

from danger; this is not an easy time. This international financial situation is very, very important, and we have got to convince our allies to join with us, in my judgment, in taking strong action here, just like they did in taking strong action on Kosovo today.

But we can do these things. And again I want to say, New York has been a special part of this country from its inception. It is still a special part of our country. It carries all—when I got off the helicopter tonight down in lower Manhattan and I was fixing to get in my car, and it was kind of a warm fall night, and I looked out and I saw the Statue of Liberty down there, it just literally—still, after all these years—took my breath away.

This is a place that ought to be represented by a Senator who can make a major contribution to what America should become in the 21st century. That, more than anything else, is my case for Congressman Schumer.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to desert cohorts Harvey Weinstein, Steve Rattner, and Maureen White; and murder victim Matthew Shepard. H.J. Res. 134, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1999, approved October 12, was assigned Public Law No. 105-254.

Remarks on the Situation in Kosovo and an Exchange With Reporters October 13, 1998

The President. Before I leave to visit a school in Maryland and talk more about our ongoing budget struggle to secure funding for education, I would like to say a few words about Kosovo.

Over the past few days, NATO has resolved to move President Milosevic from the battlefield to the bargaining table. The commitments he has made could lead—and I emphasize the word “could”—to the peaceful resolution of a crisis that threatens stability in the Balkans and the lives of tens of thousands of refugees, many of them homeless. But for that to happen, we must now see progress as President Milosevic turns his commitments into concrete realities.

First, the cessation of hostilities must continue. Second, the troops President Milosevic recently sent to Kosovo must begin to move out, and those already there must begin to come to garrison. Third, the international monitors must be allowed to enter and be given full freedom of movement. Fourth, humanitarian relief agencies must be able to bring help to the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. And fifth, serious autonomy negotiations with the Kosovars must begin to go forward.

As I said last night, we will not rely on what President Milosevic says, but on what he does for the whole world to see. To that end, a key component of the commitments he has made is an intrusive, on-the-ground and in-the-air

verification system. It will include about 2,000 international inspectors in Kosovo who will serve as watchdog to ensure that the cease-fire holds and the Serb forces withdraw, while building confidence among Kosovars to return to their homes. And it will involve unrestricted NATO aerial surveillance to monitor compliance and quickly detect violations.

The international community prefers compliance to conflict. But in voting to give our military commanders the authority to carry out airstrikes against Serbia, NATO sent a clear message to President Milosevic: NATO is ready to act. It is up now to the President of Serbia to follow through on his commitments.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, given your expressed distrust of Milosevic, how optimistic are you that he’s going to be able to fulfill this long list of conditions by the deadline?

The President. Well, I’m neither optimistic, nor pessimistic because I have something better now. We have now a verification system, so we’re not dependent upon our hopes. We have a verification system. There will be facts—facts on the ground which will tell us whether or not the compliance is there. And I certainly would hope that this NATO position will, in effect, be maintained until all the conditions are fully met. And I expect that it will be.

So I cannot—I would like to say again what I said last night—I'm very appreciative to Mr. Holbrooke, but also to Secretary General Solana and General Clark and all of our NATO Allies, as well as to the Secretary of State and Mr. Berger and our people who have worked for the better part of 3 months to try to bring about these developments. So I'm very pleased about where we are today, because we're not dependent on hope. We can just look at the facts and see what he does. It is a very good agreement. It is completely in accord with the United Nations resolution, and it gives us the chance to save an awful lot of innocent people from starvation or freezing this winter and to remove yet another very dangerous source of instability in Europe.

Q. Sir, if he doesn't comply, will he escape paying any price for what has happened so far?

The President. Well, I think he is going to pay the price of a defeat here for continued aggression by his government, and he's not going to succeed in his designs. I think the most important thing now is for us to save lives, return people to their homes, get them the humanitarian aid they need, and to remove completely and irrevocably the threat of aggression by the Serb military and other forces in Kosovo.

We've got to put first things first here. The most important thing is to right this situation, as we were able to do in Bosnia. And I think that today I'd say we have a pretty good chance of doing that. Again, we prefer compliance over conflict, and we hope that will be the case. But whether it is or not is entirely up to him now, and we have the verification system in place and so we'll know. And I'm very, very pleased with the work that all the people involved have done in these last several days. This is where the international community ought to be, what we ought to be doing, the position we ought to be taking. And I'm looking forward to events as they unfold.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Silver Spring, MD. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Special Envoy Richard C. Holbrooke, the President's nominee to be Ambassador to the U.N.; NATO Secretary General Javier Solana; and Gen. Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

Exchange With Reporters at Forest Knolls Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland

October 13, 1998

Classroom Space

Q. Mr. President, Ashley Lewis was telling us before you came in that she actually likes this classroom, that it's one of the biggest in the school—

The President. It is big.

Q. Why should—can you explain to her, maybe, why you feel the need to spend \$1.1 billion to build new classrooms when the student population may not always be this size?

The President. Well, maybe I should let Secretary Riley answer that one, because it's going to be this size and bigger for a long time.

[At this point, Secretary of Education Richard Riley made brief remarks explaining the need

to replace temporary classrooms that were unsuitable for various reasons.]

The President. Accessibility.

Secretary Riley. Heat, cool, it's different kinds of problems in all the different temporary facilities. Some are better than others, as the Governor pointed out, but they're temporary, and it's not a permanent solution.

The President. Even if it is bigger. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in a portable trailer classroom. A reporter referred to sixth grade student Ashley Lewis, and Secretary Riley referred to Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.