

Senator Warner, Senator Hagel, Senator Lugar, all have expressed support for this mission. So I feel good about where we are on that.

Q. Mr. President, will you confirm reports on ground troops in Kuwait?

Q. [*Inaudible*—on the first day of the operation and would it undercut your authority if the House opened the impeachment debate during this operation?

The President. What was the first question, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press]?

Q. Bomb damage assessment.

The President. I'm about to get it.

Q. You didn't get any from Mr. Berger?

The President. Obviously, I've kept up with it as best I could, but I have not gotten a full report.

Q. But you think it is a success?

The President. I'm about to get a—it's an ongoing mission. I want to wait—

Q. Because Joe Lockhart told us it was a success.

Q. And he undercut your authority, sir?

The President. No. First of all, I'm going to complete this mission—we're going to complete this mission. And the Republican leaders will have to decide how to do their job. That's not for me to comment on.

Kuwait

Q. Can you confirm reports of Saddam Hussein possibly advancing and invading Kuwait and the possible use of ground troops, sir?

The President. No, I have no comment on that. I think that surely he knows what a disastrous mistake that would be.

Civilian Casualties in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, the Iraqis are saying there's been heavy civilian casualties in this. Do you have any information so far that that's true?

The President. I do not. I can tell you what I said last night: We did everything we could to carefully target military and national security targets and to minimize civilian casualties. There is always a prospect that the missiles will miss, that they will be interrupted because of the missiles being fired at them, trying to deflect them from their intended targets. I am quite sure there will be, as I said last evening, unintended casualties, and I regret that very much.

That's one of the reasons that I have bent over backwards, not just in November but also on previous occasions to avoid using force in this case. I did not want to do it; I think all of you know it. But in November, we literally had planes in the air, and I said that it would be the last chance. I think it is very important that we not allow Saddam Hussein to destroy the UNSCOM system without any penalty whatever, to eventually get all these sanctions lifted and to go right on just as if he never made any commitments that were unfulfilled on this score. I think it would have been a disaster for us to do this.

And so, regrettably, I made this decision. There is, I believe, no way to avoid some unintended civilian casualties, and I regret it very much. But I believe far, far more people would have died eventually from this man's regime had we not taken this action.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, prior to a meeting with the foreign policy team. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Richard Butler, executive chairman, United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring Eunice Kennedy Shriver at the Special Olympics Dinner

December 17, 1998

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you. Pretty rowdy crowd tonight. [*Laughter*] I am delighted to join Hillary in welcoming all of you here. We're delighted to have you at this re-

markable celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Special Olympics.

Let me say just for a moment, I am also thinking tonight about the brave American men and women in uniform who are carrying out

our mission in Iraq with our British allies. I know that our thoughts and our prayers, indeed, those of all the American people, are with them tonight. And I wanted to say that what they are doing is important. It will make the world a safer, more peaceful place for our children in the 21st century.

I'd also like to say a word now about the Special Olympics. More than 30 years ago Eunice Kennedy Shriver had an idea as simple as it was revolutionary, to give young people with disabilities the chance to know the thrill of athletic competition, the joy of participation, the pride of accomplishment. Out of that powerful idea, dreamed up at a kitchen table and launched at a backyard in Rockville, Maryland, Special Olympics grew and grew and grew.

Just think of it, if you can remember back to the time before the Special Olympics, many people actually believed that people with disabilities were incapable of performing the most basic everyday activities, let alone competing in sports. But this year, 30 years later, there are

more than one million Special Olympic athletes throwing the javelin, swimming the 500-meter butterfly, walking the balance beam—something most of the rest of us cannot do—[laughter]—and inspiring hope all over the world.

So tonight I ask all of you to stand and join me in toasting Eunice Kennedy Shriver; her wonderful family, who have supported her every step of the way; to all the people who work so hard year-in and year-out to make Special Olympics possible; and to the athletes who are an inspiration to us all—to Eunice Kennedy Shriver and the Special Olympics. Ladies and gentlemen, Eunice Shriver.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder, Special Olympics. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Remarks at the Conclusion of the Special Olympics Dinner *December 17, 1998*

Thank you. This has been a wonderful night. Hillary and I want to thank all the artists who have graced this stage. They have brought something special to this part of the White House lawn and this beautiful tent that we've never had before. They certainly have helped to put us all in the holiday spirit, including our good friend Whoopi, who I thought was terrific tonight, even in the breaks.

I feel very proud to be a part of this special evening to pay tribute to Special Olympics. Tonight we celebrate 30 years of breaking down barriers and building up hope, 30 years of widening the circle of opportunity, 30 years of helping Americans with disabilities to reach their highest potential. Tonight we celebrate the victory of the human spirit. We see the power of that spirit every single time an athlete like Loretta runs a race, every time a young person realizes the wonder that he can swim faster than almost anybody else in the pool, every time a parent's heart fills with pride as her child steps with confidence onto the winner's block, and

every time a volunteer learns the joy of helping people with disabilities to make the most of their abilities.

As Special Olympics enters its fourth decade, this legacy is being passed from generation to generation, in a circle of hope, as the children of Special Olympics volunteers take their place in the dugouts and on the sidelines and as former competitors become coaches and mentors to new young athletes. The Special Olympics torch, which began as a small flicker of light in 1968 in Chicago, now burns brightly all around the world as a symbol of acceptance and pride.

Tonight, we thank all of you, every single one of you who have made this possible: the Shriver and Kennedy families, without whose vision there would be no Special Olympics; the thousands of supporters and volunteers whose dedication sustains that vision; the millions of athletes whose courage inspires and challenges all of us. And we salute the next generation