

I guess I could go home without seeing you, but that would be my loss. Hillary and I look forward so much to the opportunities we have to come here to see the people who serve our Nation, who serve particularly in the Asia-Pacific region where I have just spent a number of days in Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand, and to see your families. I want to thank you for what you do. I want to tell you that, once again, I see from my talks with leaders throughout the world how important our leadership in this region is for peace, for stability, for prosperity and how much people all over the Asia-Pacific region look to you, trust you, believe in you, and see America in you. I thank you for that, and you should be very, very proud.

As Hillary and I go home for Thanksgiving we'll be giving special thanks this year, because it's Military Families Appreciation Week, for the families of our men and women in uniform throughout the world. From Bosnia to the Middle East, to Haiti, to the DMZ in Korea, here in Alaska, and in countries throughout the world, in bases all over the United States, I have seen the sacrifices and the support of our military families. I'm so grateful to all of you who have brought your children here today. I hope I get to shake hands with as many of them as possible. Those of you in the back who have your children on your shoulders, I thank you for that. I hope they will always remember that their parents served their country with pride and honor and that they had a chance to see the President thank their parents for their service.

To all of you in our families—I know here at Elmendorf alone there are 10,000 dependents—I know that the national security would not be possible without you. I was so moved by General McCaffrey's story of his own experience. I have seen that in military support families in accidents which cost the lives of our military personnel and in losses in active-duty service. But every day I see it in the support you give in countless ways to make it possible for families to stay together, for children to be raised properly, for families to support each so that our country can be properly defended.

So on this Thanksgiving Day, for all of our many blessings—and I've got a lot of things

to be thankful for, including having my contract renewed—[laughter]—I want you to know when our family, including a lot of our extended family, gathers on Thursday at Camp David, we will be thanking God for all of you who make our country the greatest, strongest force for freedom in human history.

God bless you, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 p.m. Alaska time in the Hangar One after crossing the international dateline. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tony Knowles of Alaska and his wife, Susan; Lt. Gen. Patrick K. Gamble, USAF, Commander, Alaskan Command; Col. William J. Lake, USAF, Commander, Third Wing; Mayor Rick Mystrom of Anchorage; Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer; and Barry R. McCaffrey, Director of National Drug Control Policy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 6959—World AIDS Day, 1996

November 26, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We dedicate World AIDS Day to the memory of those we have lost to HIV and AIDS and to our quest to help those who are living with this disease. The theme of this ninth observance of World AIDS Day, "One World, One Hope," reminds us that AIDS is a global pandemic and that HIV recognizes no geographic boundaries. Today, an estimated 21.8 million adults and children worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS, and we anticipate that as many as 3 million more will become infected with HIV in this year alone.

Of the almost 6 million men, women, and children around the world who have died of AIDS, more than 330,000 have been Americans. Each day, 100 of our fellow citizens lose their lives to this disease, and nearly 200 more are diagnosed with AIDS. The threat that HIV and AIDS pose to our Nation and the world has demanded a national response involving government, industry, communities, families, and individuals. We have put our best scientific minds to work on research, and our most talented public health professionals have strived to prevent the spread of

this epidemic. Parents, teachers, clergy, and other civic leaders have worked together to educate and protect young people and other groups who are so vulnerable to—and devastated by—the scourge of HIV and AIDS.

At long last, this investment of our time, attention, and resources in science and public health has begun to pay dividends. The past 12 months have offered us reasons for real hope and optimism after so many years of sadness and despair. New treatments, approved in record time, are showing remarkable results in arresting the development of HIV disease and are beginning to improve the health of those who are living with the virus. We have worked hard to provide access to these promising treatments for as many people as possible. We have tripled funding for AIDS drug assistance programs, and we have increased support for the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act by 30 percent during the past 12 months. We have also preserved the Medicaid program, which provides care to more than half of Americans living with AIDS, including more than 90 percent of the children with AIDS.

We are heartened by our success in reducing the risk of perinatal transmission of HIV from mother to child. For the first time since this epidemic began in 1981, we have seen an actual reduction in the number of infants born with HIV. It is within our grasp to virtually eradicate pediatric HIV disease by the end of this century. Our efforts to prevent other types of HIV transmission are also showing signs of progress. But we must remain vigilant to the continuing need for prevention, reducing the number of new infections year by year until the day when we can eliminate this disease.

As we move forward in this battle, we do so with renewed hope for the future. Let us observe World AIDS Day by intensifying our search for an end to the epidemic, for a cure for those who are living with HIV and AIDS, and for a vaccine to protect all citizens of the world from this relentless killer. And let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting the rights of all those who are living with HIV.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,
President of the United States of America,

by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 1, 1996, as World AIDS Day, and I invite the Governors of the States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, officials of other territories subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in reaffirming our commitment to combating HIV and AIDS and to reach out to those living with this disease.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 29, 1996]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 27, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 2.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 27, 1996

Please sit down. You can hear I'm hoarse. I just got back from a long trip. But if you'll bear with me, I will—I'll do my best to talk. [Laughter]

I want to, first of all, thank the chairman of the National Turkey Federation, Jim Cooper, and his family for bringing the turkey here, all the way from Oakwood, Ohio. His Congressman, Representative Paul Gillmor, is here; I welcome him as well. I want to thank Stuart Proctor, the president of the National Turkey Federation, and Joel Brandenberger, the executive director. I want to thank the volunteers and young people from the Big Brothers and the Big Sisters program and the Boys and Girls Club of America for being here.

You all know why we're here. Tomorrow 45 million turkeys will play the supreme sacrifice for our Thanksgiving. So, continuing a tradition begun 50 years ago by President Truman, I am going to keep at least one tur-