

once but repeatedly in the terrible war Iraq fought with Iran, and not only against combatants but against civilians, and not only against a foreign adversary but against his own people. And he's targeted Scud missiles against fellow Arabs and Muslims in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

Now, he is trying to rid Iraq of the international inspectors who have done such a remarkable job in finding and destroying his hidden weapons—weapons he himself promised in 1991 to report and help destroy. If Saddam is allowed to rebuild his arsenal unchecked, none of the region's children will be safe.

America is working very hard to find a diplomatic solution to this crisis Saddam has created. I have sent my Secretary of State, my Defense Secretary, and my Ambassador to the United Nations literally around the world to work with our friends and allies. If there is a way to resolve this peacefully, we will pursue it to the very end.

But from Europe to the Persian Gulf, all agree on the bottom line: Saddam must allow the U.N. weapons inspectors to complete their mission with full and free access to any site they suspect may be hiding material or information related to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs. That is what Saddam agreed to as a condition for ending the Gulf war way back in 1991.

Nobody wants to use force. But if Saddam refuses to keep his commitments to the inter-

national community, we must be prepared to deal directly with the threat these weapons pose to the Iraqi people, to Iraq's neighbors, and to the rest of the world. Either Saddam acts, or we will have to.

Saddam himself understands that the international community places a higher value on the lives of the Iraqi people than he does. That is why he uses innocent women and children as human shields, risking what we care about—human lives—to protect what he cares about—his weapons. If force proves necessary to resolve this crisis, we will do everything we can to prevent innocent people from getting hurt. But make no mistake: Saddam Hussein must bear full responsibility for every casualty that results.

To all our Arab and Muslim friends, let me say America wants to see a future of security, prosperity, and peace for all the people of the Middle East. We want to see the Iraqi people free of the constant warfare and repression that have been the hallmark of Saddam's regime. We want to see them living in a nation that uses its wealth not to strengthen its arsenal but to care for its citizens and give its children a brighter future. That is what we'll keep working for and what the people of Iraq deserve.

NOTE: These remarks were videotaped at approximately 4 p.m. on February 18 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for later broadcast, and they were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20.

Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

February 20, 1998

Today's decision to suspend Sinn Fein from the Northern Ireland peace talks shows that the UK and Irish Governments are committed to an inclusive process but one that reaffirms that it is unacceptable to mix politics and violence.

Peace in Northern Ireland is best served if all the political leaders of Northern Ireland work to find common ground to make common cause for peace. The United States stands with those who support peace and against those extremists

on both sides who will use all the means at their disposal to sabotage a peaceful settlement that the vast majority of both communities, and countries, support. I call on Sinn Fein to take the necessary steps to rejoin the talks and for all parties to reject violence and demonstrate in word and deed commitment to the Mitchell principles that exclusively peaceful means are the only way forward.