

June 22 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

together to develop cost-effective ways to provide these services. We must ensure that the quality of these services is excellent and that they are available to persons with disabilities of all ages.

Therefore, I am asking Secretary Shalala and Attorney General Reno to work with all interested parties to carry out today's decision in

a fair and effective manner. Although this may not be easy in some cases, we can do it by working together in order to advance the goals of the ADA. Our ultimate goal is a nation that integrates people with disabilities into the social mainstream, promotes equality of opportunity, and maximizes individual choice.

Statement on Senate Action on Steel Imports Limitation Legislation

June 22, 1999

Today's vote is a reaffirmation of America's commitment to open markets, to a strong U.S. economy, and to vigorous enforcement of our trade laws. The surge in steel imports has created significant hardship for many steelworkers and communities. But quota legislation was the wrong approach and would have weakened our economy and undermined our ability to tear

down unfair trade barriers in foreign countries that hurt our workers, farmers, and companies. We must and will continue vigorous enforcement of our trade laws. Our actions have already cut imports to pre-crisis levels. I will continue to work with workers, industry, and Members of Congress to attack unfair trade practices and subsidies around the world.

Remarks to Operation Allied Force Troops at Aviano Air Base in Italy

June 22, 1999

Thank you very much. Well, Captain Davis, you are a pretty tough act to follow—[*laughter*—and not short of self-confidence, either. That's good. [*Laughter*] I'd like to begin by saying that Hillary and I are delighted to be back in Aviano. We have been here several times to thank you, but never on an occasion more important than this.

I thank the Italian Minister of Defense, Mr. Scognamiglio, and his government and his Prime Minister for their leadership, their strength, and their support for NATO during this operation. They have been terrific, and I thank them.

I would like to also say a special word of appreciation to our NATO Commander, our SACEUR, General Wes Clark, who led this conflict to a successful conclusion. Thank you, General Clark.

I want to thank Colonel Durigon, the Italian Base Commander; Ambassador Tom Foglietta, our Ambassador to Italy; Ambassador Lindy Boggs, our Ambassador to the Holy See. And General Leaf, I want to thank you for your

leadership and your remarkable statement here today.

We have been on a long trip to Europe. I have been, at various times, with not only Hillary and Chelsea but with Secretary of State Albright and National Security Adviser Berger, a large number of other people, on a long, long week very important to America. But I did not want to leave without having the chance to thank those of you who protect our freedom every single day, who fought for human dignity and won its cause in Kosovo. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Since the beginning of Operation Allied Force, I have actually traveled to six other bases involved in this effort: in the United States—Norfolk, Barksdale, and Whiteman in America; Spangdahlem, Ramstein, Ingleheim in Germany. But I wanted to come here to say a special word of thanks to the 16th Air Force, the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing, because of what you have done in Kosovo, because of the role this base played in Bosnia. You have repeatedly put

your lives on the line to save the lives of innocent civilians and turn back the tide of ethnic cleansing. Thank you again for this noble endeavor.

In 79 days, you did prove that a sustained air campaign under the right conditions can stop an army on the ground. The Serb forces have withdrawn from Kosovo; 20,000 allied KFOR troops are already in. You also stopped a vicious campaign of ethnic cleansing and made it possible for us to reverse it. Protected by a peace-keeping force that includes NATO, Russia, and many other nations, the refugees are going back home. They have given new meaning, and you have given new meaning, to the motto of the 31st Fighter Wing. Thanks to you, they "Return With Honor."

Now that the conflict has been won, it is imperative that we and our NATO Allies and the others working with us win the peace. No one thinks it will take hold without difficulty. As more and more light is shed on those burned villages and even more mass graves than we dared to imagine, we become more and more appalled by the dark vision of Mr. Milosevic and more and more certain we were right to stop it.

We have to win the peace with the same qualities with which you won the conflict, with determination and patience, with discipline and precision. We learned yesterday again that this, too, is a dangerous mission, as we mourn the loss of two British soldiers who gave their lives trying to clear mines out of a house where they were placed solely to kill the returning refugees.

But thanks to you, the worst is already over in Kosovo. And tomorrow's dictators in other places will have to now take a harder look before they try to destroy or expel an entire people simply because of their race or religion.

General Leaf called you a championship team. Those are words well chosen. As he said, over 30,000 sorties flown, about 9,000 from here at Aviano, with zero combat fatalities; 2 planes down, both from here; in each case, the pilot recovered, first in 6 hours, the second in an hour and a half. That is a truly astonishing record.

And of course, we remember our two Army airmen who died in a training exercise in Albania. But I know, and I want the American people to know, that we could have had many more losses but for your skill and courage, because I know that there were many occasions when

our pilots avoided firing back at those who were firing on them because they were firing from heavily populated civilian areas. And I am grateful for that, as well.

So many of you deserve acknowledgement. I wish I could name you all. I probably will miss someone, but I'm going to do this anyway, because I love to hear you cheer when your names are called. [Laughter] It does me a lot of good—you know, we've been up for a week, and we're a little tired, and you get my adrenaline flowing.

So thank you to the Buzzards of the 510th Fighter Squadron—[applause]—the Bushmasters of the 78th—[applause]—the Black Panthers of the 494th—[applause]—the Triple Nickle—[applause]—the Star Warriors and Patriots and Yellowjackets from the Navy—[applause]—Playboys and Seahawks from the Marines—[applause]—the men and women deployed to Aviano from about 90 bases around America and Europe—[applause]—and the crews here from Spain, Canada, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. [Applause] You have to teach them to scream with the same fervor with which you scream. [Laughter]

I want to thank the people on the ground, the maintenance personnel, the weaponeers, the air traffic controllers, and the Italian citizens who work on this base and make its success possible.

I do want the American press to note that some of you have demonstrated abilities that will serve you well when you return to civilian life. The 31st Civil Engineers—[applause]—built a tent city here in just 4 days. And it is the envy of all the urban planners back home in America. There's no crime—[laughter]—decent sanitation, and extremely low unemployment—congratulations. [Laughter] Thank you.

I want to again, in front of all of you, express my profound gratitude for our remarkable NATO Alliance of 19 nations. This was a difficult, difficult struggle for many of our countries. It is a tribute to their people and to their leaders. When I visited Spangdahlem in Germany in May, I spoke with pilots who told me how good it felt to look out of their cockpits and see aircrafts from the other NATO nations flying beside them.

Now, under the leadership of General Jackson, with all 19 NATO nations working with the Russians and with many other countries, we are there in Kosovo to guarantee security,

self-government, and a chance for all the people to rebuild.

Again, I want to say I am particularly grateful to Prime Minister D'Alema and the Italian people for giving us the chance to call Aviano home and for their solidarity throughout this operation. All of you know that Kosovo was not a distant crisis for the people of Italy; it was an immediate threat and a difficult one, indeed. The threat is now receding before a new vision of southeastern Europe, one in which the pull of our common humanity and the promise of shared prosperity are more powerful than the old forces of hatred and division.

I want to say a special word of appreciation to all of you in our Armed Forces for just being here. If you think about—I want you to really think about it—you think about what Kosovo was all about. People were taught to hate people who were from a different ethnic group than they were, who worshiped God in a different way. They started out by being afraid of them and misunderstanding them. Then, they came to hate them. And then after hating them for a good while, they came to dehumanize them. And once you decide that someone you're looking at is no longer a human being, it's not so hard to justify killing them, or burning them out of house and home, or torturing their children, or doing all the other things you have heard. It all starts—it all starts with the inability to recognize the inherent dignity and equality of someone who is different from ourselves.

The composition of our Armed Forces, with people from every race, every ethnic group, every religious persuasion, from all walks of life, that make up American society—the fact that our military has all of you in it is the most stunning rebuke to the claims of ethnic cleansing.

Now, we're going home. *[Applause]* I hope it's home you're cheering for and not the fact that I'm about to quit speaking. *[Laughter]* But I just want to say to you, you make possible, by defending our interests and advancing them, the work of the United States at the end of the cold war, at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium. That is profoundly important.

Just think of what your country has been doing in the last week. I went to Cologne, Germany, to meet with the other large industrial powers of the world to plan for the new century; to change the financial rules so that we don't

have other financial crises like the one we've had in Asia which causes big problems back in America, as well as for the people who are caught up in it; to provide dramatic increases in debt relief to the poorest countries of the world, to lift the burden of debt off their backs they can't pay anyway, as long as they'll put the savings into keeping their children alive and educating them and giving them good health care and ending the scourge of poverty in their country; to planning for the future of Kosovo and all of southeastern Europe.

Yesterday I went to Slovenia, where I saw what we can build here, a thriving nation which embraces democracy, rejects bigotry, and looks toward the future together. That's what we can do for all the Balkans, for all of southeastern Europe.

And I have just come from Macedonia, from the refugee camps, from the children singing and chanting "U.S.A! U.S.A! U.S.A!," knowing they are going to go home, knowing they don't have to go to bed at night afraid, knowing you have given them a chance to reclaim their lives in their native land.

And I met with our KFOR forces from the United States and Spain and France and Great Britain and Portugal. And they are very proud to be succeeding you to make sure that this mission is finally won.

Now, I know this has been difficult for many of you—to sleep 10 to a tent, work 12-hour shifts, 6 days a week; hard for a young pilot to leave a wife and two young children, going off into uncertain skies; hard for some of you to spend last Father's Day alone, waiting to hear your child's small voice a long way away on a telephone.

I want you to know that I am absolutely certain that you are building a better world for your children and that they will come to know that—if not now, then someday—they will understand what their fathers and their mothers who wore our uniform have done in the last year of the 20th century to save the people of Kosovo, to defeat ethnic cleansing, to start the new millennium in the right way, as a time of human rights and human dignity and allied confidence that together we can build a future worthy of our dreams for our children.

You have done that. I want you to know that your children will know it. And I, personally, am profoundly grateful.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:26 p.m. in Hangar 1A. In his remarks, he referred to Capt. Charles E. (Digger) Davis, USAF, 510th Fighter Squadron; Minister of Defense Carlo Scognamiglio and Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema of Italy; Gen. Wesley K. Clark, USA, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR); Col. Orfeo Durigon, Italian Air Force, Italian Base Commander; Brig. Gen. Daniel P. Leaf, USAF, Commander, 31st

Air Expeditionary Wing; U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See Corinne Claiborne (Lindy) Boggs; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Lt. Gareth Evans and Sgt. Balaram Rai, British Royal Army personnel who were killed in an explosion in Negrovce, Kosovo, on June 21; Apache helicopter pilots CW3 David A. Gibbs, USA, and CW2 Kevin L. Reichert, USA, who were killed in a training accident in Albania on May 5; and Lt. Gen. Mike Jackson, British Royal Army, Commander, Kosovo International Security Force.

Statement on the 27th Anniversary of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

June 23, 1999

On this 27th anniversary of the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, we celebrate what can be accomplished when we allow all Americans—men and women—equal opportunity to be their best. By opening doors previously closed, Title IX provides women and girls with quality opportunities for achievement in education—in academics as well as athletics.

Today we reflect on the profound changes this legislation has helped bring about in American education, including changing expectations of women's achievements, lowering the dropout rate for women, and increasing opportunities in math and science. Since 1971, dramatically greater numbers of women have completed postsecondary, graduate, and professional degrees. Employment opportunities in many non-traditional professions for women have also opened up. The U.S. athletes in the Women's World Cup, currently being watched by millions

of fans across the country, are shining examples of the value of increased participation in athletics by women.

While we have come a long way, there is still further progress to be made in undoing barriers to equal opportunity for women. We must continue to work to close the pay gap and ensure equal pay, enable men and women to meet their responsibilities at work and home, and end discrimination in the workplace. Too many women are paid less than men, and too many still experience discrimination in the workplace.

As we move forward towards the eradication of discrimination based on gender, we celebrate Title IX and our Nation's commitment to equality.

NOTE: The statement referred to Title IX—Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, part of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Public Law 92–318).

Statement on Federal Reserve Board Action on Collection of Information Concerning Loan Applicants

June 23, 1999

I am pleased that the Federal Reserve Board has acted on my administration's request by voting this morning to propose, under the Equal

Credit Opportunity Act, that lenders may choose to collect information about the race and gender of individuals applying for loans beyond home