

Mar. 24 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

Kangolo, master of ceremonies; Milli Mukyala, dairy distribution operator; and Robinah Balidawa, business owner. The President also re-

ferred to the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA).

Statement on the Attack at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas March 24, 1998

Like all Americans, Hillary and I are deeply shocked and heartbroken by this afternoon's horrifying events at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

We don't know now and we may never fully understand what could have driven two youths to deliberately shoot into a crowd of their classmates.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families, and the entire Jonesboro community.

NOTE: In the statement, the President referred to Andrew Golden, 11, and Mitchell Johnson, 13, students at Westside Middle School, who fired on other students during a fire drill, killing four students and a teacher.

Remarks on Departure from Entebbe, Uganda, and an Exchange With Reporters March 25, 1998

Jonesboro Incident

The President. Just before I left the hotel this morning, I talked to the Governor of Arkansas and extended my personal condolences and sorrow about the terrible incident in Jonesboro yesterday. I attempted to call the mayor who is an old friend of mine, but I haven't reached him yet.

I just want to say again how profoundly sad I am and how disturbed I am. I've been thinking about this for the last several hours. This is the third incident in the last few months involving young children and violence in schools, and I'm going to ask the Attorney General to find whatever experts there are in our country on this and try to analyze this terrible tragedy to see whether there are any common elements in this incident and the other two, and whether it indicates any further action on our part.

Today the people in my home State and a town I know very well are grieving. They're suffering losses. And we should focus on that. But I do think, in the weeks to come, we have to analyze these incidents and see whether or not we can learn anything that will tell us what we can do to prevent further ones.

Q. Do you have any thoughts about how to stop this? I mean, if you've been thinking about it, anything come to mind, sir?

The President. I don't want to say too much until we have a chance to analyze them. I don't know enough about the facts of this incident. The facts of this incident are just now coming out. I've read, obviously, all the latest wire reports I can get, and frankly I'm not sure I know enough about the other two to draw any conclusions.

I don't want the American people to jump to any conclusions, but when three horrible tragedies like this involving young people who take other people's lives and then in the process destroy their own, we have to see if there are some common elements. And we'll look and do our best to do the right thing.

Q. Do you suspect that there are some common elements, sir?

The President. Well, the circumstances certainly seem to have a lot in common. What we need to know is what's behind the circumstances. As I said, I think that the American people today should send their thoughts, their prayers, their hopes to the people in Jonesboro.