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WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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

May 9, 2000

Thank you. Please be seated. We're delighted to be joined today by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Rudy de Leon, by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Shelton. You may have seen in the movie that I sunk his battleship, but so far he's got all his planes. [Laughter] So he's welcome here at the Air Force celebration. General Handy, welcome. And a special word of welcome to the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy, Lieutenant General Oelstrom, and to Coach DeBerry and to all the members of the Falcons football team and the other friends of the Air Force who are here today.

We are celebrating something that has never happened before. This is the first time we will award the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the Air Force Academy in the 21st century. [Laughter]

In the last century, by my count, there were four great sports dynasties. From 1947 to 1958, the Yankees won 9 of 12 World Series. I actually saw the last few of those, when we got a television. From 1957 to 1969, the Celtics won 11 of 13 titles in the NBA. From 1964 to 1975, UCLA won the NCAA basketball championship 10 of 12 times. Now the Falcons have won the Commander in Chief's Trophy 9 of the last 11 times.

You know, I try to be completely neutral in these things, but the Army really was hurt that you beat them this year with a better ground game. [Laughter]

I want to say also, Coach DeBerry really knows how to hurt a guy. I said, "You know, you've been here 7 of the 8 years I've been President." He said, "That's right, and I look forward to being here next year. I'm not term-limited." [Laughter] And I'm glad you're not term-limited.

We celebrate today, of course, formally the presentation of the Commander in Chief's Tro-

phy. It is recognition of athletic success. But the truly remarkable thing is that these young men, year-in and year-out, win athletic success while recognizing it is not the most important part of their lives. They are trained academically. They are trained militarily. They are trained to develop good character and good citizenship and to be good people and representatives of the United States of America. And still, year-in and year-out, they play well; they win a lot; they play as a team. And it must be immensely encouraging to every American, as it is to me as Commander in Chief, to know that they will be representing our country as an important part of our national defense in the years ahead.

To all of you who have had anything to do with their success, I thank you. To all of you who teach at the Air Force Academy, who coach, or who otherwise support these young people who have made such an important commitment to excellence and to service, I thank you.

And I want to again say I won't be here next year, but I expect you will be. [Laughter] I hope you will remember that I have been honored to see the Air Force Academy here 7 of these 8 years, that you have earned every appearance. And I hope you will take with you into life the values that brought you to this place today.

Thank you very much.

Now, I would like to ask the Superintendent to come up for remarks, and then we'll have the coach say a thing or two.

General, it's good to see you again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Tad J. Oelstrom, USAF, Superintendent, and Fisher DeBerry, football coach, U.S. Air Force Academy.