

and TB; fighting the scourge of organized crime, trafficking in persons and child pornography; and completing the Chornobyl Shelter Implementation Plan. To help complete the Chornobyl Shelter, the United States will provide an additional \$45 million to the Shelter Fund. Ukraine will also provide an additional financial contribution and facilitate prompt completion of the Shelter. U.S. assistance to Ukraine will particularly focus on solidifying democratic advances through anti-corruption and rule of law programs, media and NGO development, nonpartisan party and election monitor training and other steps to improve electoral institutions and practices.

We also support a bold expansion of contact between our societies. To this end, Ukraine will eliminate visa requirements for Americans, and the United States will reduce visa fees for Ukrainians. We aim to enhance citizen exchanges, training opportunities and cooperation between business communities of both countries.

We commit our two nations to stand together as global partners for freedom, security and prosperity in the 21st century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith *April 4, 2005*

Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. Today is a special occasion: We are here to pay tribute to a soldier whose service illustrates the highest ideals of leadership and love of our country.

Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith of Florida gave his life for these ideals in a deadly battle outside Baghdad. It is my great privilege to recognize his extraordinary sacrifice by awarding Sergeant Smith the Medal of Honor.

I appreciate Secretary Don Rumsfeld joining us today; Secretary Jim Nicholson of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Senator Carl Levin, Senator Bill Nelson, Senator Mel Martinez, Senator Johnny Isakson, and Congressman Ike Skelton. Thank you all for joining us.

I appreciate Secretary Francis Harvey, Secretary of the Army; General Dick Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; General Pete Pace, Vice Chairman; General Pete Schoomaker, Chief of the Army.

I want to thank the Medal of Honor recipients who have joined us today: John Baker, Barney Barnum, Bernie Fisher, Al Rascon, and Brian Thacker. Honored you all are here.

I appreciate the family members who have joined us today. Thank you all for coming: Birgit Smith, his wife; Jessica Smith; David Smith; Janice Pvirre, the mom; Donald Pvirre, stepfather; and all the other family members who have joined us. Welcome.

I appreciate Chaplain David Hicks for his invocation. I want to thank Lieutenant Colonel Tom Smith for joining us, who was Paul Smith's commander. I particularly want to welcome soldiers from the 3d Infantry Division, Paul's unit in Iraq.

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for bravery a President can bestow. It is given for gallantry above and beyond the call of duty in the face of enemy attack. Since World War II, more than half of those who have been awarded this medal gave their lives in the action that earned

it. Sergeant Paul Smith belongs to this select group.

The story of Paul Smith is a story of a boy transformed into a man and a leader. His friends and family will tell you that he joined the Army in 1989 after finishing high school. When he joined the Army, he was a typical young American. He liked sports; he liked fast cars; and he liked to stay out late with his friends, pursuits that occasionally earned him what the Army calls “extra duty”—[laughter]—scrubbing floors.

Two things would change Paul’s life and lead him to the selfless heroism we honor today. The first would come when he was stationed in Germany and fell for a woman named Birgit Bacher. It turns out that Paul had a romantic streak in him. On the first night he met her, Paul appeared outside Birgit’s window singing “You’ve Lost That Loving Feeling.” [Laughter] In 1992, the two married, and soon a young soldier became a devoted family man who played tee-ball with his son and taught his daughter how to change the oil in his Jeep Cherokee.

Second great change in Paul’s life would come when he shipped off to Saudi Arabia to fight in the first gulf war. There the young combat engineer learned that his training had a purpose and could save lives on the battlefield. Paul returned from that war determined that other soldiers would benefit from the lessons he had learned.

Paul earned his sergeant’s stripes and became known as a stickler for detail. Sergeant Smith’s seriousness wasn’t always appreciated by the greener troops under his direction. Those greener troops oftentimes found themselves to do tasks over and over again, until they got it right. Specialist Michael Seaman, who is with us today, says, “He was hard in training because he knew we had to be hard in battle.” Specialist Seaman will also tell you that he and others are alive today because of Sergeant Smith’s discipline.

That discipline would be put to the task in a small courtyard less than a mile from the Baghdad airport. Sergeant Smith was leading about three dozen men who were using a courtyard next to a watchtower to build a temporary jail for captured enemy prisoners. As they were cleaning the courtyard, they were surprised by about a hundred of Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard.

With complete disregard for his own life and under constant enemy fire, Sergeant Smith rallied his men and led a counter-attack. Seeing that his wounded men were in danger of being overrun and that enemy fire from the watchtower had pinned them down, Sergeant Smith manned a 50-caliber machine gun atop a damaged armored vehicle. From a completely exposed position, he killed as many as 50 enemy soldiers as he protected his men.

Sergeant Smith’s leadership saved the men in the courtyard, and he prevented an enemy attack on the aid station just up the road. Sergeant Smith continued to fire and took a—until he took a fatal round to the head. His actions in that courtyard saved the lives of more than 100 American soldiers.

Scripture tells us, as the general said, “that a man has no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.” And that is exactly the responsibility Paul Smith believed the sergeant’s stripes on his sleeve had given him. In a letter he wrote to his parents but never mailed, he said that he was prepared to “give all that I am to ensure that all my boys make it home.”

On this day 2 years ago, Sergeant Smith gave his all for his men. Five days later, Baghdad fell, and the Iraqi people were liberated. And today we bestow upon Sergeant Smith the first Medal of Honor in the war on terror. He’s also the first to be awarded this new Medal of Honor flag, authorized by the United States Congress. We count ourselves blessed to have soldiers like Sergeant Smith, who put their lives

on the line to advance the cause of freedom and protect the American people.

Like every one of the men and women in uniform who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Sergeant Paul Smith was a volunteer. We thank his family for the father, husband, and son and brother who can never be replaced. We recall with appreciation the fellow soldiers whose lives he saved and the many more he inspired. And we express our gratitude for a new generation of Americans, every bit as selfless and dedicated to liberty as any that has gone on before, a dedication exempli-

fied by the sacrifice and valor of Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith.

And now if his family would join me, please. Lieutenant Commander, please read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Ray Smith's son, David A. Smith, and daughter, Jessica M. Smith; and Maj. Gen. David Hicks, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains. Following the President's remarks, Lt. Cmdr. Keith B. Davids, Navy Aide to the President, read the citation.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Bureau of the Public Debt in Parkersburg, West Virginia April 5, 2005

The President. See, what's interesting is a lot of people believe that the Social Security trust is—the Government takes a person's money, invests it, and then pays it back to them upon retirement. It doesn't work that way.

Susan Chapman. That's right. That's exactly right.

The President. This is what exists. And it's very important, then, to make sure that in the future that there's real assets for retirees.

But I want to thank you all for having me come. I want to thank all the workers here for representing the mighty United States. I'm proud to work with you. I thank you for what you do. And my message here in town is that we have an obligation to

take the system that Franklin Roosevelt created and make it work for a younger generation of Americans. I'm looking forward to working with Congress to do that. That's what the American people expect. They expect us to modernize the system.

Anyway, thanks for having us.

Ms. Chapman. Well, thank you for coming. We're proud to have you visit us.

The President. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. Participating in the tour was Susan Chapman, Director, Division of Federal Investments, Bureau of the Public Debt. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Strengthening Social Security in Parkersburg April 5, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you all. It is nice to be back in Parkersburg.

Thanks for having me. It just seems like yesterday that I was here. [Laughter] It's