

Mar. 8 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Statement on the Kennedy-Murray Amendment to Proposed Education Flexibility Partnership Legislation

March 8, 1999

The Republican leadership continues to block a vote on an amendment to finish the job of hiring 100,000 teachers to reduce class size. Communities across the country need to know that Congress will live up to the bipartisan commitment we made last fall to fund this effort.

The American people expect us to work together to improve the education of our students. I call on the Republican leadership to allow an up-or-down vote on more teachers and smaller classes.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Report on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty Compliance

March 8, 1999

Dear _____:

In accordance with Condition (5)(C) of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Document Agreed Among the States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) of November 19, 1990, adopted by the Senate of the United States on May 14, 1997, enclosed is the Report on CFE Compliance.

The Report is provided in both a classified and unclassified version.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; and Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Remarks to the Community at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras

March 9, 1999

President Flores, Colonel Ramirez, General Wilhelm, Colonel Rosner, members of the Honduran and American militaries, to the people of Honduras, the American delegation and Members of Congress who came here with me, ladies and gentlemen. Yesterday in Nicaragua, today in Honduras, we see that this disaster has taught us that what happens to one in the Americas affects us all. It reminds us that in good times and bad, *todos somos Americanos*.

Mr. President, I thank you for your kind words about the First Lady. I spoke with Hillary last night, and she asked me to give you her best. She remembers so well her trip here, and she wishes you well.

Mr. President, as our military leaders know, at this Honduran air base, our Armed Forces trained together for this sort of disaster just a few months before the storm. When the real test came, they passed with flying colors.

This long runway, turned into a lifeline, connected the countries all over the world. Over 47 million pounds of supplies came through here. Helicopters performed daring rescues and delivered food; engineers repaired roads; medical teams gave treatment and comfort; relief workers provided clean water, built schools and shelters, and restored faith in the future that nearly washed away.

Operation Fuerte Apoyo turned into one of the largest humanitarian missions performed by

the United States military since the Berlin airlift 50 years ago. To all who were a part of it, I thank you for your courage, your confidence, your compassion.

I believe the United States must do more. I have asked Congress for \$956 million to support the reconstruction effort in Central America. We expect almost a third of that to come to Honduras to improve public health, to build homes and schools, to rebuild roads so farmers can move their produce to market, and to prepare for future hurricanes. It will also forgive and defer Honduran debt, and it will be targeted to local communities to make sure the people who need it get the assistance.

I would also like to announce \$56 million to expand our New Horizons program which brings civilian guardsmen and reservists to the region for 2 weeks of training and relief work.

Mr. President, I know Hondurans are determined not just to rebuild but actually to create something better out of this tragedy: to build a reconstruction that protects the environment so that people are not exposed to unnecessary risks in the next storm; to build a reconstruction that ensures that those who suffered most participate fully and benefit equally; to build a reconstruction that consolidates democracy by engaging local government, NGO's, and the private sector.

I would like to especially thank the members of our Armed Forces for their hard work to advance these goals, for their enthusiasm and good cheer, even when you have to sleep in hooches in Tent City—[laughter]—for your cooperation between the services and between our U.S. personnel and our Honduran hosts. You have shown the people of Central America the true colors of our men and women in uniform.

Today I am proud to announce the award of Humanitarian Service Medals to all those members of the U.S. Armed Forces who served in support of the relief effort in Central America, and to announce that I have just presented

to Colonel Rosner a Joint Meritorious Unit Award to JTF Bravo for its sustained commitment to our mission in this region. Congratulations on a job well done.

Later today I will see the Juan Molina Bridge in Tegucigalpa. It was built jointly with U.S. assistance and Honduran efforts. I can't think of a better symbol of JTF Bravo's efforts or our cooperation, building bridges between people and nations in Central America, with Central America itself the bridge between North and South America.

In this tragedy's aftermath, Hondurans and Americans have given new meaning to the words written by Juan Molina in his poem "Eagles and Condors": *Pueblos Americanos en este continente debemos ser hermanos*.

Not far from here is Comayagua, the old capital of Honduras, built because it was near the center of Central America and of the entire New World. That city boasts a clock said to be the oldest in the Americas, made by Spanish Moors in the 12th century. When that clock began ticking about 900 years ago, the world was a smaller place in every way. Now that clock is ticking away the final hours and days of the 20th century, headed toward a new millennium. But one thing remains as true today as the day the clock was built: We humans still have the urge to chart a new course for the future and the obligation to make it a better one for our children.

Thanks to your work here, a new and better world truly lies within our grasp. Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in Hangar 1. In his remarks, he referred to President Carlos Roberto Flores of Honduras; Col. Alberto Ramirez-Mathia, Honduran Base Commander; Gen. Charles E. Wilhelm, USMC, Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command; and Col. Elliot J. Rosner, USA, Commander, Joint Task Force Bravo.