

Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Tipper Gore on Hurricane
Damage in Central America
November 10, 1998

The President. Hello?

Tipper Gore. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Hi, Tipper.

Mrs. Gore. Hi, how are you? Thank you very much for the honor of leading the delegation. It's a privilege to bring the aid and the assistance to the people of Honduras. They need it. They have suffered an incredible amount of devastation, and they're very grateful for the \$70 million and the additional \$10 million that you authorized and that I was able to tell them about today.

The President. Well, what have you seen?

Mrs. Gore. Well, I took a helicopter tour along with the delegation of the area that had a great deal of devastation. We've seen communities and neighborhoods and entire areas wiped out. You can see that the base of their infrastructure is completely destroyed—farming, bridges knocked out. From the air I've seen dead animals, lots of vultures.

But I can tell you something else that's very important, and that is that in working in a neighborhood outside the capital with people that so have an inspirational spirit, they have learned how to reorganize, and we all worked to help them clean the mud out of a schoolhouse so it can be converted for medical facilities, first and foremost.

The President. That's really good. I wonder, what are your thoughts about how well we're doing in getting our aid down there, how we're going to handle extra volunteer help, all the other things you could do. What's the most important thing we could give next—that we should do next after the money that you brought down?

Mrs. Gore. I think the most important thing—and they are very, very appreciative of the money that you authorized and we brought—but the next most important thing would probably be if some of the FEMA—the Spanish-speaking FEMA people who have worked in Puerto Rico and have experience after Hurricane Georges be sent over here in order to help, again, with the acute relief effort. I think that would be a tremendous asset if that could be arranged.

The President. We'll arrange it.

Mrs. Gore. That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

The President. When you meet with the President and you finish your trip, I think when you come back, the thing that I think would be most helpful is if you could brief me and also brief Hillary before she goes down and be—let us know specifically what you really think we ought to do. I think everyone in the United States wants to do as much as we possible can to help, both in the immediate aftermath of this horrible tragedy and also for the long-term rebuilding.

And so one of the reasons I was hoping that you could go is to get a firsthand feel for what's going on that even the pictures don't give us here or the telephone calls, and just let me know exactly what you think we ought to do.

Mrs. Gore. Well, I will, and one thing I can tell you is this is a catastrophe of Biblical proportions. It's really unbelievable, and yet the spirit of the people is inspirational. And I will listen; I'm going into a meeting with the President. I've been with Mary Flores all day, working. And the delegation and I look forward to giving you a full report and telling you what we have learned and what we think will be the most helpful for you.

The President. That's great. Where are you going to spend the night tonight?

Mrs. Gore. I'm going to spend the night—we're pitching tents. We don't want to take any assets away from the relief effort, so we're pitching some tents, and we're going to sleep in those.

The President. That's good.

Mrs. Gore. And we're going to get up and go to Nicaragua tomorrow.

The President. That's great.

Mrs. Gore. Thank you again for allowing us to bring this and to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our neighbors who are in crisis right now.

The President. Well, thank you for going. I thank you and all the people on your delegation, all the congressional Members, I hope you'll thank them for me. And have a good night and have a good trip the rest of the way to

Nicaragua. And when you come back, let us know what we can do. And let them know that the people of the United States are pulling for them, and we want to be helpful today, tomorrow, and until everything is restored.

Mrs. Gore. Yes sir. I'll be happy to convey that message. Thank you very much.

The President. Goodbye, Tipper.

Mrs. Gore. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In her remarks, Mrs. Gore referred to President Carlos Flores of Honduras and his wife, Mary.

Remarks at a Veterans Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia *November 11, 1998*

Thank you very much, Secretary West, for those extraordinary remarks and your equally extraordinary service to our Nation. Commander Tanguma, General Ivany, Superintendent Metzler, Chaplain Maddry, Lee Thornton, thank you for being with us again.

To the distinguished leaders of our veteran organizations, General Ivany, Members of Congress, members of the Cabinet, Secretary Cohen and the Joint Chiefs, the clergy, the veterans, and their families, the members of the Armed Services here. We thank especially the Marine Band.

My fellow Americans, if you will let me begin on a point of personal privilege, I was especially proud to listen to Commander Tanguma's speech today. It was about 10 months, almost to the day, from this day that he and I were together in Mission, Texas, his hometown. He brought with him a distinguished group of Catholic war veterans, including a number from Texas, including a member of his post, the former chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Congressman Kika de la Garza. We're glad to see you here, sir.

What I want you to know, that is in spite of all the incredible valor of Hispanic soldiers in our country's war, he is the very first Hispanic veteran ever to host this event. It is a great honor for all Americans that this has finally come to pass, and we thank you, sir, for being here.

Today, as a free nation, we come together to honor the men and women to whom we owe our freedom, to pay our own tribute here at this most sacred memorial to our Nation's past. Not only today but every day, some of us have the privilege to glance across the Potomac to see these silent white rows inscribed

with their crosses and crescents and Stars of David to remind us that our achievements in peace are built on the sacrifices of our veterans in war and that we owe the most solemn debt to these brave Americans who knew their duty and did it so very well.

We come together today to acknowledge that duty to them, a duty to provide for our veterans and their families, to give them every possible opportunity to improve their education, to find a job, to buy a home, to protect their health. Just this morning I was proud to sign, in the presence of some of the veterans leaders here, the Veterans Programs Enhancement Act, which will increase compensation payments to veterans with disabilities as well as benefits to the survivors of Americans who died serving our country.

I have also directed the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Administration, and Health and Human Services to establish a Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board to improve health care for our Armed Forces, our veterans, and our families, and to make sure we know what the health risks are to our soldiers when we send them into harm's way.

We have a duty as well to remember the history that our veterans lived and to appreciate and honor the history they made. We cannot expect future generations to understand fully what those who came before saw, experienced, and felt in battle. But we can make sure that our children know enough to say "thank you." Those two simple words that can mean as much or even more than a medal. We can preserve their diaries and documents, their letters home, their stories of sorrow and pride. Neither the passage of time nor the comforts of peace