

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of
Pakistan and an Exchange With Reporters
December 2, 1998

President Clinton. Let me begin by saying I am delighted to welcome Prime Minister Sharif and his group here to the White House and to the Oval Office. The United States values its long friendship with Pakistan very, very much.

We have a very full agenda today. All of you know of my concern to do everything we can to end the nuclear competition in South Asia, which I believe is a threat to Pakistan and India and to the stability of the world. We also want to work with Pakistan to promote economic growth there, to continue our mutual concern to fight terrorism, and deal with some of the other regional issues.

So we have a great deal to discuss, and I'm very much looking forward to it.

Would you like to say anything?

Prime Minister Sharif. Thank you, Mr. President. I am also very delighted to meet you, and thank you for inviting me to America.

We've had meetings—also. I am sure that you are taking interest in the affairs of Pakistan, which of course also concern the United States of America, and we hope to work together. And you are doing your best and, of course, it is also my endeavor to remove all the misperceptions which are there in our bilateral relations.

And I look forward to working together with you and strengthening our relations with the United States of America.

F-16 Aircraft

Q. Mr. President, New Zealand has said that it has agreed to lease the 28 F-16's whose sale was blocked to Pakistan in 1990. Has that received the U.S. blessing?

And Mr. Prime Minister, would you accept or find acceptable such a deal which would only give you about \$105 million, much, much less than you originally paid for the planes?

President Clinton. Let me say that I don't presume to answer for the Prime Minister, but we have—I have a report to make on this issue which is somewhat more extensive, and after we have a chance to discuss it, then we will make available, obviously, to the public where

we are on this. And so I'd like to have a chance to discuss it with him, and then we'll have a statement to make on it.

Impeachment Inquiry

Q. Mr. President, what about the direction of the Judiciary Committee's investigation, the expansion into campaign fundraising irregularities? What should you and the White House be doing to deal with that new turn in the investigation?

President Clinton. Well, you know, I have a group of lawyers handling that, and I presume they'll—we'll find some time to talk about that. But the Congress, in the end, has to make its own decisions about what it will do and how it will conduct itself. It's important for me to get on with the work of the country, and that's what I'm doing here, and that's what I intend to continue to do.

Q. Mr. President, why have you decided not to—

Future Visit to Pakistan and India

Q. [Inaudible]—on the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and would you consider anything short of that that would allow you to go ahead with the visit to Pakistan and India next year?

President Clinton. I hope it will be possible for me to go next year. I've looked forward to it for a long time, and I hope I will be able to go. Obviously, I hope that the treaty will be signed.

Q. But is it a condition?

Pakistan-India Relations

Q. Mr. President, are you ready to bring both Prime Ministers from India and Pakistan here in Washington for further talks or to solve the problems of 50 years between the two countries?

Prime Minister Sharif. That is—[inaudible]. [Laughter]

President Clinton. You know, that's work that I always like to do. I've enjoyed my opportunities to work with the parties in the Middle East and in Northern Ireland, but it only works when

both parties wish the United States to be involved. Otherwise we can't be effective.

Let me say that I have been very encouraged that the two Governments have resumed their direct conversations; I think it's very hopeful. And I think Prime Minister Sharif has been very forthcoming in this regard. And I think he deserves a lot of credit, and I hope the people of Pakistan support his decision to continue this dialog with India. I think it's very important.

At any time there's anything that I can do that both parties will agree to our doing, of course I will be happy to do it.

Mergers, Layoffs, and the Global Economy

Q. Sir, can I ask you a question on the—could I ask you an economic question, please? Could I ask you a question on the economy, please? Thousands of people are losing their jobs at Boeing plants. Kellogg today announced a similar move. The Exxon-Mobil merger is going to cause people to lose their jobs. What's your concern about the economic impact, and is there anything that the administration can do for these people?

President Clinton. Well, I think on the merger question—let's deal with that one first. Of course, you've heard what Exxon and Mobil have said; you know where the price of oil is; you know what the facts are. My position on mergers has always been that if they increase the competitiveness of the company and bring lower prices and higher quality service to the consumers of our country, then they're good. And if they don't, they aren't. And you know we've got the National Economic Council reviewing this whole merger issue.

On this specific one, I have to be very careful in what I say because of the way our law works and the judgment that might have to be made by independent people in the Federal Government about that.

On the Boeing and the economy generally, this is—particularly with Boeing, which I am very concerned about because I've worked so hard to help Boeing and our aerospace industry generally and to get employment up—I think it is clearly a result of the global financial crisis and in particular the economic problems in Asia. And that's why I have given such a high priority for the better part of a year now to trying to—actually slightly more than a year now—to trying to stabilize the situation there, limit the spread

of the financial contagion, and then reverse conditions in Asia and restore economic growth there.

I can't tell you how important it is from my point of view for the United States to be actively involved in trying to restore the conditions of growth in Asia. We can only maintain our leadership in the whole aerospace area if there are countries beyond our borders able to purchase the airplanes we produce. And this, I think, is purely and simply a function of the downturn in Asia. We saw it first in our farming communities, where the price of grain dropped because Asian purchases dropped so much. And if we can—that's why I went to Korea and Japan. And if we can make progress there and see some growth coming back in Asia, then you'll see these orders—the countries will be able to make good on these orders. They'll start buying the airplanes again, production lines will start up again, and they'll call the workers back.

And that's my goal, before it affects other industries, to try to get that growth going back in Asia. It's very, very important to the American people to do that.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Discussions With Prime Minister Sharif

President Clinton. Let me say, if everyone is here, I would like to just make a brief remark. I am delighted to have the Prime Minister and members of his Government here in the Oval Office today. We value our friendship with Pakistan very much.

We have a very full agenda to discuss. All of you know of my concern to limit nuclear proliferation in South Asia. I don't believe it's good for the peace and stability and security of Pakistanis or Indians or the world. And I hope we can make some progress there. But I also want to be supportive in any way that we can to help the economy of Pakistan to grow, to benefit ordinary citizens of your country. And I hope we can discuss our common interest in fighting terrorism and a number of our other interests in the region.

So I am delighted to have the Prime Minister here, and I'm looking forward to our conversation.

Would you like to say something?

Prime Minister Sharif. I have already said, Mr. President, I am delighted to be here, too.

I thank you very much for extending this invitation to me. I'd like to work with you; Pakistan would like to work with the United States of America. And there are a lot of issues on which we have common interest, and we will be very happy to extend all the help and assistance as far as we are concerned, especially on the issue of terrorism. And we have been fighting terrorism, and you know that we've been cooperating with the United States of America also.

And all the other issues, as the President has mentioned, we have a full agenda today. We will discuss each and every thing that concerns America and Pakistan.

Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia

Q. Pakistan has been a victim of unilateral Pakistani-specific sanctions, whereas India, the—country of Pakistan has been let loose to tear up all their nuclear programs. India was the one who started the first proliferation there, but still Pakistan has been a victim of the U.S. sanctions. Don't you think it was unfair? And if it was unfair, what is your administration going to do to compensate for what Pakistan has already suffered?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, we have, as a part of our dialog on nonproliferation, we have actually lifted a large number of the sanctions that were applied against Pakistan to try to get economic activity going there again. And we will continue to discuss with the Prime Minister what we can do to make further progress.

In terms of the test, what we were required to do was mandated by an act of Congress. There was no discretion in the executive branch about it. I have worked very hard to put our relationships back on a more normal path, and we have lifted a number of these sanctions already. And I look forward to making further progress on that.

Kashmir

Q. Mr. President, that's not—

Q. [Inaudible]—you have been very effective in resolving the Palestine dispute in the Middle East, and would you also—

The President. That's a—

Q. I mean, to some extent. Would you also be using those good offices to resolving the Kashmir dispute which has festered and threatens a war in the subcontinent?

The President. Well, that is work that I think is important to do. I've worked, as you pointed

out, in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. But the United States can be effective in that role only when both parties want us to do so. There is no case in which we have injected ourselves into a dispute in the absence of the agreement of both sides, because otherwise it doesn't work.

I will say this. I want to applaud the Prime Minister for supporting resumption of direct talks with the Indians. I think that is very important. I think if you look at, if you imagine what the world could be like in, let's say, 20 years if the dispute over Kashmir were resolved and South Asia—India and Pakistan were both reconciled to each other and focused on a positive future, I think the potential for increased prosperity among ordinary citizens and increased global influence that both have is virtually unlimited. I think this conflict is holding both nations back and diminishing the quality of life of ordinary citizens.

So I would do anything I could to help to resolve it. But the most important thing is that the leaders are discussing it again; they're working on it. And I think what they need, what both leaders need, is a little elbow room from the political forces in their country and from ordinary citizens, because we see in place after place after place, when people can resolve old differences, then they can look to new possibilities.

And if you look at the potential that Pakistan and India have for economic growth and for solving a lot of the personal problems that ordinary people have, it's absolutely staggering. There's no place on Earth with a greater potential for development in the next 30 years than South Asia, no place. And if this thorn can be taken from the sides of the people, that will occur. So I would support that in any way I could.

Q. Can I have a followup?

Q. Mr. President—

President Clinton. Yes, yes, one more.

Future Visit to Pakistan and India

Q. Will you renew your plan to visit the subcontinent, that you canceled last year?

President Clinton. Let me say two things before you go. First of all, on the question—I very much hope it will be possible for me to go next year. I have looked forward to going for many years. As I think you know, my wife had a wonderful trip not very long ago, and

I want to go, and I hope it will be possible for me to go.

One other thing, Prime Minister, if you'll indulge me before the Pakistani press leaves, I think I would like to say to the people of Pakistan, on behalf of not just myself personally but the United States, our country has been enormously enriched by the presence of Pakistani-American citizens and immigrants. And we are a stronger, better place today because of the people who have come from Pakistan to

the United States, and that makes me all the more determined to try to be a positive force and a good friend and a good partner. And I hope we're going to make some progress today.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Steve Grossman as National Chairman of the Democratic National Committee *December 2, 1998*

While it is good news for his family, the resignation of DNC National Chairman Steve Grossman is a loss for the Democratic Party. Steve has been a leader, a party builder, a prolific fundraiser, and a wonderful friend to Hillary and me.

When Steve became national chairman in early 1997, the Democratic Party faced an enormous debt and the possibility that we would not have the financial resources to compete effectively in the midterm election. With Steve's energy and dedication, the party has nearly

eliminated its debt, and we had the resources we needed to compete in November.

Steve and our general chairman, Governor Roy Romer, have made a remarkable team. The millions of voters mobilized under their leadership led to the extraordinary and historic successes of Democratic candidates nationwide.

Steve's life has been dedicated to public service, his community, and his faith. I will always be grateful to him for his service to our party and the Nation. Hillary and I wish the best to Steve, his wife, Barbara, and their sons, David, Benjamin, and Joshua.

Statement on the Acquittal of Former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy *December 2, 1998*

I am pleased by the jury's verdict today acquitting former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy of all charges brought by the Independent Counsel. Mr. Espy served his country and my administration with distinction—first as a Congressman from Mississippi and then as Secretary of Agriculture.

As Secretary, Mike Espy worked hard and successfully to create a Department that now better serves the American people. He was a relentless champion for America's farmers and consumers. He reached out when lives and livelihoods were threatened by natural disasters in rural communities and offered relief. He was

an advocate for those suffering from hunger, and he fought for the environment.

After what have been challenging times for Mr. Espy, both personally and professionally, I am heartened that he has, as he said, emerged from this ordeal stronger. I hope that, as he moves forward, he will continue his notable record of service to the country.

NOTE: The statement referred to Independent Counsel Donald C. Smaltz.