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With regard to the specific question you asked, we're going to review FEMA's operations to see what needs to be done to strengthen them. From the point of view of the Governors and the people at the local level, one of the biggest criticisms has been that FEMA has to go through this long approval process with the Governor asking for emergency aid. And we're looking at what can be done to maybe pre-position people and move this whole process faster.

With regard to the question of the professionalization of the Agency, Senator Mikulski has a bill now in the Senate that she's been working on. We are discussing it with her, we are working with her, and I want to evaluate it as we go along, as I'm sure you do.

This is very important to me. I live in a State, or I did before I became President, lived in a State that had the highest tornado occurrences per capita in America, that regularly had floods and ice storms and drought. I've been through a lot of experience with FEMA. And I think the American people are entitled to an emergency management agency that is as good and quick and competent and professional as possible.

Let me just mention one other issue that we have to really think through, and that is that FEMA is essentially set up to act quickly with problems that are immediate. But these disasters often leave a long rebuilding period in their wake. You can't just turn these things around overnight. Now, one of the things that we've tried to do is to set up a set of de facto solutions to this. For example, when I became President, I asked Henry Cisneros, the HUD Secretary, to take over coordinating the long-term response to Hurricane Andrew in Florida. I have asked Secretary Espy, the Agriculture Secretary now, to take over the long-term management of our commitment in the Midwest in the aftermath of the flood. But that also needs to be thought through because a lot of these problems we're going to be dealing with in the fall and the winter and next year as well. Senator Mikulski came to St. Louis with me last Saturday when we met with the Governors and other emergency personnel from all the States affected by the flood. And we're going to be talking about what else we need to do legally.

Thank you.

Mr. Stroger. Thank you, Mr. President. And frankly, as a fellow Arkansan, I can't think of a better time to be president of the National Association of Counties and have this opportunity to work with you. And I know that you're very sensitive, concerned. You're imbued with a sense of fairness for all Americans. And working with us here at NACO and with other groups of Americans like us, you're going to help us make America really, really great. So we stand here with you ready to face the challenges together and build on America's already greatness. Thank you very much, and God bless you. And I hope he continues to allow you to be strong to carry forth your charge.

The President. Thank you, John. God bless you. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. via satellite from Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Announcing the New Policy on Gays and Lesbians in the Military

July 19, 1993

Thank you very much. Secretary Aspin, General Powell, members of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Kime, to our host, Admiral Smith, ladies and gentlemen, I have come here today to discuss a difficult challenge and one which has received an enormous amount of publicity and public and private debate over the last several months: Our Nation's policy toward homosexuals in the military.

I believe the policy I am announcing today represents a real step forward, but I know it will raise concerns in some of your minds. So I wanted you to hear my thinking and my decision directly and in person because I respect you, and because you are among the elite who will lead our Armed Forces into the next century, and because you will have to put this policy into effect and I expect your help in doing it.

The policy I am announcing today is, in my judgment, the right thing to do and the best way to do it. It is right because it provides greater protection to those who happen to be homosexual and want to serve their country honorably in uniform, obeying all the military's rules against sexual misconduct. It is the best way to proceed because it provides a sensible balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of our military to remain the world's number one fighting force. As President of all the American people, I am pledged to protect and to promote individual rights. As Commander in Chief, I am pledged to protect and advance our security. In this policy, I believe we have come close to meeting both objectives.

Let me start with this clear fact: Our military is one of our greatest accomplishments and our most valuable assets. It is the world's most effective and powerful fighting force, bar none. I have seen proof of this fact almost every day since I became President. I saw it last week when I visited Camp Casey, along the DMZ in Korea. I witnessed it at our military academies at Annapolis and West Point when I visited there. And I certainly relied on it 3 weeks ago when I ordered an attack on Iraq after that country's leadership attempted to assassinate President Bush.

We owe a great deal to the men and women who protect us through their service, their sacrifice, and their dedication. And we owe it to our own security to listen hard to them and act carefully as we consider any changes in the military. A force ready to fight must maintain the highest priority under all circumstances.

Let me review the events which bring us here today. Before I ran for President, this issue was already upon us. Some of the members of the military returning from the Gulf war announced their homosexuality in order to protest the ban. The military's policy has been questioned in college ROTC programs. Legal challenges have been filed in court, including one that has since succeeded. In 1991, the Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, was asked about reports that the Defense Department spent an alleged $500 million to separate and replace about 17,000 homosexuals from the military service during the 1980's, in spite of the findings of a Government report saying there was no reason to believe that they could not serve effectively and with distinction. Shortly thereafter, while giving a speech at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, I was asked by one of the students what I thought of this report and what I thought of lifting the ban. This question had never before been presented to me, and I had never had the opportunity to discuss it with anyone. I stated then what I still believe, that I thought there ought to be a presumption that people who wish to do so should be able to serve their country if they are willing to conform to the high standards of the military and that the emphasis should be always on people's conduct, not their status.

For me, and this is very important, this issue has never been one of group rights but rather of individual ones, of the individual opportunity to serve and the individual responsibility to conform to the highest standards of military conduct. For people who are willing to play by the rules, able to serve and make a contribution, I believed then and I believe now we should give them the chance to do so.

The central facts of this issue are not much in dispute. First, notwithstanding the ban, there have been and are homosexuals in the military service who serve with distinction. I have had the privilege of meeting some of these men and women, and I have been deeply impressed by their devotion to duty and to country.

Second, there is no study showing them to be less capable or more prone to misconduct than heterosexual soldiers. Indeed, all the information we have indicates that they are not less capable or more prone to misbehavior.

Third, misconduct is already covered by the laws and rules which also cover activities that are improper by heterosexual members of the military.

Fourth, the ban has been lifted in other nations and in police and fire departments in our country with no discernible negative impact on unit cohesion or capacity to do the job, though there is, admittedly, no absolute analogy to the situation we face and no study bearing on this specific issue.

Fifth, even if the ban were lifted entirely, the experience of other nations and police and fire departments in the United States indicates that most homosexuals would probably not declare their sexual orientation openly thereby making an already hard life even more difficult in some circumstances.

But as the sociologist Charles Moskos noted after spending many years studying the American military, the issue may be tougher to resolve here in the United States than in Canada, Australia, and in some other nations because of the presence in our country of both vocal gay rights groups and equally vocal antigay rights groups, including some religious groups who believe that lifting the ban amounts to endorsing a lifestyle they strongly disapprove of.

Clearly the American people are deeply divided on this issue, with most military people opposed to lifting the ban because of the feared impact on unit cohesion, rooted in disapproval of homosexual lifestyles and the fear of invasion of privacy of heterosexual soldiers who must live and work in close quarters with homosexual military people. However, those who have studied this issue extensively have discovered an interesting fact. People in this country who are aware of having known homosexuals are far more likely to support lifting the ban. In other words, they are likely to see this issue in terms of individual conduct and individual capacity instead of the claims of a group with which they do not agree and also to be able to imagine how this ban could be lifted without a destructive impact on group cohesion and morale.

Shortly after I took office and reaffirmed my position, the foes of lifting the ban in the Congress moved to enshrine the ban in law. I asked that congressional action be delayed for 6 months while the Secretary of Defense worked with the Joint Chiefs to come up with a proposal for changing our current policy. I then met with the Joint Chiefs to hear their concerns and asked them to try to work through the issue with Secretary Aspin. I wanted to handle the matter in this way on grounds of both principle and practicality.

As a matter of principle, it is my duty as Commander in Chief to uphold the high standards of combat readiness and unit cohesion of the world's finest fighting force, while doing my duty as President to protect the rights of individual Americans and to put to use the abilities of all the American people. And I was determined to serve this principle as fully as possible through practical action, knowing this fact about our system of government: While the Commander in Chief and the Secretary of Defense can change military personnel policies, Congress can reverse those changes by law in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, to veto.

For months now, the Secretary of Defense and the Service Chiefs have worked through this issue in a highly charged, deeply emotional environment, struggling to come to terms with the competing consideration and pressures and, frankly, to work through their own ideas and deep feelings.

During this time many dedicated Americans have come forward to state their own views on this issue. Most, but not all, of the military testimony has been against lifting the ban. But support for changing the policy has come from distinguished combat veterans, including Senators Bob Kerrey, Chuck Robb, and John Kerry in the United States Congress. It has come from Lawrence Korb, who enforced the gay ban during the Reagan administration, and from former Senator Barry Goldwater, a distinguished veteran, former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, founder of the Arizona National Guard, and patron saint of the conservative wing of the Republican Party.

Senator Goldwater's statement, published in The Washington Post recently, made it crystal clear that when this matter is viewed as an issue of individual opportunity and responsibility rather than one of alleged group rights, this is not a call for cultural license but rather a reaffirmation of the American value of extending opportunity to responsible individuals and of limiting the role of Government over citizens' private lives.

On the other hand, those who oppose lifting the ban are clearly focused not on the conduct of individual gay service members but on how nongay service members feel about gays in general and in particular those in the military service.

These past few days I have been in contact with the Secretary of Defense as he has

worked through the final stages of this policy with the Joint Chiefs. We now have a policy that is a substantial advance over the one in place when I took office. I have ordered Secretary Aspin to issue a directive consisting of these essential elements: One, service men and women will be judged based on their conduct, not their sexual orientation. Two, therefore the practice, now 6 months old, of not asking about sexual orientation in the enlistment procedure will continue. Three, an open statement by a service member that he or she is a homosexual will create a rebuttable presumption that he or she intends to engage in prohibited conduct, but the service member will be given an opportunity to refute that presumption; in other words, to demonstrate that he or she intends to live by the rules of conduct that apply in the military service. And four, all provisions of the Uniform Code of Military Justice will be enforced in an even-handed manner as regards both heterosexuals and homosexuals. And thanks to the policy provisions agreed to by the Joint Chiefs, there will be a decent regard to the legitimate privacy and associational rights of all service members.

Just as is the case under current policy, unacceptable conduct, either heterosexual or homosexual, will be unacceptable 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from the time a recruit joins the service until the day he or she is discharged. Now, as in the past, every member of our military will be required to comply with the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which is Federal law, and military regulations at all times and in all places.

Let me say a few words now about this policy. It is not a perfect solution. It is not identical with some of my own goals. And it certainly will not please everyone, perhaps not anyone, and clearly not those who hold the most adamant opinions on either side of this issue.

But those who wish to ignore the issue must understand that it is already tearing at the cohesion of the military and it is today being considered by the Federal courts in ways that may not be to the liking of those who oppose any change. And those who want the ban to be lifted completely on both status and conduct must understand that such action would have faced certain and decisive reversal by the Congress and the cause for which many have fought for years would be delayed, probably for years.

Thus, on grounds of both principle and practicality, this is a major step forward. It is, in my judgment, consistent with my responsibilities as President and Commander in Chief to meet the need to change current policy. It is an honorable compromise that advances the cause of people who are called to serve our country by their patriotism, the cause of our national security, and our national interest in resolving an issue that has divided our military and our Nation and diverted our attention from other matters for too long.

The time has come for us to move forward. As your Commander in Chief, I charge all of you to carry out this policy with fairness, with balance, and with due regard for the privacy of individuals. We must and will protect unit cohesion and troop morale. We must and will continue to have the best fighting force in the world. But this is an end to witch hunts that spend millions of taxpayer dollars to ferret out individuals who have served their country well. Improper conduct, on or off base, should remain grounds for discharge. But we will proceed with an even hand against everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

Such controversies as this have divided us before. But our Nation and our military have always risen to the challenge before. That was true of racial integration of the military and changes in the role of women in the military. Each of these was an issue, because it was an issue for society as well as for the military. And in each case our military was a leader in figuring out how to respond most effectively.

In the early 1970's, when President Nixon decided to transform our military into an all-volunteer force, many argued that it could not work. They said it would ruin our forces. But the leaders of our military not only made it work, they used the concept of an all-volunteer force to build the very finest fighting force our Nation and the world have ever known.

Ultimately, the success of this policy will depend in large measure on the commitment it receives from the leaders of the military

services. I very much respect and commend the Joint Chiefs for the good-faith effort they have made through this whole endeavor. And I thank General Powell, the Joint Chiefs, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard for joining me here today and for their support of this policy.

I would also like to thank those who lobbied aggressively in behalf of changing the policy, including Congressman Barney Frank; Congressman Gerry Studds; and the Campaign for Military Service, who worked with us and who clearly will not agree with every aspect of the policy announced today, but who should take some solace in knowing that their efforts have helped to produce a strong advance for the cause they seek to serve.

I must now look to General Powell, to the Joint Chiefs, to all the other leaders in our military to carry out this policy through effective training and leadership. Every officer will be expected to exert the necessary effort to make this policy work. That has been the key every time the military has successfully addressed a new challenge, and it will be key in this effort, too.

Our military is a conservative institution, and I say that in the very best sense, for its purpose is to conserve the fighting spirit of our troops, to conserve the resources and the capacity of our troops, to conserve the military lessons acquired during our Nation's existence, to conserve our very security, and yes, to conserve the liberties of the American people. Because it is a conservative institution, it is right for the military to be wary of sudden changes. Because it is an institution that embodies the best of America and must reflect the society in which it operates, it is also right for the military to make changes when the time for change is at hand.

I strongly believe that our military, like our society, needs the talents of every person who wants to make a contribution and who is ready to live by the rules. That is the heart of the policy that I have announced today. I hope in your heart you will find the will and the desire to support it and to lead our military in incorporating it into our Nation's great asset and the world's best fighting force.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:36 p.m. at the National Defense University at Fort McNair.

Remarks on the Dismissal of FBI Director William Sessions and an Exchange With Reporters

July 19, 1993

The President. Good afternoon. In recent months, serious questions have been raised about the conduct and the leadership of the Director of the FBI William Sessions. Among other matters, the Department's Office of Professional Responsibility has issued a report on certain conduct by the Director. I asked the Attorney General, Janet Reno, to assess the Director's tenure and the proper response to the turmoil now in the Bureau. After a thorough review by the Attorney General of Mr. Sessions' leadership of the FBI, she has reported to me in no uncertain terms that he can no longer effectively lead the Bureau and law enforcement community.

I had hoped very much that this matter could be resolved within the Justice Department. The Attorney General met with Judge Sessions over the weekend and asked him to resign, but he refused. In accord with the recommendation of the Attorney General, with which I fully agree, I called Director Sessions a few moments ago and informed him that I was dismissing him, effective immediately, as the Director of the FBI.

We cannot have a leadership vacuum at an agency as important to the United States as the FBI. It is time that this difficult chapter in the Agency's history is brought to a close. The FBI is the Nation's premier investigative and enforcement agency. Law-abiding citizens rely on the FBI to handle a wide array of complex and sensitive matters, to protect our shores against terrorism, our neighborhoods against the scourge of drugs and guns, our public life against white-collar crime, corruption, and crimes of violence. The Agency's brilliant detective work in the wake of the World Trade Center bombing has shown even in a time of difficulty the men and women on the street and in the labs have continued to give their country their best. With a change in management in