

Statement on Action To Defend Minority Voting Opportunities *February 22, 1994*

I have been advised that the Department of Justice has announced that the United States will participate in voting rights litigation in three States to defend minority voting opportunities. The legal action taken today in cases in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas reaffirms my administration's strong commitment to defend the historic gains made under the Voting Rights Act.

The Voting Rights Act ensures that all Americans may fully participate in the democratic process. In recent years, our Nation has enjoyed a tremendous increase in minority voter access to our electoral system. These hard-won victories must not be abandoned. I applaud the forceful actions of Attorney General Reno and the Justice Department to ensure that voting rights are vigorously protected.

Remarks on the Technology Reinvestment Project and Earthquake Relief and an Exchange With Reporters *February 23, 1994*

The President. Thank you. I have to bear so much bad news, I must say that's the only time I've ever been introduced as the bearer of good news. Thank you, Mr. Vice President, and thank you all for being here, the members of the administration, the Members of the Congress, and our distinguished guests from California. We're glad to see all of you here.

We are here to announce some new help for California as you work to come out of the consequences of the earthquake. But first I want to talk about the announcement made just this morning at the Pentagon to which the Vice President referred.

This morning we announced the latest round of awards in our technology reinvestment project, which helps companies and workers in defense industries to develop technologies to meet our Nation's commercial and military needs. This is the fourth round of TRP awards we've announced since October. So far, \$605 million in competitive Federal grants awarded on merit have gone to firms and communities through this innovative program. It's a cornerstone of our reinvestment and conversion initiative, recognizing that those who worked so hard to win the cold war should not be unduly burdened by cutbacks in military expenditures and that all the work they have done, the expertise they've developed, the barriers that they have broken, should be turned to the advantage of America as we move into the 21st century.

The TRP is of special interest to the people of California because California has been on the leading edge of military technology. And converting this know-how for dual use and commercial applications will help our country move into the next century as the economic leader of the world, using things that relate from biomedical and environmental technologies to advanced transportation and communications systems, all rooted originally in our investments in national defense.

The projects which have been funded are exciting; they're futuristic; they're farsighted; they have potentially enormous beneficial impact to all the American people. I can't tell you about all of them—we awarded 50 just today—but let me just mention a couple.

One involves the Bay Area Rapid Transit System and Hughes Aircraft. Together they'll develop an advanced automated train control system that will identify the precise location of every train, even those in tunnels. That will allow trains to operate at closer distances to each other, and that means the existing infrastructure can double its rider capacity.

Another project will establish a technology center in Cerritos, California, to transfer leading-edge composites manufacturing technology to 16,000 small defense and commercial firms just in the Los Angeles area. The University of California at San Diego will work with Alcoa Electronic Packaging and Hewlett Packard to

offer displaced defense engineers a 2-year master's program in world-class manufacturing engineering. This will emphasize foreign language training and include an internship in international manufacturing companies. The aim, of course, is to help these folks build on their old skills with new learning to keep them vital and employed and to keep our country competitive in the global marketplace, to provide economic opportunity and shore up military strength, and to ensure that the people who won the cold war won't be left out in the cold. That's what this TRP, the technology reinvestment project, is all about. And that's why I'm proud it's proving to be such a success.

I will say that on the last round of grants, I think California won—again, I will say, on a purely competitive basis—almost 40 percent of the total dollars. And when you consider the fact that when we started this, the State of California, with 12 percent of the country's population, had over 21 percent of the Nation's military expenditures and has had almost 40 percent of the base closings, the last two rounds of base closings, and over 40 percent of the last round of base closings, it is heartening that in the race for the technologies of the future and, therefore, the jobs of the future, that the whole conversion effort is obviously beginning to work in the way that it ought to work.

Let me now say a few words about our continuing efforts to deal with the consequences of the earthquake. In the 5 weeks since the Northridge earthquake, our administration has worked closely with State and local officials, as all of you know, to try to help families, businesses, and communities. We are working to get the whole region back on its feet again. All of you know what the Vice President has already said, that the FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, Secretary Cisneros, Secretary Pena, Mr. Panetta, and many, many others have worked tirelessly to try to deal with the problems that were generated by the earthquake.

Immediately after the earthquake, I extended the period for which Federal Government's paid the entire cost of FEMA disaster assistance and increased from 75 to 90 percent the share paid by the Federal Government for FEMA public assistance programs. Now, today we are announcing some loan guarantees which will help to meet the remaining share owed by the State of California.

Congress has appropriated new funds for FEMA, for the Small Business Administration, for the Departments of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Veterans Affairs to rebuild these homes and businesses, to house the homeless, to repair the highways and bridges, to restore the damaged schools and other facilities.

I do want to say a word of thanks to Secretary Pena for trying to accelerate the construction process. We stood on one of those totally broken sections of highway, and they said it was going to take a year to fix. I can only imagine how mad the drivers would be. I know how mad the drivers get at me when we stop traffic at one intersection for 2 minutes here. I multiplied 2 minutes times whatever the number is to get to one year, and it seemed to me that we ought to try to make the contracts go faster. I thank you for that.

Recently, your Governor, Speaker Brown, the Senate president pro tem Bill Lockyer, Mayor Riordan, and other officials have asked if there was any way we could lend California the money they believe is needed to pay the State and local share of the FEMA assistance costs.

Today I am asking Secretary Cisneros to offer loan guarantees totaling more than \$500 million to jurisdictions affected by the earthquake, including the cities of Los Angeles and Santa Monica, Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, and other towns and communities which suffered damages. This loan guarantee authority we are extending to local governments will enable them to obtain loans from private lenders at below-market rates that will take some of the bite out of the cost of recovery. The assistance will be provided under HUD's Community Development Block Grant Section 108 loan guarantee program. I've asked Secretary Cisneros to work with the local governments to work out repayment terms that meet the needs of local communities. The Secretary is also committed to providing technical assistance in preparing the applications and to expedite the review process. This will ensure that the flow of assistance to those in need in southern California will continue without interruption.

I've asked the Federal agencies whenever possible to use their discretionary authorities to waive rules and regulations to expedite the delivery of further assistance.

This step today builds on these efforts. It reflects a commitment that our administration

has made to the people of California, a commitment to do all that we can to help your people work their way out of this disaster, day-in and day-out, until all the work is done.

In recent years, the citizens of southern California, in particular, have endured multiple disasters, from riots to fires and mudslides and now the earthquake. That's what people around here call a character-building experience. I just want you to know that I am committed to ensuring that our Government continues to meet those obligations that we have to give you the opportunity to make a full comeback in the face of this latest setback.

Let me just say one other thing, if I might. Even though this is a time of renewal and reconstruction for the people of Los Angeles and California, it's also a day of sadness for many people in that area and for many of the rest of us who believe in the rule of law and appreciate those who enforce it. Yesterday, as all of you know, a rookie policewoman named Christy Lynne Hamilton was shot and killed in the line of duty less than one week after she became a commissioned police officer. A teenager with a semi-automatic weapon hardly gave her a chance to emerge from her patrol car before she was shot down. She received her diploma, as I said, just 5 days ago. At the academy, she was honored by her classmates as being the most inspirational officer candidate. And now her city has lost a policewoman who could have made a difference to people on her beat. Her force has lost its ninth officer this year. Her children have lost a mother. There have been too many funerals and too many folded flags presented to too many grieving survivors.

Our duty is clear: We have pending before the Congress an opportunity to pass crime legislation that is both tough and smart, that would put another 100,000 police officers on the street, a proposal of real value for the cities of California, and at the same time, ban the kinds of semi-automatic weapons that are used for killing people like Cristy Hamilton and which have no justification for sporting or hunting purposes.

I hope that we can make this legislation law and that we can do it soon. Many of you in this room have worked for a long time on these issues. Senator Feinstein, in particular, got the semi-automatic weapons ban into the Senate crime bill, and we all thank you for that.

All I can tell you is that we are here primarily to celebrate our coming together to overcome

the destructive impacts of an act of God. It is time that we here in Washington muster the courage and the fortitude to do something to help you also overcome the acts of people that have no basis in law or honor, not only to honor the memory of Cristy Lynne Hamilton and all those others like her we have lost but to defend the honor of the American people to live together as human beings in a common community.

Thank you very much.

The Vice President. Before the President takes questions, let me say we inadvertently forgot to acknowledge Secretary Ron Brown, who's played a special and leading role in organizing the administration's response to a whole range of economic problems, in particular in the State of California. And we wanted to remedy that oversight.

The President. Thank you.

Ames Espionage Case

Q. Mr. President, are you satisfied so far with the Russian response to the espionage arrest? And what do you think of Senator DeConcini's proposal today that there be a 60-day freeze on Russian aid until we get answers from the Russians?

The President. First of all, this morning I met with my national security team for some length of time before the Secretary of State went up to the Hill. And we decided then what we had already decided, that I should emphasize to you that—to you, the American people through the press—that I have known about this particular case for some time.

I have continued to pursue our policies toward Russia because Russia, like other countries, is not a monolith. It is not a single force. It is many forces and many developments occurring at once. I still believe it is in the interest of the United States to support democracy, to support the movement toward economic reform, to support the absence of weapons proliferation, to support the denuclearization of Russia. And therefore, I think we should be careful before we make specific determinations about aid flows. A lot of our aid flows, for example, are directly to individuals who are trying to privatize their businesses, having nothing to do with government or government policies. Most of our government aid is in the form of aid to take down the nuclear weapons. And I don't think anyone thinks we should slow that up.

This is a serious case. It is an unusually serious one because of factors I cannot discuss. But I also believe that, given all the facts as I understand them—and I know, I think, quite a bit about it—that we are pursuing the proper policy. And at this time, I think we have lodged the formal protest and a strong one. I think we should wait and see what the full response of the Russians is before we make any other determinations.

Q. Have you had any response yet? And what do you expect them to do? I mean, what gesture are you waiting for?

The President. Let's give them a chance to make an adequate response, and we'll see what happens.

Q. Have you instructed Director Woolsey to begin a damage assessment? And have you been given any preliminary briefing as to the scope of damage?

The President. The answer to the first question is, yes, the damage assessment is ongoing. The answer to the second question is, I have gotten a preliminary assessment. They are working on it. I had a good discussion with Mr. Woolsey today. I am satisfied, by the way, that the CIA worked with the FBI very well over a considerable period of months. Keep in mind they have been working against the worst consequences for some considerable period of time now while they've been attempting to complete the investigation and wrap up the case.

Q. Sir, do you intend to discuss this with Mr. Yeltsin? You've had a lot of personal discussions with him. Is it going to put this on a personal level?

The President. We may well discuss it, but I can't make a decision on that at this time

until we see what the official reaction of the Russians is and until I have a little bit more time to reflect on what our options are, sir. I don't think I'm in a position to make that decision right now.

Q. So far the reaction has been, what are we making such a fuss about, since we spy and they spy and we both know each others spies. Is it hypocritical of the United States to make this fuss?

The President. First of all, we're making a fuss about this man. This man was not just a spy; this is a person who is a 31-year veteran of the CIA. So quite apart from the Russians, this was a very serious offense against the United States of America by one of its citizens. So this is a very serious matter. Also, it is a serious matter because of issues which I am not at this moment at liberty to discuss. What I said yesterday is this was a serious case going back several years. I do not think the facts of this case at this time undermine in any way, shape, or form the policy we have followed for the last year toward President Yeltsin and his Government and the forces of change in Russia; I do not believe that. But this is a very serious case, and it has to be pursued aggressively, and we will do that.

Q. Don't you think there was a real lapse in finding these people?

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Pete Wilson of California; Willie Brown, California Assembly speaker; and Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles.

Statement on the Technology Reinvestment Project

February 23, 1994

This marks another major step in our effort to protect our national security and promote our economic security in the post-cold-war world. We are investing in projects that will create the jobs of the future by exploring ideas, developing technologies, creating products, and

strengthening skills that will keep America strong, militarily and economically.

NOTE: This statement was included in a White House statement announcing the fourth group of awards in the technology reinvestment project.