

ously hurt, and he has been med-evac'd to Croatia, in a hospital there, and we understand he's in stable condition.

But mines have always been our biggest concern, and we're working very hard on it, but that's what happened. And we'll continue to monitor it and do the best we can. The mission itself is going very well. The people have received our soldiers very well, and I'm very well satisfied with the progress. And I'm obviously very sorry this happened, but they're making good progress on the mine problem, but it's going to be difficult to get rid of them all.

Budget Negotiations

Q. [Inaudible]—the measure to get the workers back that's going to get through Congress?

Senator Dole. Well, it passed the House. We hope we can pass it in the Senate today, so make some progress.

Senator Daschle. We tried to pass a clean CR, one without any conditions. And that was objected to, but I hope we can work something out.

Q. But isn't the fact now that the Democrats are holding things up?

Senator Daschle. Not at all. As a matter of fact, as I said, we passed a continuing resolution—we had no conditions. It sent people back to work, and that was objected to. So we're

not trying to hold anything up here. We hope we can get some sort of an agreement as early as today.

Q. Well, what's it going to take to get a deal?

Speaker Gingrich. Well, let me just say something. I think the President had a right—we're glad to have you all in. We have a lot of work to do. We made, I thought, real progress last night. It is not easy. We have very significant areas we have to work on, but I thought the spirit was very positive. We don't just want to get the Federal workers back, we want to get them paid. And in order to do that, I think we've got to get this whole thing worked out. But I thought we had a great start last night. And with you all's permission, I think we can get a lot more done in the next few hours.

Q. Mr. President, is the message from the Democrats basically that they don't trust you?

The President. We've got to go to work.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with congressional leaders. In his remarks, he referred to Spec. Martin J. Begosh, USA, whose vehicle hit a landmine in Bosnia on December 30. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters on the Budget Negotiations December 31, 1995

Q. Mr. President, are you close to a deal today?

The President. Let me tell you where we are today. We had a very long discussion yesterday. We discussed almost all the issues where we had differences on our plans financially, in terms of the dollars. And this morning we're going to have an extensive discussion of the Medicare policy. And then we're going to give our staffs some instruction. We're going to meet again on Tuesday, and we're going to do our best to work through this and come to an accord.

My New Year's wish is that we'll get this balanced budget plan, and we'll do it in a way that protects the things that we care about, the Medicare, the Medicaid, the education and environment, the other issues. And we've been

working at it. I've been very well pleased, and I think we've been somewhat successful because we haven't said very much about it. We've just got to keep working until we reach an accord.

Q. Mr. President, will you touch on—[inaudible]—negotiations—

Q. Will you leave town today without reopening the Government, of the three—

Speaker Gingrich. I'm sure we'll be talking about that, that's one of the things we want to get done and get agreed to. So we're trying to work out how to get the Federal employees back to work. We'd also like to get them paid. I think that's an integral part of getting them back to work. But as the President said, I think, frankly, most of our success so far has been that we've been in this room talking with each

other and not getting involved in negotiating in public, and I think we've made a lot of progress.

Q. To follow on that, sir, is it healthy to have the House Speaker talking on CNN yesterday on the——

Speaker Gingrich. Oh, that is nonsense. I told the President on Friday that I was so favorable about him in answering their big question on "Evans & Novak" that I thought he'd want to see it. The fact is we're working very well together. I was asked a question about the campaign next year, and I suspect if you ask Mr. Gephardt or Vice President Gore about how they'll campaign next year, they'll give you similar answers. We're negotiating very well from a Government standpoint in here, and I think we have a lot to be proud of. Our New Year's wish ought to be that we get this done and

give the American people a balanced budget and the Government paid for and back to work.

Senator Dole. The Senate is going to meet at noon; we'll try to pass something to help the Federal employees.

Q. Are you closer?

Senator Dole. Oh, we're about 6 feet apart. [Laughter]

Senator Daschle. We'll be a lot closer in a couple of hours. [Laughter]

The President. We're working at it steady.

Happy New Year, everybody.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:50 a.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 this exchange.