

May 16 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

endorsing what you are trying to do in Kosovo.” And he said, “You see, we know something about ethnic cleansing.” And he said, “We’d like—and here we are in the White House today, and we can’t turn away from this.”

And then this young man across the room in the circle stood up, and he said—he had this beautiful Indian jewelry around his neck. And I mean, when this guy started talking, it just took all the oxygen out of the room. He was very dignified, and he said, “Mr. President,” he said, “My two uncles—I had two uncles. One was on the beach at Normandy. The other was the first Native American fighter pilot in our history.” He said, “My great-great-grandfather was slaughtered by the American 7th Cavalry at Wounded Knee.” He said, “We’ve come a long way from Wounded Knee, to my uncles, to me standing here in the Roosevelt Room, talking to the President.” He said, “I just have one child. He means more to me than anything. But I would be honored to have him go to fight against the destruction of the people of

Kosovo, so they don’t have to go through all that we have been through.”

And I thought to myself, I just wish every American could see this. This is what I ran for President to lift up.

So remember that. If we can learn to get along together and work together and stand for our common humanity, then you and talented people like you all over this country, you’ll figure out how to solve the rest of this stuff. It’s the most important thing.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 p.m. in a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Brian L. and Myra Greenspun, and their daughter, Amy; Nevada State Athletic Commission Chairman Elias Ghanem and his wife, Jody; Timothy McVeigh, who was convicted of bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK; Tex Hall, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (the Three Affiliated Tribes); and Gregg Bourland, chairman, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Statement on the Election of Ehud Barak as Prime Minister of Israel

May 17, 1999

On behalf of the American people, I want to extend my warmest congratulations to Ehud Barak upon his election as Israel’s new Prime Minister. The people of Israel have given the new Prime Minister a strong mandate.

I have just spoken with Prime Minister Netanyahu to thank him for his dedicated service to Israel. I also spoke with Prime Minister-

elect Barak to congratulate him and reaffirm our Nation’s steadfast support for Israel and its people. I will continue to work energetically for a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace that strengthens Israel’s security. I look forward to working closely with Ehud Barak and his new government as they strive to reach that goal with their Palestinian and Arab partners.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters

May 18, 1999

President Clinton. Well, let me just begin by saying how delighted I am to have His Majesty here today. The United States values our relationship with Jordan very much. We hope to have a discussion about the opportunity and the obligation we have to continue the peace proc-

ess in the Middle East. I think we’ve both talked to Prime Minister-elect Barak about that.

And we are also very much committed to Jordan’s economic renewal. And the supplemental appropriation bill now working its way through the Congress has, among other things,

\$100 million in support for Jordan, and I believe it will pass in the next few days, so I'm very encouraged by that.

And I'm delighted to have you here, Your Majesty.

Israeli Election and Middle East Peace Process

Q. What would be the first step, Mr. President, towards a renewal, a revival of the peace process? Do you have anything in mind, I mean, have you set any dates?

President Clinton. No. Well, we have to, first of all, await the formation of a government in Israel. They probably have only known for a few hours what the distribution of the vote is by parties, in terms of what the composition of the Knesset will be. And so I think General Barak is entitled to a few days to put a government together.

Q. Why do you have so many hopes about this? I mean, why are you suddenly encouraged?

President Clinton. Well, I think that, clearly, the whole issue of the peace process was an issue; and I think because of his military service, the question of General Barak's devotion to the security of Israel is not in question. But he has evidenced an intention to continue the peace process. And if he's willing to do it, I think that we're certainly both willing to do it and we're hopeful that we'll have a chance to do so.

Q. Mr. President, what can the United States do to help further this peace process at this point?

President Clinton. Well, we have an accord at Wye to implement, and we have a lot of work to do on the final status issues. I think the roadmap is out there. And we'll do what we've always done. I've been working at this for 6 years, and I'm looking forward to continuing. I'll do what I have done under all the previous leadership of Israel and what we have worked very closely with Jordan to do.

Jordanian Economy

Q. Mr. President, the U.S. and you, personally, have been very supportive to Jordan in the past few months. What immediate plans do you have now to help Jordan's economy, in addition to the \$100 million?

President Clinton. Well, that's what—we're going to have a conversation about that. I hope that Jordan can receive some relief on its debt problem from other countries. The United

States has already done about all we can on that; we've done quite a bit. But I think other nations could do more to help Jordan, and I know His Majesty has been working on that. And I would like to see more action on that, and I will do what I can to support that.

NATO Military Action in Kosovo

Q. Why is the United States, sir, stalling the use of Apache helicopters in Kosovo?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I think that's a mischaracterization. This is a military campaign with clear objectives. And military leaders will make their decisions about when and under what circumstances to use the Apaches. As General Clark and others have made clear, when the weather is good, as it generally is at this time of year, most of what the Apaches could do can be done with the A-10's at less risk.

But those are judgments there being made; I don't really understand this implication that the United States is stalling. They're a military asset that's there; they're there to be used under appropriate circumstances when the military commanders decide that it should be done. It's not a political decision in any way, and it should not be.

Q. With the air war now in its second month, are you giving more consideration to ground troops?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I think the air war has accomplished quite a bit, and there's a lot more that it can accomplish. I, and everyone else, has always said that we intend to see our objectives achieved and that we have not, and will not, take any option off the table.

But we are making progress, and I am convinced that we will achieve our objectives one way or the other. And I'm very hopeful, obviously, that the diplomatic efforts that are being made in the State Department and with the Russians will bear some fruit. But if they do not, we will continue to press ahead. But I do believe that they've done an excellent job and—now over 20,000 sorties—a great deal of what we have been trying to accomplish has been done. I don't think that we or our Allies should take any options off the table, and that has been my position from the beginning, but we ought to stay with the strategy we have and work it through to the end.

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Jordan-U.S. Relations/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Your Majesty, what do you hope your talks with the President will result in? And do you think the climate in Israel now is more conducive to making progress in the peace process?

King Abdullah. Well, I think we have many issues to discuss with the President, and one of the main things is to thank the overwhelming support that the President has shown Jordan over the many years, but especially with the passing away of His Majesty. And again, the President went out of his way, and the American administration and Government, to support us through this very difficult time.

Vis-a-vis, obviously, the elections in Israel were very, very optimistic. I just had the opportunity to speak to Prime Minister-elect Barak and wish him well. And we had the opportunity of seeing him in Jordan only several days ago, and we see eye-to-eye on many issues, and we're very optimistic of taking the peace process forward.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak of Israel; and Gen. Wesley K. Clark, USA, Supreme Allied Commander Europe. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Withdrawal of the Nomination of J. Brian Atwood To Be Ambassador to Brazil

May 18, 1999

Today Brian Atwood asked me to withdraw his nomination to be the United States Ambassador to Brazil. I have accepted his request with reluctance and regret.

Few people in public life have better combined the qualities of professional competence and moral purpose. Brian Atwood has served with distinction as Administrator of the Agency for International Development, making it more effective while tenaciously defending its mission and its independence. He has helped put the fight against poverty, civil strife, and disease in the developing world at the heart of our foreign policy, where it belongs, and where I am confident it will stay. When I asked him last month to lead America's effort to bring aid to the refu-

gees escaping Kosovo, I knew we would be getting the very best. That is what America gets every time Brian Atwood goes to work.

In his statement today, he said that Washington owes us nothing but the "opportunity to serve." I believe we owe Brian Atwood something more: our gratitude for continually making a difference in the lives of millions of people around the world.

I thank him for his many contributions and for his willingness to stay on as our AID Administrator, where he is doing an outstanding job as our Kosovo humanitarian coordinator. And I am confident he will have many opportunities to serve our Nation again.

Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Require Child Safety Locks for Guns

May 18, 1999

I want to commend the Senate for reversing its position of last year and voting overwhelmingly today to require that child safety locks be provided with every gun sold. This was a courageous, commonsense vote that will help

prevent tragic shootings and gun-related accidents in the future.

I also want to thank Speaker Hastert for agreeing that we should close the gun show