

everyone. I think everyone—there are different levels of disruption that different trips would cause, and I think we ought to try to just keep it nonpolitical. I hope anybody that wants to go there that has a reason to go, including Senator Dole, will be able to go at the appropriate time. And that's the determination that needs to be made.

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned the safety of the troops as being part of your decision a couple times in that last answer. We're sending quite a large force involved in the Bosnia mission. Some might say, awfully large for a peaceful mission. How extensive do you think the danger is to our troops there?

The President. Well, I think there is—let's look at what the sources are. No one can—the extent of the danger depends on factors that we can't fully predict. But I believe that we have minimized the risks. What are the possible problems? First of all, if you look at what the United Nations went through over the last 4 years, I think something over 200 people lost their lives in Bosnia. But more than half of them lost their lives in accidents. So we have really worked hard to train against accidents, to prepare—to look at the roadways, to look at the railways, to look at the airfields. We've worked hard to minimize the loss of life or serious injury due to accidents.

Then we know there are a lot of landmines there. I got a very encouraging report today that the parties themselves in many places are assisting us in removing the mines. But there are a lot of places where there are a lot of mines laid where the land was first in one hand and then another, where we don't have records

of the mines, where people don't have memories of them. So we have trained very hard to deal with landmines. I think that's the next biggest danger after accidents.

Then the third problem is people that fought in that war who are either from the country or who came in from without the country who may have either a specific grudge against the United States or, more likely, will just be frustrated because they don't agree with the peace agreement that the leaders made and, therefore, some—and then, fourthly, there is just the possibility of encounters that go wrong. The only casualty we sustained in Haiti had nothing to do with opposition to our being there. It was a man who was literally a common criminal who ran through a barrier, and there was an incident, and he shot one of our soldiers dead.

So I would say that those are the dangers in order.

Q. Mr. President, I think that's all the time we have.

The President. Thank you, and Merry Christmas. I appreciate what you do.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:35 a.m. in the Visual Recording Facility at the National Military Command Center, the Pentagon. The following journalists participated in the interview: Sgt. Austin Camacho, American Forces Radio and Television Service; Jim Garamone, American Forces Information Service; Cindy Killion, Stars and Stripes; Bill Matthews and Jim Wolffe, Army Times; and David Gollust, Voice of America. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. George A. Joulwan, USA, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

Remarks on Budget Negotiations and an Exchange With Reporters December 22, 1995

The President. I hope—as you see, we're running a little behind today, so I hope you'll forgive us if we don't do a lot of questions; we have a lot of work to do. But let me just say from my point of view, I am pleased that our representatives met yesterday. They did make some progress. Obviously, a lot of the biggest issues remain. But the process seems to be working, and I'm encouraged. And I want to

continue to do it until we reach agreement on a balanced budget. That's what I think clearly we all want.

I would say here that 2 days before Christmas I hope some way can be found to get the checks for the 3½ million veterans and the aid to the 8 million children who need it just to exist. And there are almost half a million Federal workers who have been working who won't get

their paychecks today that they would otherwise get. So I think those problems need to be addressed.

But on the other issue, I at least believe that we made some good progress yesterday, and I'm looking forward to the report today and continuing this process until we succeed, until we get this job done.

Q. Can we ask the leaders, Mr. President, if they will get the checks out and—

Q. Do you think the Congress should go home when millions are denied subsistence checks over Christmas?

Speaker Gingrich. Well, let me just say, if I could for a second, Mr. President, I think both the House and Senate hope to get those bills down here today so that the—the AFDC and the—as the President mentioned the other day on television.

Q. What are the chances of reopening the Government, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker Gingrich. I think we're going to talk about that now.

Q. Mr. Speaker, do you feel like a dog being wagged by its tail? [*Laughter*]

Speaker Gingrich. It's amazing you guys get paid for some of these questions, on the eve of Christmas. Merry Christmas.

Q. No, it's not my expression; it's the President's analysis.

The President. I never called the Speaker a dog. [*Laughter*]

Q. No, I know you didn't.

Speaker Gingrich. And I'm deeply grateful. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, do you think you can get a framework of a deal by Christmas?

The President. I'm prepared to—let me just say, I'm prepared to just keep working. I think all of us want to have Christmas with our families, but beyond that, I'm prepared to keep working. And I'm going to do everything I can to succeed, and that's what we're going to talk about.

Q. Mr. Speaker—

The President. Thank you. We really need to go to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:52 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with congressional leaders. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement With Congressional Leaders on Budget Negotiations

December 22, 1995

Today we had good meetings which built on the progress made in yesterday's discussions. Staff will prepare further analysis to clarify options for the budget advisory group, which will then advise the principals on outstanding issues. Following the meeting of the budget advisory

group, the principals will meet again next Friday afternoon.

NOTE: This statement was announced jointly with Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Bob Dole, Senate majority leader.

Statement on Signing Limited Continuing Appropriations Legislation

December 22, 1995

Today I have signed into law House Joint Resolution 136, which ensures that the Government makes veterans' benefit payments to 3.3

million veterans and their survivors without further delay.

The resolution also provides funding for several vitally important programs for children and