

Security Council resolutions. The United States looks forward to the day when Iraq rejoins the family of nations as a responsible and law-abiding member. I appreciate the support of the Congress for our efforts and shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks on Departure for Littleton, Colorado *May 20, 1999*

School Violence

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I have just met with my foreign policy team, but before I speak on the situation in Kosovo, I want to say a few words about school violence. As all of you know, in a few moments I am leaving for Littleton, Colorado, where Hillary and I will meet with students and families from Columbine High School.

The news this morning of another school shooting, this one in Rockdale County in suburban Atlanta, is deeply troubling to me, as it is to all Americans. We thank God that the injuries to the students do not seem to be life threatening. This incident, again, should underscore how profoundly important it is that all Americans come together in the face of these events to protect all of our children from violence.

There is debate going on in the Senate today relevant to that, and we must press ahead aggressively with the national campaign that we met about here a week ago Monday. We have got to do this.

Situation in the Balkans

The national security team has just briefed me on what has been accomplished to date in Kosovo by the air campaign, on the progress of our diplomacy with our allies in Russia, on the humanitarian situation on the ground. I want to speak about some of the recent developments, but first I want to say a word about one person who has been critical to our efforts in Kosovo, and indeed, to our entire national security program. I am pleased to announce that I have nominated General Hugh Shelton to a second term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Over the last 2 years, he has provided extraordinary leadership, unwavering dedication to our men and women in uniform, unstinting efforts on behalf of military readiness and modernization. Our Nation is fortunate that this critical post will continue to be filled by someone of his experience, ability, and character.

Now, he also has, as all of you have noticed, great stature. We were joking in there a few moments ago, in a situation that is not really funny, that we had a vote about whether I should renominate General Shelton; and Secretary Cohen, Secretary Albright, Mr. Berger, and I voted for it, and he voted against it. But we overruled him, and he's going to serve another term.

Let me say that our effort in Kosovo was strengthened by the vote in the House of Representatives to approve the supplemental funding we requested last month. It is absolutely imperative that the Senate follow suit without delay. The measure will allow us to keep bringing aid to the refugees until they go home, to help the neighboring countries feeling the brunt of the crisis. Most important, it will give our military what it needs to see its mission through while maintaining the readiness of our forces around the world.

As all of you know, there are some things in the bill that I did not support, but it is terribly important that this aid be released as soon as possible to those other countries and to the refugees and that we get the support for the military. I will sign the bill as soon as it gets here, and it is important that it be passed without delay.

Now, let me again say what we are doing. The refugees must go home with security and self-government. The Serbian forces must leave

Kosovo. An international security force with NATO at its core must deploy to protect people of every ethnicity and faith in Kosovo. On this, our country is speaking with a single voice, as we see by the strong bipartisan support for the measure.

From the beginning, we have said that we believe that a peaceful resolution that meets these conditions would serve our interests, and we will continue to pursue one with our Allies and with Russia. We will also continue our military campaign until the conditions are met. I believe the campaign is working. Each day we hear reports of desertions in the Serbian Army, dissension in Belgrade, unrest in Serbian communities. President Milosevic should know that he cannot change the fundamental terms that we have outlined, because they are simply what is required for the Kosovars to go home and live in peace.

The question is not whether ethnic cleansing will be reversed but how much of the military will be destroyed because of his intransigence along the way; how much damage will be done to Serbia because of his delays? NATO is united in our determination to persist as long as it takes to achieve these goals.

Let me just make one other point about Kosovo. In the last few days, we have seen more disturbing evidence of the atrocities committed against innocent Kosovars, including some of the first photographic proof of massacres of unarmed people. In trying to divert attention from these crimes, Serbian forces are only committing more by placing civilians around military targets. It's like pushing someone in front of an oncoming train and then trying to blame the train for running them over. We will not allow this cruel tactic to deceive or divert us from our goal. We need to stay focused and patient in pursuit of our simple objective, to defend the right of a people to exist on their land without being subject to mass expulsion and mass murder. With continued support from Congress and the American people, that is exactly what we intend to do.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks to the Columbine High School Community in Littleton

May 20, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Do that cheer for me one more time.

Audience members. We are Columbine! We are Columbine! We are Columbine!

The President. Thank you.

Dr. Hammond; Mr. DeAngelis; President DeStefano and the State legislators, county commissioners; Attorney General Salazar; especially Governor Owens, thank you for being here. To all the officials who are here; most especially to the students of Columbine and the students who are here from Chatfield and Dakota Ridge. And Heather Dinkel, thank you for standing up here in front of this big crowd and making a fine talk. Weren't you proud of her? She did a good job representing you today. [Applause]

I want to say a special word of thanks to the families who met with Hillary and me before we came over here, for telling us the stories

and showing us the booklets commemorating the lives of their very special children. I also want to thank the fine young people who still are hospitalized with whom I spoke by telephone yesterday—two of them, Patrick Ireland and Sean Graves, are here today. They left the hospital to be here.

I know there are some other people here who are also still injured who have come. I thank all of you for coming. This has been a long, hard month for all of you, and as Hillary said, it's been a hard month for America.

You heard her say that part of our job in these last 6 years, more than we ever could have imagined when we moved to Washington after the election in 1992, has been to be with grieving people, after the Oklahoma City building was blown up and the Embassies were blown up and our airmen were killed in the