

Office of the First Lady

For Immediate Release

February 9, 2012

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
AT LITTLE ROCK AIR FORCE BASE ON *LET'S MOVE!* TOUR

Hercules Dining Facility  
Little Rock Air Force Base  
Little Rock, Arkansas

2:53 P.M. CST

MRS. OBAMA: Thank you all. (Applause.) It's great to be here in Arkansas. And I have to say, you all look really good, really fit. (Laughter.) So thank you for eating your vegetables. We need you strong.

I want to start by thanking Dr. Woodson for that very kind introduction, but also for his leadership on behalf of our men and women in uniform. I also want to thank Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Gordon, General Murrie, Colonel Brian "Smokey" Robinson. Thank you all for your leadership and service to our country.

I am truly proud to be here today as the Department of Defense is making what is a groundbreaking commitment to the health of our troops and their families.

And this is a big day. That's why we brought all these people. It's huge. As Dr. Woodson explained, for the first time in 20 years, the DOD is updating their nutritional standards to include more fresh fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy products with every single meal. So that means more DOD installations will offer the kind of fresh, healthy food that the Air Force's Food Transformation Initiative helped bring here to Little Rock.

The DOD is also going to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of every single military base in America to make sure they're serving healthy food not just to those in uniform, but to their families. They'll be looking to improve the food served in dining facilities, school cafeterias, vending machines, snack bars, and any other places where military families purchase food.

So this isn't just a drop in the bucket. I mean, this is really a big splash. This will affect more than 1,000 dining facilities and nearly 1.5 million troops. Simply put, this is an example of America's entire military once again stepping forward to lead by example.

And it's happening because our military leaders know that this is not just a diet issue; it's not just a health issue. This is truly a national security issue. According to a recent Army study, more than a quarter of our nation's 17- to 24-year-olds are too overweight to serve in our armed forces today. And even those who make the cut often struggle in basic training. One Army general told me that after years of inactivity and poor nutrition, many recruits are just out of shape and they're more likely to injure themselves in basic training. As a result, the military is spending more and more money on obesity-related injuries, health problems -- and dental care, which was a surprise to me; the cost of dental care because of poor nutrition has gone up.

So that's why our armed forces are rolling out this very comprehensive strategy to give our troops and their families the healthy, nutritious food they need and, more importantly, they deserve. And I want to emphasize that in doing so, you're not just sending a powerful message throughout the military community. You're sending a message to our entire country. And that's one of the reasons I wanted to be here, because whenever our men and women in uniform step forward, America takes notice. We are all inspired by your courage. We are all inspired by your service and your sacrifice.

So when you make healthy eating a priority in your lives, the rest of us are more likely to make it a priority in our lives.

And that's really what "Let's Move" is all about. It's about mobilizing folks from every sector of our society to address our obesity epidemic. Because there is no one program, there's no one policy that will solve such a huge challenge; no one business leader, no one general, not even a first lady. None of us can wave a magic wand to help us all live healthier lives.

But if we do our part -- if we do our part as airmen, if we do our part as moms and dads, as community leaders and neighbors, we can put this country on a path to a stronger, healthier future. The one thing I say is that our own health is the one thing that we can control. Even in the midst of any kind of chaos, we control what we put in our bodies. So if we have the information and we have the examples, we can teach our kids now how to do what's best for them for the rest of their lives.

And that's why days like today are really so important. A lot of times people think when we talk about health and nutrition, that it's fun and games. But this is a serious problem.

But days like this show me that everyone is willing to step up on behalf of our kids. Because this is really about our kids. They look to you all; they are going to model themselves after you. You have young people in your lives -- your brothers, your sisters, your cousins, your neighbors. When you come home from service, they are in awe. And if you do the right thing, they're going to follow suit.

So we are just thrilled. And this is why I am -- have never been more confident that if we keep coming together like this as a nation, if we keep working together, we can make a real difference for our children, but more importantly, for our entire country. Because if we start kids off right, they will take these behaviors through the rest of their lives, and they'll teach their children something different.

So I want to thank you again for hosting this event here today. I want to thank you all for your service and your sacrifice. This is a model for what we will see throughout the armed forces, which is one of the reasons why we wanted to come to this base. You all are 95 percent in compliance with what is going to be happening already. So you're ahead of the curve. So you should be proud about that; you should feel good that your commanders had the foresight to jump ahead, and they're doing the very best for you, and more importantly, for your families.

So I want to make sure that you tell your families thank you, from me. Tell them that we are proud of them all. We are working hard for them as well, because you all know that as you sacrifice, they are sacrificing right alongside you. So these benefits have to affect them as well.

So we are proud of you all. I want you all to keep eating your vegetables -- (laughter) -- and working very hard. You all are the best that this country has to offer, the very best.

So thank you all. Good luck and God bless. And God bless your families as well. Take care. (Applause.)

END

3:00 P.M CST