

The President's News Conference April 23, 1993

The President. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press], do you have a question?

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, there's a growing feeling that the Western response to bloodshed in Bosnia has been woefully inadequate. Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel asked you yesterday to do something, anything to stop the fighting. Is the United States considering taking unilateral action such as air strikes against Serb artillery sites?

The President. Well, first let me say, as you know, for more than a week now we have been seriously reviewing our options for further action. And I want to say, too, let's look at the last 3 months. Since I became President, I have worked with our allies, and we have tried to move forward, first on the no-fly zone, on enforcement of it, on the humanitarian airdrops, on the war crimes investigation, on getting the Bosnian Muslims involved in the peace process. We have made some progress. And now we have a very much tougher sanctions resolution. And Leon Fuerth, who is the National Security Adviser to the Vice President, is in Europe now working on implementing that. That is going to make a big difference to Serbia.

And we are reviewing other options. I think we should act. We should lead. The United States should lead. We have led for the last 3 months. We have moved the coalition. And to be fair, our allies in Europe have been willing to do their part. And they have troops on the ground there.

But I do not think we should act alone, unilaterally, nor do I think we will have to. And in the next several days I think we will finalize the extensive review which has been going on and which has taken a lot of my time as well as the time of the administration, as it should have, over the last 10 days or so. I think we'll finish that in the near future, and then we'll have a policy, and we'll announce it and everyone can evaluate it.

Q. Can I follow up?

The President. Sure.

Q. Do you see any parallel between the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and the Holocaust?

The President. I think the Holocaust is on a whole different level. I think it is without

precedent or peer in human history. On the other hand, ethnic cleansing is the kind of inhumanity that the Holocaust took to the nth degree. The idea of moving people around and abusing them and often killing them solely because of their ethnicity is an abhorrent thing. And it is especially troublesome in that area where people of different ethnic groups live side by side for so long together. And I think you have to stand up against it. I think it's wrong.

We were talking today about all of the other troubles in that region. I was happy to see the violence between the Croats and the Muslims in Bosnia subside this morning, and I think we're making progress on that front. But what's going on with the Serbians and the ethnic cleansing is qualitatively different than the other conflicts, both within the former Yugoslavia and in other parts of the region.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]?

The First 100 Days

Q. Mr. President, by any count, you have not had a good week in your Presidency. The tragedy in Waco, the defeat of your stimulus bill, the standoff in Bosnia. What did you do wrong, and what are you going to do differently? How do you look at things? Are you reassessing?

The President. I don't really believe that the situation in Bosnia—it's not been a good week for the world, but I don't know that the administration could have made it different.

On the stimulus package, I'd like to put it into the larger context and remind you that in this 100 days we have already fundamentally changed the direction of an American Government. We have abandoned trickle-down economics. We've abandoned the policies that brought the debt of this country from \$1 trillion to \$4 trillion in only a decade.

The budget plan, which passed the Congress, which will reduce the deficit and increase investment, has led to a 20-year low in mortgage rates, dramatically lower interest rates. There are probably people in this room who have refinanced their home mortgages in the last 3 months or who have had access to cheaper credit. That's going to put tens of billion dollars

coursing throughout this economy in ways that are very, very good for the country. And so we are moving in the right direction economically.

I regret that the stimulus did not pass, and I have begun to ask, and will continue to ask, not only people in the administration but people in the Congress whether there is something I could have done differently to pass that. Part of the reason it didn't pass was politics; part of it was a difference in ideas. There are really people still who believe that it's not needed. I just disagree with that.

I think the recovery—the economists say it's been underway for about 2 years, and we've still had 16 months of 7-percent unemployment, and all the wealthy countries are having trouble creating jobs. So I think there was an idea base, an argument there, that while we're waiting for the lower interest rates and the deficit reduction and the investments of the next 4 years to take effect, this sort of supplemental appropriation should go forward.

Now, I have to tell you, I did misgauge that because a majority of the Republican Senators now sitting in the Senate voted for a similar stimulus when Ronald Reagan was President in 1983 and voted 28 times for regular supplemental appropriations like this. I just misgauged it. And I hope that I can learn something. I've just been here 90 days. And you know, I was a Governor working with a contentious legislature for 12 years, and it took me a decade to get political reform there. So it takes time to change things. But I basically feel very good about what's happened in the first 100 days with regard to the Congress.

Tragedy in Waco

Q. Waco—[inaudible]—

The President. Well, with regard to Waco I don't have much to add to what I've already said. I want the situation looked into. I want us to bring in people who have any insights to bear on that. I think it's very important that the whole thing be thoroughly gone over. But I still maintain what I said from the beginning, that the offender there was David Koresh. And I do not think the United States Government is responsible for the fact that a bunch of fanatics decided to kill themselves. And I'm sorry that they killed their children.

Ross Perot

Q. Mr. President, to follow up partly on Helen, on your stimulus package and on your political approach to Capitol Hill, Ross Perot said today that you're playing games with the American people in your tax policy. He was strongly critical of your stimulus package. He said he's going to launch an advertising campaign against the North American Free Trade Agreement. How are you going to handle his political criticism? Will it complicate your efforts on the Hill with your economic plan? And do you plan to repackage some of the things that have been in your stimulus program and try to resubmit them to the Hill?

The President. Let me answer that question first. We're going to revisit all of that over the next few days. I'm going to be talking to Members of Congress and to others to see what we can do about that. With regard to the economic plan, I must say I found that rather amazing. I don't want to get into an argument with Mr. Perot. I'll be interested to hear what his specifics are, but I would—go back and read his book and his plan. There's a remarkable convergence except that we have more specific budget cuts. We raise taxes less on the middle class and more on the wealthy. But otherwise, the plans are remarkably similar.

So I think it would be—I'll be interested to see if maybe perhaps he's changed his position from his book last year, and he has some new ideas to bring to bear. I'll be glad to hear them.

Q. To follow up, sir, how do you plan to handle his political criticism? He's launched a campaign against you. Do you think you can sit back and just—

The President. Well, first of all, I will ask you to apply the same level of scrutiny to him as you do to me. And if he's changed his position from the positions he took in the campaign last year, then we need to know why and what his ideas are. Maybe he's got some constructive ideas.

I think the American people have shown that they're very impatient with people who don't want to produce results. And the one thing I think that everybody has figured out about me in the last—even if they don't agree with what I do—is that I want to get something done. I just came here to try to change things. I want to do things. And I want to do things that help people's lives. So my judgment is that

if he makes a suggestion that is good, that is constructive, that takes us beyond some idea I've proposed that will change people's lives for the better, fine. But I think that that ought to be the test that we apply to everyone who weighs into this debate and not just to the President.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, to go back to Bosnia for a minute. You continue to insist that this has to be multilateral action, a criteria that seems to have hamstrung us when it comes to many options thus far and makes it look as if this is a state of paralysis. The United States is the last remaining superpower. Why is it not appropriate in this situation for the United States to act unilaterally?

The President. Well, the United States—surely you would agree, that the United States, even as the last remaining superpower, has to act consistent with international law under some mandate of the United Nations.

Q. But you have a mandate and—

The President. They do, and that is one of the things that we have under review. I haven't ruled out any option for action. I would remind all of you, I have not ruled out any option, except that we have not discussed and we are not considering the introduction of American forces in continuing hostilities there. We are not.

So we are reviewing other options. But I also would remind you that, to be fair, our allies have had—the French, the British, and the Canadians—have had troops on the ground there. They have been justifiably worried about those. But they have supported the airdrops, the toughening of the sanctions. They welcomed the American delegation now in Europe, working on how to make these sanctions really work and really bite against Serbia. And I can tell you that the other nations involved are also genuinely reassessing their position, and I would not rule out the fact that we can reach an agreement for a concerted action that goes beyond where we have been. I don't have any criticism of the British, the French, and others about that.

Q. Would that be military action?

Statements by Administration Officials

Q. Mr. President, several of the leading lights in your administration, ranging from your FBI Director to your U.N. Ambassador, to your Dep-

uty Budget Director, to your Health Services Secretary, have issued statements in the last couple of weeks which are absolutely contradictory to some of the positions you've taken in your administration. Why is that? Are you losing your political grip?

The President. Give me an example.

Q. Example? Judge Sessions said that there was no child abuse in Waco. Madeleine Albright has said in this morning's newspapers, at least, that she favors air strikes in Bosnia. All of these are things you said that you didn't support.

The President. First of all, I don't know what—we know that David Koresh had sex with children. I think that is undisputed, is it not? Is it not? Does anybody dispute that? Where I come from that qualifies as child abuse. And we know that he had people teaching these kids how to kill themselves. I think that qualifies as abuse. And I'm not criticizing Judge Sessions because I don't know exactly what he said.

In terms of Madeleine Albright, Madeleine Albright has made no public statement at all about air strikes. There is a press report that she wrote me a confidential letter in which she expressed her—or memos—in which she expressed her views about the new direction we should take in response to my request to all the senior members of my administration to let me know what they thought we ought to do next. And I have heard from her and from others about what they think we ought to do next. And I'm not going to discuss the recommendations they made to me, but in the next few days when I make a decision about what to do, then I will announce what I'm going to do. So I wouldn't say that either one of those examples qualifies speaking out of school.

Q. How about the value-added tax, Mr. President?

The President. What was that?

Q. The value-added tax, Mrs. Rivlin and Ms. Shalala both said that they thought that that was a good idea.

The President. I don't mind them saying they think it's a good idea. There are all kinds of arguments for it on policy grounds. That does not mean that we have decided to incorporate it in the health care debate. No decision has been made on that. And I have no objection to their expressing their views on that. We've had a lot of people from business and labor come to us saying that they thought that tax would help make their particular industries more

competitive in the global economy. That wasn't taking a line against an administration policy.

Gay Rights

Q. Mr. President, a week ago a group of gay and lesbian representatives came out of a meeting with you and expressed in the most ringing terms their confidence in your understanding of them and their political aspirations, and their belief that you would fulfill those aspirations. Do you feel now that you will be able to meet their now-enhanced expectations?

The President. Well, I don't know about that. And I don't know what their—it depends on what the expectations are. But I'll tell you this: I believe that this country's policies should be heavily biased in favor of nondiscrimination. I believe when you tell people they can't do certain things in this country that other people can do, there ought to be an overwhelming and compelling reason for it. I believe we need the services of all of our people, and I have said that consistently and not as a political proposition. The first time this issue came up was in 1991 when I was in Boston. I was just asked the question about it.

And I might add, it's interesting that I have been attacked. Obviously, those who disagree with me here are primarily coming from the political right in America. When I was Governor, I was attacked from the other direction for sticking up for the rights of religious fundamentalists to run their child care centers and to practice home schooling under appropriate safeguards. I just have always had an almost libertarian view that we should try to protect the rights of American individual citizens to live up to the fullest of their capacities, and I'm going to stick right with that.

Q. Are you concerned, sir, that you may have generated expectations on their end and criticism among others that has hamstrung your administration in the sense of far too great emphasis on this issue?

The President. Yes, but I have not placed a great deal of emphasis on it. It's gotten a lot of emphasis in other quarters and in the press. I've just simply taken my position and tried to see it through. And that's what I do. It doesn't take a lot of my time as President to say what I believe in and what I intend to do, and that's what I'll continue to do.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, getting back to the situation in Bosnia—and we understand you haven't made any final decisions on new options previously considered unacceptable. But the two most commonly heard options would be lifting the arms embargo to enable the Bosnian Muslims to defend themselves and to initiate some limited air strikes, perhaps, to cut off supply lines. Without telling us your decision—presumably, you haven't made any final decisions on those two options—what are the pros and cons that are going through your mind right now and will weigh heavily on your final decision?

The President. I'm reluctant to get into this. Those are two of the options. There are some other options that have been considered. All have pluses and minuses; all have supporters and opponents within the administration and in the Congress, where, I would remind you, heavy consultations will be required to embark on any new policy.

I do believe that on the air strike issue, the pronouncements that General Powell has made generally about military action apply there. If you take action, if the United States takes action, we must have a clearly defined objective that can be met. We must be able to understand it, and its limitations must be clear. The United States is not, should not, become involved as a partisan in a war.

With regard to the lifting of the arms embargo, the question obviously there is if you widen the capacity of people to fight, will that help to get a settlement and bring about peace? Will it lead to more bloodshed? What kind of reaction can others have that would undermine the effectiveness of the policy?

But I think both of them deserve some serious consideration, along with some other options we have.

Q. Do you think that these people who are trying to get us into war in Bosnia are really remembering that we haven't taken care of hundreds of thousands of veterans from the last war and we couldn't take care of our prisoners and get them all home from Vietnam? And now many of them are coming up with bills for treatment of Agent Orange. How can we afford to go to any more of these wars?

The President. Well, I think that's a good argument against the United States itself becoming involved as a belligerent in a war there.

But we are, after all, the world's only superpower. We do have to lead the world, and there is a very serious problem of systematic ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, which could have not only enormous further humanitarian consequences, and goodness knows there have been many, but also could have other practical consequences in other nearby regions where the same sorts of ethnic tensions exist.

Q. Did you make any kind of agreement with Boris Yeltsin to hold off either on air strikes or any kind of aggressive action against the Serbs until after Sunday? And in general, how has his political situation affected your deliberation on Bosnia?

The President. No, I have not made any agreement, and he did not ask for that. We never even discussed that, interestingly enough. The Russians, I would remind you, in the middle of President Yeltsin's campaign, abstained from our attempt to get tougher sanctions through the United Nations in what I thought was the proper decision for them and one that the United States and, I'm sure, the rest of the free world very much appreciated.

Tragedy in Waco

Q. Do you wish, Mr. President, that you'd become more involved in the planning of the Waco operation? And how would you handle that situation differently now?

The President. I don't think as a practical matter that the President should become involved in the planning of those kinds of things at that detail. One of the things that I'm sure will come out when we look into this is—the questions will be asked and answered: Did all of us who were up the line of command ask the questions we should have asked and get the answers we should have gotten? And I look forward to that. But at the time, I have to say as I did before, the first thing I did after the ATF agents were killed, once we knew that the FBI was going to go in, was to ask that the military be consulted because of the quasi-, as least, military nature of the conflict given the resources that Koresh had in his compound and their obvious willingness to use them. And then on the day before the action, I asked the questions of the Attorney General which I have reported to you previously and which at the time I thought were sufficient. As I said, I'm sure, I leave it to others to make the suggestions

about whether there are other questions I should have asked.

FBI Director Sessions

Q. Mr. President, what is your assessment of Director Sessions' role in the Waco affair? And have you made a decision on his future? And if you haven't, will you give him a personal hearing before you do decide?

The President. Well, first of all, I have no assessment of his role since I had no direct contact with him. And I mean no negative or positive inference. I have no assessment there. I stand by what I said before about my general high regard for the FBI. And I'm waiting for a recommendation from the Attorney General about what to do with the direction of the FBI.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, since you said that one side in the Bosnia conflict represents inhumanity that the Holocaust carried to the nth degree, why do you then tell us that the United States cannot take a partisan view in this war?

The President. Well, I said that the principle of ethnic cleansing is something we ought to stand up against. That does not mean that the United States or the United Nations can enter a war, in effect, to redraw the lines, geographical lines of republics within what was Yugoslavia, or that that would ultimately be successful.

I think what the United States has to do is to try to figure out whether there is some way consistent with forcing the people to resolve their own difficulties we can stand up to and stop ethnic cleansing. And that is obviously the difficulty we are wrestling with. This is clearly the most difficult foreign policy problem we face and that all of our allies face. And if it were easy, I suppose it would have been solved before. We have tried to do more in the last 90 days than was previously done. It has clearly not been enough to stop the Serbian aggression, and we are now looking at what else we can do.

Q. Yesterday you specifically criticized the Roosevelt administration for not having bombed the railroads to the concentration camps and things that were near military targets. Aren't there steps like that that would not involve conflict, direct conflict or partisan belligerence, that you might consider?

The President. There may be. I would remind you that the circumstances were somewhat different. We were then at war with Germany at

the time, and that's what made that whole series of incidents so perplexing. But we have—as I say, we've got all of our options under review.

Haiti

Q. The diplomatic initiative on Haiti is on the verge of collapse. What can you do to salvage it short of a full-scale military operation?

The President. Well, you may know something I don't. That's not what our people tell me. I think Mr. Caputo and Ambassador Pezzullo have done together a good job. The thing keeps going back and forth because of the people who are involved with the de facto government there. It's obvious what their concerns are. They were the same concerns that led to the ouster of Aristide in the first place, and President Aristide, we feel, should be restored to power. We're working toward that. I get a report on that. We discuss it at least three times a week, and I'm convinced that we're going to prevail there and be successful.

I do believe that there's every reason to think that there will have to be some sort of multilateral presence to try to guarantee the security and the freedom from violence of people on both sides of the ledger while we try to establish the conditions of ongoing civilized society. But I believe we're going to prevail there.

The First 100 Days

Q. Mr. President, would you care to make your assessment of the first 100 days before we make one for you? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I'll say if—I believe, first of all, we passed the budget resolution in record time. That was the biggest issue. That confirmed the direction of the administration and confirmed the commitments of the campaign that we could both bring the deficit down and increase investment, and that we could do it by specific spending cuts and by raising taxes, almost all of which come from the highest income people in this society, reversing a 12-year trend in which most of the tax burdens were borne by the middle class, whose incomes were going down when their taxes were going up, while the deficit went from \$1 trillion to \$4 trillion, the total national debt, and the deficit continued to go up.

We have a 20-year low in interest rates from mortgages. We have lower interest rates across the board. We have tens of billions of dollars flooding back into this economy as people refi-

nance their debt. We have established a new environmental policy, which is dramatically different. The Secretary of Education has worked with me and with others and with the Governors to establish a new approach in education that focuses on tough standards as well as increasing opportunity. We have done an enormous amount of work on political reform, on campaign finance, and lobbying reform. And I have imposed tough ethics requirements on my own administration's officials. These things are consistent with not only what I said I'd do in the campaign but with turning the country around. The Vice President is heading a task force which will literally change the way the Federal Government operates and make it much more responsive to the citizens of this country.

We are working on a whole range of other things: the welfare reform initiative, to move people from welfare to work. And, of course, a massive amount of work has been done on the health care issue, which is a huge economic and personal security problem for millions of Americans.

So I think it is amazing how much has been done. More will be done. We also passed the family leave bill, a version of the motor voter bill that has not come out of conference back to me yet. And everything has been passed except the stimulus program. So I think we're doing fine, and we're moving in the right direction. I feel good about it.

Aid to Russia

Q. Sir, a followup. Wouldn't you say, though, that one of your biggest initiatives, aid to Soviet Russia, is now practically finished? If we can't pass a stimulus bill in our own country, how can we do it for them?

The President. Let me recast the question a little bit. It's a good question. [*Laughter*] It's a good question, but to be fair we've got to recast it. We have already—the first round of aid to non-Soviet Russia, to a democratic Russia, is plainly going to go through, the first \$1.6 billion. The aid that we agreed with our partners in the G-7 to provide through the international financial institutions, which is a big dollar item, is plainly going to go through. The question is, can we get any more aid for Russia that requires a new appropriation by the United States Congress? And that is a question I think, Mary [Mary McGrory, Washington Post], that will be resolved in the weeks ahead, in part

by what happens to the American workers and their jobs and their future. I think the two things will be tied by many Members of Congress.

Navy Sexual Harassment Investigation

Q. The Tailhook report came out this morning, documenting horrendous and nearly criminal conduct on the part of the Navy. How much did you discuss the incident, and what might be done about it with your nominee to be the Secretary of the Navy?

The President. First, let me comment a little on that. The Inspector General's report details conduct which is wrong and which has no place in the armed services. And I expect the report to be acted on in the appropriate way. I also want to say to the American people and to all of you that the report should be taken for what it is, a very disturbing list of allegations which will have to be thoroughly examined. It should not be taken as a general indictment of the United States Navy or of all the fine people who serve there. It is very specific in its allegations, and it will be pursued.

The only thing I said to the Secretary-designate of the Navy and the only thing I should have said to him, I think, is that I expected him to take the report and to do his duty. And I believe he will do that.

Russia

Q. Mr. President, to go back to Russia for just a minute. The latest polls show that Mr. Yeltsin will probably win his vote of confidence. But there seems to be a real toss-up on whether or not voters are going to endorse his economic reforms.

The President. I understand that.

Q. Can you live with a split decision, though, or do you need both passed in order to then build support for Russian aid?

The President. I believe—the answer to your question is, for the United States, the key question should be that which is posed to any democracy, which is who wins the election? If he wins the election, if he is ratified by the Russian people to continue as their President, then I think we should do our best to work with him toward reform.

You know, we had a lot of other countries here for the Holocaust Museum dedication; their leaders were here. Leaders from Eastern Europe, leaders from at least one republic of

the former Soviet Union, all of them having terrible economic challenges as they convert from a Communist command-and-control economy to a market economy in a world where there's economic slowdown everywhere. And in a world in which there's economic slowdown and difficulty, all leaders will have trouble having their policies be popular in a poll because they haven't produced the results that the people so earnestly yearn for. You can understand that.

But if they have confidence in the leadership, I think that's all we can ask. And the United States will, if the Russian people ratify him as their President and stick with him, then the United States will continue to work with him. I think he is a genuine democrat—small “d”—and genuinely committed to reform. I think that we should support that.

NAFTA

Q. Mr. President, Mr. Perot has come out strongly in what is perceived behind the line against a free trade agreement, NAFTA. How hard are you going to fight for this free trade agreement, and when do you expect to see it accomplished?

The President. I think we'll have the agreement ready in the fairly near future. You know, our people are still working with the Mexican Government and with the Canadians on the side agreements. We're trying to work out what the environmental agreement will say, what the labor agreement will say, and then what the fairest way to deal with enforcement is.

The Mexicans say, and there is some merit to their position, that they're worried about transferring their sovereignty in enforcement to a multilateral commission. Even in the United States, to be fair, we have some folks who are worried about that, about giving that up. On the other hand, if we're going to have an environmental agreement and a labor standards agreement that means something, then there has to be ultimately some consequences for violating them. So what we're trying to do is to agree on an approach which would say that if there is a pattern of violations, if you keep on violating it past a certain point—maybe not an isolated incident, but a pattern of violation—there is going to be some enforcement. There must be consequences. And we're working out the details of that.

But I still feel quite good about it. And this

is just an area where I disagree with Mr. Perot and with others. I think that we will win big if we have a fair agreement that integrates more closely the Mexican economy and the American economy and leads us from there to Chile to other market economies in Latin America and gives us a bigger world in which to trade. I think that's the only way a rich country can grow richer. If you look at what Japan and other countries in the Pacific are doing to reach out in their own region, it's a pretty good lesson to us that we had better worry about how to build those bridges in our own area.

So this is an idea battle. You know, you've got a lot of questions, and I want to answer them all. But let me say not every one of these things can be distilled simply into politics, you know, who's for this and who's for that, and if this person is for this, somebody else has got to be for that. A lot of these things honestly involved real debates over ideas, over who's right and wrong about the world toward which we're moving. And the answers are not self-evident. And one of the reasons that I wanted to run for President is I wanted to sort of open the floodgates for debating these ideas so that we could try to change in the appropriate way. So I just have a difference of opinion. I believe that the concept of NAFTA is sound, even though, as you know, I thought that the details needed to be improved.

POW/MIA's

Q. Mr. President, there was a tremendous flurry of interest earlier this month in the Russian document that purported to show that the Vietnamese had held back American prisoners. General Vessey has now said publicly that while the document itself was authentic, he believes that it was incorrect. Do you have a personal view at this point about that issue? And more broadly, do you believe that, in fact, the Vietnamese did return all the American prisoners at the time of the Paris Peace Accord?

The President. First let me say, I saw General Vessey before he went to Vietnam and after he returned. And I have a high regard for him, and I appreciate his willingness to serve his country in this way. As to whether the document had any basis in fact, let me say that the Government of Vietnam was more forthcoming than it had been in the past and gave us some documents that would tend to undermine the validity of the Russian documents claim.

I do not know whether that is right or wrong. We are having it basically evaluated at this time, and when we complete the evaluation, we'll tell you. And of course, we want to tell the families of those who were missing in action or who were POW's. I think that we'll be able to make some progress in eliminating some of the questions about the outstanding cases as a result of this last interchange, but I cannot say that I'm fully satisfied that we know all that we need to know. There are still some cases that we don't know the answer to. But I do believe we're making some progress. I was encouraged by the last trip.

Q. I'd like to follow up on that. Before the U.S. normalizes relations, allows trade to go forward, do you have to be personally sure that every case has been resolved or would you be willing to go forward on the basis that while it may take years to resolve these cases, the Vietnamese have made sufficient offerings to us to confirm good faith?

The President. A lot of experts say you can never resolve every case, every one, that we couldn't resolve all the cases for them and that there are still some cases that have not been factually resolved, going back to the Second World War. But what I would have to be convinced of is that we had gone a long way toward resolving every case that could be resolved at this moment in time, and that there was a complete, open, and unrestricted commitment to continue to do everything that could be done always to keep resolving those cases. And we're not there yet.

Again, I have to be guided a little bit by people who know a lot about this. And I confess to being much more heavily influenced by the families of the people whose lives were lost there or whose lives remain in question than by the commercial interest and the other things which seem so compelling in this moment. I just am very influenced by how the families feel.

Legislative Agenda

Q. [Inaudible]—your economic stimulus package, are you doing some kind of reality check now and scaling back some of your plans, your legislative plans for the coming year, including the crime bill, the health care initiatives, and other things? Are there any plans to do that? And also, did you underestimate the power of Senator Bob Dole?

The President. No, what I underestimated was the extent to which what I thought was a fairly self-evident case, particularly after we stayed below the spending caps approved by this Congress, including the Republicans who were in this Congress last year, when we had already passed a budget resolution which called for over \$500 billion in deficit reduction. When they had voted repeatedly for supplemental appropriations to help foreign governments, I thought at least four of them would vote to break cloture, and I underestimated that. I did not have an adequate strategy of dealing with that.

I also thought that if I made a good-faith effort to negotiate and to compromise, that it would not be rebuffed. Instead, every time I offered something they reduced the offer that they had previously been talking to the majority leader about. So it was a strange set of events. But I think what happened was what was a significant part of our plan, but not the major part of it, acquired a political connotation that got out of proportion to the merits, so that a lot of Republicans were saying to me privately, "Mr. President, I'd like to be for this, but I can't now. And we're all strung out, and we're divided."

I think we need to do a reality check. As I said, what I want to know—let me go back to what I said—what I want to know from our folks and from our friends in the Senate, and Republicans or Democrats, is what could I have done differently to make it come out differently, because the real losers here were not the President and the administration. The real losers were the hundreds of thousands of people who won't have jobs now. We could have put another 700,000 kids to work this summer. I mean, we could have done a lot of good things with that money. And I think that is very, very sad. And it became more political than it should have. But the underlying rationale I don't think holds a lot of water, that it was deficit spending. That just won't wash.

Q. [Inaudible]—and redo—

The President. No. I mean, you know, for example, you mentioned the crime bill. I think it would be a real mistake not to pass the crime bill. I mean, the crime bill was almost on the point of passage last year. And they were all fighting over the Brady bill. Surely, surely after what we have been through in this country just in the last 3 months, with the kind of mindless violence we have seen, we can pass a bill requir-

ing people to go through a waiting period before they buy a handgun. And surely we can see that we need more police officers on the street.

That's another thing that—I really believe that once we move some of that money, not all but some of it, up into this jobs package to make some of the jobs rehiring police officers on the street who'd been laid off, that would be a compelling case. I mean people are scared in this country, and I think we need to go forward. I feel very strongly that we need to go forward on the crime bill.

Navy Sexual Harassment Investigation

Q. Mr. President, back to the Tailhook report for a second. That report contained very strong criticism of the Navy's senior leadership in general but did not name any of the senior officers. Do you believe that the senior officers who are implicated in this, including Admiral Kelso who was there one night in Las Vegas, should they be disciplined, and do you believe the public has a right to know the names of the senior officers?

The President. You should know that under the rules of law which apply to this, I am in the chain of command. There is now an Inspector General's report, and the law must take its course. If I were to answer that question I might prejudice any decisions which might be later made in this case. I think all I can tell you is what I have already said. I was very disturbed by the specific allegations in the Inspector General's report, and I want appropriate action to be taken.

Until the proper procedures have a chance to kick in and appropriate action is taken, I have been advised that because I am the Commander in Chief I have to be very careful about what I say so as not to prejudice the rights of anybody against whom any action might proceed or to prejudice the case in any other way either pro or con. So I can't say any more except to say that I want this thing handled in an appropriate and thorough way.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, could I ask you for a clarification on Bosnia? You said that you were not considering introduction of American forces. Does that include any air forces as well as ground forces, sir?

The President. I said ground forces.

Q. You said ground forces. Could I ask you,

sir, if you fear that using U.S. air strikes might draw the United States into a ground war there?

The President. I just don't want to discuss our evaluation of the options anymore. I've told you that there's never been a serious discussion in this country about the introduction of ground forces into an ongoing conflict there.

Gay Rights March

Q. With hundreds of thousands of gays in Washington this weekend for the march, did you ever reconsider your decision to leave town for this weekend? Did you ever consider in any way participating in some of the activities?

The President. No.

Q. Why not?

The President. Because I—and, basically, I wouldn't participate in other marches. I think once you become President, on balance, except under unusual circumstances, that is not what should be done. But more importantly, I'm going to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, a trip that presumably most of you

would want me to make, to try to focus anew on what I think are the fundamental issues at stake for our country right now. And I expect that I will say something about the fact that a lot of Americans have come here asking for a climate that is free of discrimination, asking basically to be able to work hard and live by the rules and be treated like other American citizens if they do that, and just that. And that's always been my position, not only for the gays who will be here but for others as well.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 13th news conference began at 1 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. During the news conference, the following persons were referred to: Elie Wiesel, Nobel laureate and concentration camp survivor; Dante Caputo, U.N./OAS Special Envoy to Haiti; Lawrence Pezzullo, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State on Haiti; and Adm. Frank B. Kelso II, USN, Chief of Naval Operations.

Statement on Advancing U.S. Relations With Russia and the Other New Independent States

April 23, 1993

Since my summit in Vancouver with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, I have pursued a number of measures to implement our policy of economic and strategic partnership between our two countries. These reflect my conviction that the movement toward political and economic reform in Russia and the other new states of the former Soviet Union is the greatest security challenge of our day and can fuel our own future prosperity as well.

It is time to put our relations with Russia and the other states on a new footing. As an important step in that process, we need to update the accumulated cold war vestiges that remain in U.S. laws and practices. Our statutes and regulations are filled with restrictions on a Communist Soviet Union, a nation that no longer exists. Many of those provisions needlessly impede our relations with the democratic states that replaced the Soviet Union.

Many in Congress have already taken the lead on re-examining these provisions. Today I have

asked Ambassador-at-Large Strobe Talbott to coordinate our Executive review of these laws and statutes on an expedited basis, with the goal of revising or removing them where appropriate and consistent with our security and other national interests. Related to this process, our administration will also begin a thorough review, working with our allies, of how to reorient export controls on sensitive technology. I ask the bipartisan leaders in Congress to work with us to coordinate and expedite these reviews.

Today I am also announcing steps to help build a new security partnership with Russia and the other states. We will accelerate the deactivation of nuclear weapons systems already scheduled for elimination under the START I Treaty, while working to accelerate dismantlement in Russia and the three other states with nuclear weapons on their territory. We are beginning a comprehensive review of measures that could enhance strategic stability, including the possibility of each side reprogramming its