

people are proud of their own race and ethnicity and religion, but respectful of others; when they are secure enough in who they are that they don't have to put anybody else down, hurt anybody else, torch anybody else's church or mosque just to feel that they matter. This is the most important issue in the whole world today.

And just by getting up every day, going to work, keeping the kind of morale that you manifested today with your cheers and your pride, you are a rebuke to the biggest problem in the world, and the power of your example can do more than anything else to help us to win the peace.

Thank you, God bless you, and Happy Thanksgiving.

[At this point, a gift was presented to the President.]

The President. You all know I have an important job, because I'm your Commander in Chief, right? [Cheers] Well, tomorrow, because I'm also the President and I have broad executive authority—I get home at 10 o'clock tonight, we're all dog-tired, but I've got to get up and go to work tomorrow because I have to do something that every President has been doing since the 1920's: I have to pardon the Thanksgiving turkey. And they bring me a big turkey, and we let one go so we can eat all the others. [Laughter] And they put this turkey in a petting zoo for children to see in the Washington area. Anyway, it's always a great deal. I'm just saying, when I go into the office tomorrow to pardon the turkey, I'm going to take the falcon and put it on my desk so all of America can see, when my desk is on television, what you're doing.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:13 p.m. in the base theater/festival tent. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Craig Peterson, USA, Commander, Task Force Falcon, who introduced the President; and Gen. Wesley K. Clark, USA, Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

Remarks to American Troops Following Thanksgiving Dinner at Camp Bondsteel

November 23, 1999

Thank you. Well, the people at my table said that the speech I gave to the other troops was piped in here, which means it either was or it wasn't. And if it was, you heard it, and if it wasn't, you get relieved of hearing it. [Laughter]

Let me say to all of you how very grateful I am for your service here and for the power of your example here. As I said to the other troops, NATO won the military victory, but now the people of Kosovo have to win the peace, and you have to help them win it, not only by doing your jobs but by setting a good example.

This was a war caused by a man's determination to drive a whole people out of a country because of their ethnic and religious background. It's the opposite of everything we believe in, everything we live by, and everything the United States military stands for.

And you just look around this room today. We just celebrated Thanksgiving, with, I bet you, conservatively, 25 different ethnic groups represented among the American military forces here in this room—maybe 50, maybe it's more. We are interested and proud in and proud of our background, and we should be, but we know that our common humanity and our shared values are more important. That's the message that the children need to get here in Kosovo. And the more you work with people and the more you let children see you working together, having a good time, being proud of what you're doing, doing your job, living the American creed, you will also be fulfilling your mission by doing that.

Kids are not brought up hating each other because they're different; they have to be taught to do that. They've taught generations of people on this land, good people in both communities, to do that. And now they've got to stop, and you've got to help them. And

I can't think of a better Thanksgiving present that you could give to them.

Let me also say that I was very honored—I've got four Members of the Congress here who voted for this, but I was very honored to sign the legislation which raised the pay and improved the retirement of members of the military. But let me also say that we are well aware that in this good economy, with the training you've gotten in the military, that you're not serving for the money, but we think you ought to be properly compensated and have a good retirement, and it ought to be an incentive for you to stay if you're so inclined.

But we honor your service; we need you. And on Thanksgiving, those of us who came here will be home, and you will be a long way from home. But you will be in our hearts, and I hope you know that what you're doing is a great, great gift to your country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in a dining tent. In his remarks, he referred to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, Public Law 106-65, approved October 5.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony and an Exchange With Reporters

November 24, 1999

The President. Please sit down, everyone. Welcome to this annual day-before-Thanksgiving ritual here at the White House. I want to welcome particularly the Boys and Girls Clubs from Greater Washington, Horton's Kids, the people from the National Turkey Federation, and especially Chairman Jim Rieth and the president, Stuart Proctor.

I also want to say a special word of welcome to Representative Peter Deutsch from Florida and his family, who are here. This is a triumph of human stamina, because Peter just made the trip with me to Bulgaria and Kosovo. We got back very late last night, so he promised to come so there would be two jet-lagged people standing here together, and we're glad to see them.

I want to thank, as always, the National Turkey Federation for donating this year's tom turkey. It traveled here all the way from

Minnesota. Minnesota may be the second biggest turkey-producing State in our country. Sometimes I wonder if it's really a match for Washington, DC. [Laughter]

Tomorrow we celebrate the last Thanksgiving of this century. A hundred years ago, on these very grounds, President William McKinley reflected on the last turn of the century. He said, "Seldom has this Nation had greater cause for profound thanksgiving." Those words ring even more true today.

Today we count among our national blessing a time of unprecedented prosperity, with expanding economy, low rates of poverty and unemployment among our people, limitless opportunities for our children and the future. We are also very grateful for the peace and freedom America continues to enjoy, thanks to our men and women in uniform—many of whom I saw yesterday—a very long way from home at Thanksgiving.

As we gather around our dinner tables tomorrow with family and friends, let us give thanks for all these things that hold us together as a people—the duty we owe to our parents and our children; the nurturing and education of our families, especially our children, and for many, our grandchildren; the bounty of our earth; and the strong spirit of community we enjoy here in the United States.

We also know as we celebrate our blessings that there are still too many people who are hungry at this holiday season, both beyond our borders and around the world and, sadly, even here in the United States. That's why it's so important that we not only give thanks but also give back to our communities.

Before coming out here, I asked some of our staff members what they were thankful for this holiday season. One of my staff members said, "Today I'm thankful that I'm not a turkey." [Laughter] I know that one turkey doesn't have to worry about that—this fine-looking bird from the State of Minnesota. At over 50 pounds, he is the namesake of Harry S. Truman, the President who began the tradition of keeping at least one turkey off the Thanksgiving dinner table. Harry, the turkey, will get his pardon today.

So before I feast on one of the 45 million turkeys who will make the ultimate sacrifice,