

521 Remarks in Key West Upon Presenting Unit Citations
at the Boca Chica Naval Air Station. *November 26, 1962*

Admiral Dennison and members of the United States Navy and the Marine Corps:

I want to express in presenting this commendation to you two units the great appreciation of the people of the United States to all of you. I think that the American people should realize what an extraordinary burden they have carried in the last 17 years in the maintenance of freedom.

I pointed out this morning that there are over a million Americans who are serving outside of their country, and I suppose that really, since the beginning of recorded history there have been great periods where soldiers or sailors or airmen of a country have served outside of their country in the camps in other nations, but I know of no period in the history of the world or any nation that has done so in the defense of freedom and not made its object subjugation.

The United States has carried this load now for 17 years, in rebuilding Europe, in the defense of freedom in recent days in the Caribbean, in the defense of freedom in Vietnam, Berlin, all around the globe. The 180 million people of the United States, with their will and determination, and with you gentlemen as the point of the spear, have carried a load unprecedented in history. So no American need express any sense of inadequacy. As they look back on our history, and look ahead on the days to come, the title of being a citizen of the United States, I think, is one we should all bear with the greatest pride and distinction, because upon it and upon our will and upon all of you de-

pends the freedom of the United States and the freedom of a great many dozens of countries which stretch all the way around the earth.

We express particular thanks to you for your work of the last 5 weeks. The reconnaissance flights which enabled us to determine with precision the offensive buildup in Cuba contributed directly to the security of the United States in the most important and significant way. The days that we have recently passed through have been among the most dangerous since the end of the Second War. We have no assurance that in other times we may not pass through other dangerous days, but it gives all of us—and I'm sure I am speaking on behalf of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the members of the Congress who are here, as well as the people of the United States—it has given us all the greatest satisfaction to come today and see the First Armored Division, representing the Army divisions which have been prepared, the Navy, the Marines, and the Air Force, all working together in the greatest of causes, the defense of the United States.

We thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke following an inspection tour of the naval air station. The units receiving citations were the Navy Light Photographic Squadron 62 and the Marine Light Photographic Squadron VMC-12.

The President's opening words "Admiral Dennison" referred to Admiral Robert L. Dennison, Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, and Commander of the Atlantic Fleet.