

Proclamation 7061—Wright Brothers Day, 1997

December 16, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On December 17, 1903, Orville Wright lay inside the first heavier-than-air powered craft that permitted controlled flight. His brother Wilbur stood nearby, steadying the craft at one wing tip. In a few moments, the brothers would know if their years of hard work and painstaking experimentation would finally bear fruit. With Wilbur running beside the plane to build its momentum, Orville achieved, for a scant 12 seconds over a distance of 120 feet, what humankind had always dreamed of—he flew.

That historic moment marked the first step in a long journey through the skies that would ultimately take Americans beyond Earth's atmosphere and into space. The Mars Pathfinder spacecraft that captured the world's attention and imagination this past summer reflects the same American ingenuity and pioneering spirit that sent the Wrights' fragile craft aloft so briefly over Kitty Hawk almost a century ago. With unwavering perseverance in the face of many failures, steady conviction in the possibility of flight, and a determination to bring their vision to reality, the Wright brothers expanded our horizons and also brought the world closer together.

We are still reaping the benefits of their extraordinary achievement. America's aerospace industry has experienced enormous growth and development since the Wright brothers' first flight. It has strengthened our economy, created new business and recreational opportunities, freed us from many of the limits of time and distance, and made our Nation's aviation system the finest in the world. And thanks in large part to the efforts of the men and women throughout the Federal Government—in the Departments of Transportation and Defense, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration—that system is also the safest in the world.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 169), has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 1997, as Wright Brothers Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 18.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Space Medal of Honor Posthumously to Roger B. Chaffee and Edward H. White II

December 17, 1997

Dr. Gibbons, Mr. Goldin, Congressman Sensenbrenner, to Edward White and the White family, and Martha Chaffee and the Chaffee family, and Mrs. Grissom, other representatives of astronauts' families that are here.

A generation ago, President Kennedy challenged our Nation and asked God's blessing to undertake the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked. His challenge in 1961 to send a man to the moon and bring him safely back to Earth by the end of the decade captured the imagination of millions of people around the world. A group of pioneering Americans recognized the limitless possibilities of this seemingly impossible challenge, and they would risk their lives to make it happen.