

Nov. 1 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority in Oslo November 1, 1999

EgyptAir Flight 990 Aircraft Tragedy

Q. Mr. President, is there anything new on the crash, sir? Has the Pentagon radar or satellite imagery been able to yield any clues as to what happened to EgyptAir 990?

President Clinton. Nothing that I've been briefed on.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. Chairman, what would you like the President to do to be helpful to your aspirations, as you put it?

Chairman Arafat. Not to forget that first agreement which had been started here in Oslo had been signed under his supervision in the White House. We cannot forget it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:52 p.m. in the Gamlebyen Room at the SAS Radisson Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on the Death of Walter Payton November 1, 1999

We were saddened to hear of the death of Walter Payton. In the long highlight reel of this life cut short, Walter Payton will always be a man in motion: breaking tackles, breaking records, clearing every obstacle in his path. From the first day he donned the uniform of the Chicago Bears in 1975, until his retirement 13 years later, Walter Payton missed only one game, and that was because the coach ordered him to rest his ankle. He followed a long line of great Bears running backs and became the greatest of them all. The record books confirm that. But individual triumphs would never mean as much to Walter Payton as a victory he could share with his teammates and with the fans who endured, season after season, the icy winds of Soldier Field. Walter Payton would not stop

running until his Bears were as great as the Bears of old, until they had again won the Super Bowl, which they did, in dramatic fashion, in 1985.

Walter Payton faced his illness with the same grit and determination that he showed every week on the football field. The people of Chicago and all Americans who love the game of football will miss him profoundly.

We would like to offer our condolences to Walter's wife, Connie, and to their two children, Jarrett and Brittney. Our hearts are with them today.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Remarks at a Memorial Ceremony for Yitzhak Rabin in Oslo November 2, 1999

Your Majesties, Prime Minister and Mrs. Bondevik, Mr. Mayor, President Ahtisaari, Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Barak, Chairman Arafat, Leah Rabin, ladies and gentlemen, today we bear witness to the wisdom of the Psalm

which says, "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." We honor a righteous man whose memory is everlasting, because he devoted his life to the security of his country but gave his life to the promise of peace.

Yitzhak Rabin's life was a lesson, teaching us that old fears and suspicions and hatreds can, in fact, be overcome, for he would be the first to remind us that he felt all those things, too, but he let them go; teaching us that there could be no security without lasting peace and no peace without charity for all and malice toward none; teaching us that the only final answer to violence is reconciliation.

Almost 7 years ago, those principles brought Israelis and Palestinians to this city of peace to find common ground. And today our friend brings us back to Oslo. We can almost hear his kind, but stern voice telling us, "Well, this is all very nice, but if you really want to honor me, finish the job." He would be pleased to see Israel's cause represented by Prime Minister Barak, his friend, fellow soldier, and fervent ally for peace.

In his last hour, Yitzhak Rabin, who was a shy person in public, sang to a peace-loving throng of Israelis the *Shir Ha Shalom*, the "Song of Peace." Its words sing out to us today: Don't say the day will come; make it come. Today, in honor of our friend and leader, we must all say we will make it come, a new day of peace that is more than the absence of war; a new day of tolerance and respect, of trust and shared destiny, when the fears of the past are released so that the hands and heart are free to embrace the promise of the future.

The enemies of peace remain alive and active. Even in this day we see their dark work. But the Scripture reminds us that evil can be overcome by good, and only by good. So we pursue Yitzhak Rabin's vision not only because we loved and admired him—although we surely did—but because it is right and the only way.

We have now a chance, but only a chance, to bring real and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors. If we let it slip away, all will bear the consequences: Israel still trapped within a circle of hostility; the Palestinians still saddled with poverty and frustration and pain; both and their Arab neighbors wrapped in an endless and pointless cycle of conflict.

So if Rabin were here with us today, he would say there is not a moment to spare; "All this honoring me and these nice words, they're very nice, but please finish the job."

The way ahead will be full of challenges for the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Syrians, the Lebanese, for the friends of peace here represented. President Mubarak and King Abdullah

will be important to our efforts. I am determined that the United States will do all we can, including living up to the commitments we made at Wye River. But the most important thing we can do today is to say to our friend, Rabin, we can still hear you; we are prepared to finish the job.

When President Kennedy was assassinated, Abba Eban said, "Tragedy is the difference between what is and what might have been." That is the way we felt in the months and years after Prime Minister Rabin was killed. Today let us say together we are done with tragedy. We will close the gap between what is and what might have been.

The other night my wife had to the White House one of the great scientists in our country, who is unlocking the mysteries of the human gene. And he said to us the most astonishing thing. He said all humanity, genetically, are 99.9 percent the same. And if you get any group, ethnic group, together—100 Norwegians—with another ethnic group—100 west Africans—you find that the genetic differences among individuals within each group are greater than the genetic profile of differences between the Norwegians and the Africans. Think of that.

Think of all the bodies that have been piled up, one after another, the young and the old, throughout human history in tribute to that one-tenth of one percent difference. Think about what brings us here today, that the greatest quality a human being can have is the ability to reach beyond that last one-tenth of one percent to unite in the common humanity of the other 99.9 percent.

Yitzhak Rabin led us in that great reach out, reaching across the last divide of one-tenth of one percent. It was his greatness. It is his lesson. It is his message to us today. Let us hear him, even as we loved him.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the Main Hall at City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to King Harald V, Queen Sonja, and Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway; Prime Minister Bendevik's wife, Bjorg; Mayor Per Ditlev-Simonsen of Oslo; President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland; former Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Leah Rabin, widow of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel; President

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Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research.

Statement on the Cyclone in India

November 2, 1999

On behalf of all Americans, Hillary and I offer our deepest condolences to the families who lost loved ones to the devastating cyclone that struck eastern India Friday and Saturday. It is gradually becoming clear just how much destruction was wrought along the seacoast and inland in those terrifying hours. There are reports that thousands of lives were lost and hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed. It is truly a national calamity.

Our hearts go out to the Indian people, and we are prepared to do what we can to help. The Government of India has an immense task ahead in providing assistance to the people who were affected by this tragedy. The United States Government is providing more than \$2 million worth of food and \$100,000 worth of tents and plastic sheeting to help alleviate the hunger and immediate suffering. I also encourage the American people to help through charities involved in international relief.

Statement on House Action on Proposed Legislation To Provide Assistance to African, Caribbean, and Central American Nations

November 2, 1999

Today's vote is an important milestone in our effort to build a new economic relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and deepen ties with our Caribbean and Central American neighbors. This legislation will help increase trade, enhance

opportunity, and boost economic growth in America and nations in Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America. I urge the Senate to pass this bill as soon as possible.

Statement on Senate Action on Appropriations Legislation for the District of Columbia and Labor, Health, and Education Programs

November 2, 1999

Today, by a narrow margin, Congress completed action on a deeply flawed spending bill that I will veto. This bill is a catalog of missed opportunities, misguided priorities, and mindless cuts. It forces America's schoolchildren to pay the price for Congress' failure to make responsible choices. I will not let it become law.

The bill, which includes the Labor/Health and Human Services/Education appropriations measure, makes a blind, across-the-board cut that will hurt everything from national defense to

veterans' programs, from education to the environment. It reneges on last year's bipartisan commitment to fund 100,000 teachers and reduce class size in the early grades, replacing this proven approach with a risky block grant that opens the door to private school vouchers. It fails to include a key accountability initiative to help turn around failing schools. And it short-changes many other priorities, including efforts to enhance worker safety, expand child care,