

Message on the Observance of the Lunar New Year January 14, 1998

Warm greetings to all those celebrating the Lunar New Year.

This joyous occasion celebrates the blessings of family, community, and a rich and ancient heritage. It is a special time to reflect on the events of the previous year and to embrace the challenges of the year ahead. Vibrant with color, lights, dancing, parades, folk music, and delicious food, the Lunar New Year reminds all of us of the beauty and variety of Asian culture

and of the strength, character, and achievement that Asian Americans bring to our national life.

As we join you in welcoming the Year of the Tiger, Hillary and I extend best wishes to all for a new year full of health, happiness, prosperity, and peace.

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 20.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel January 20, 1998

Cuba-U.S. Relations

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning.

Q. Mr. President, Cuba is about to be in the news. What does the United States gain from pressing the embargo?

The President. Well, let me say, our position on that is that we want Cuba to move toward freedom and openness, and if they do, we'll respond. That's always been our position, and I believe in the end it will prevail.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, on the Middle East, Mr. Arafat is talking with some threatening phrases, speaking of maybe the intifada will be resumed. And of course, the Prime Minister said last night that's no way to negotiate. How do you feel about—

The President. I agree with that. I think if he makes an observation that if this whole thing fails, that it won't be good, then that's understandable. But I don't think it should be encouraged. I've really looked forward to this week. I've worked hard to get ready for the meeting. I'm anxious to begin my sixth meeting with the Prime Minister and then to see Mr. Arafat in a couple of days. And I think we have to have a positive attitude. We need to be reassuring

to people. We don't want to undermine any confidence. We need to keep working.

Q. Mr. President, you said yesterday that you had high hopes, and that seems out of step with some of the views of your top officials here. What makes you have high hopes for these talks?

The President. Well, I've often been out of step, in having high hopes, with a lot of people. It may be a defect in my nature, but I think—for one thing I think that Israel wants peace and a resolution of this. And I believe that it's very much in the interests of the Palestinians and Mr. Arafat to seek to resolve it, and we're working very hard. I've just found that, more often than not, you ultimately have success if you stay at something and keep working at it in good faith.

Q. Mr. President, could you just tell us what you believe a credible withdrawal would be? And does Chairman Arafat need to do anything before such a withdrawal should take place?

The President. I think that's a conversation I need to have with the Prime Minister first. I don't—and I will do that.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's Cabinet

Q. Mr. Netanyahu, may I ask you one question, please? Are you in a more difficult situation because of the new makeup of your Cabinet,