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CONTACT: WALT RIKER
(202) 224-5358

OPERATION DESERT CALM

BRILLIANT LEADERSHIP WINS WAR; BUSH MAKES "TOUGHEST CALL OF OUR TIME"

SIX WEEKS AGO, WE STOOD ON THIS FLOOR IN AN HISTORIC DEBATE ABOUT WAR. TODAY, WE STAND HERE ON THE BRINK OF PEACE.

THE WORLD HAS WATCHED AS OPERATION DESERT SHIELD TURNED INTO OPERATION DESERT STORM. TODAY WE REJOICE THE FIRST DAY OF OPERATION DESERT CALM.

WE PRAY IT STAYS THAT WAY.

TODAY, WE ARE TRULY HUMBLLED BY THE SACRIFICE AND PATRIOTISM OF THE HEROES OF THIS STUNNING ALLIED VICTORY.

THE COALITION PREVAILED BECAUSE IT HAD THE WILL, THE DETERMINATION, THE UNITY AND THE SPECTACULAR MEANS TO GET THE JOB DONE -- SWIFTLY AND DECISIVELY.

PEACE IS AT HAND BECAUSE OF BRILLIANT LEADERSHIP -- FROM PRESIDENT BUSH, FROM THE PENTAGON, FROM THE LEADERS ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND ESPECIALLY FROM THE BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE OF THE COALITION FORCES.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAS EARNED A PLACE IN HISTORY WITH HIS BOLD LEADERSHIP. PRESIDENT BUSH HAD TO MAKE THE TOUGH CALLS -- THE TOUGHEST DECISIONS OF HIS LIFE, AND OF OUR TIME. IN EVERY INSTANCE, HE MADE THE RIGHT CALL -- FOR THE NATION, FOR OUR SOLDIERS, FOR THE COALITION, AND FOR PEACE. HE STUCK TO HIS GUNS AND HIS PRINCIPLES WHEN SOME OF THE SECOND-GUESSERS WERE SAYING OTHERWISE -- AND THANK GOD HE DID.

ONCE THE PRESIDENT MADE THE CALL, THE MILITARY CHAIN-OF-COMMAND CARRIED OUT THEIR AWESOME RESPONSIBILITIES WITH UNPARALLELED DISTINCTION.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, AMERICA HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH SOME OF HISTORY'S GREATEST MILITARY LEADERS, BUT NO TEAM HAS EVER BEEN ANY BETTER THAN DEFENSE SECRETARY DICK CHENEY, GENERAL COLIN POWELL AND GENERAL NORMAN SCHWARTZKOPF.

BUT MOST OF ALL, WE OWE OUR GRATITUDE TO THE BACKBONE OF OPERATION DESERT STORM -- THE HALF MILLION BRAVE AMERICAN SOLDIERS WHO PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE SO OTHERS WOULD BE FREE. THESE COURAGEOUS MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES, RESERVES AND NATIONAL GUARD UNITS FROM ACROSS THE NATION DID THE HARD WORK OF FREEDOM, AND THEY DID IT RIGHT.

MEANWHILE, WE WILL NEVER FORGET THOSE WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE -- ON THE BATTLEFIELD, IN TRAINING, AND IN ACCIDENTS DURING THE MASSIVE TROOP DEPLOYMENT. ONE DEATH WAS ONE DEATH TOO MANY. ONE MISSING IN ACTION IS ONE TOO MANY. AND ONE P.O.W. IS ONE TOO MANY.

THESE HEROES AND THEIR FAMILIES WILL REMAIN IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.

WE ALSO PRAY THAT TODAY IS THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA IN IRAQ. OUR WAR WAS NEVER WITH THE IRAQI PEOPLE -- IT WAS WITH THEIR MISGUIDED LEADER WHO BEARS ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PAIN AND DESTRUCTION HE HAS BROUGHT TO HIS OWN PEOPLE, TO KUWAIT AND TO EVERY COUNTRY THAT GAVE SO MUCH TO DEFEAT HIM.

NOW WE WATCH THE FRUITS OF THIS ALLIED VICTORY: THE PARADES OF JOY IN THE STREETS OF A LIBERATED KUWAIT CITY -- BUT THE PARADES I'M NOW LOOKING FORWARD TO ARE THE ONES THROUGH THE STREETS OF JUNCTION CITY, GARDEN CITY, WICHITA, LEAVENWORTH, TOPEKA AND EVERYWHERE IN KANSAS AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHERE PROUD AMERICANS WILL WELCOME HOME THE HEROES OF OPERATION DESERT STORM -- OUR MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE RISKED SO MUCH TO GIVE US THIS THE FIRST DAY OF OPERATION DESERT CALM.

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