

killed in a helicopter accident earlier this month at Camp Lejeune; a brilliant member of my staff, Air Force Colonel Nelson Drew, who perished in Bosnia last August while working to end the suffering and the slaughter; a proud Army veteran, our Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, who was taken from us last month on a foggy mountainside in Croatia as he was leading a mission of peace and hope to restore a broken land; and in that terrible crash, we also lost Tech Sergeant Cheryl Ann Turnage, a member of the Air Force crew who hoped to pursue a career in law; and just last week, we said goodbye to the Navy's fiercest champion and most beloved sailor, Admiral Mike Boorda. These five were very different in their backgrounds and in their service. But they were joined in their love for America. Their lives reflect the spirit of our democracy, the strength of our diversity, the energy and opportunity that make our country so great.

We are descendants of a common creed, one Nation, under God; partners with a common

purpose, to keep our Nation free and strong, a force for peace and progress, a place where people who work hard and take responsibility have the chance to make the most of their own lives, build good, strong families, and live out their dreams in dignity and peace.

May God bless the souls of our departed and always bless the country they gave everything to serve.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. in the amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Robert F. Foley, USA, Commanding General, and Lt. Col. Joseph L. O'Keefe, USA, Deputy Command Chaplain, U.S. Army Military District of Washington; Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, USAF, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and John Metzler, Superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery. The Memorial Day proclamation of May 24 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Announcing Agent Orange-Related Disability Benefits for Vietnam Veterans and an Exchange With Reporters

May 28, 1996

Mr. Vice President, thank you very much for your very moving remarks and your support of this endeavor. Secretary Brown, thank you for your service to our country in so many ways and especially for your work at the Veterans Administration, along with Deputy Secretary Hershel Gober and the others who are here. Senator Robb, Congressman Evans, and to Members of Congress who are not here, including Senator Daschle who worked so hard on this issue; to the Vietnam veterans who are here and all others who are concerned about this matter:

This is an important day for the United States to take further steps to ease the suffering our Nation unintentionally caused its own sons and daughters by exposing them to Agent Orange in Vietnam. For over two decades Vietnam veterans made the case that exposure to Agent Orange was injuring and killing them long before they left the field of battle, even damaging their children.

For years, the Government did not listen. With steps taken since 1993, and the important step we are taking today, we are showing that America can listen and act. I'm announcing that Vietnam veterans with prostate cancer and the neurological disorder peripheral neuropathy are entitled to disability payments based upon their exposure to Agent Orange. Our administration will also propose legislation to meet the needs of veterans' children afflicted with the birth defect spina bifida—the first time the offspring of American soldiers will receive benefits for combat-related health problems.

From the outset, we have pressed hard for answers about the effects of Agent Orange and other chemicals used to kill vegetation during the war in Vietnam. Once we had those answers, we've looked for practical ways to ease the pain of Americans who have already sacrificed so much for their country.

Soon after I took office, the National Academy of Sciences completed a study on the long-

term health effects of Agent Orange. The Veterans Administration, under Secretary Brown's leadership, moved immediately to compensate and treat veterans with illnesses that the National Academy found were associated with Agent Orange.

First we added two diseases, Hodgkin's disease and a liver disorder, to the list of ailments recognized as being associated with exposure to Agent Orange. Then Secretary Brown created a full task force to look into the National Academy of Sciences report in more detail. Acting on its recommendations, I approved disability payments to Vietnam veterans suffering from respiratory cancers and multiple myeloma. Finally, we asked the National Academy of Sciences to focus on the link between Agent Orange and other conditions, including prostate cancer, peripheral neuropathy, and spina bifida in the children of Vietnam veterans. Today's actions reflect the National Academy's most recent findings.

I want to commend the National Academy of Sciences and its Institute of Medicine for their extraordinary service to our Vietnam veterans. They reached out to the best doctors and scientists in America for the answers to the hard questions about Agent Orange. Just as important, they reached out to our Vietnam veterans to give them full voice in their work.

I want to praise the determination of Secretary Brown, who time and time again has turned reports into actions. And there is no better example than his work on Agent Orange.

Finally, I want to thank my longtime friend Admiral Zumwalt. America's Vietnam veterans have had no greater champion. You heard him outline—in ways that reflected well on the President, but should have reflected well on the proselytizing of Admiral Zumwalt—[laughter]—over 10 years of effort to make sure that someone he never imagined would be President at least knew about the issue of Agent Orange. No one has done more to keep the spotlight on Agent Orange. No one has done more to demand that all of us do better by our veterans. No one knows more and has shown more what it means to take personal responsibility for our actions.

Admiral, every single American with a heart and a soul to love this country is in your debt today, and we thank you.

I also want to thank the Members of Congress, two of whom are here, especially those

who served in Vietnam, who are strong and healthy but who have not forgotten those with whom they served, for never letting this issue go.

These actions show that our country can face up to the consequences of our actions; that we will bear responsibility for the harm we do, even when the harm is unintended; that we will continue to honor those who served our country and gave so much.

Nothing we can do will ever fully repay the Vietnam veterans for all they gave and all they lost, particularly those who have been damaged by Agent Orange. But we must never stop trying. The veterans never stopped taking every step they could for America; now it is our turn to do what we should do. We can and will go the extra step for them.

And again I say today, every person involved in this decision has served our country well and honored our veterans and their sacrifice. I thank them all. And I thank you for coming. Thank you very much.

Thank you all very much. What did you say?

Israeli Elections

Q. Are you pulling for Prime Minister Peres and the Labor Party tomorrow?

The President. I knew I shouldn't have come back. [Laughter] I think we all recognize—very briefly—I think we all recognize that that election tomorrow is a very important election for the future of Israel and the future of the Middle East. Israel is a great democracy and the people are fully capable of making their own judgments.

The United States supports the peace process, and we have made it clear that if further steps are taken that entail risks for peace, we will stand with the Government and the people of Israel, the leaders of Israel in minimizing those risks. We will do everything we possibly can to do it. But that is the important thing that I want the people of Israel to know.

They have to make the decision of whether they want to pursue the peace process or not; that is their decision. We believe, ultimately, it's the only way to bring peace and security, and we want both peace and security. I think that's what they all want. I think that's why the race is so close.

But I can tell you this: If they decide to stay on the path of peace, we will share the risk; we will do what we can to minimize the risk. They can make the decision. Whatever de-

cision they make, we obviously—all countries—will accept and respect. But if they decide to stay with peace, we will do what we can to make sure they can have security as well.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN (Ret.), former Chief of Naval Operations.

Remarks on the Verdict in the McDougal-Tucker Trial and an Exchange With Reporters

May 28, 1996

The President. I'd like to make a brief statement about the jury verdict in Arkansas today. First of all, the jury has completed its work, and they obviously worked for quite a long time and debated this thoroughly and tried to make a good decision. So I think we should all accept that.

Obviously, on a personal level, I'm very sorry for Governor Tucker and Jim and Susan McDougal. But the jury has decided. I was asked to give testimony; I did that. And for me, it's time to go back to work. That's what I intend to do.

Q. Do you think Governor Tucker should resign?

The President. I don't want to comment on that. I think those questions have to be resolved by the people involved and in terms of what their other options are. I don't want to comment on that.

I just think that this is a day for saying that these jurors worked a long time; they were out

for an extended period of time; they reached their verdict. And as I said, for me it's more of a personal thing today. I'm very sorry for them personally. But I did what I was asked to do, and now I've got to go back to work. That's what I intend to do.

Q. Sir, do you think this is a repudiation of your statements?

Q. Did the jurors not believe you, sir? Did the jurors not believe you?

The President. You ought to ask them that. I doubt that; I doubt that that's what was going on. But you ought to ask them. I don't know.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:20 p.m. on the North Driveway at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to trial codefendants Gov. Jim Guy Tucker of Arkansas and James and Susan McDougal. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring Blue Ribbon Schools

May 29, 1996

Thank you so much. Secretary Riley, thank you for the wonderful job that you do and your clear, strong voice for education. Mr. Vice President, thank you for the work you have done in advancing our technology initiative. I forgive you for mentioning all those Tennessee schools. [Laughter] We're always doing this. You know, there's a school from Arkansas here—from Bentonville, Arkansas. And I have spoken at the high school graduation there more than once. Now, have you spoken at all those Tennessee

schools' graduation? [Laughter] We'll do this for 3 or 4 more days until—[laughter].

And I want to say to Jill Mahler how very much we appreciate not only the excellent work being done in your school—and I think I—they are so proud of her, I think I'd like to ask the representatives from Mainland High School in Daytona Beach to stand up here, and thank you very much. [Applause] Thank you.

But it also reminds us that teaching and learning are a lot more than technology. And this