

Statement on Approval of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1996

November 30, 1995

I have decided this evening to approve the Department of Defense appropriations bill. This legislation is vital to fund our national defense, so that the United States remains the strongest force for peace in the world.

This bill provides for a strong national defense, supports our commitments to the quality of life of our forces and their families, maintains high military readiness, and funds investment programs necessary to modernize the equipment used by our combat forces. Continuing American global leadership is ensured by the support the bill provides for our forces.

I made this decision because my Administration has reached agreement with Congressional leaders to provide funding, out of the funds contained in this bill, for the troop deployment and other efforts to secure peace in Bosnia. The pressing demands of peace and of our military service men and women compel my approval of this measure.

I have expressed my strong concerns that this legislation contains excessive spending for projects that are not currently needed for our defense. I will forward to Congress rescission legislation that would eliminate funding for those projects, and I urge Congress to act on it. We should spend no more than we need to at a time when we are determined to balance the budget.

I am also concerned that section 8117 of the Act contains certain reporting requirements that could materially interfere with or impede this country's ability to provide necessary support to another nation or international organization in connection with peacekeeping or humanitarian assistance activities otherwise authorized by law.

I will interpret this provision consistent with my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and my responsibilities as Commander in Chief.

In addition, I remain very concerned about provisions of the Act that restrict service women and female dependents of military personnel from obtaining privately funded abortions in military facilities overseas, except in cases in which the mother's life is endangered or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. In many countries, these U.S. facilities provide the only accessible, safe source for these medical services.

My Administration is continuing discussions with the Congress on the remaining spending bills, in order to protect necessary priorities in education, the environment and law enforcement. Over the past several days we have made progress in good faith discussions with the leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to close the gap between us on these issues. The decision I am making tonight is consistent with our understanding that these discussions will continue with the goal of reaching a satisfactory conclusion as rapidly as possible. We should promptly complete this task, so there is no unnecessary shutdown of the government.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 30, 1995.

NOTE: H.R. 2126 became law without the President's signature on December 1, and it was assigned Public Law No. 104-61.

Remarks on Lighting the City Christmas Tree in Belfast

November 30, 1995

Thank you very much. To the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, let me begin by saying to all of you, Hillary and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making us feel so very,

very welcome in Belfast and Northern Ireland. We thank you, Lord Mayor, for your cooperation and your help in making this trip so successful, and we trust that, for all of you, we

haven't inconvenienced you too much. But this has been a wonderful way for us to begin the Christmas holidays.

Let me also say I understood just what an honor it was to be able to turn on this Christmas tree when I realized the competition. [Laughter] Now, to become President of the United States you have to undertake some considerable competition. But I have never confronted challengers with the name recognition, the understanding of the media, and the ability in the martial arts of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers.

To all of you whose support enabled me to join you tonight and turn the Christmas tree on, I give you my heartfelt thanks. I know here in Belfast you've been lighting the Christmas tree for more than 20 years. But this year must be especially joyous to you, for you are entering your second Christmas of peace.

As I look down these beautiful streets, I think how wonderful it will be for people to do their holiday shopping without worry of searches or bombs, to visit loved ones on the other side of the border without the burden of checkpoints or roadblocks, to enjoy these magnificent Christmas lights without any fear of violence. Peace has brought real change to your lives.

Across the ocean, the American people are rejoicing with you. We are joined to you by strong ties of community and commerce and culture. Over the years, men and women of both traditions have flourished in our country and helped America to flourish.

And today, of course, we are forging new and special bonds. Belfast's sister city in the United States, Nashville, Tennessee, was proud to send this Christmas tree to friends across the Atlantic. I want to thank the most prominent present resident of Nashville, Tennessee, Vice President Al Gore, the Mayor, Phil Bredesen, and the United States Air Force for getting this big tree all the way across the Atlantic to be here with you tonight.

In this 50th anniversary year of the end of World War II, many Americans still remember the warmth the people of Northern Ireland showed them when the Army was stationed here under General Eisenhower. The people of Belfast named General Eisenhower an honorary burgess of the city. He viewed that honor, and I quote, "as a token of our common purpose to work together for a better world." That mission endures today. We remain Americans, and

as people of Northern Ireland, partners for security, partners for prosperity, and most important, partners for peace.

Two years ago, at this very spot, tens of thousands of you took part in a day for peace, as a response to some of the worst violence Northern Ireland had known in recent years. The two morning papers, representing both traditions, sponsored a telephone poll for peace that generated almost 160,000 calls. In the United States, for my fellow Americans who are here, that would be the equivalent to 25 million calls.

The response left no doubt that all across Northern Ireland the desire for peace was becoming a demand. I am honored to announce today that those same two newspapers, the Newsletter and the Irish News, have established the President's Prize, an annual award to those at the grassroots level who have contributed most to peace and reconciliation. The honorees will travel to the United States to exchange experiences on the issues we share, including community relations and conflict resolution. We have a lot to learn from one another. The President's Prize will underscore that Northern Ireland's two traditions have a common interest in peace.

As you know, and as the First Lady said, I have received thousands of letters from schoolchildren all over your remarkable land telling me what peace means to them. They poured in from villages and cities, from Catholic and Protestant communities, from mixed schools, primary schools, from schools for children with special needs. All the letters in their own way were truly wonderful for their honesty, their simple wisdom, and their passion. Many of the children showed tremendous pride in their homeland, in its beauty, and in its true nature. I congratulate the winners. They were wonderful, and I loved hearing their letters.

But let me tell you about another couple I received. Eleven-year-old Keith from Carrickfergus wrote, "Please tell everyone in America that we're not always fighting here and that it's only a small number of people who make the trouble." Like many of the children, Keith did not identify himself as Protestant or Catholic and did not distinguish between the sources of the violence.

So many children told me of loved ones they have lost, of lives disrupted and opportunities forsaken and families forced to move. Yet they showed remarkable courage and strength and

a commitment to overcome the past. As 14-year-old Sharon of County Armagh wrote, "Both sides have been hurt. Both sides must forgive."

Despite the extraordinary hardships so many of these children have faced, their letters were full of hope and love and humor. To all of you who took the time to write me, you've brightened my holiday season with your words of faith and courage, and I thank you. To all of you who asked me to do what I could do to help peace take root, I pledge you America's support. We will stand with you as you take risks for peace.

And to all of you who have not lost your sense of humor, I say thank you. I got a letter from 13-year-old Ryan from Belfast. Now, Ryan, if you're out in the crowd tonight, here's the answer to your question. No, as far as I know, an alien spacecraft did not crash in Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947. [Laughter] And Ryan, if the United States Air Force did recover alien

bodies, they didn't tell me about it, either, and I want to know.

Ladies and gentlemen, this day that Hillary and I have had here in Belfast and in Derry and Londonderry County will long be with us as one of the most remarkable days of our lives. I leave you with these thoughts. May the Christmas spirit of peace and good will flourish and grow in you. May you remember the words of the Lord Mayor, "This is Christmas. We celebrate the world in a new way because of the birth of Emmanuel: God with us." And when God was with us, he said no words more important than these, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the Earth."

Merry Christmas, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:45 p.m. outside Belfast City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Lord Mayor Eric Smyth of Belfast and his wife, Frances Smyth.

Remarks at a Reception Hosted by Sir Patrick Mayhew in Belfast November 30, 1995

The President. Thank you.

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. The plane for America leaves tomorrow morning. I want you to be on it. [Laughter] We'll take you back.

Thank you, Sir Patrick and Lady Mayhew. And thank you, Sir Patrick, for your tireless efforts for peace in Northern Ireland.

I want to thank the Vice Chancellor, Sir Gordon Beveridge, and everyone here at Queen's University for allowing us to meet at this wonderful place in the year of its sesquicentennial celebration. I am delighted to be here. And I'm also delighted that it was given to me the honor to make a little announcement involving Queen's. Under the auspices of the Fulbright program, named after the late Senator from my home State, J. William Fulbright, who gave me my first job in public life, we are establishing a distinguished Fulbright lecturer program here at Queen's University to bring distinguished Americans to share their experiences and their ideas with their academic colleagues here and to reach out to the community throughout Northern Ireland.

Let me say that Hillary and I are delighted to be here with a very large contingent of Americans from all walks of life and from both political parties. I am delighted to be the first American President ever to visit Northern Ireland while serving as President. And I think all of you here know that I would, given the choice, never miss a chance to go to an exciting place and make new friends. But the real reason I'm here is because of the hard work and the tough choices that many of you in this room have made to advance the cause of peace and reconciliation in this land. And I thank you for that.

I will take away from this visit a lot of enduring memories, a lot of lasting impressions of peace. When we were at the Mackie plant this morning, it really struck me as a symbol of Northern Ireland's rebirth since the cease-fire. On the shop floor, men and women who come to the plant by separated gates still, work together side by side with common goals for their families and their communities.

I went to the Enterprise Park in East Belfast, and I met with tenants and managers who were