

Aug. 28 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

The conference has given us a better foundation to defuse, contain, and bring to an end the conflict in former Yugoslavia. It has established a new, permanent negotiating forum, cochaired by the United Nations and the European Community, in Geneva. The United States has offered \$3 million to help with startup costs of the conference.

The conference developed an international plan of action to deal with this crisis. As a result, the international community is taking a number of concrete actions to provide humanitarian relief, increase pressure on the aggressors, and contain the conflict. These include a massive humanitarian relief effort for this winter; a strengthening of the sanctions regime by introducing international monitors in neigh-

boring states; and the placing of human rights monitors as well as "early warning" monitors in neighboring states and regions.

The conference also made progress with the parties themselves. The leader of the Bosnian Serbs has agreed to consolidate heavy weapons under international control and the Government of Bosnia has agreed to rejoin the negotiating process.

The causes of this conflict are complex; it will not be ended overnight. We thank Prime Minister Major and Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali for organizing and running this conference, which has succeeded in galvanizing international action to alleviate the humanitarian nightmare in Bosnia, to support the negotiating process, to punish the aggressors, and to quarantine the conflict.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on Disaster Relief Efforts August 29, 1992

The President. Let me just bring you all up to date. Yesterday I talked to the Governor of Guam, Governor Ada. His main problem there is getting that airport to function, getting generators in to get water going for the people. The military have responded superbly here. And those problems, thank heavens, are less extensive than the problems in Florida or Louisiana. But nevertheless, there are a lot of people hurting there, and we're trying to help them in every way possible.

I talked to Governor Edwards of Louisiana yesterday. He expressed his appreciation for the Federal support. I've just had a briefing from General Sullivan as to what the military have done. And of course, if their pockets need additional support, we're prepared to give additional support. But again, that one is a little further along now. It's getting into the reconstruction phase of things.

As to Florida, General Sullivan and Andy Card and Wally Stickney, who's the head of FEMA, have briefed us; Admiral Jeremiah of the Joint Chiefs and, of course, Secretary Atwood helping out along the way.

First, I think the cooperation from the military has been absolutely outstanding. We've just reviewed the status of the Federal, State, and then the local efforts in Florida to help the people in the aftermath of Andrew. The mobilization I ordered of nearly 7,000 Federal troops in addition to the 5,000 National Guardsmen is well underway. Significant progress is being made in delivering food, water, shelter, and other basic necessities to the people of the region.

I am today ordering an additional 5,000 military troops be sent in order to increase existing services such as the provision of food, kitchens, tents, and delivery of shelter-related items. We're also sending more medical units with doctors who are capable of advising and treating patients in the area.

I'm also augmenting our current effort in the following way: I'm making available nearly \$300 million to help the delivery of services by FEMA, by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Small Business Administration—\$300 million. Furthermore, I intend to submit a supplemental appropriations request as soon as Congress returns in whatever amount necessary

to respond to the human needs on the ground in Florida and Louisiana and, if need be, in Guam.

I want to emphasize that we intend to respond to this crisis on a human level, block by block, right out there where these people live. People have lost their homes and their possessions, and we want to reach out to people so they don't have to leave what few possessions they have and leave the familiar surroundings that they have lived in.

We've made it known again today to Governor Chiles that I am prepared to federalize the National Guard at any time. I repeat that offer now. The Governor, city managers, and other local officials are doing an excellent job at reaching out to help their citizens. This is a time for all of us to pull together.

I also want to announce an agreement that's been reached today with the State of Florida to provide an additional \$127.2 million in emergency food stamps for the people of Dade County. I've received a full report today on our military and our civilian efforts to help. I am satisfied that everyone is dedicated to pulling out all of the stops to help the people of Florida recover from this enormous disaster.

I am grateful to the men on the ground, men and women of the military who are performing with the same excellence that this country's come to expect. And I am grateful to Andy Card and Wally Stickney for what they're doing. It's a massive problem of coordination and distribution, but I am determined that we will get on top of it and that we will see these problems solved. It's not easy. But we're moving with a lot of effort here, a lot of people, to get the job done.

Q. Mr. President, do you as President bear some responsibility for the delay in Federal help?

The President. We're not talking about delay. The military was ready to move instantly, hot planning right from the very beginning. And there's no point going back trying to dig up difficulty between one government agency or another. I said that yesterday, and I'll repeat it today. What I'd like to see is somebody tell what exactly is happening down there and what people

are trying to do.

Q. Governor Clinton suggested, sir, that the Federal response should be looked into to see how it could be improved, said that he's not criticizing you but thinks that it should be looked into. What's your response to that?

The President. Well, I don't respond to Governor Clinton on these matters. We have a national emergency here, and we're trying to get this job done. And I have full confidence in the people that are trying to get the job done.

I don't take that as critical. If there are ways to improve what we're doing, fine. But this isn't a business of second-guessing; it's a business of trying to help people. And that's what we're about here. Again, I salute those who are involved. Andy Card had hardly any sleep down there working with these local officials. Governor Chiles is being as cooperative as he possibly can; same with the Senators down there, one Democrat and one Republican, trying to help us, Senator Graham, Senator Mack.

And so I look for the positive things in a matter of this nature. We're not going around trying to find blame or make some politics out of a national disaster.

Q. Do you have even a ballpark idea of how much additional money might be needed?

The President. I don't think we have any estimates on that. Director Darman is here, who has the total view in mind. But we haven't—unless Wally, did you want to—

Director Stickney. No, sir, I think it's too early.

Q. Mr. President, any response to Clinton's suggestion or charge that you're distorting his tax record and his claim—

The President. No. We're talking about something that's very serious business here, and I'm going to keep on this subject. I want the American people to understand what we're trying to do to solve this big problem, Federal, State, and local governments working together. And it's a very impressive effort. I think the people of this community who have been heartbroken and scared, wondering where their meals are coming from, are now seeing—and certainly those that are not seeing will see—

that this is a magnificent response, local, State, and Federal, with an awful lot of credit to the U.S. military who once again have performed admirably.

Those who want to dramatically cut the military, they ought to take another look when it comes to being prepared to do things of this nature.

Q. Sir, do you think your handling of this will be viewed in any way by the electorate down in Florida in a particular way?

The President. Look, may I tell you something? This may be hard for you to believe: I am thinking about what's good for the people here. I don't even think about the politics of it. We're trying to help people.

I see a bunch of people running around interviewing people who have been thrown out of their homes by a natural disaster, saying how do the politics work. Good heavens, isn't there any honor here? Can't we help people without having somebody try to put a political interpretation on it? I

mean, heaven sakes, we have people that are hurting out there. And then to try to cast it politically, I'm sorry, I just simply find that a little bit outrageous.

And it's happening all over Florida, I'm told today by the local head of one of these communities, Homestead, that's been hit so badly. He said he's just shocked by it. That's the way it is. That's the way it is.

Q. —Mr. President, from your responding much quicker, at least going down there quicker than you went to South Carolina or California?

The President. I think we've responded properly, and I think history will show that.

Note: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Gordon Sullivan, Army Chief of Staff in charge of the Federal forces involved in the recovery efforts in Florida.

Remarks on Hurricane Andrew Disaster Relief

August 30, 1992

The President. Let me simply say that this meeting is just a follow-on meeting. The Secretaries and Administrators here are able to help the victims of the hurricane, and I'm going to hear from them, each of them, as to what their Departments can do. We'll figure out how to follow up.

Over the weekend I was in touch with the manager of Homestead, city manager Alex Muxo; talked to the director of public safety of Dade County, Fred Taylor, and to Otis Wallace, one of the top officials in Florida City; and then General Sullivan called in with a good report as to what they're doing. And I must say I think progress is being made. And now we need to follow up with our Agencies and Departments in every way that we possibly can to assist the victims of this storm.

I might say for the benefit of the reporters here, as far as we're concerned, cooperation between the State and Federal is good. I've talked with General Sullivan about the

coordination between the Guard and the regular Army, and he felt that that's in good shape, as did the director of public safety of Dade County. So I think real progress is being made, but there's still an awful lot of human suffering there. And what we all are going to try to do is continue to move forward as fast as we can to help alleviate that.

Q. Mr. President, some people have suggested that additional funding is going to be essential to help the people of southern Florida. Are you prepared to ask Congress now for additional funding?

The President. Yes. I think I made that statement the other day, that we are prepared. As soon as we get the estimates that are pouring in every day, why, we will go forward.

Q. Do you have any idea how much you'll be asking for?

The President. I don't have it now.