

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

July 11, 1995

Legislative Agenda

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to welcome the congressional leadership back here today. There are many things that we will discuss today. We have a lot of work to do. This summer we are working on finishing the rescission bill, and I very much hope we can succeed in passing the terrorism legislation and welfare reform.

And I hope that we can begin as soon as possible the budget debate. We have major differences over how the budget ought to be balanced, and I think it would be in error to delay it and run the risk of having a crisis in Government. I think the quicker we can begin it and the fuller and more open it can be and the more the American people can hear of it, the better off we'll be.

So those are the things that I hope we can discuss today and I think are very important.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. Mr. President, have you heard anything about the condition of Boris Yeltsin?

The President. No.

Q. Any reports on his health?

The President. No. Nothing other than the last time I saw him, he was in good health and seemed to be doing well.

Q. Well, he's been hospitalized this morning for heart problems.

The President. Yes, I know, but I have heard nothing this morning about the condition.

Bosnia

Q. Sir, the Bosnian Serbs are moving into Srebrenica fast, according to the reports. Is it time for NATO air strikes?

The President. We may have something to say on that later today. But let me say I'm concerned about the people who are there, and I'm also concerned about the UNPROFOR troops, the Dutch, who are there. And we may have something later today to say about that.

Vietnam

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—the decision on Vietnam, how much more difficult is it for you personally and politically, given your failure to serve in Vietnam?*

The President. None.

Q. Does it enter into your decision at all?

The President. No.

Base Closings

Q. Are you going to do base closings—

The President. I don't know yet. We're working very hard on that, worked on it yesterday and last night. We have some more work to do, and I'm waiting for some more information to come back this morning. We spent quite a bit of time on it. It won't be long, but I can't say for sure.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Congressional Black Caucus

July 11, 1995

Affirmative Action

Q. Mr. President, are you prepared to deliver your affirmative action review next Wednesday, as has been speculated?

The President. What date is that?

Q. The 19th. [*Laughter*]

The President. I believe that's the day we're going to do it.

Q. Have you already reached a conclusion? Are you going to brief these Members today

on what your thoughts are dealing with affirmative action?

The President. I'm going to deal with their agenda today. I'm here and I'm listening to them and they're going to go through an agenda and I'm going to respond to it.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. Any further word on Boris Yeltsin and how that might impact on U.S.-Russian relations?

The President. No. I got another report after this morning's meeting with congressional leadership, and our latest report is that he seems to be resting well and feeling pretty good and making some decisions from the hospital. That's the latest report I got—is about 30 minutes ago.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:44 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Announcing the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations With Vietnam

July 11, 1995

Thank you very much. I welcome you all here, those who have been introduced and distinguished Members of Congress and military leaders, veterans, others who are in the audience.

Today I am announcing the normalization of diplomatic relationships with Vietnam.

From the beginning of this administration, any improvement in relationships between America and Vietnam has depended upon making progress on the issue of Americans who were missing in action or held as prisoners of war. Last year, I lifted the trade embargo on Vietnam in response to their cooperation and to enhance our efforts to secure the remains of lost Americans and to determine the fate of those whose remains have not been found.

It has worked. In 17 months, Hanoi has taken important steps to help us resolve many cases. Twenty-nine families have received the remains of their loved ones and at last have been able to give them a proper burial. Hanoi has delivered to us hundreds of pages of documents shedding light on what happened to Americans in Vietnam. And Hanoi has stepped up its cooperation with Laos, where many Americans were lost. We have reduced the number of so-called discrepancy cases, in which we have had reason to believe that Americans were still alive after they were lost, to 55. And we will continue to work to resolve more cases.

Hundreds of dedicated men and women are working on all these cases, often under extreme hardship and real danger in the mountains and

jungles of Indochina. On behalf of all Americans, I want to thank them. And I want to pay a special tribute to General John Vessey, who has worked so tirelessly on this issue for Presidents Reagan and Bush and for our administration. He has made a great difference to a great many families. And we as a nation are grateful for his dedication and for his service. Thank you, sir.

I also want to thank the Presidential delegation, led by Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Hershel Gober, Winston Lord, James Wold, who have helped us to make so much progress on this issue. And I am especially grateful to the leaders of the families and the veterans organizations who have worked with the delegation and maintained their extraordinary commitment to finding the answers we seek.

Never before in the history of warfare has such an extensive effort been made to resolve the fate of soldiers who did not return. Let me emphasize, normalization of our relations with Vietnam is not the end of our effort. From the early days of this administration I have said to the families and veterans groups what I say again here: We will keep working until we get all the answers we can. Our strategy is working. Normalization of relations is the next appropriate step. With this new relationship we will be able to make more progress. To that end, I will send another delegation to Vietnam this year. And Vietnam has pledged it will continue to help us find answers. We will hold them to that pledge.