

nuclear backdrop that has darkened the world's stage for too long now. Let us make these solemn tasks our common obligation, our common commitment. If we do, then together we will enter the 21st century marching toward a better, safer world, the very better, safer world the United Nations has sought to build for 51 years.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the General Assembly Hall. In his remarks, he referred to United Nations General Assembly President Razali bin Ismail and Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali; and Jaap Ramaker, Netherlands Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of Japan in New York City September 24, 1996

Okinawa

Q. President Clinton, what do you think about the idea of floating offshore facility for a U.S. military base in Okinawa?

The President. Well, let me say, first of all, I very much appreciate the work that the Prime Minister has done in trying to resolve this matter to the satisfaction of the people of Okinawa and in a way that is consistent with the security relationship between the United States and Japan. And I intend to keep working on it, and we are prepared to do whatever is reasonable to respond to the concerns of the people of Okinawa, consistent with the absolute importance of our military readiness. So we'll just keep working on this and hope we can come to a satisfactory conclusion.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Prime Minister Hashimoto. We agree on the major point between ourselves at the moment that we cannot have a meaningful conversation while the microphones are on. [Laughter]

Federal Reserve Board

Q. Mr. President, the Fed is meeting today to decide whether to raise interest rates. Do you think the Fed has any cause to raise interest rates at this time?

The President. Well, I'm going to continue my policy of not commenting on their decisions. I will say this: I am very pleased that we have strong growth and no sign of inflation. I feel good about that. But they have to make their decisions; I can't comment on that.

Q. Well, do you believe there's any justification whatsoever, economic or otherwise, to raise interest rates?

The President. I don't know what you mean by "otherwise."

United Nations

Q. Mr. President, you said today that some Americans don't appreciate the U.N. and have made it difficult for the United States to pay its dues. Were you talking about anybody in particular, maybe like Senator Dole and Mr. Gingrich? Did you have them in mind?

The President. No, I was talking about everybody who believes that we—that the U.N. is, in effect, not important to the United States and to our future. I believe it is important to our future. I think it's also important that the United States and some of our friends, especially Great Britain, have pushed the U.N. for reform. And the Japanese have supported that.

We like the idea that the U.N.'s budget has been frozen and that the bureaucracy is being reduced. And I think the people in Congress in both parties who have pushed for that were right, and they should be complimented for that. But I think that having launched this process of reform, if we want to continue to have influence over it, at least we have to pay what we owe here and pay up our past-due obligations. That's the point I was making. I think that we are helped by having a system of shared burdens throughout the world, and I think most Americans feel that way.

Q. Mr. President, did you discuss the Secretary-General's term when you met with him this morning?

The President. I didn't, because he and everyone else knows our position. They know it's firm. There was nothing to talk about.

Q. In other words, there was nothing he could say or do, sir, that would change your mind perhaps after the election?

The President. There was nothing to discuss. Our position is clear and is set, and there was nothing to talk about.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:42 a.m. at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. In his remarks, the President referred to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Remarks in Freehold Borough, New Jersey September 24, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you, in the back, for being here. Thank you, way down under the trees, for being here. Mayor Wilson, it's great to be in Freehold. It's great to be in Monmouth County. It's great to be here with all of you.

I want to thank all those officials who are here—Mayor Susan Bass Levin, Mayor Cardell Cooper. Governor Florio, it's good to see you. State Chairman Tom Byrne, it's good to see you. Senator Ray Lesniak, State Senator John Lynch, all the other legislators and local leaders who are here.

Mayor Dave DeVecchio, thank you very much for running for the Congress and for making the stakes as clear as you have today. I know one thing, if you're representing this district in Congress in January, I believe that you will not vote for a Speaker of the House who wants to enact a contract on America, I think you will vote for the people of this district and their future. And I thank you for running.

I think we have some students here from the Freehold Borough Regional High School; thank you all for coming. You've got a big stake in this election, and I'm glad you're here.

You know, I was told this morning when I got up to come to New Jersey, after I went to the United Nations—I'll say more about that in a moment—that this magnificent monument commemorates George Washington's defeat of a British general in 1778 named Sir Henry Clinton. [Laughter] And I thought I would tell you here in the presence of these Revolutionary War reenactors who come from the Delaware Valley—and they did a great job today, let's give them a hand. [Applause] That may have hap-

pened in 1778, but in 1996, Clinton is on the right side of the battle for America's future.

And so is Bob Torricelli. You know, I've watched Bob Torricelli in Congress for 4 years now. I've watched him fight for legislation. I saw him sponsor legislation to require 48 hours as a minimum stay for new mothers and their newborns. He and Senator Bradley did that, and it's going to be the law of the land within about 48 more hours, I believe, when the Congress passes that. It took 4 long years, but I thank him for that.

I saw him sponsor legislation that I have embraced to expand the Brady bill. The Brady bill, which was also opposed by the leaders of the other party in Congress, basically says you have to wait 5 days while we do a background check before you get a handgun. Now, when we passed the Brady bill, there was all this screaming and yelling that we would be taking people's guns away. And 3 years later every hunter still has the same gun, but 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers were not able to get handguns. Bob Torricelli was right, and they were wrong. And now, he and I believe that the Brady bill ought to be modestly extended to say if you have beaten up your spouse or your child you shouldn't get a handgun, either. And I think New Jersey agrees with that.

I understand there's been a little ad running in New Jersey about Bob Torricelli's vote for our economic plan in 1993. "That one vote," they say, "was the biggest tax increase in history." Of course, it wasn't. The biggest one in history was in 1982, under President Reagan, and he supported it and signed it. I wasn't around.