

May 18 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

education in the United States over the past twenty-eight years.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

May 18, 1994.

Statement by the Press Secretary on Draft Registration and the Selective Service System

May 18, 1994

The President has announced that he has approved a National Security Council recommendation to maintain peacetime draft registration and the Selective Service System (SSS).

In letters to the House and Senate, the President stated that “. . . it is essential to our national security to continue draft registration and the Selective Service System. While tangible military requirements alone do not currently make a mass call-up of American young men likely, there are three reasons I believe we should maintain both the SSS and the draft registration requirement.”

First, the President stated that the SSS and registration provide “. . . a hedge against unforeseen threats and a relatively low cost ‘insurance policy’ against our underestimating the maximum level of threat we expect our Armed Forces to face.”

Next, “. . . terminating the SSS and draft registration now could send the wrong signal

to our potential enemies who are watching for signs of U.S. resolve.”

And finally, “. . . as fewer and fewer members of our society have direct military experience, it is increasingly important to maintain the link between the All Volunteer Force and our society at large. The Armed Forces must also know that the general population stands behind them, committed to serve, should the preservation of our national security so require.”

The NSC review leading to the President’s decision has been conducted since January and consisted of representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the DOD Inspector General, the Joint Staff, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Selective Service System.

The President urged Congress to support the administration fiscal year 1995 request for \$23 million for the Selective Service System.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Military Leaders

May 19, 1994

Representative Dan Rostenkowski

Q. On Rostenkowski, sir, should the public be concerned at all that you and he have the same lawyer?

The President. No.

China

Q. Mr. President, did you send Michael Armacost to China to negotiate some kind of deal?

The President. Well, we’ve had a number of Americans in China and speaking with the Chinese, and those conversations are ongoing. And

I think until they are resolved, one way or the other, I shouldn’t say more about them.

Q. It’s being reported that you have made a decision to go ahead and renew MFN.

The President. We are still in discussions with the Chinese. I don’t know that I should call them negotiations; that’s not an accurate characterization. We are having discussions with them about our differences and about the importance of our relationship. And I will have a decision on the matter in a timely fashion. No decision has been reached yet; we’re still talking with them.

Q. Is it true that China has—[inaudible]—leaders willing to make concessions on human rights—

The President. I don't think I should speak for the Chinese. All I can tell you is there are some things which have been reported which have actually occurred, and we've had discussions about other matters. But I don't think I should discuss them now. We're still in discussions with them.

Q. What's the purpose of this meeting?

The President. What?

Q. What's the purpose of the meeting?

The President. We meet on a regular basis to discuss a number of national security issues. And there are a number of things that the CINC's are going to bring me up to date on. I have some questions to ask them about some of the challenges we face around the world.

North Korea

Q. On North Korea, sir—[inaudible]—North Korea divert its spent nuclear fuel? And if so, is it too late to avoid sanctions?

The President. Well, let me say I certainly cannot answer that first question in the affirmative. That's why we have inspectors there now. And they are working hard, and as far as we know, they're—I got a report this morning—they are proceeding with their inspections. They should be in a position to give us a report imminently, in the near future. So I don't think you'll have to wait long for an answer to that. But the inspectors are there and working, and we should know more about it. And I think that the better course of action is for all of us to refrain from any kind of comment until we know what the facts are, because we will have the facts soon.

Q. Sending troops anywhere? [Laughter]

The President. To Normandy. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:14 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A reporter referred to Michael Armacost, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of India and an Exchange With Reporters

May 19, 1994

The President. Let me say that it's a great honor for me personally and for the United States to welcome Prime Minister Rao and his delegation here.

India is the world's largest democracy, by a long ways, and a very important partner for the United States on many issues, with a very impressive rate of economic growth now and the prospect of a real partnership with our country, spanning not only economic but many other issues. And I'm really looking forward to our discussions. And I'm delighted that he's found the time to come and be here with us.

Nuclear Nonproliferation

Q. Mr. President, how much of a hang-up is the issue of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and India's resistance to signing it? Will that come up? And do you think there's any way of persuading India to sign this treaty?

The President. Well, we'll have a chance to talk about a number of issues. I think that, as you know, we have a broad-based approach. We're supporting the comprehensive test ban. We want to have the fissile materials production ban. We've got a lot of things to discuss, and we'll have a chance to talk about them. But he just got here. I don't want to presume upon the conversation that hasn't yet occurred.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Q. Mr. President, do you have anything to say to the Kennedys? Do you have any words for the Kennedys? You know, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is—

The President. Hillary and I have been in touch with Mrs. Onassis in the last several days and are getting regular updates. She's been quite wonderful to my wife and to my daughter and to all of us. And we're thinking about her, praying for her.