

Remarks on the Conclusion of the Senate Impeachment Trial and an Exchange With Reporters *February 12, 1999*

The President. Now that the Senate has fulfilled its constitutional responsibility, bringing this process to a conclusion, I want to say again to the American people how profoundly sorry I am for what I said and did to trigger these events and the great burden they have imposed on the Congress and on the American people.

I also am humbled and very grateful for the support and the prayers I have received from millions of Americans over this past year.

Now I ask all Americans, and I hope all Americans—here in Washington and throughout

our land—will rededicate ourselves to the work of serving our Nation and building our future together. This can be and this must be a time of reconciliation and renewal for America.

Thank you very much.

Q. In your heart, sir, can you forgive and forget?

The President. I believe any person who asks for forgiveness has to be prepared to give it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on the American Airlines Labor Dispute *February 12, 1999*

Over the past several days I have closely monitored the labor dispute between American Airlines and the Allied Pilots Association. I am concerned about the impact this labor dispute is having on our Nation and the traveling public. With the potential for enormous disruption over the upcoming Presidents' Day holiday weekend, I urge both parties to think of the impact on the traveling public, set aside their differences, and work together to resolve the issues between them. We have a long history and tradition of settling labor disputes in this country under the law. The Railway Labor Act provides the means for the airline industry to resolve these disputes.

It is my understanding that American Airlines canceled up to 80 percent of its flights yesterday, affecting major cities such as New York,

Miami, Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago, and that it might cancel at least half of its scheduled flights today. I commend the cities, the airports, the tourism industry, and the other major carriers for doing their part to keep domestic air traffic moving. However, even with all of the carriers doing their part, it is likely that thousands of passengers will be forced to change their travel plans. They are innocent bystanders in a dispute that should be set aside over the weekend and resolved at the bargaining table.

Again, I urge both sides to consider the impact their dispute is having on the traveling public as well as the millions of Americans who depend on the transportation and tourism industries for their livelihood.

Message on the Observance of Presidents' Day, 1999 *February 12, 1999*

I am pleased to join all Americans in observing Presidents' Day.

Today we celebrate the vision and achievements of our nation's former Presidents, and we remember with special pride two of our

greatest leaders, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Though born almost 80 years apart and shaped by vastly different circumstances and experiences, they still shared much in common.

Each assumed the Presidency at a crucial moment in our nation's history; each had a clear vision of what America should be and the courage to lead his fellow citizens toward that vision; and each shared a profound devotion to our country and to its promise of freedom and human dignity. Because of George Washington, America's great experiment in democracy has succeeded; because of Abraham Lincoln, America's Union has been preserved.

Now, as we stand at the dawn of a new century, we have a historic opportunity—and re-

sponsibility—to build on the legacies of Washington and Lincoln. Blessed with peace and unprecedented prosperity, we must seize this unique moment in our national life and shape a future where every American has the tools and the opportunity to succeed; where we finally understand that the dreams and ideals that unite us are more powerful than any differences that divide us; and where new generations of Americans can live in peace, prosperity, and freedom.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful celebration.

BILL CLINTON

The President's Radio Address

February 13, 1999

Good morning. This week the warring parties in Kosovo have been meeting at a 14th century castle in France, in search of a 21st century peace. They've come together because of the determination of the United States, our European allies, and Russia to help end Kosovo's bloodshed and build a peaceful future there. Today I want to speak to you about why peace in Kosovo is important to America.

World War II taught us that America could never be secure if Europe's future was in doubt. We and our Allies formed NATO after the war, and together we've deterred aggression, secured Europe, and eventually made possible the victory of freedom all across the European continent. In this decade, violent ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have threatened Europe's stability and future.

For 4 years Bosnia was the site of Europe's bloodiest war in half a century. With American leadership and that of our allies, we worked to end the war and move the Bosnian people toward reconciliation and democracy. Now, as the peace takes hold, we've been steadily bringing our troops home. But Bosnia taught us a lesson: In this volatile region, violence we fail to oppose leads to even greater violence we will have to oppose later at greater cost. We must heed that lesson in Kosovo.

In 1989 Serbia stripped away Kosovo's autonomy. A year ago Serbian forces launched a brutal crackdown against Kosovo's ethnic Albanians. Fighting and atrocities intensified, and hundreds of thousands of people were driven from their

homes. Last fall, using diplomacy backed by the threat of NATO force, we averted a humanitarian crisis and slowed the fighting. But now it's clear that only a strong peace agreement can end it.

America has a national interest in achieving this peace. If the conflict persists, there likely will be a tremendous loss of life and a massive refugee crisis in the middle of Europe. There is a serious risk the hostilities would spread to the neighboring new democracies of Albania and Macedonia, and reignite the conflict in Bosnia we worked so hard to stop. It could even involve our NATO Allies Greece and Turkey. If we wait until casualties mount and war spreads, any effort to stop it will come at a higher price, under more dangerous conditions. The time to stop the war is right now.

With our NATO Allies and Russia, we have offered a comprehensive plan to restore peace and return self-government to Kosovo. NATO has authorized airstrikes if Serbia fails to comply with its previous commitments to withdraw forces and fails to support a peace accord. At the same time, we've made it clear to the Kosovo Albanians that if they reject our plan or continue to wage war, they will not have our support.

There are serious obstacles to overcome at the current talks. It is increasingly clear that this effort can only succeed if it includes a NATO-led peace implementation force that gives both sides the confidence to lay down their arms. It's also clear that if there is a real peace,