

up there in front of the Congress—felt the thunder of the applause and sensed the emotion that filled that Chamber. And the cheering for our armed forces—and it was strong, it was for them—was followed by two more standing ovations for you, the courageous families of our service men and women. And it was for you and for our troops. And that's exactly the way it should have been.

And I hope that that Saddam Hussein, in his bunker somewhere in Baghdad, saw every single minute of it. And if he did, maybe he now understands that we are a nation united in support of our troops.

I know it's been tough on a lot of you—maybe all of you here at Seymour Johnson. And I know also what it is that you have offered this great nation of ours. I understand what it is that I have asked of you, what General McPeak has asked of you. Members of this fighting unit have voluntarily set aside their freedom to wage this battle. But while today some may be prisoners of war, and others may have made the ultimate sacrifice, a lifetime of democracy and faith in God keeps their spirit free. No foreign dictator can imprison the love of liberty that beats in the hearts of every American.

And before I finish, I'd like to say something to all of the kids here today. I want you to know that your parents, your loved ones, our troops in the Gulf are enduring the hardships of war today so that you may know the blessings of peace tomorrow.

And seeing such strong, wonderful families here today and knowing the support that you have received from this community is good for the soul and proves the strength of America's spirit. And I think each and every one of you—I thank each and every one of you. And when I climbed on Air

Force One this morning out there—I told them this over at Cherry Point—I heard on the television, "President Bush is visiting the bases to help lift the morale." And it's been exactly 180 degrees the other way around. My morale has been pretty darn good, frankly, but seeing those people over there and now all of you, my morale has never been more sky-high.

Thank you for this fantastic support for the troops—because you see, you see, I do draw strength and courage from your forbearance—for the job that the colonel and all the others are doing around here. And I ask God's blessing upon you all—every one of you—and upon every soldier and sailor, marine, airman, and coastguardsman—every man and woman now serving in the Persian Gulf. What a wonderful country we have. And nothing could prove that more than the patriotism and the courage and the devotion of your loved ones, our beloved troops, halfway around the world.

May God bless the United States of America and each and every one of you. Thank you very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the base picnic grounds. In his remarks, he referred to Cynthia Hornburg, wife of Col. Al Hornburg, wing commander, 4th Tactical Fighter Wing; Col. James "Jumbo" Wray, vice commander, 4th Tactical Fighter Wing; Gov. James G. Martin of North Carolina; Representative H. Martin Lancaster; Hal K. Plonk, mayor of Goldsboro; Secretary of the Air Force Donald B. Rice; Gen. Merrill A. McPeak, Air Force Chief of Staff; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Following his remarks, President Bush traveled to Fort Stewart, GA.

Remarks to Community Members at Fort Stewart, Georgia February 1, 1991

Thank you for that great welcome. Jill—Jill McCaffrey—it is my great pleasure to be here and to meet with you. Barbara and I met the commanding general—met Jill's

husband, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, and many of his troops, many of your loved ones—and we shared a meal with them on Thanksgiving Day. And it was special, and we Bushes

will never forget it. And the food wasn't bad, either. *[Laughter]* But I'll tell you, the morale was great.

I want to salute General Burba, thank him for his leadership in this most important command of his. I want to salute and pay my respects to these two Senators from this State in which this installation is located—Senator Nunn, chairman of our Armed Services Committee; Senator Wyche Fowler—and of course, your own Congressman from this district who's been so supportive of everything all of you are involved in, Congressman Thomas. To the new Governor of this great State, Governor Miller, who is with us today, my respects. And Colonel Lucas, thank you, sir, for your prayers. And Colonel Frank Miller, if you can sing like your wife does, why, you guys ought to go on the road. *[Laughter]* But I think I've mentioned everybody but Beetle Bailey here. *[Laughter]*

But nevertheless, it is indeed a real pleasure to meet with you. I've heard a lot from Colonel Miller and others about Hinesville, and I heard a lot out in the Saudi desert—you can believe me—about all of you, the Fort Stewart family. I came down here to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation for your steadfast service and sacrifice because when proud men and women of Fort Stewart and Hunter Field put it all on the line, every one of you is right there with them.

In times of trial, we fall back on faith and on family—what a wise man once called the “little platoons” to which we all belong—the little platoons that provide the 24th Infantry Division with its fighting spirit and its staying power.

Right now, it's night in Saudi Arabia. The soldiers from Fort Stewart are on duty, 1 more day in more than 5 long months away from home. Our thoughts are with them, day and night—America's finest, standing against an aggressor who must be stopped, standing up for the best—all that is best in us. Because those men and women know and you know—we all know that when the forces of aggression take up arms, America cannot look the other way.

It began with Kuwait, but that wouldn't have been the end. What we've witnessed these last few weeks removed any last shred of doubt about the adversary that we face:

the terror bombing, without military value—the terror bombing of innocent civilians with those Scud missiles; the brutal treatment—that brutal, inhumane treatment of our POW's; the endless appetite for evil that would lead a man to make war on the world's environment. All of us know what we're up against. All of you know why we're there.

We are there because we are Americans, part of something that's larger than ourselves. Our cause is right. Our cause is just. And because it is just, that world's cause will prevail.

And when we win—and we will—we will have taught a dangerous dictator and any tyrant tempted to follow in his footsteps that the U.S. has a new credibility, and that what we say goes, and that there is no place for lawless aggression in the Persian Gulf and in this new world order that we seek to create. And we mean it. And he will understand that when the day is done.

I know that all of you—especially all of you—are anxious to know if and when a ground operation might begin. Let me tell you now, it will only begin if necessary and when we decide that the time is right. We will conduct this conflict on our terms, on our timetable, not on Saddam Hussein's timetable.

Let me assure you that Desert Storm is right on course. Our training, our investment, our planning are all paying off. American and allied forces are systematically destroying Iraq's capacity to wage war.

Every member of the 24th Infantry Division is part of a fighting tradition stretching back some 50 years. Back in November, when I met with the men and women of the 24th, I told them about the last Thanksgiving that I had spent so far away from home. It was on a ship off the Philippine coast back in 1944. The 24th was there, fighting to take Red Beach on Leyte Island in the campaign that earned the 24th the nickname it so proudly bears today: the “Victory” Division.

And back then, those—close to 50 years ago—Franklin Delano Roosevelt sent a cable out to General MacArthur and the 24th Division, a message that—very short—I'd like to read it to you today. FDR wrote

them: "You have the Nation's gratitude, and the Nation's prayers for success, as you and your men fight your way back."

And now, many years later, once more the 24th is in the front lines, far from home. Once more, the Nation's prayers and the Nation's pride are with the 24th and all the brave men and women of Desert Storm.

I don't know whether it was Jill, but somebody told me about the send-off back in August, when the 24th was among the first to deploy to Saudi Arabia—the way the people of Hinesville and the other towns near here lined not just the streets around Fort Stewart but lined the interstate all the way up I-95 to Hunter Field and Savannah. What a sight that must have been to the proud soldiers of Fort Stewart.

And let me say to all the children here with parents that are serving over there in the Gulf, keep in mind that no matter how much you depend on your parents, your country depends on them, too. And you've read at school about the great generals and some of the Presidents—all about American history and American heroes. Well, you see, that's just part of the great story about our country because your moms and dads are the heroes, too, doing the hard work of freedom right now, half a world away.

I know it's been tough. It may get tougher. We've got three of the Walker kids here somewhere: Michael, Sioban, and their little brother, Martin. Their mom and dad are both now serving in Saudi Arabia, and they've been living with their babysitter, Ida Sanders. Eddie and Brandon Bowman are here; their dad went over in August, and their mom in November. Eddie and Brandon are staying with a friend of their family, Reggie Bray, whose wife was called up in the Reserves. I know at times like this the Fort Stewart family draws together, just gets tighter; everyone pulls together, the way a family always does.

And so, to all you kids, let me say: Be proud, and stay strong. Don't be afraid to ask family friends or your teachers at school to help you when things get tough. And know that we're doing everything we can to make sure your parents have the best possible support to get the job done and get every man and woman of the fighting 24th back home, safe and sound, just as

soon as possible. That is my goal as your Commander in Chief.

With those brave young men and women in mind, let this nation come together this Sunday—day after tomorrow—on a day that will be our National Day of Prayer. We are, you see, one nation under God. And we will pray for the safety of every American and allied serviceman and service-woman, for every innocent caught up in this terrible conflict, and for our POW's and for our MIA's. And may all of our troops be safe and sound until the families of Fort Stewart are united once again.

Thank you once again for this warm welcome and for all your support. And let me tell you what I told some of the wives that are supporting in this support group. When I got on Air Force One this morning, I heard one of the television commentators say, "Well, the President is going to three different places to help with the morale." And, you see, it's been just the other way around. I've got good morale. But I'll tell you, I'm going on home to see Barbara with my morale sky-high because of the fantastic spirit of the families that are giving their all-out support to the finest fighting men and women that the world has ever seen.

God bless you all, and God bless the United States. Thank you very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. on Cottrel Field at Fort Stewart. In his remarks, he referred to Jill McCaffrey, wife of Maj. Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, commanding general, 24th Infantry Division Mechanized; Gen. Edwin H. Burba, Jr., commander in chief, Forces Command; Senators Sam Nunn and Wyche Fowler, Jr.; Representative Robert Lindsay Thomas; Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia; Col. Thomas L. Lucas, installation chaplain; and Col. Frank D. Miller, installation commander, and his wife, Joan. Prior to his remarks, the President attended a reception with spouses of deployed personnel. Following his remarks, he traveled to Hobe Sound, FL, to visit his mother. Later in the evening, the President traveled to Camp David, MD, for the weekend.