

Apr. 25 / Administration of George Bush, 1991

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on Supplemental Assistance Requests for Iraqi Refugees

April 25, 1991

The President today transmitted to Congress a request for FY 1991 supplemental appropriations for the Department of State and the Agency for International Development (AID) and language provisions for the Department of Defense. The requested funds and provisions are for humanitarian assistance efforts for refugees and displaced persons in and around Iraq as well as for peacekeeping activities.

The proposed language provisions would permit transfer from the Persian Gulf Regional Defense Fund to the Department of Defense for the incremental costs of humanitarian assistance.

In addition, the supplemental requests

\$123.5 million for the Department of State and \$27 million for the Agency for International Development for assistance for refugees and displaced persons as well as for peacekeeping activities. The State Department and AID requests would be financed through transfers of interest earned on balances in the Defense Cooperation Account. Contributions of foreign governments would not be used.

These supplemental requests would be exempt from statutory spending limits because they are incremental costs associated with Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

Remarks at an Arbor Day Tree-Planting Ceremony and an Exchange With Reporters

April 26, 1991

The President. Good morning, and welcome back. It's good to see Secretary Madigan here, Mike Deland, and the Deputy EPA Administrator, and the U.S. Forest Service Director. I'm glad that you're all here on this beautiful day on the South Lawn. We're competing with Randy Travis, who's about to appear over here, so it's tough competition. But I think what we've got going here is very, very important.

As J. Sterling Morton, the founder of Arbor Day, said: "Other holidays repose upon the past; Arbor Day proposes for the future." Our tree-planting initiative to plant and maintain a billion trees a year for 10 years is a major component of our America the Beautiful program. It's an initiative that relies on voluntary individual effort. And it is a program that will enhance the appearance and the quality of our environment.

I welcome this opportunity to thank all the organizations represented here today who have committed themselves to the stewardship of our environment. We cannot

succeed without your help. There is no way that government alone can get this important job done.

Later today on the White House lawn, we're going to be having a National Celebration of Community Service. And it is therefore fitting that today, Arbor Day, our 440th daily Point of Light is TreePeople of Los Angeles, California, an organization that has trained volunteer citizen foresters for 18 years and has planted over 180 million trees around the globe. Andy Lipkis and Katie Lipkis, the cofounders, are here with us this morning.

I was reminded by a fellow schoolmate here in Washington the other day that every Arbor Day in our little grade school we planted a tree every Arbor Day. And Secretary Madigan and the Forest Service Chief Robertson are here today to help me plant this beautiful purple leaf beech donated by Russell Watson, who's with us today. And I also have some great helpers back

here—look at them over there—from Washington, DC's, own Trees for the City program.

So, with no further ado, again, you're most welcome. Please keep up this dedication to our precious environment. And now, shall we begin? You guys want to do the heavy shoveling here? And I'll stand by and critique it.

[At this point, the tree was planted.]

Q. Mr. President, any word on the Middle East peace process?

The President. Let me finish the tree ceremony here before I address myself to Iraq, if that's all right. I may not address myself to Iraq, either, but—

Now what was the one question?

Administration Travel Policy

Q. The L.A. Times says that the White House—that you are very unhappy with John Sununu and you are going to change the travel policy.

The President. He has my full support, and I've said I'm going to review the travel policy. And there might well be changes in it because I want this administration to continue to be above the perception of impropriety. So, if that requires changes, fine. As I said before, John Sununu acted in accordance with existing policy. But if there's reason to change it, I'll be out there in the front making some suggested changes.

Q. Have you made up your mind yet?

The President. I haven't made up my mind yet. We're taking a good, hard look at the whole travel policy.

Q. When do you think you'll have it?

The President. I have no idea, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]. But we'll be out there and get it to you as soon as we get it. I think you may be among the first to get it.

Q. Call me up. My number is—[laughter].

Middle East Peace Talks

Q. Sir, has Secretary Baker made any progress in the Middle East as far as moving forward the—

The President. Yes, he's made progress. I just talked to him. There's sadness in his family—his mother just passed away, so he will be coming home, stopping short of the

two meetings that he had hoped to have in Israel. But it is most appropriate. I mean, they're a very close family. And, incidentally, Barbara and I expressed our regrets to him. We've known Mrs. Baker for many, many years. She's one of God's very special people. And so, he has this personal sadness.

But he did have a meeting with Prime Minister Shamir. And I think it's fair to say that, though problems remain, I think the bottom line is there's some reason for optimism. I don't want to state why; I'm not going to go into the details of it. I will get debriefed by him when he gets here. And there are still some sticky problems, but we're not going to give up. We're going to continue to try to bring peace to that troubled corner of the world.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, are you confident that the Iraqis, in fact, will keep their military out of the refugee zones?

The President. Yes, they're not going to—they don't want to tangle with the U.S. again. They—

Q. Do you think their promise is good?

The President. —learned that the hard way, and the forces are there to be sure that it's good; put it that way. We're not looking for any fight. We want to help these Kurds, and we are. What the United States has done in terms of bringing relief to these pitiful people is just—we all ought to take great pride in the way our country is responding—and I might say at considerable cost. We're doing it because it's right.

But I do not want to intervene and get our troops hauled into some conflict that's been going on for years. But when it comes to helping people, the United States is today doing what it's always done—being out in front on the relief effort. But I don't expect, Rita [Rita Beamish, Associated Press], any complication. I don't think Saddam Hussein is dumb enough to want to run into the U.S. troops again.

Q. What about the long-term prospects?

The President. This isn't a press conference.

Q. What about the long-term prospects, Mr. President? What happens when the U.S. leaves, even if there's a small U.N.

force there?

The President. I don't know that there's going to be lasting peace in Iraq. Peace has escaped those people for years. So, I would hope, though, that the lesson having been taught to Saddam Hussein about aggression, that some of that lesson might spill over in terms of his own internal problems. I would hope that maybe out of the talks he's having with the Kurdish leaders you'll see some long-sought-after peace. But I can't certify that. And I would hope that—I would hope—

Q. How long will the troops stay there?

The President. They're going to stay there as long as it takes to be sure these refugees are taken care of, and not a minute longer. We're continuing to pull troops back. I want these kids home, and so do the American people want them home. P.s.: We will do what's necessary to see that this refugee aid gets to the people that need it, and gets there so that they can have it in safety. And then beyond that, we talked yesterday to the Secretary-General, and the U.N. has a major role to play here. Some of the United Nations critics ought to open their eyes, because the United Nations not only had a significant role in the repelling of aggression, which was our objective, but it is also playing a significant role in this refugee relief. So, we're going to continue on that track.

I've got to—this is the last one.

Q. Do you still think that Saddam Hussein will be deposed? And what do you think—

The President. I'm confident he will because there will not be normal relationships with the United States or many other countries as long as he is in power. Those sanctions are going to stay there as far as we're concerned, and undoing some evil that is not going to—by that, I mean, working out something possibly with the Kurds—that's only part of the problem. And so, there will not be normal relations with this man as long as I'm President of the United States. I'll guarantee you that.

Q. Sir, he's lasted this long. What's going to put him out of power? What's it going to—

The President. The fact that he's been whipped bad in the military. His aggres-

sion—he's been forced to that which he said he would never do. His people don't like him, and it's only terror that's keeping him in power. And someday history will show you these things manage to take care of themselves. And I hope it happens soon because we want him out of there.

We don't have any fight with the Iraqi people. I've said that from day one. Go back and look at the text back in August, September, October. Our fight is not with the Iraqi people. Our objective was to repel aggression, and we did it. And the American troops deserve enormous credit, and they're getting it every single day they come home. But beyond that, this internal matter has been going on for years—years and years. And I'd like to see it ended. And one good way to end it is to have somebody with a little more compassion as President of Iraq. But let them worry about that problem. I worry about it because there won't be normal relations until he's gone. But history has a way of taking care of tyrants.

Soviet-U.S. Relations

Q. —up of the CFE treaty assure a summit this year—

The President. I honestly didn't hear the question.

Q. —summit, sir. A summit?

Q. Soviets.

The President. No set date on a summit. I don't know where that came from.

Q. Has there been progress with the Soviets, sir?

The President. On what?

Q. With the summit.

The President. On the arms control agenda?

Q. Yes.

The President. Modest progress.

Note: The President spoke at 8:49 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Agriculture Edward R. Madigan; Michael R. Deland, Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality; F. Henry Babicht II, Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; F. Dale Robertson, Chief of the Forest Service; country musician Randy Travis; Andy and Katie Lipkis,

cofounders of Tree-People; Russell G. Watson, Sr., owner of Robin Hill Farm Nursery; John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; Mrs. James A. Baker, the Secretary's de-

ceased mother; Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra.

Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Popadiuk on the Death of Secretary of State James A. Baker's Mother

April 26, 1991

The President called Secretary Baker this morning to express his condolences on the death of his mother. The President and Mrs. Bush share in the Secretary's loss and are deeply saddened. The Secretary in-

formed the President of his plans to return immediately to Houston. The President said: "Barbara and I have known Mrs. Baker for many years. She was indeed one of God's special people."

Remarks at the Points of Light Community Service Celebration

April 26, 1991

Please be seated. Thank you all. I don't know how you begin to thank all these people that have contributed to this very special day. Tony Danza, an old friend—I think he was as moved as I was by that reading we had just a minute ago. Randy Travis, so generous with his time and his creativity; Patti LuPone. I don't know what to say about the Eagles there, but it's just beautiful. And Andrae and Saundra, and Larnelle, and the Ellington Singers, and of course, Peter Max. Just thank you so much for helping us honor this constellation of Points of Light across America, our community service volunteers. A handful of them were here today, and we salute them. There are many, many more—thank God—like them all across our great country.

I was very pleased to hear from sitting outside the Oval Office, our great Secretary of HUD, Jack Kemp—not only is he pressing, giving hope in the area of housing, but he is out helping with this whole concept of Points of Light. Jack, thank you so much for being with us.

I want to pay special thanks to the Points of Light Foundation which, with the help of the United Way and many other organi-

zations, has spent the past 12 days illuminating and celebrating community service initiatives all across our great country.

And special thanks to Jane Kenny, the Director of ACTION, and of course, to Governor George Romney and the National Center and local volunteer centers for all they've done to make this celebration of service such a success.

I'm proud to see this crowd of people of all ages who display the power of community service. This celebration honors you, those Randy Travis calls "the dedicated army of quiet volunteers," the heroes and heroines who battle selflessly against drug abuse, homelessness, and hunger, and other plagues that ruin lives and shatter dreams.

You lead a great movement that's begun to race across this country. The Points of Light movement promises us renewed, strong America because it builds upon our natural yearnings to help one another. You already have been moved by the mighty spirit of voluntary service. Your labors have earned you something very special, something very precious: fulfillment. You do something good, you feel something real. Barbara and I proudly salute each and