

Statement on Providing Disaster Assistance to Venezuela December 23, 1999

Today I authorized a \$20 million drawdown of emergency disaster assistance to support relief operations in Venezuela. This assistance, to be drawn from existing Department of Defense inventories, will augment the \$5.5 million we have already committed to Venezuela. These funds will support continued search and rescue operations by U.S. military helicopters now on the scene, airlift of food, shelter, and medicines, water purification systems, and other critical needs.

As I told President Chavez when I spoke to him by telephone on Tuesday, we are deeply

saddened by the loss of life and devastation that has taken place in Venezuela. The heroic response of the Venezuelan people to this calamity has left a profound impression on all of us. Through the efforts of our military and USAID, we will continue to do everything possible to help the people of Venezuela. Providing this assistance is not only the right thing to do; it also promotes our interest in ensuring stability in a nation that is a key partner in the hemisphere.

At this holiday season, the people of Venezuela are in our thoughts and prayers.

Christmas Greeting to the Nation December 24, 1999

The President. On this holiest of holidays, Hillary and I would like to wish all of you a very merry Christmas. This is a season of joy, a time for family and friends to rejoice in one another's company and in the magic of Christmas. This is also the season of peace.

On behalf of all Americans, I'd like to send a special greeting to the brave men and women in uniform who are serving our country in lands far from home. Thank you for the greatest gift of the season, for protecting our Nation and safeguarding the blessings we all hold dear.

The First Lady. At the dawn of this new millennium, let us reflect on our hopes, our dreams, and the gifts we can give to the future. So let all of us cherish the gift of every child

among us and pledge to build a world where all children, no matter where they are born, can make their dreams come true.

The President. From our family to yours, merry Christmas, happy new year, and may God bless you all.

NOTE: The greeting was videotaped at approximately 2:30 p.m. on December 23 in Room 459 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for later broadcast. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23 but was embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. on December 24. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this greeting.

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The First Lady. At the dawn of this new millennium, let us reflect on our hopes, our dreams, and the gifts we can give to the future. Let us all cherish the gift of every child among us and pledge to build a world worthy of all our children.