

The President. No, we can't afford pessimism. I mean, after all, if you just look at the whole sweep of events in the last 3 years or so and compare that to the previous 25 years, I still think that things are moving right along here. We're in a rough patch, but if we just keep at it, I think it will come out all right.

Prime Minister Bruton. Exactly.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Charles Yah Lin Trie, chief executive officer, Diahatsu International Trading Co.; Michael H. Cardozo, executive director, Presidential Legal Expense Trust; George J. Mitchell, Special Adviser to the President and Secretary of State on Economic Initiatives for Ireland; and Martha Pope, Mr. Mitchell's deputy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Receiving the National AIDS Strategy

December 17, 1996

I am pleased today to receive the first-ever National AIDS Strategy. In the 15 years of this epidemic, we have never had such a unified strategy. This strategy represents an important milestone in the history of the fight to defeat this epidemic.

The National Strategy reiterates our administration's and our Nation's commitment to winning the battle against AIDS. It establishes six major goals for our national efforts: to find a cure and a vaccine; to reduce new HIV infections; to assure people living with HIV and AIDS access to high-quality care; to fight AIDS-related discrimination at every turn; to lead the global fight to end AIDS; and to translate our research advances into treatment as quickly as possible.

These goals will help to guide our work in the coming term and more specifically in the coming year. We have made significant progress in the last 4 years. Researchers working toward a cure and a vaccine are reporting encouraging news and giving us hope. New treatments, ap-

proved by the FDA in record time, are producing some very encouraging results in terms of the quality of people's lives and the potential for extending the length of life.

This progress results from more than a decade of investment in AIDS research, prevention, and care. I am very proud that in the four budgets my administration has produced, funding for AIDS programs has increased by 55 percent. We have also strengthened the Office of AIDS Research at NIH and tripled funding for AIDS drug assistance programs.

Despite this progress, we must recognize that the AIDS epidemic is not over. Far too many of our sons and daughters are still losing their lives to this epidemic every day. Far too many are still becoming infected. We will win the battle against HIV, but to do so we must stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight and we must build on the strides we have made. I am confident that my administration will do its part and that we have taken yet another step forward in that battle today.

Statement on Approval of the Operation Plan for the Stabilization Force in Bosnia

December 17, 1996

I have formally approved NATO's new operation plan for the Stabilization Force (SFOR) that will succeed the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia after December 20.

I welcome NATO's decision yesterday to approve formally the new operation plan and today to approve the Activation Order that will authorize the start of SFOR's mission.

SFOR's limited and focused mission is to consolidate the peace that IFOR successfully established and maintained. During the past 12 months, IFOR separated and ensured the demobilization of former warring factions. It provided the secure conditions in which democratic elections could be held and the reconstruction of Bosnia's shattered economy could begin. IFOR succeeded in bringing an end to a war that threatened stability in Europe. Now, by preventing the parties from sliding back into armed conflict and providing more breathing space for political and economic efforts to take hold, SFOR will help Bosnians assume full responsibility for their future—a future without an outside military presence.

As the leader of NATO and the principal architect of the Dayton peace, the United States must continue to lead in this new mission to

consolidate the peace in Bosnia. At the same time, our European allies are sharing the responsibility for building long-term stability. The European Union is the leading donor to the economic reconstruction effort and shoulders the burden of helping Bosnia's refugees. Europe will also contribute a greater share of the troops for SFOR than it did for IFOR, with the U.S. providing less than half of what we provided for IFOR.

SFOR's mission will last 18 months. Every 6 months we will review and consult with Congress on whether stability can be maintained with fewer forces. By helping the Bosnian people build a peace that is self-sustaining, SFOR will also help advance our fundamental goal of building a Europe that is peaceful, undivided, and democratic.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Television Rating System and an Exchange With Reporters *December 19, 1996*

The President. Let me begin by saying that, as all of you know, that the Vice President and Secretary Riley and members of the White House staff and I have just met with Jack Valenti and Eddie Fritts and Decker Anstrom.

I want to thank the industry leaders for the television rating system which they have proposed today. Earlier this year, in February, I asked them to do this. They said that they would and that they would do it by January 1st. They are on time, and they have done what they said they would do. And they are going to give America's families more help in choosing appropriate television programming for their children.

Now, it is now appropriate to say that it is the personal responsibility of the family, first of all, to make use of this system. In a year, you know, the new televisions will have these V-chips, but for right now there will be other ways that the industry will work to make available the information to parents. They have to use it. They have to evaluate it, and then they have to communicate back to the industry how they feel. Do they like it; do they not like it; where is it inadequate; what suggestions they have for changes. As this system is implemented,

the ball will plainly be in the court of the parents of America to make the most of this and to actually give feedback about it.

I would also like to say that at the request of the Vice President, the industry has agreed to make a systematic effort to get the continuous parental input and evaluation so that they will know how this system is going down, to what extent it's being used, and how it's being received by the parents of this country.

So I feel that this is a very important step forward. Over the next several months the industry has agreed that they will review their findings and the reactions to what they're doing. I think that's a very positive thing.

And I want to thank the Vice President for what he has done and ask him to say a word or two. And then if you have any questions, we'll try to answer them.

[At this point, the Vice President made brief remarks.]

Q. Mr. President, are you then leaving open the possibility that at some future time the administration might agree with the parents' groups who want this rated by content?