

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Air Force Academy Falcons May 21, 1998

The President. General Shelton, General Ryan, Senator Thurmond, Lieutenant General Oelstrom, Coach Fisher DeBerry; to the entire Air Force Academy team, at least the first classmen who are here today, and all of our other guests, friends, and members of the Air Force football staff, and others, I am very pleased to present the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Air Force Academy again. [Laughter]

This is the 11th time the Air Force has won the trophy. Since I have been President, I have presented it to the Falcons every year except 1996. That's 5 out of 6 years. I'm good luck for you folks. [Laughter] You might ought to think about repealing the 22d amendment. [Laughter]

The record of the Air Force Academy is so remarkable that I have asked Secretary Cohen to include a special analysis of your success in the next quadrennial defense review. We may try to apply it to other areas of our endeavor. [Laughter]

This team showed real character, winning its first 7 games, ending up 10 and 2. Charles Gilliam rushed for 741 yards. Lane Morgan rushed for six touchdowns and threw for 975 yards. Chris Gizzi, whom I just met, had 179 tackles, the second highest number in school history. And he proved over and over again, I understand, that he has a real nose for football. [Laughter] For the members of the press that are here, I understand he had his nose stitched up after every game.

Coach DeBerry, as always, you deserve a lot of credit for this team's outstanding performance. You're the winningest coach in Academy history. Your knowledge of the game, your calm leadership are always indispensable to the team's success.

I understand, and I have seen on occasion, that you tend to excite your team with unexpected displays of emotion on the sideline. And I was told, before I came out here, that part of the reason that these Falcons flew so high is that they were supremely pumped up by the chicken dance you did after beating Navy and Army. [Laughter]

One of my predecessors, and one of my favorite predecessors, Teddy Roosevelt, would admire this team. In 1900, he wrote a book called "The Strenuous Life," in which he said: "In life, as in a football game, the principle to follow is hit the line hard." Your competitive drive, teamwork, and hard work brought you here. And I hope you will continue to hit the line hard in your careers and in your service to our Nation.

All of us here are very, very proud of the Academy football programs at all three of our service academies and the fine example you set as scholar athletes. But the 1997 Falcons have proven beyond question that they deserve the Commander in Chief Trophy. Your timing couldn't have been better. Last fall we celebrated in the 50th anniversary of the Air Force, and you gave something extra to cheer for.

Again, let me repeat my congratulations to the team, the coach, to the entire Air Force Academy. You not only aim high, you find what you aim for. Congratulations.

Now I'd like to ask Lieutenant General Oelstrom to come up and continue the program.

Thank you very much.

[At this point, team members presented gifts to the President, including a U.S. Air Force Academy football jersey.]

The President. You know, I sometimes don't have the best of timing. Tomorrow is the day in my annual rotation that I have to give the commencement address at the Naval Academy. [Laughter] So, if you'll forgive me, I think I'll start wearing this day after tomorrow on the golf course. [Laughter]

You're great representatives of the United States. We're all proud of you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Michael E. Ryan, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; and Lt. Gen. Tad Oelstrom, USAF, Superintendent, and Fisher DeBerry, Football Coach, U.S. Air Force Academy.