

pay a price when he acts recklessly. That is why when Saddam sent his troops into the Kurdish city of Irbil in northern Iraq 2 weeks ago, we responded strongly, immediately, and strategically.

If we had failed to answer Saddam's provocation, he would have been emboldened to act even more recklessly and in a manner more dangerous to our interests. That is why we did respond and why we did so in a way that made our interests more secure. We acted in southern Iraq, where our interests are the most vital and where we had the capacity to increase the international community's ability to deter aggression by Saddam against his neighbors.

I ordered the attacks in order to extend the no-fly zone in Iraq, the air space through which Iraq's military is not allowed to fly. Now we control the skies over Iraq from the border of Kuwait to the southern suburbs of Baghdad. This action tightened the strategic straitjacket on Saddam, making it harder for him to threaten Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and easier for us to stop him if he does. In so doing, we advanced America's fundamental interests in the region.

Of course, our interests also must include protecting the safety of our own pilots who are patrolling the expanded no-fly zone. That is why our cruise missiles struck the bulk of Saddam's air defense system in southern Iraq. The United States will take whatever steps are necessary to protect our pilots as they enforce the expanded no-fly zone and to defend our strategic interests. I have ordered sufficient forces to the region to give us that capability.

On another note, let me say that I deeply regret the very week our Armed Forces advanced America's interests halfway around the world, here at home, the Senate missed an historic opportunity to make our soldiers and citi-

zens safer by failing to vote on the Chemical Weapons Convention. The fact that our troops are facing off against Saddam Hussein, who once amassed stockpiles of chemical weapons and still seeks to develop them, should have underscored the importance of this treaty. But the treaty seems to have gotten caught up in election-year politicking.

It's been nearly 4 years since the Bush administration signed the Chemical Weapons Convention and 3 years since I submitted it to the Congress. We've been at this a long time, and I have no intention of letting this treaty die. Our military supports it; leaders of our Nation's foreign policy, both Democrats and Republicans, including President Bush, General Colin Powell, and Senator Dick Lugar, support it.

We all agree that we should be sending a strong message as a united country that America will do its part to banish poison gas from the Earth. And meanwhile, we must do everything we can to protect our soldiers and to keep such weapons out of the hands of terrorists. The Chemical Weapons Convention will clearly help us to do that.

So I want the American people to know that I will work with the Senate to pass the Chemical Weapons Convention when a calmer political climate prevails. We cannot afford to play partisan politics with America's security. Our troops who are doing such an outstanding job in the Gulf and all around the world and all the American people deserve better than that.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:25 p.m. on September 13 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 14.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on Hurricane Fran in Raleigh, North Carolina *September 14, 1996*

The President. Thank you, Governor. I don't want to say too much right now. We mostly just came down to listen and to see what we could do to help. But I would like to say, first of all, that like most Americans, I've followed

the course of the hurricane and the storms and the rains. I have followed very closely. I did see the video on the way down of the—specifically focusing on your damage along the beach, but I also have watched over the last several

days as the damage took its toll and then this remarkable job of cleaning that has been done.

I want to thank all of you who have worked on this. I frankly was amazed when we flew over the damaged area and how much had been done to at least prepare the way to rebuild the homes and to get the trees up and do the other things that have been done, and I take my hat off to you. And we will do whatever we can to help.

A lot of our administration people have been down here. Secretary Riley—I asked Secretary Riley this morning, I said, “Dick, why are you coming with us today?” And he said, “Well, I’m a Carolinian,” he said. [Laughter] He said, “Besides, there were schools damaged; I belong down there.” And I thank you for what you said about James Lee Witt. I thought I should send someone down here who did not speak with an accent—[laughter]—so that you would—there would be no time lost in translation. But I believe that if we can perform as well over the next several weeks as the people of North Carolina have performed in the last week, we will be able to recover from this.

I also know, Governor, you told me on the way down there has been an enormous amount of loss to the agricultural crops, to the tobacco, the corn, perhaps some others, and I’d like to hear about that. We just want to know what the full dimensions of the problems are and what we can do to help, and we’ll do our best.

[At this point, the roundtable discussion began.]

The President. First of all, I would like to—let me begin by thanking all of you who have spoken and those who worked in public capacities and the citizens who told their stories. Thank you in Wilmington, Mr. Mayor, and the others for joining us by satellite. The wonders of modern technology have given us a picture of that house, which proves that no matter how modern technology gets, we are not in total control, and I thank you all for what you have done.

What I’d like to do in the time we have available here is just to—first of all, let me tell you that we talked—the Governor and Congresswoman Clayton and I talked on the way down here with Leon Panetta and Mr. Witt and others about what we could do before the Congress goes home, maybe, to get a little help here for North Carolina and for the other States that were damaged not as badly but there was

still quite a bit of significant damage from Hurricane Fran in some other States and whether we could get something done. So we’re looking at that. What I’d like to do is to have the clearest picture I can when I leave here today of what your priorities are.

Phil Lader, our Small Business Administration director, is here. Jim, you told me, I think, 50,000 small businesses have been hurt by this hurricane. And I think we’ve acknowledged everyone else here. North Carolinian Martin Lancaster is here from the Defense Department, and General Genega, the head of the Corps of Engineers.

We’d like to know exactly what you need done the most quickly, and what priority—what we need to be sensitive to. And we want to do the best we can to try to fashion this relief package that’s as adequate as possible within the limits of the law. We also want to organize our own efforts in a way that is most helpful to you.

We’ve been dealing with the emergencies in the last week, but Mr. Culbreth just said—I mean, I frankly was astonished that you had over 98 percent of the people hooked up to their power again. I think it’s a stunning achievement. But now we need to focus on where to go from here and how to do the rebuilding. I’m glad to see Commissioner Graham out there, and Mr. Campbell, I’m glad to see you.

I asked on the way in about the farm losses and how we could help to deal with that. So I’d just like for anybody here around the table or out in the audience—again, there are a couple of public officials I see on the television there in Wilmington or at least citizens who haven’t said anything. Anybody wants to say anything else to me about what you feel should be done in what order, I would like to hear it.

[The discussion continued.]

The President. I guess one of the things I would like to point out, just parenthetically, on the Federal assistance, most of the Federal assistance I think is funds we need to get to you for these big categories of things where, as the mayor said, the people will know what to do with it. There are some things where we have direct Federal appropriations, where we’re going to be looking to see that we have done everything that we should do—I’ll give

you an example—to fix the Federal-aid roads and the bridges, you know, where we ought to be moving that money as quickly as possible. I think that—and they've unleashed another \$5 million or something today that can fix a lot of the bridges. And then there's money we have directly from the Department of Labor to help people who have lost their jobs, either to hire them as temporary workers or to retrain them, do whatever is necessary, and I believe that about \$8 million has been allocated for that. And so I think that's important, too.

We want to make sure that we have—that on the laws already on the books, the money already appropriated, the things that the Federal Government can just go ahead and pay for directly, even though the work may be done on contract or by people down here, we're getting that out here, too, because I think—the magnitude of the losses here is so great that there may be things that we haven't even thought of yet that we could be moving on. And we want to just—I think the main thing is just to get as much happening as quickly as possible. It's obvious that you are all very well organized and will make the most of whatever is given to you.

I'd like to thank the Red Cross and all of the volunteers. I know you've had people here from 18 or 20 States coming in. I see some of our AmeriCorps volunteers out there; I know they've been working; I thank them for doing that.

If you can think of anything else—let me tell you what we're going to do on the budget issue. We talked to Congresswoman Clayton, and we'll get in touch with Senator Helms and the others next week—well, the first of the week, the day after tomorrow—to see if before the Congress recesses for the election recess, we can find an amendment process by which we could actually get some relief now so that it's not just a bill that everybody says they're for, that we actually produced something for you in the next 3 or 4 days. We could do it next week if we got real lucky and everybody just pulled together.

You know, this country has been so afflicted by disasters in the last 4 years, just since I've been President, I mean from the earthquakes and the floods and the fires in California to the Pacific Northwest and the 500-year flood in the Mississippi River Valley to any number of things that have happened along the East

Coast. My guess is that there will be an enormous amount of sympathy for this across the country, because all of those people know that people from North Carolina and West Virginia and Virginia helped them when they were in need, and I think they will respond.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Thank you very much, Governor. Let me just say in closing, I've been coming to North Carolina for many, many years now, long before I ever got into my present line of endeavor. And I've always been impressed by the combination of sort of old-fashioned, friendly hospitality and creative aggression—[*laughter*—]in this State. I mean, I think it really accounts for a lot of your success. And I will do exactly what you ask. That's why I made the point I did about the Labor Department funds and the highway bridge funds. We want to be a good partner and a good friend and a good neighbor.

The second thing I'd like to say is that you were very generous in complimenting everybody else, but you and I have been friends for nearly 20 years now, and I can say that if every one of us in public life had the level of energy, intelligence, and determination you do, we wouldn't have as many problems as we do, and I thank you for your leadership.

The last thing I want to say is, you told me today North Carolina State was getting a new basketball gym, and as somebody who once gave a speech in the old one—and it was so hot I destroyed a suit while I was doing it—I'm proud they're going to do it, and I wish them well this year, and I hope they have a good season.

Thank you very much. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at the State fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina; Mayor Don Betz of Wilmington; Maj. Gen. Stanley Genega, USA, Director and Assistant Commander for Civil Works, Army Corps of Engineers; Carson (Doug) Culbreth, energy division director, North Carolina Department of Commerce; James Graham, State commissioner of agriculture; and Wayne Campbell, State auditor.