America, was bedecked in flags and yellow ribbons.

This says much about our city and about our nation. But it says much more about our country. For during these anxious months, this story has unfolded a thousand times over. In churches, in synagogues, in temples, in mosques, in communities of every size, in schools and scout troops, and countless times in the quiet, simple acts of individuals who care. We are one nation under God.

On these special Days of Thanksgiving, we do have so very much for which to be thankful. We are grateful for the long-awaited liberation of tiny Kuwait and the end of the terror rendered upon the Kuwaiti people. And for our men and women who performed their mission with such courage and conviction, we are grateful that their losses were mercifully few. And we're extraordinarily proud of our troops now returning home.

It is the time to give thanks to God, not for winning the war but for helping us to do what was right. We mourn for those

who have fallen, and our hearts go out to their families. But we should thank God Almighty for men and women who will risk their lives to save the lives of others. Remember Michener, James Michener's Admiral Tarrant asked, "Where did we get such men?" And the answer is, those men and women came right here, right here at home. That's where they came from.

Well, I believe that two such men are with us here today, recently returned from the Gulf: F-16 pilot Captain John Hunnell and his wingman Lieutenant Scott Long. Maybe you'd stand up, if you all are there. [Applause] Thank you.

I read the letter that John sent to Reverend Di Paola about his second combat mission over Iraq. It was as terrifying as it was majestic. He describes an unnerving silence amidst missile trails and bright flashes of flak; the only sounds, the dull roar of his engine, the radio, and the beeping of his radar alarm. And although he didn't mention it, probably the beating of his heart felt pretty loud at that time. [Laughter]

And it's been said, "The wings of prayer carry high and far." Well, Captain Hunnell mentioned a prayer he repeated often. And it says, "If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me." The Lord did not forget him, nor the righteousness of our cause. And so, on this National Day of Thanksgiving, this church being one of many across the country celebrating this National Day of Thanksgiving, let me conclude with a brief prayer:

Dear God, we humbly give you our heartfelt thanks. We thank you for bringing the war to a quick end. We thank you for spar-