

Sept. 17 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Federal Advisory Committees

September 17, 1997

To the Congress of the United States:

As provided by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended (Public Law 92-463; 5 U.S.C., App. 2, 6(c)), I am submitting the Twenty-Fifth Annual Report on Federal Advisory Committees, covering fiscal year 1996.

The executive branch continues to implement my policy of maintaining the number of advisory committees within the ceiling of 534 required by Executive Order 12838 of February 10, 1993. As a result, the number of discretionary advisory committees (established under general congressional authorizations) was held to 501, or 37 percent fewer than those 801 committees in existence at the beginning of my Administration. Savings achieved through elimination of discretionary committees during fiscal year 1996 totalled \$2.5 million.

Through the advisory committee planning process required by Executive Order 12838, departments and agencies have worked to minimize the total number of advisory committees specifically mandated by statute. The 407 such groups supported at the end of fiscal year 1996 represents a modest 7 percent decrease over the 439 in existence at the beginning of my Administration. However, more can be done to assure that the total costs to fund these groups in fiscal year 1997, or \$38.5 million, are dedicated to support high-priority public involvement efforts.

During fiscal year 1996, the General Services Administration (GSA) initiated a process for col-

laborating with executive departments and agencies to increase public participation opportunities at all levels of American society. Building upon my Administration's commitment to expand access to Federal decisionmakers, managers at all levels will be provided with more timely guidance that includes enhanced options for achieving objectives, better training, and exposure to a variety of tools and techniques, which when used in conjunction with advisory committees, offer additional flexibility to address a wide variety of public participation needs.

Actions to broaden the scope and effectiveness of public participation within the Federal sector will continue during fiscal year 1997. During the year, GSA will develop newly updated guidance implementing FACA. At the same time, GSA will continue to support and work closely with such agencies as the Council on Environmental Quality and the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to align its efforts with key Administration policies relating to ecosystem and land management priorities.

My Administration will continue to work with the Congress to assure that all advisory committees that are required by statute are regularly reviewed through the congressional reauthorization process and that remaining committees are instrumental in achieving national interests.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
September 17, 1997.

Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of the United States Air Force in Arlington, Virginia

September 18, 1997

Thank you very much. Secretary Cohen, Secretary Widnall, General Eberhart, Chaplain Denlinger, Chief Benkin, to the Air Force Band, the Air Force Academy Cadet Chorale, the friends and families, especially the men and women of the United States Air Force. I'm de-

lighted to be here as we celebrate this 50th anniversary of the best air force in the world.

Secretary Widnall thanked me for coming to your 50th birthday party. Actually, I thank you for having me. Ever since I turned 50 myself, I've been looking for all the company I can

find. [Laughter] And since I can't run for office anymore, Secretary Cohen, I'm glad to come here and have this crowd you raised for me. I appreciate it very much. [Laughter]

Ladies and gentlemen, 50 years ago, when our Nation emerged from the crucible of World War II, we faced a political and military landscape that had been forever changed. Our European allies were devastated, the Iron Curtain was descending, the values for which we had fought so dearly seemed under siege from Europe to Asia. At that moment, only the United States had the strength to uphold the struggle for freedom around the world. And though our people were eager to turn their energies back home, we rose to the awesome responsibility at hand, creating the institutions that would protect our security and promote the cause of liberty and peace and eventually enable us to prevail in the cold war and enjoy the conditions that exist today, when, for the first time in human history, more than one-half the people on this planet live under governments of their own choosing.

In 1947, 50 years ago, the 4 essential players in that struggle came to life: the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, and the United States Air Force. For the record, I think it should be noted that President Truman signed this act aboard his so-called Sacred Cow, the C-54 Presidential aircraft that served back then as Air Force One. In case you're wondering, President Truman was just like me; he didn't have an escape pod on his plane either. [Laughter] I might say, as long as the Air Force is flying me, I don't feel the need for a way out.

Fifty years later, our Air Force remains a world-class force without peer, thanks to the extraordinary men and women who serve in it. Your soaring spirit, your dedication, your skill have helped America to master the skies. You've made us more secure. You've made the world a safer place.

We have seen your courage and expertise in time of war. We have seen your compassion and sacrifice in time of peace. We have seen the around-the-clock flights of the Berlin airlift. We saw you in MiG Alley in Korea. We saw

the longest humanitarian airlift in history during the war in Bosnia. We saw you in the skies over Baghdad in Desert Storm. And just a few days ago, we saw the nine crewmembers of the C-141 perish off the coast of Africa after carrying a team of experts to help support our demining efforts in Namibia.

We have seen you rise to the challenges of our time, from the development of the air expeditionary forces that give me an invaluable tool in time of crisis, to last week's deployment of Commando Solo aircraft to help prevent the enemies of peace in Bosnia from sabotaging the Dayton agreement. We have seen your vision and commitment to excel as you sharpen your technological edge to dominate the battlefields of the future.

And perhaps most important, we see in the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year the best traditions, the best hope, and the brightest future of the Air Force, the leadership and talent and dedication that make you second to none.

I want you to know on behalf of all Americans, I am proud of them and proud of all of you who serve in the United States Air Force. To the pilots, the flight crews, the Red Horse engineers, the technicians, the security police, the space and missile operators, all who contribute to the strength of America in the skies, and to all the families who support you, our Nation is profoundly grateful.

Today is a well-earned day of celebration for your golden legacy of achievement. But as you know better than anyone, there is never a day of rest. We pay tribute to the last 50 years with a determination to look to our Air Force men and women to help us meet the challenges of the next 50 years. We know we can always count on you; we always have. Aim high, and reach for new horizons.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. in the Courtyard at the Pentagon. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Ralph Eberhart, USAF, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force; Maj. Gen. William J. Denlinger, USAF, Chief of Chaplains; and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Eric Benkin, USAF.