

The President's Radio Address *July 6, 2002*

Good morning. This week, Americans are celebrating the 226th anniversary of our independence. On the Fourth of July, we count our blessings, and there are so many to count.

We are thankful for the families that share our life in this land of liberty. We're thankful for the opportunities given to us every day in this country. We are thankful for our freedom, the freedom declared by the Founding Fathers, defended by many generations, and granted to each one of us by Almighty God.

Americans know that our country did not come about by chance. Our Nation was first designed as a colony, serving an empire and answering to a king. The Founders had other things in mind. In the summer of 1776, they declared that these colonies "are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States." All Americans can draw a straight line from the free lives we lead today to that one moment when the world changed forever.

From that day in 1776, freedom has had a home and a defender. Unlike any other country, America came into the world with a message for mankind—that all are created equal and all are meant to be free.

There is no American race; there's only an American creed. We believe in the dignity and rights of every person. We believe in equal justice, limited government, and the rule of law, personal responsibility and tolerance toward others. This creed of freedom and equality has lifted the lives of millions of Americans, of citizens by birth and citizens by choice. This creed draws our friends to us, sets our enemies against us, and always inspires the best that is in us.

In this 226th year of our independence, we have seen that American patriotism is still a living faith. We love our country only more when she is threatened. America is

the most diverse Nation on Earth. Yet, in a moment we discovered again that we are a single people; we share the same allegiance; we live under the same flag; and when you strike one American, you strike us all.

More than ever in the lifetimes of most Americans, our flag stands for a true united country. We've been united in our grief, and we are united in our resolve to protect our people and defeat the enemies of freedom. At this hour, more than 60,000 American troops are deployed around the world in the war against terror. Many of you have family members serving in the military. Wherever they are stationed, this Nation is depending on them, and you can be proud of them.

America's service men and women and our veterans know better than anyone that our love for country is shown in works. That spirit of service is alive and strong in America today. As we fight a war abroad, at home Americans are answering the call of service, giving their time and energy to causes greater than self-interest. This Nation is confronting a terrible evil, and we are overcoming evil with good.

Today, as much as ever before, America bears the hopes of the world. Yet, from the day of our founding, America's own great hope has never been in ourselves alone. The Founders humbly sought the wisdom and the blessing of Divine Providence. May we always live by that same trust, and may God continue to watch over the United States of America.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:17 a.m. on July 3 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 5 but was embargoed for release until the

broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of General Benjamin Oliver Davis, Jr. *July 6, 2002*

Two days ago, on July 4th, America lost a true hero when General Benjamin Oliver Davis, Jr., died at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, DC. Throughout his career, General Davis served the cause of freedom with distinction and dignity. He will be sorely missed. On behalf of a grateful nation, Laura and I send our condolences to the Davis family.

We will remember General Davis most for his leadership of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. The segregated African American 332d Fighter Group flew more than 15,000 sorties against the Nazi Luftwaffe, destroyed over 250 enemy aircraft, and never lost a single Allied plane flying under its escort protection. Davis' leadership and the dazzling success of his Tuskegee Airmen contributed greatly to the victory over fascism abroad—and to important victories over

discrimination here at home, especially the desegregation of the armed services ordered by President Truman in 1948.

The quiet courage, discipline, and high achievement of the Tuskegee Airmen simply mirrored the qualities that Benjamin Davis, Jr., demonstrated throughout his career. A graduate of West Point, he was a recipient of the Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross and was the first African American in the Air Force to earn a star. He retired with the rank of Lieutenant General and was awarded his fourth star after his retirement in 1998. His passing on the date of our Nation's Independence underscores the independence and pride with which he served our Nation's highest ideals. General Davis left our country better than he found it and his legacy will endure for as long as Americans seek to protect—and perfect—our Union.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor Posthumously to Captain Humbert Versace *July 8, 2002*

Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. It's a—this is a special occasion. I am honored to be a part of the gathering as we pay tribute to a true American patriot and a hero, Captain Humbert "Rocky" Versace.

Nearly four decades ago, his courage and defiance while being held captive in Vietnam cost him his life. Today it is my great privilege to recognize his extraordinary sac-

rifices by awarding him the Medal of Honor.

I appreciate Secretary Anthony Principi, the Secretary from the Department of Veteran Affairs, for being here. Thank you for coming, Tony. I appreciate Senator George Allen and Congressman Jim Moran. I want to thank Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and General Pete Pace, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Army