

the end of the question, the following translation was given.]

Q. Just like you had Arafat in the United States, here in the White House, do you think at some point it would be possible to have one of our guerrilla leaders here?

President Clinton. Sorry, the interpreter did not hear, so could he repeat his question? If he could repeat his question in English, then you could answer in Spanish and the interpreter could hear you. [*Laughter*]

President Pastrana. Well, Colombia is not at war. Colombia has an internal conflict. I've been able to describe it to the President. For 36 years we've had an internal conflict in the country. And what we hope for is precisely to be able to achieve a peace process that will allow us to put an end to the violence that Colombia has lived through in the last few years.

As I was able to explain to the President and to the press, for the first time as well, we have an historic opportunity. The guerrillas have agreed to eradicate illicit crops. For the first time the FARC has made a commitment; in fact, they have set that forth in the document they've given to the government, which the public knows of. For the first time they're willing to work on eradicating illicit crops.

So I think it's an historic opportunity for the country. If we're able to make peace in Colombia, this is the first major battle in which we will defeat the narcotraffickers. The major enemy in Colombia is drug trafficking, drug traffickers. Therefore, we understand, and we know that we will win that battle. And by winning that battle, we will begin to do away with the global problems the entire world is suffering from today.

That's why I think it's a situation in which our country knows, we're already dealing with it. We've initiated our dialog with the ELN. And we hope after November 7th to begin the dialog with the FARC. And in this way we'll put an end to this process and, clearly, achieve the great wish of our people, which is to have a country at peace.

President Clinton. On the question you asked me about the immigration, the Colombians who are here, I don't know enough about the facts to answer the question. We did make—I tried to make good decisions regarding the Nicaraguans, the Salvadorans, and the Haitians. We have tried to be sensitive to the real facts of the individual's lives who are here—what were the circumstances under which they came to our country and under which they stayed—consistent with our other immigration laws, which are pretty open and broad, I think. But I would—before I could give you an answer, I would have to know more than I do now.

Thank you.

President Pastrana. Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 165th news conference began at 3:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Pastrana's wife, Nohra; Foreign Minister Guillermo Fernandez of Colombia; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. President Pastrana referred to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN). President Pastrana spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Communique With President Andres Pastrana of Colombia October 28, 1998

In their second meeting since President Pastrana's election last June, President Clinton and President Pastrana consolidated a comprehensive partnership between their two governments designed to promote democracy and economic growth, fight illicit drugs, strengthen respect for human rights, extend the rule of law, and help bring an end to Colombia's armed

conflict. Toward these ends, President Clinton pledged over \$280 million in new assistance to Colombia, to be made available in the course of the current fiscal year. President Clinton noted that the scope of this assistance, which is more than double that of last year, makes it by far the largest American assistance program for the hemisphere. This assistance is indicative

of the strong bipartisan support, in the Congress as well as his Administration, for Colombia and its new leadership.

The two Presidents agreed on the importance of increased trade and investment in sustaining growth, reducing poverty, and permitting societies to meet the aspirations of their people. They expressed support for the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005, while also noting the continuing importance of the Andean Trade Preferences in promoting economic growth throughout that region, and underpinning the viability of alternative development programs. They initiated consultations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty, and agreed to conclude with the other countries concerned the creation of a Trade and Investment Council for the Andean region. They welcomed the expanded activities of the Export Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation in support of United States/Colombian trade and investment. President Clinton offered and President Pastrana accepted a program of technical assistance by the United States Treasury, with funding from United States Agency for International Development, for the financial sector. The Presidents agreed to work to create the fair and equitable conditions necessary to implement an Open Skies regime, and to conclude a new bilateral aviation agreement as soon as possible. President Pastrana welcomed the forthcoming visit of United States Commerce Secretary Daley to further expand cooperation in the fields of trade and investment.

The two Presidents signed an *Alliance Against Drugs* committing their nations to use all means at their disposal to stem narcotics production, trafficking, consumption and related crimes. They agreed that education, prevention, law enforcement, judicial action, extradition of narcotraffickers, aerial and other forms of eradication, alternative development and efforts to end armed conflict are all essential elements in an overall strategy to combat illegal drugs. They looked forward to the early completion of a customs mutual assistance agreement. They called for greater international efforts, and welcomed the work underway through the Organization of American States to forge a hemispheric alliance, and to establish a multilateral process to monitor and evaluate national as well as collective performance toward agreed goals.

President Clinton expressed admiration and support for President Pastrana's efforts, based

upon democracy and the rule of law, to establish a dialogue with Colombia's insurgent groups, to initiate a peace process, and to seek an end to many decades of armed conflict. President Clinton pledged to work with other international donors to mobilize substantial additional resources to support implementation of the peace process, to promote programs for internally displaced persons, to give financial and technical support to a program of alternative development, and to thereby promote reconciliation within a democratic society of laws. The two Presidents agreed that concrete action on the part of insurgent groups to cease hostage taking and other forms of terrorism, to cut their ties to narcotrafficking, to respect international humanitarian law and to join the fight against illicit drugs will be the test of their sincerity and genuine interest in peace.

The two Presidents shared a commitment to a cleaner environment and sustainable development. They welcomed the signing of a "GLOBE" agreement to link schools and education together through the Internet for environmental work. President Pastrana expressed appreciation for the provision of Visiting Fellowships by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for the study of watershed management.

The two Presidents agreed that respect for human rights was at the core of their effort to promote peace, extend the rule of law, and strengthen democratic institutions. They welcomed the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Colombia and United States Agency for International Development establishing a program for the training and support for the Colombian judiciary. They welcomed the signing of a forfeited-assets sharing arrangement that will direct forfeitures to Colombian counternarcotics law enforcement efforts. They also attached special importance to the establishment between the two Defense Ministries of a Bilateral Working Group that will establish and oversee a program of support and training for the military justice system.

In order to manage and extend their comprehensive partnership, the two Presidents established a high-level Joint Consultative Group, led by the United States State Department and Colombian Foreign Ministry, with senior representation from all the other affected cabinet agencies, which will meet on a regular basis.

Acting Assistant Secretary Romero will lead a U.S. team to Colombia in early November to agree upon a work program for the Group, and to consult on the peace process.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint communiqué.

Remarks Announcing the HIV/AIDS Initiative in Minority Communities October 28, 1998

Thank you and welcome, every one of you. I'd like to begin by welcoming the Mayor of Baltimore, Kurt Schmoke, and the Mayor of East St. Louis, Gordon Bush. I'd like to thank the Members of Congress here behind me who are so responsible for the purpose for which we are called today.

I want to acknowledge Congresswoman Donna Christian-Green, Congressman Elijah Cummings, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Congressman Donald Payne. I will say more about Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Representative Lou Stokes in a moment. [Laughter] But I want to thank them and all the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including all the House members and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, for what they did. And then I would like to offer a special word of appreciation to Senator Arlen Specter and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, who helped us so much to get this done. Thank you very much.

I want to thank everyone in our administration who has worked so hard on the issue of HIV and AIDS, beginning with the Vice President, who couldn't be here today but who has worked very hard on all these issues; and Secretary Shalala; our wonderful Surgeon General, David Satcher; the Director of our AIDS Policy Office, Sandy Thurman, who has literally spent months sounding the alarm about the growing crisis in communities of color and working to help achieve these dramatic funding increases. There is no stronger or more effective advocate, and I think we ought to thank Sandy Thurman for what she's done.

Finally, I want to thank Denise Stokes for being here. As you will hear in a few moments, she has been living with HIV for 15 years and has been giving so much of herself to educate others. If we are to stop this cruel disease, we'll have to have brave people like Denise to reach out with candor and compassion to those at risk.

I really admire her very much. And you'll hear from her in a moment, but I think we ought to give her a hand for showing up today. [Applause]

We have good reason to feel encouraged that so many HIV-positive men and women are living longer and healthier lives. We should be proud that we've helped to speed the development of lifesaving therapies and nearly tripled funding to support those with HIV and AIDS.

But the AIDS epidemic is far from over in any community in our country. Today we're here to send out a word loud and clear: AIDS is a particularly severe and ongoing crisis in the African-American and Hispanic communities and in other communities of color. African-Americans represent only 13 percent of our population but account for almost half the new AIDS cases reported last year. Hispanics represent 10 percent of our population; they account for more than 20 percent of the new AIDS cases. And AIDS is becoming a critical concern in some Native-American and Asian-American communities, as well.

Like other epidemics before it, AIDS is now hitting hardest in areas where knowledge about the disease is scarce and poverty is high. In other words, as so often happens, it is picking on the most vulnerable among us.

The fact is HIV infection is one of the most deadly health disparities between African-Americans, Hispanics, and white Americans. And just as we have committed to help build one America by ending the racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality and cancer and other diseases, we must use all our power to end the growing disparities in HIV and AIDS.

The AIDS crisis in our communities of color is a national one, and that is why we are greatly increasing our national response. Today I am