

Remarks at a Military Reenlistment Ceremony  
*May 23, 2001*

I don't know if the Commander in Chief is allowed to say this, but I'm going to anyway: At ease. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for your service to the country. It's fitting that he is here today, because a few months ago, Secretary Rumsfeld re-upped himself. *[Laughter]* And the Nation is better off for it. General Shelton, thank you for being here. Joint Chiefs, thank you all for coming; family and friends.

Before I begin my remarks, I want to take note of a major event that took place today in the United States Senate. Just a little over an hour ago, the United States Senate, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, voted to give the tax relief to the American people. The House of Representatives has already voted in favor of tax relief. So I'm pleased to report today that tax relief is on the way.

I want to congratulate the 62 Senators who voted for this important measure. Senator Lott and Senator Grassley, Senator Baucus, Senator Miller, and Senator Breaux led the way in giving this victory to the American people. And they deserve our country's thanks and praise.

The economy needs a shot in the arm, so I call on the House and the Senate to reach an agreement on the final tax relief package this week. The sooner the Congress completes its work, the sooner the American people will have their own money in their own pockets to save and invest as they see fit. Our economy cannot afford any further delays.

And now to the task at hand. I am so appreciative that General Shelton and the other leaders of the military are here. The men and women now know how proud you are of their decision to take another tour of duty. And I'm proud, too. And I welcome you all to the White House.

For two centuries this house has been the final point of decision in the chain of command. Here President Wilson decided that American soldiers would have to go to Europe to fight in World War I. Here Franklin Roosevelt first learned of the attack at Pearl Harbor, and within days, America began a 4-year war in two theaters. Here four modern Presidents dealt with the struggle in Vietnam, from beginning to end.

Every major military operation of the last 200 years was set in motion at the White House. The circumstances have varied greatly, but no President has ever had reason to doubt the ability and commitment of the American Armed Forces. You have shown that commitment today. Like many thousands of others who will reenlist this year, you've done yourselves credit, and you've paid your country a high tribute. The choice was yours to make, and you volunteered again, and your country is very grateful.

Our military depends on reenlistment. This is especially true now, as military technology and equipment grow more complex and more demanding. Perhaps more than ever, the success of our all-volunteer force requires that we keep the best people, the most experienced technicians, and mature leaders of the highest caliber. That is what America gains with each one of you who stays.

In return, America owes you every ounce of support you need to carry out your daily mission. When reenlistment declines, that's usually a sign that such support is missing. I have promised never to let that support waver, never to take you for granted. As long as I live under this roof, our country and our military will be prepared to meet any challenge the future may bring.

For many of you, the decision to reenlist wasn't made alone. You all know the saying:

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Soldiers enlist, but families reenlist. [Laughter] And we have many family members here. You're not taking an oath, but you're making an important commitment. And along the way, all of you have made your share of sacrifices. And I appreciate the chance to thank you for it. When I speak of supporting the military, that means family members as well, the bases you call home, and the schools where you send your children.

For those who are about to take the oath, congratulations. You repeat some fa-

miliar words. You will do so with self-assurance that you might not have had the first time, that comes with hard work and discipline and service to our country. I want each of you to return to your posts with the knowledge that you have my gratitude and full confidence. Thank you again.

And now it is my honor to turn over the proceedings to General Shelton, who will administer the oath of office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Statement on House of Representatives Action on Education Reform Legislation

*May 23, 2001*

I commend the House of Representatives for taking a giant step toward improving America's public schools. The education reforms adopted today build on the principles of accountability, flexibility, local control, and greater choices for parents. The reforms require annual testing of students in grades three through eight, give States unprecedented flexibility to meet critical education needs and, for the first time, tie Federal education funding to results. These

education reforms also give parents real options to get their children out of persistently failing schools through public school choice with transportation provided, and supplemental services such as tutoring and summer school. I look forward to working with Members of the House and Senate to make sure this vital legislation becomes law so that no child in America is left behind.

## Message to the Congress on Additional Measures Prohibiting the Importation of Rough Diamonds From Sierra Leone

*May 23, 2001*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Pursuant to section 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b) (IEEPA), and section 301 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1631, I hereby report that I have exercised my statutory authority to expand the scope of an existing national emergency in response to the unusual and extraor-

dinary threat posed to the foreign policy of the United States by the Government of Liberia's complicity in the illicit trade in diamonds from Sierra Leone by the insurgent Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) and by the Government of Liberia's other forms of support for the RUF. I also have exercised my statutory authority to issue an Executive Order that