

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on United States Agricultural Loan Credit for the Soviet Union *June 11, 1991*

President Bush has informed President Gorbachev today that the United States will meet the Soviet request for up to \$1.5 billion in credit guarantees toward the purchase of American agricultural products. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Madigan will follow up immediately with Soviet officials to work out the details of this agreement.

The President's offer specifies U.S. willingness to make the credit guarantees available in three tranches over the next 9 months—\$600 million this month, \$500 million in October 1991, and \$400 million in February 1992. The President made this decision after having received the views of the Presidential delegation he sent to the U.S.S.R. in late May to study the grain request and the food distribution system there.

In addition to meeting the Soviet request for credit guarantees, the President today also expressed to President Gorbachev his continued interest in collaborating on a long-term effort to improve the food dis-

tribution system in the U.S.S.R., primarily through the introduction of market measures. The United States is prepared to form a high-level team of Government and private experts to assist the Soviets in this effort.

In making this decision, the President took into consideration the record of the Soviet Government in meeting its official obligations. The President's decision also followed assurances from the Soviet Government that the grains made available through the credit guarantees would be fairly distributed among Soviet Republics and the Baltic States. The President's decision reflects the administration's desire to promote a continued positive evolution in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. In particular, we hope that this assistance will help to stabilize the food situation in that country.

Note: Press Secretary Fitzwater read the statement to reporters at 4:38 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Alfredo Cristiani Buckard of El Salvador *June 12, 1991*

President Bush. Let me say I am just delighted you're here, and we have a lot to talk about when we're alone. But I'll say before we are that we support you and what you're trying to do and the courageous steps you've taken—the free election process being part of it, of course—but what you're trying to do and bring peace there. And I must say you have our respect and full support. And let there be no doubt about that anywhere, in this country, in Salvador, wherever else it may be.

Reporter. Mr. President are you taking questions from us today?

President Bush. No questions today if you

don't mind.

Q. Perhaps the President of El Salvador would like to.

President Bush. Well, if he'd like to answer a question, but he knows that he's going to have a press opportunity later on. He knows that seldom do I take them here, but he can do it any way he wants. I'm not trying to slant—

Q. Would you talk to us about the status of the investigation into the killings of the Jesuits, sir?

President Cristiani. Afterwards, after we—there will be a press conference tomorrow.

President Bush. I think that's a better, more fair way to handle it so others can be there. That's the way we like to do it, too.

But I commend you on what you're doing in that and many other cases there, too—many other moves towards true and open democracy. Let there be no—this administration for this President, strong.

Q. Happy birthday.

President Bush. It's been a good one so far.

Q. Will you call on me at your next news conference, sir? I was kinder and gentler this time.

President Bush. You were. I noticed that. We're got to have one soon, provided you throw me a slow ball, softball.

[At this point, another group of journalists entered the room.]

President Bush. May I say to the journalists—I want to repeat what I said in front of the last wave, which is that we strongly support this President and what he is doing carrying his country inexorably down the democratic path. And let there be no doubt about it, he has the full support of this administration. He's taken on tough problems, handled them with dispatch. Some tough problems remain, but there is no question in my mind that this President

and his administration merits the full, all-out support of the United States.

And it is not his government that is keeping peace from coming to his country that had open and free certified elections, many more times than one. And it is the opposition; it is people who think they can use the gun to get what they should be willing to fight for at the ballot box.

And so, I'm proud to have President Cristiani at my side. Today we've got lots to talk about, so you guys are almost history here—[laughter]—but thank you for coming. And I don't take questions in the Oval Office, as I'm sure most of you know. And I think the President will be having a press conference tomorrow some time. But I wanted to violate a rule that I have of not making comments because I feel so strongly about the need to support the President and the steps he's taking there.

Thank you all, and I hope you feel welcome here in the States.

Q. Thank you. Happy birthday again.

President Bush. Oh, thanks. I thought I'd hate it, but so far it's been very good.

Note: President Bush spoke at 11:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Alfredo Cristiani Buckard of El Salvador and an Exchange With Reporters

June 12, 1991

President Bush. Mr. President, with your permission, let me just say that I was delighted to spend time talking and working today with a close friend of the United States, President Cristiani of El Salvador. And in greeting one of your predecessors, Dwight Eisenhower declared that: "Friends and countries are not measured by the extent of territory or the size of their population. They are measured by their dedication to their friends, to common values, priceless values that free men possess above even life itself."

Thirty years later, those words still ring

true. Through trying circumstances, El Salvador holds fast to its democratic traditions. And seven times in 10 years, your courageous countrymen have voted in free and fair elections, proving to the world that, in Lincoln's words, "the ballot is stronger than the bullet."

Mr. President, time and again you and the people of El Salvador have proved your doubters to be wrong. Political rights have flourished despite hardship and despite war. And your people enjoy freedom of speech like never before. Exiles who once feared for their lives have returned, come back