

September 26, 1940

[Breaking Ground for New Hall of Records]

FDR Speech File

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P.P.R.
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File

FOR THE PRESS

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 26, 1940

Informal remarks of the President in connection with the breaking of ground for the new Hall of Records, Washington, D. C., Thursday, September twenty-sixth.

DOCTOR THOMPKINS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE DISTRICT:

I am very glad to come here in person today to take part in this breaking of the ground for this new Hall of Records.

Some of you know that I am so historically minded that I save everything I can get my hands on. I save old documents of all kinds, documents that go back to the early days of the Republic, and even documents that relate to the present Administration.

Having that historical sense, I believe that old records ought to be kept for historical reasons because you never can tell when something that does not seem of any particular value today may be of real value a hundred years from now.

But there is another reason. There are a great many documents that obviously will be of historical value and even of current value in our normal business life. About seven years ago I found that in the office of the Recorder of Deeds, the Government of the District was losing about \$40,000 a year. Now, of course, we ought to make the recording, not only of deeds but of any other documents, pay as it goes. You are a thrifty people. We ought not to have to pay out of tax money a loss in running an office of that kind. And during these years we have reached the amazing peak, under Dr. Thompsons, of making a profit of \$40,000 a year.

Those documents, as I say, relate to current events and they also relate to a great many old events. They go back, for example, in the real estate of the District, to, I think, 1792, when there were a great many old land records. They have been all recopied in Dr. Thompsons' administration; they are now in good shape. And we have to remember that every time any one of you buys or sells a piece of property in the District of Columbia, you have got to check back to see whether the title is genuine or not.

Furthermore, in addition to this saving -- this profit instead of the old loss -- we have brought our work up to date. In those old days, when we were children, seven years ago, it would take you not only hours and days, but weeks and months before you could get recorded by your government the various necessary documents for real estate sales or purchases and many other forms of documents that had to be recorded, not only under the law, but for the sake of safety of property.

And so this Administration, I think, has done something under Dr. Thompson, to help the business men and property owners of the District of Columbia, and at a fee cost, incidentally, that is just about as low as any place in the United States.

Then there is another thing. As I mentioned the other day, I am a combination of Scotch and Dutch business man. We are going to save money for the taxpayers of the District by putting up this building because today we are laying out an enormous sum in rent -- \$240,000 a year, I think it is -- and with this new building, owned by the Government and paid for by the Government, we are going to amortize it, pay for it, through the profits that are being made today, in a very short time. And, after that, when we are in the building, there won't be any more rent to pay. So, from that point of view, at business people, we feel that this new building is a mighty good investment.

And so I am glad to come here and congratulate Dr. Thompson and all of his assistants, his whole staff, on the splendid business-like job that has been done and to express the hope that he will be in this very important office for many long years to come for the service of the community and the Nation.

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FOR THE PRESS

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 26, 1940

Informal remarks of the President in connection with
the breaking of ground for the new ~~Secretary of War~~
~~_____~~, Washington, D. C., Thursday, September
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 26, 1940

Informal remarks of the President in connection with the breaking of ground for the new Hall of Records, Washington, D. C., Thursday, September twenty-sixth.

1652

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Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

September 29, 1940

Washington National Airport Cornerstone Ceremonies

1308

FDR Speech File

AIR PORT SPEECH

Just Draft

First of all, I make this signal to the Army
and the Navy that flies:

"Well done! The Commander in Chief's compliments
and thanks to all hands."

~~A little secret can now be told. The order for
this parade was issued only five days ago. Within that five
days, our military services put into the air above the
national capital a striking force and a defensive force,
actually greater than any we know to have been used on any
single occasion any place else in the world. The roar of
hundreds of American airplane engines, in more than six hundred American
planes~~ is symbolic of our determination to build up a defense
on sea, on land and in the air capable of overcoming any
attack. They are not the power we ultimately must have --
and will soon have, ~~if we are to preserve our way of life.~~
Rather let me describe this as just a ~~slightly~~ gratifying
flexing of the kind of fighting muscle ~~any way of life can~~
and does produce.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all
hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace.
We shall all strive with all of our energies and skills to
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They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all
hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace.
We shall all strive with all of our energies and skills to
see to it that they are never called upon for missions of

war. But the more we have of them the less likely we are to have to use them, for the less likely will there be attack upon us from abroad.

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, George Washington and the other fathers sought to place the nation's capital at a center of the then channels of transportation. There was long dispute about the plan. So, too, there has been long dispute about the plan for this airport, which now will again make the capital a hub of today's transportation by air. A proper and adequate flying field has been a Washington problem since the Wrights had their first crash on the parade ground at Fort Myer thirty years ago. We might go even further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his "Aerodrome" from a trestle on a barge just below us here in the Potomac.

Two years ago the problem became so acute as, literally, to give me bad dreams. So, upon the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was the creation of an adequate airport for the nation's capital. [They came back to me so rapidly with a plan so complete and so convincing that I am sure my friends Colonel Harrington and Sumpter Smith had beaten the gun by studying the whole problem as a part of their task in

Works Progress Administration.

That was in August. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first bucket of muck from beneath ten feet of water just to the south of where we now stand. They told me this field would be usable within two years. Today, ~~within two days~~ well within that promise, the field was used. It will be in regular use ~~in~~ ^{within} three months. And Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation during these two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as we must throughout the nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the nation's defense, we can make comparisons with Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms and knew how to use them. Every gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket which he used almost daily to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than ~~one~~ ²⁵ thousand one-fiftieth of our people -- only one-and-hundredth of one percent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only the American that proportion of Washington's people had known how to use in Washington's day a musket, the continental "army" would have consisted of

little more than a corporal's guard,
~~about fifteen hundred men.~~

Americans

Today fifty thousand young ~~men~~ are licensed flyers and the number is growing by almost two thousand a month. They are not all military pilots -- but they are as ready to become military pilots as were the ~~woodsmen~~ of Washington's day to become riflemen of the line. Whereas two years ago not more than a quarter of a million of our people habitually used the airlines and other planes to travel in, that number, the number of citizens at least familiar with the airplane, has doubled and will soon be tripled.

That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's ~~most complete~~, ^{greatest facilities} surely its most convenient and probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow its model, will draw free men freely to use an implement of commerce which can be, but we hope never will be ~~horribly~~ converted to the purposes of attack and defense in war.

(Substitute)

News stories and radio reports tell us every day
~~Every day a story of the world above that only~~
by ~~the~~ aircraft help
~~the essential weapon can~~ ~~keep~~ for
the liberty that Washington and his men ~~won for~~
~~crossed to the land~~ That is why
the thunder of these squadrons, the Army and the Navy flying
as one, was a fitting prelude to the laying of this important
corner stone of civil aviation at Washington National Airport.



DRAFT #2

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT
GRAVELLY POINT AIRPORT
SEPTEMBER 28, 1940

First of all, I make this signal to the Army and the Navy that flies:

"Well done! The Commander-in-Chief's compliments and thanks to all hands".

The roar above us of American airplane engines in hundreds of American planes is symbolic of our determination to build up a defense on sea, on land and in the air capable of overcoming any attack. They ^{represent in a small way} ~~are not~~ the power we ultimately must have -- and will soon have. Rather let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind of fighting muscle democracy can and does produce.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace. We shall ~~ever~~ strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more ~~we have~~ ^{we have} ~~they~~ of them the less likely we are to have to use them ^{and the} ~~the~~ less likely ^{we} ~~will~~ ^{to} ~~be~~ ^{ed} be attack^{ed} ~~upon~~ from abroad.

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, George Washington and the other fathers sought to place the nation's capital at a center of the then channels of transportation. There was long dispute about the plan. So, too, there has been long dispute about the plan for this airport, which ~~will~~ will again make the capital ^A ~~a~~ hub of ~~some~~ transportation by air. A proper and adequate flying field has been a Washington problem since the Wrights had their first crash on the parade ground at Fort Myer thirty years ago. We might go even further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his "Aerodrome" from ~~a~~ ^{anchored} ~~an~~ barge just below us here in the Potomac.

Two years ago the problem became so acute as, literally, to give me bad dreams. So, upon the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was the creation of an adequate airport for the nation's capital.

That was in August. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first ^{mucky soil} ~~bucket of mud~~ from beneath some ten feet of water ~~just to the south of~~ where we now stand.

They told me this field would be usable within two years. Today, well within that promise, the field was used. It will be in regular use within three more months. And Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation during these two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as we must throughout the nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the nation's defense, we can make comparisons with Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms and knew how to use them. Every gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket which he used almost daily to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than twenty-five thousand of our people -- only one fiftieth of one per cent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only that proportion of the American people had known how to use a musket in Washington's day the Continental Army* would have consisted of little more than a corporal's guard.

Today fifty thousand young Americans are licensed flyers and the number is growing by almost two thousand a month. They are not all military pilots -- but they are as ready to become military pilots as were the farmers of Washington's day to become riflemen of the line. Whereas two years ago not more than a quarter of a million of our people ~~habitually~~ used the airlines and ~~freely~~ planes to travel in, that number -- the number of citizens at least familiar with the airplane -- has doubled and will soon be tripled.

That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's most commodious, surely its most convenient and probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow ~~itself~~, will draw free men freely to ~~a~~ ^{peace time} ~~use~~ ^{as} implement of commerce which, ~~can be~~, we hope, ~~never~~ ~~ever~~ will be converted to ~~the purposes of attack and~~ ~~defence~~ ^{Wartime Services}.

Our newspapers and the radio tell us day after day how increasingly important aircraft ~~xxxx~~ has become both as weapons in the hands of aggressors and to those who fight for their continued national existence. These reports easily explain why these squadrons of the Army and Navy Air Forces, the thunder of which still rings in our ears, were a ~~firing~~ prelude to the ceremonies here this afternoon -- a ~~firing~~ prelude to the completion and ^{this} operation today even of a civilian aviation center -- the Washington National Airport.

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT
SEPTEMBER 28, 1940

First of all, I make this signal to the Army and the
Navy that flies:

"Well done! The Commander-in-Chief's compliments
and thanks to all hands".

The roar above us of American airplane engines in
hundreds of American planes is symbolic of our determination
to build up a defense on sea, on land and in the air capable
of overcoming any attack. They represent in a small way the
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let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind
of fighting muscle democracy can and does produce.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope
that their missions will always be in the ways of peace.

We shall strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more of them we have the less likely we are to have to use them -- the less likely are we to be attacked from abroad.

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Two years ago the problem became as acute as, literally, to give me bad dreams. So, upon the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was the creation of an adequate airport for the nation's capital.

That was in August. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first mucky soil from beneath some ten feet of water very near the spot where we now stand. They told me this field would be usable within two years. Today, well within that promise, the field was used. It will be in regular use within three more months. And Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation during these two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as we must do throughout the nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the nation's defense, we can make comparisons with Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms and knew how to use them. Every

gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket which he used almost daily to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than twenty-five thousand of our people -- only one fiftieth of one per cent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only that proportion of the American people had known how to use a musket in Washington's day the Continental Army would have consisted of little more than a corporal's guard.

Today fifty thousand young Americans are licensed flyers and the number is growing by almost two thousand a month. They are not all military pilots -- but they are as ready to become military pilots as were the farmers of Washington's day to become riflemen of the line. Whereas two years ago not more than a quarter of a million of our people used the airlines and private planes to travel in, that number -- the number of citizens at least familiar with the airplane -- has doubled and will soon be tripled.

That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's greatest facilities, surely its most convenient and probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow, will draw free men freely to use a peace time implement of commerce which, we hope, will never be converted to war time service.

Our newspapers and the radio tell us day after day how increasingly important aircraft has become both as a weapon in the hands of aggressors and to those who fight for their continued national existence. These reports easily explain why these squadrons of the Army and Navy air forces, the thunder of which still rings in our ears, were a prelude to the ceremonies here this afternoon -- a prelude to the completion and operation today even of this civilian aviation center -- the Washington National Airport.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

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September 28, 1940

Remarks
CAUTION: The following ~~speeches~~ of the President, to be delivered in connection with the laying of the cornerstone of the Administration Building at the Washington National Airport, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 2:30 P.M., E.S.T., September 28, 1940. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

P.P.E.
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DRAFT #2

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT
GRAVELLY POINT AIRPORT
SEPTEMBER 28, 1940

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STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

First of all, I make this signal to the Army and the Navy that flies:

"Well done! The Commander-in-Chief's compliments and thanks to all hands".

The roar above us of American airplane engines in hundreds of American planes is symbolic of our determination to build up a defense on sea, on land and in the air capable of overcoming any attack. They represent in a small way the power we ultimately must have -- and will soon have. Rather let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind of fighting muscle democracy can and does produce.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace. We shall strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more of them we have the less likely we are to have to use them -- the less likely are we to be attacked from abroad.

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, George Washington and the other fathers sought to place the nation's capital at a center of the then channels of transportation. There was long dispute about the plan. So, too, there has been long dispute about the plan for this airport, which will make the capital again the hub of transportation by air. A proper and adequate flying field has been a Washington problem since the Wrights had their first crash on the parade ground at Fort Myer thirty years ago. We might go even further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his "Aerodrome" from a barge anchored just below us here in the Potomac.

Two years ago the problem became so acute as, literally, to give me bad dreams. So, upon the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was the creation of an adequate airport for the nation's capital.

That was in August. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first mucky soil from beneath some ten feet of water very near the spot where we now stand. They told me this field would be usable within two years. Today, well within that promise, the field was used. It will be in regular use within three more months. And Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation during these two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as we must do throughout the nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the nation's defense, we can make comparisons with Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms and knew how to use them. Every gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket which he used almost daily to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than twenty-five thousand of our people -- only one fiftieth of one per cent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only that proportion of the American people had known how to use a musket in Washington's day the Continental Army would have consisted of little more than a corporal's guard.

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That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's greatest facilities, surely its most convenient and probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow will draw free men freely to use a peace time implement of commerce which, we hope, will never be converted to war time service.

Our newspapers and the radio tell us day after day how increasingly important aircraft has become both as a weapon in the hands of aggressors and to those who fight for their continued national existence. These reports easily explain why those squadrons of the Army and Navy air forces, the thunder of which still rings in our ears, were a prelude to the ceremonies here this afternoon -- a prelude to the completion and operation today even of this civilian aviation center -- the Washington National Airport.

2:13 p.m. For Transport Planes

This is the President calling Bolling Field Control Tower.

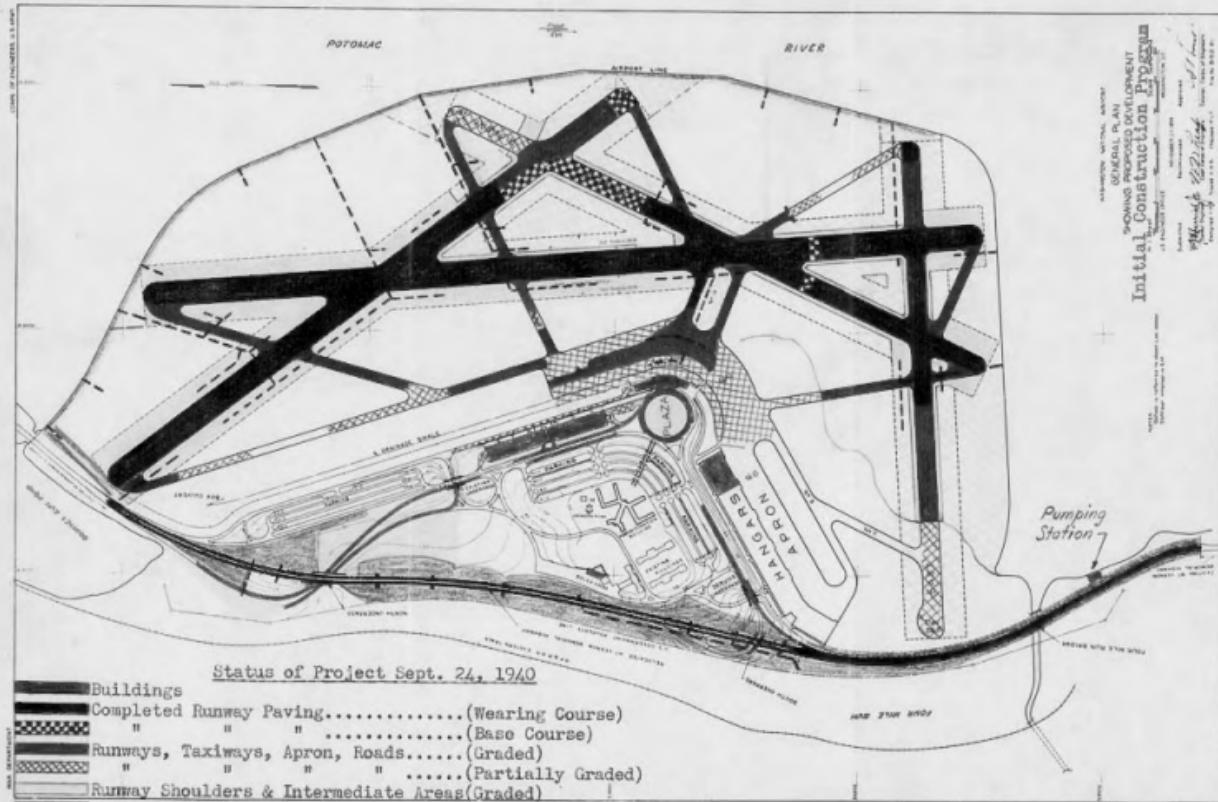
Radio Assistant Secretary Hinckley to bring in the first transport planes to land on Washington National Airport.

2:19 p.m.

This is the President calling Bolling Field Control Tower.

Radio from the Commander-in-Chief to General Commanding, Second Wing, Army Air Corps.

The Army and Navy wings pass in review.



Status of Project Sept. 24, 1940

Buildings	
Completed Runway Paving.....	(Wearing Course)
" " " .	(Base Course)
Runways, Taxiways, Apron, Roads.....	(Graded)
" " " "	(Partially Graded)
Runway Shoulders & Intermediate Areas.....	(Graded)
" " " " "	(Partially Graded)
Upland Areas between Roads.....	(Graded)
" "	(Landscaping-Seeding Completed)
Field & Upland Drainage.....	(Completed)

2:13 p.m. For Transport Planes

This is the President calling Bolling Field Control Tower.

Radio Assistant Secretary Hinckley to bring in the first transport planes to land on Washington National Airport.

2:19 p.m.

This is the President calling Bolling Field Control Tower.

Radio from the Commander-in-Chief to General Commanding, Second Wing, Army Air Corps.

The Army and Navy wings pass in review.

STATEMENTS FILE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED
IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAYING OF THE
CORNERSTONE OF THE ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING AT THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL
AIRPORT, SEPTEMBER 29, 1940.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I think we are very fortunate in having a perfect day for this opening after having had to put it off last week. The new Secretary of Commerce, who has only been in office a few days, told me, when he got into the car at the White House, that he has discovered that the Weather Bureau is under his jurisdiction, so that explains this perfect day.

I think we have all been very much thrilled at this surprise party which we have given to the good people of Washington and Virginia. All these planes, over 500 of them, came here -- I knew about it but you didn't -- and it has been a great show. It has also been a wonderful thing for us to see these transport planes come here, just behind me, and make the first landings, the first series of landings that have ever been made on this field.

You have seen that display and I want, in my behalf and, I think, in yours, to make a new signal to the Army and the Navy that have been flying over us, and the signal to them is this:

"Well done! The Commander in Chief's compliments and thanks to all hands."

In these serious days, the roar above us of these American-made airplane engines in hundreds of American-made planes is symbolic of our determination to build up a defense on sea and on land and in the air that is capable of overcoming any attack against us. They represent in a small way the power we ultimately must have -- and will soon have. Rather let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind of fighting muscle that democracy can produce and is producing.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace. We shall strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more of them we have the less likely we are to have to use them -- the less likely are we to be attacked from abroad.

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, the Father of the Country, the first President and his associates of one hundred and fifty years ago, sought to place the Nation's capital at a center of what was then the channels of transportation. There was a long dispute about the plan, a long dispute that occupied twelve years and, finally, the present head of the Nation had a dream.

This problem of an adequate flying field really, if you go back to it, has been a Washington problem since the Wright brothers had their first crash on the Fort Myer parade ground thirty or more years ago. And we might even go further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his thing called an "Aerodrome" from a barge that was anchored just below us here in the Potomac.

Following my first dream, I kept having bad dreams, as you know, dreams of sudden crashes, and things like that. The dreams got bad and I was afraid that they might come true. Therefore, upon the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was to create an adequate airport.

That was in August, two years ago. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the firstucky soil from beneath ten feet of water near the spot where we now stand. They told me it was a practical thing to do because we could kill two birds with one stone. That is a favorite maxim of mine, and we try to do that wherever we can. By deepening the River, we minimize the possibility of flood damage, and the soil we have dredged out of the old river has been used to build most of the field for the Airport.

They told me, in November, 1938, that it would take two years to make this field usable. Today the field has been used and we are well within that limit by two months. It will be in regular use for the public within three more months, and Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation in these past two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as, indeed, we must do in many other parts of the Nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the Nation's defense, we can make comparisons with George Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms hanging over the fireplace and knew how to use them. Every gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket piece which he used almost every week or so to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than twenty-five thousand of our people -- only one-fiftieth of one per cent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only that proportion of the American people had known how to use a musket in Washington's day the Continental Army would have consisted of little more than a corporal's guard.

Today fifty thousand young Americans are licensed flyers and the number is growing by almost two thousand more every month that goes by. They are not all military pilots -- but they are as ready to become military pilots as were the farmers of Washington's day to become riflemen of the line. Whereas, two years ago not more than a quarter of a million of our people used the airlines and private planes to travel in, that number -- the number of citizens at least familiar with the airplane -- has doubled and will soon be tripled.

That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's greatest facilities, surely its most convenient and, some of us like to think, probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow will draw free men freely to use a peaceable implement of commerce which, we hope, will never be converted to wartime service.

Our newspapers and the radio tell us day after day how increasingly important aircraft has become both as a weapon in the hands of aggressors and to those who fight, or may be compelled to fight, for their continued national existence. These reports easily explain why those squadrons of the Army and Navy air forces, the thunder of which still rings in our ears, were a prelude to the ceremonies here this afternoon -- a prelude to the completion and operation today even of this civilian aviation center of which we are so proud -- the Washington National Airport.

STATEMENTS FILE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
DELIVERED IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE
OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AT THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT
September 28, 1940

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I think we are very fortunate in having a perfect day for this opening after having had to put it off last week. The new Secretary of Commerce, who has only been in office a few days, told me, when he got into the car at the White House, that he has discovered that the Weather Bureau is under his jurisdiction, so that explains this perfect day.

I think we have all been very much thrilled at this surprise party which we have given to the good people of Washington and Virginia. All these planes, over 500 of them, came here -- I knew about it but you didn't -- and it has been a great show. It has also been a wonderful thing for us to see these transport planes come here, just behind me, and make the first landings, the first series of landings that have ever been made on this field.

You have seen that display and I want, in my behalf and, I think, in yours, to make a new signal to the Army and the Navy that have been flying over us, and the signal to them is this:

"Well done! The Commander in Chief's compliments and thanks to all hands." ~~Applause~~

In these serious days, the roar above us of these American-airplane-made ~~pistons~~ engines in hundreds of American-made planes is symbolic

of our determination to build up a defense on sea and on land and in the air that is capable of overcoming any attack against us. They represent in a small way the power we ultimately must have -- and will soon have. Rather let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind of fighting muscle that democracy can produce and is producing.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace. We shall strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more of them we have the less likely we are to have to use them -- the less likely are we to be attacked from abroad. {Applause}

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, the Father of the Country, the first President and his associates of one hundred and fifty years ago, sought to place the Nation's capital at a center of what was then the channels of transportation. There was a long dispute about the plan, a long dispute that took twelve years present and, finally, the ~~President~~ head of the Nation had a dream.

This problem of an adequate flying field really, if you go back to it, has been a Washington problem since the Wright brothers had their first crash on the Fort Myer parade ground thirty or more years ago. And we might even go further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his thing called an "Aerodrome" from a barge that was anchored just below us

here in the Potomac.

Following my first dream, I kept having bad dreams, as you know, dreams of sudden crashes, and things like that. The dreams got bad and I was afraid that they might come true. Therefore, ~~one of the first tasks~~ Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was to create, a ^{adequate} ~~sufficient~~ airport ~~out of what I had been able to escape from the bottom of the channel.~~ That was in August, two years ago. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first mucky soil from beneath ten feet of water near the spot where we now stand. They told me it was a practical thing to do because we could kill two birds with one stone. ~~That~~ That is a favorite maxim of mine, and we try to do that wherever we can. By deepening the ~~River~~, we minimize the possibility of flood damage, and the soil we have dredged out of the old river has been used to build most of the ~~field~~ for the Airport.

They told me, in November, 1938, that it would take two years to make this field usable. ^{and} ~~Now~~ we are well within that limit by two months. ~~Today the field has been used.~~ It will be in regular use for the public within three more months, and Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation in these past two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as, indeed, we must do in many other parts of the Nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the Nation's defense, we can make comparisons with George Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms hanging over the fireplace and knew how to use them. Every gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket piece which he used almost every week or so to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than twenty-five thousand of our people -- only one-fiftieth of one per cent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only that proportion of the American people had known how to use a musket in Washington's day the Continental Army would have consisted of little more than a corporal's guard.

Today fifty thousand young Americans are licensed flyers and the number is growing by almost two thousand more every month that goes by. They are not all military pilots -- but they are as ready to become military pilots as were the farmers of Washington's day to become riflemen of the line. Whereas, two years ago not more than a quarter of a million of our people used the airlines and private planes to travel in, that number -- the number of citizens at least familiar with the airplane -- has doubled and will soon be tripled.

That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's greatest facilities, surely its most convenient and, some of us like to think, probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this

awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow will draw free men freely to use a peacetime implement of commerce which, we hope, will never be converted to wartime service.

Our newspapers and the radio tell us day after day how increasingly important aircraft has become both as a weapon in the hands of aggressors and to those who fight, or may be compelled to fight, for their continued national existence. These reports easily explain why those squadrons of the Army and Navy air forces, the thunder of which still rings in our ears, were a prelude to the ceremonies here this afternoon -- a prelude to the completion and operation today even of this civilian aviation center of which we are so proud -- the Washington National Airport.



STATEMENTS FILE

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September 28, 1940

CAUTION: The following remarks of the President, to be delivered in connection with the laying of the cornerstone of the Administration Building at the Washington National Airport, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

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CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PRELATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

First of all, I make this signal to the Army and the Navy that flies:

"Well done! The Commander-in-Chief's compliments and thanks to all hands".

The rear above us of American airplanes engines in hundreds of American planes is symbolic of our determination to build up a defense on sea, on land and in the air capable of overcoming any attack. They represent in a small way the power we ultimately must have -- and will soon have. Rather let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind of fighting muscle democracy can and does produce.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace. We shall strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more of them we have the less likely we are to have to use them -- the less likely are we to be attacked from abroad.

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, George Washington and the other fathers sought to place the Nation's capital at a center of ~~multiple~~ channels of transportation. There was long dispute about the plan. So, too, there has been long dispute about the plan for this airport which will make the capital again the hub of transportation by air. A proper and adequate flying field has been a Washington problem since the Wrights had their first crash on the parade ground at Fort Myer thirty years ago. We might go even further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his "Aerodrome" from a barge anchored just below us here in the Potomac.

The years are the problem because so acute as, literally, to give me bad dreams. So, upon the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act, one of the first tasks I asked of the new agency was the creation of an adequate airport for the nation's capital.

That was in August. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first muddy soil from beneath some ten feet of water very near the spot where we now stand. They told me this field would be usable within two years. Today, well within that promise, the field was used. It will be in regular use within three more months. And Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation during these two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as we must do throughout the nation.

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of which we are so proud

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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September 28, 1940

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Receiving Station

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REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED
IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAYING OF THE
CORNERSTONE OF THE ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING AT THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL
AIRPORT, SEPTEMBER 28, 1940.

1634

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I think we are very fortunate in having a perfect day for this opening after having had to put it off last week. The new Secretary of Commerce, who has only been in office a few days, told me, when he got into the car at the White House, that he has discovered that the Weather Bureau is under his jurisdiction, so that explains this perfect day.

I think we have all been very much thrilled at this surprise party which we have given to the good people of Washington and Virginia. All those planes, over 500 of them, came here -- I knew about it but you didn't -- and it has been a great show. It has also been a wonderful thing for us to see these transport planes come here, just behind me, and make the first landings, the first series of landings that have ever been made on this field.

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Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

That was in August, two years ago. On November 19, 1938, I watched a dredge bring the first mucky soil from beneath ten feet of water near the spot where we now stand. They told me it was a practical thing to do because we could kill two birds with one stone. That is a favorite maxim of mine, and we try to do that wherever we can. By deepening the River, we minimize the possibility of flood damage, and the soil we have dredged out of the old river has been used to build most of the field for the Airport.

They told me, in November, 1938, that it would take two years to make this field usable. Today the field has been used and we are well within that limit by two months. It will be in regular use for the public within three more months, and Assistant Secretary Hinckley tells me that it will be so extensively used, because of the growth of civil aviation in these past two years, that already we must begin to plan other subsidiary airports for Washington as, indeed, we must do in many other parts of the Nation.

For proof of the value of the growth of aviation to the Nation's defense, we can make comparisons with George Washington's day. He had a citizenry ready to spring to arms because nearly every citizen had arms hanging over the fireplace and knew how to use them. Every gentleman wore a sword and every farmer had a musket piece which he used almost every week or so to bring food to his table. But two years ago less than twenty-five thousand of our people -- only one-fiftieth of one per cent of the population -- knew how to fly an airplane. If only that proportion of the American people had known how to use a musket in Washington's day the Continental Army would have consisted of little more than a corporal's guard.

Today fifty thousand young Americans are licensed flyers and the number is growing by almost two thousand more every month that goes by. They are not all military pilots -- but they are as ready to become military pilots as were the farmers of Washington's day to become riflemen of the line. Whereas, two years ago not more than a quarter of a million of our people used the airlines and private planes to travel in, that number -- the number of citizens at least familiar with the airplane -- has doubled and will soon be tripled.

That is why an airport like this is important to the national defense. That is why this airport, soon to be one of the world's greatest facilities, surely its most convenient and, some of us like to think, probably its most beautiful, should be brought with all possible emphasis to the attention of our people during this awakening of America to the needs of National Defense. This airport and many others which we hope will follow will draw free men freely to use a peacetime implement of commerce which, we hope, will never be converted to wartime service.

Our newspapers and the radio tell us day after day how increasingly important aircraft has become both as a weapon in the hands of aggressors and to those who fight, or may be compelled to fight, for their continued national existence. These reports easily explain why those squadrons of the Army and Navy air forces, the thunder of which still rings in our ears, were a prelude to the ceremonies here this afternoon -- a prelude to the completion and operation today even of this civilian aviation center of which we are so proud -- the Washington National Airport.

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REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED
IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAYING OF THE
CORNENSTONE OF THE ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING AT THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL
AIRPORT, SEPTEMBER 28, 1940.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I think we are very fortunate in having a perfect day for this opening after having had to put it off last week. The new Secretary of Commerce, who has only been in office a few days, told me, when he got into the car at the White House, that he has discovered that the Weather Bureau is under his jurisdiction, so that explains this perfect day.

I think we have all been very much thrilled at this surprise party which we have given to the good people of Washington and Virginia. All these planes, over 500 of them, came here -- I knew about it but you didn't -- and it has been a great show. It has also been a wonderful thing for us to see these transport planes come here, just behind me, and make the first landings, the first series of landings that have ever been made on this field.

You have seen that display and I want, in my behalf and, I think, in yours, to make a new signal to the Army and the Navy that have been flying over us, and the signal to them is this:

"Well done! The Commander in Chief's compliments and thanks to all hands."

In these serious days, the roar above us of these American-made airplane engines in hundreds of American-made planes is symbolic of our determination to build up a defense on sea and on land and in the air that is capable of overcoming any attack against us. They represent in a small way the power we ultimately must have -- and will soon have. Rather let me describe this as just a gratifying flexing of the kind of fighting muscle that democracy can produce and is producing.

They are here upon a peaceful mission. We all hope that their missions will always be in the ways of peace. We shall strive with all of our energies and skills to see to it that they are never called upon for missions of war. But the more of them we have the less likely we are to have to use them -- the less likely are we to be attacked from abroad.

Here, in this broad Potomac Valley, the Father of the Country, the first President and his associates of one hundred and fifty years ago, sought to place the Nation's capital at a center of what was then the channels of transportation. There was a long dispute about the plan, a long dispute that occupied twelve years and, finally, the present head of the Nation had a dream.

This problem of an inadequate flying field really, if you go back to it, has been a Washington problem since the Wright brothers had their first crash on the Fort Myer parade ground thirty or more years ago. And we might even go further back, indeed, and say the problem has existed ever since Dr. Langley tried to fly his thing called an "Aerodrome" from a barge that was anchored just below us here in the Potomac.

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