

July 16 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Statement on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

July 16, 1999

Today I am notifying the Congress of my decision to suspend for another 6 months implementation of provisions of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act that allow legal action against firms trafficking in confiscated properties in Cuba. I take this action because it is in America's national interest and because it will hasten the day when the people of Cuba enjoy freedom and democracy.

I allowed Title III to enter into force in July 1996. It has put businesses around the world on notice that by trafficking in expropriated American property in Cuba, they risk significant liability in the United States. Coupled with aggressive implementation of Title IV of the law, this provision has helped deter such activities.

Since 1996, I have exercised the authority provided by the law to suspend the right to file suit. This has enabled the United States, in efforts led by Under Secretary of State Eizenstat, to work constructively with our friends and allies for the promotion of freedom and democracy in Cuba.

During this last 6-month period, friends and allies, in both word and deed, have steadily increased pressure on the Cuban Government to respect human rights and move toward democracy. Many national leaders have publicly and privately pressed senior Cuban officials on the need for reform. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution, sponsored by Poland and the Czech Republic, condemning Cuban human rights abuses. The European Union renewed its common position, com-

mitting member countries to take concrete steps to promote democracy in Cuba. A number of nongovernmental organizations have also increased support to democratic groups on the island.

The Cuban Government's disgraceful human rights record underscores the need for our coordinated international strategy. Showing disdain for universally recognized human rights, the Government in February promulgated a draconian law that criminalizes a wide range of democratic activities, including any journalism independent of the state. After a closed trial in March, the regime sentenced four courageous leaders of the internal dissident working group to harsh prison sentences merely for speaking out about their nation's future. International condemnation of these acts has been clear and swift. Countries long eager for warm relations with the Castro regime have clearly reassessed the wisdom of that approach.

The growing international consensus on the need for concrete steps to promote democracy in Cuba gives us confidence that our multilateral strategy is working. It is sending a strong message to the Cuban Government that the time for change is now and a strong message to the Cuban people that we stand with them in their efforts to build a democratic future. I once again pledge my administration's strongest efforts to work with our friends and hasten the day when our Cuban brothers and sisters enjoy the rights and freedoms that we all cherish.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

July 16, 1999

Dear _____:

Pursuant to section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-114), (the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond August

1, 1999, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted

Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, and Sam Gejdenson, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Tom Harkin in Des Moines July 16, 1999

Thank you very much. First of all, thank you, Jerry, for having me in your home. The last time, he took me to his golf club; now, he takes me to his home. I can't wait for my third trip. *[Laughter]*

Thank you, Linda. Thank you all for being here. Governor, thanks for spending the day with me, with your Lieutenant Governor and your distinguished array of officials and the First Lady from the great State of Iowa. I want to thank Tom and Ruth for giving me the chance to come down here and be with them. I want to say it's wonderful to see Congressman and Mrs. Smith. He did everything he could to educate me about agriculture before he left the Congress, and I did the best I could to learn. I'm a little slow, but he's working on me still. *[Laughter]*

Let me say to all of you, first, I want you to know that I wanted to come here to say thank you to the people of Iowa. We had a big crowd over at the middle school earlier today when we were promoting one of the many initiatives Tom Harkin is identified with: our efforts to get a modest tax cut through that will lead to \$25 billion in construction or modification or modernization of 6,000 schools in this country. And so we were over there, and there were, I don't know, a few hundred people there. And the air-conditioning was out, so the atmosphere was warm and friendly. *[Laughter]* Secretary Riley and I, having come from the Washington heat, felt right at home.

And so, anyway, we were there and having a good time. And I said, "You know, you folks in Iowa ought to be glad to see me; I'm the first guy that's been here in weeks that's not running for anything." *[Laughter]* And I must say, after 24 years, most of which—25 now—

most of which time I was running every 2 years, it's a little awkward for me to say that. But I want you to know that I am profoundly grateful to the people of Iowa for being so good to me and Hillary and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, for voting for us twice, for supporting our policies, for giving us a chance to serve.

And the second reason I wanted to come down here is I love Tom Harkin, and I am profoundly grateful. You know, I'm not sure—and this is no offense to the people of Iowa—but I bet you could get elected and reelected Senator from Iowa without being the world's number one opponent of abusive child labor in foreign countries. He just did that because he thinks it's wrong and because he doesn't want children anywhere to suffer when children everywhere should be going to school and growing up to decent lives.

Yes, he's one of the greatest advocates for farmers this country has, and we've got an earful again today about the terrible dilemmas that our farmers are facing. And there's a general consensus, I think, on what causes it. And Tom and I both said back in 1994 or '5, when they passed that freedom to farm bill, that without a safety net this would happen sooner or later; unfortunately, sooner came before later. And we have to act there, and we will.

He also is perhaps the foremost advocate for the disabled in the United States Senate, perhaps one of the two or three foremost advocates for research and development in new technologies in sciences. There is hardly anybody who serves in either House in the United States Congress that has the combination of wide interest, deep knowledge, genuine compassion, and effectiveness. I have rarely known anyone in