

Remarks on Arrival at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida
March 12, 2001

Well, thank you all very much. General Ryan, thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank your base commander. I want to thank the command sergeant who greeted me at the stairs of the Air Force plane that flew me here. The good news is, those pilots know what they're doing.

It is such an honor to be the Commander in Chief of the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth. I'm proud of the men and women who wear our uniform. My job is to set a clear mission for the United States military. The mission of the military would be to be well prepared to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

Today I'm going to speak to a Rotary Club and chamber of commerce event that will detail parts of my budget that I submitted to the Congress. One part of my budget that I submitted to the Congress will be to make sure we house our military folks better. One part of the budget I sub-

mitted to Congress is a pay raise for those who wear the uniform. I believe by focusing our mission, we can improve morale. But I know by paying folks more, we can improve morale, as well.

I look forward to shaking your hands and looking you in the eye and thanking you for serving America. For those of you who I don't get to look in the eye and say, "Thanks for serving America," thanks for serving America. We're counting on you. Our Nation relies upon you to keep the peace, and we will do so.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. on the tarmac. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Michael E. Ryan, USAF, Chief of Staff; and Brig. Gen. William F. Hodgkins, USAF, commander, and M. Sgt. Karl W. Meyers, USAF, commander chief, 325th Fighter Wing.

Remarks During a Tour of Base Housing and an Exchange With Reporters
at Tyndall Air Force Base
March 12, 2001

The President. Donnie, thanks for having us—me, my brother, and about 400 other people in your living room.

Senior Airman Donnie Bryant. I think this is the most I've ever had in my living room, sir.

The President. Well, there are some fine Americans in your living room.

Airman Bryant. Yes, sir.

The President. Thanks for having us.

Airman Bryant. Yes, sir.

The President. So, tell us about housing here.

Airman Bryant. Housing—we just recently have completed our Redfish Point housing, which is the housing right behind my house over here, the new housing. I think you may get a chance to drive by and see it.

The President. Right, we are.

Airman Bryant. This is the older housing. It's about 50 years old, built to the standards at the time. And these houses are totally being refurbished. We have kitchens being redone in them. The electric and all the plumbing and stuff, some of

that's been taken care of. The outside electric has been put to an underground system instead of the overhead wiring that we had for a long time, that actually goes into the house. It saves a lot of problems with power problems around the house. We still have a few problems with plumbing, but I believe they are starting a project on that. We've had some plumbers pull in out back. But overall—

The President. Particularly after they knew General Ryan was coming.

Airman Bryant. Cleaned it up for you, Mr. President.

But the main thing is, I guess we're trying to keep all the houses, the old houses up to par and keep everything maintained and keep the housing conditions livable.

The President. That's my mission, as well.

Airman Bryant. That's where we need our money, to keep projects going and to also make room for new houses and stuff, as well.

The President. That's one of the reasons I've come to your house, to highlight my initiative that I look forward to working with the Air Force on, and base commanders all around the country, to refurbish housing and build new housing. I do think we need for a troop to be able to house his family; that's an important part of building morale in the military.

Airman Bryant. Yes, sir. It is.

The President. Thank you for letting us come by.

Airman Bryant. Thank you, sir, for coming by.

The President. We want Chloe to have a good roof over her.

Theresa Bryant. Would you like to see her room?

The President. Sure. Chloe, would you show me your room?

Airman Bryant. Mr. President, I'll show you back there.

The President. Is everybody going in there? [Laughter]

[At this point, the President toured the house and then took questions from the press.]

Tax Relief Legislation

Q. Can I ask you your response to all those Senators that are saying they expect you to compromise on your tax cut plan?

The President. Well, there's 100 opinions in the United States Senate, and I respect every opinion. But when they listen to what the American people want, they're going to find out people want something: They want a tax relief that's substantial and real. And I look forward to working with the Senate.

Q. Does that mean you are or are not willing to compromise, sir?

The President. I'm willing to listen to the 100 different voices who've got different views about where this package ought to go. And of course, I'm pleased with what happened in the House. And as I've said all along, I laid out a plan that I thought was the right size to begin with, and look forward to working with the Members to get this done. And we need to do it in a quick way in order to provide a little second wind to the economy.

Q. What about Democrats running ads in the State against your tax package but wrapping that issue around the issue of the Florida recount, saying your brother delivered this State, and now look at what we're getting?

The President. Some of the Democrats here want to keep revoting the election. But if they would listen to America, they would find that Americans want to move forward. Secondly, there are some who would rather spend the surplus on bigger Government. And I have an honest disagreement with those types of people.

The American people, when they hear that we've got enough money to meet needs such as building housing on military bases or refurbishing housing on military bases, if we set priorities and have fiscally sound leadership in Washington, DC, they

will find that there is enough money for tax relief.

And I can understand why some—I mean, I don’t understand it, but some people want to increase the size of the Federal Government. And if the people that are running those ads here in Florida want to travel the State and say, “Support us because we want to increase the size of the Federal Government,” I think they’re going to find a lot of people aren’t going to listen.

Thank you all.

Faith-Based Initiative

Q. You’re not backing down off your faith-based program, are you?

The President. Oh, not at all, no. Our faith-based—we’ve submitted a package to

the United States Congress. I’m proud of the Faith-Based Initiative. There is a lot of bipartisan support on the Hill.

And somebody mentioned something about an article today. I haven’t read it yet. But no, we’re moving forward. It’s the right thing to do.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. Okay, see you all soon.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:45 a.m. during a tour of Airman Bryant’s residence. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gen. Michael E. Ryan, USAF, Chief of Staff; and Chloe Bryant, Airman Bryant’s daughter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Youth Activities Center at Tyndall Air Force Base
March 12, 2001

S. Sgt. Amy R. Justice. Thank you for coming, sir. We’re really looking forward to this.

The President. I’m looking forward to hearing from them. But one of the things I—my job as the Commander in Chief is to boost morale in the military. In order to keep the peace, the military must be strong and morale has got to be high. And I’ve come to talk about base housing. We want to make sure people are well housed in the military, and there’s some money in my budget to do that.

[At this point, a baby cried.]

The President. Don’t worry about it. Base housing’s on the way. [Laughter]

I got to see new housing, and I got to see not-so-new housing. And it was important to do so, and I appreciate the general giving me a tour. Anyway, thanks for letting me come by.

And by the way, I’m proud to be traveling with my brother Jeb. If you’ve got

any problems, write him—[laughter]—and the two Congressmen from this area. Congressman Boyd and Congressman Scarborough are with us. And of course, General Mike Ryan, who is from the Joint Chiefs. I appreciate you being here, General, as well.

But thank you all very much for giving me a chance to come. I look forward to hearing what you have to say, and it’s your chance to give the Commander in Chief a few suggestions. And I’m interested.

I do want to say that I know a lot of families are worried about all the deployments that take place. And we’ll honor our commitments. But the mission of this military is going to be, to be ready to fight and win war and, therefore, stop war from happening in the first place. And I think that’s important for all of the folks who wear the uniform and their spouses to hear. The mission will be well focused, and that’s what we’ll be focusing our resources and