

June 18 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

Statement on the Ethiopia-Eritrea Cease-Fire Agreement

June 18, 2000

Today in Algiers, Ethiopia and Eritrea signed an agreement to cease hostilities. This is a breakthrough which can and should end the tragic conflict in the Horn of Africa. It can and should permit these two countries to realize their potential in peace, instead of squandering it in war.

I commend the Organization of African Unity, and especially its chair, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, for leading the negotiation of this agreement. I am grateful to my envoy, former National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, to Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice, and to my senior adviser on African affairs, Gayle Smith, for their tireless pursuit of a peaceful resolution to this conflict. The United States

has supported the OAU in this effort, and we will continue to do so. I have asked Tony Lake to return to Algiers to work with the OAU as we enter the next round of negotiations.

I hope this commitment by Ethiopia and Eritrea to stop the fighting also signals their commitment to build the peace. I urge them to use the next round of talks to produce a final, comprehensive, lasting agreement, so they can get on with the work of pursuing democracy and development for their people. Ethiopia and Eritrea are America's friends. If they are ready to take the next step, we and our partners in the international community will walk with them.

Remarks at a Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Reception in Houston, Texas

June 19, 2000

Thank you very, very much. Well, I think Representative Noriega did his family proud, don't you? I thought it was great. Thank you. *[Applause]*

I would like to thank all of you who are here, including the folks behind me: my good friend Bill White and my long-time friend Representative Al Edwards and Carlos Truan, whom I've known for nearly 30 years. And Antonio Gonzalez, thank you very much. And Billie Carr is still working her cell phone after all these years. *[Laughter]* Tell whoever it is I said hello, Billie. *[Laughter]* I love this.

I want to thank Representative Sheila Jackson Lee for being here. And Mickey Ibarra, who is my special assistant who works with State and local government around the country, I thank him for coming down here, along with Steve Ricchetti, my Deputy Chief of Staff.

I'm delighted to be with Southwest Voter Registration Project, and I want to thank you for all the work that you have done with me and the Vice President over the years, the work you have done to advance democracy, to bring

Latino voters into the process, to promote education and economic development.

I also appreciate the solidarity you have shown with others who also deserve to be empowered and to have a full portion of the American dream. And I want to acknowledge, again, Representative Al Edwards, who is here, because today is June 19th, which is known in the African-American community in the South as "Juneteenth." It's the holiday that celebrates the emancipation of the slaves in Texas.

And for those of you who don't know, basically, Abraham Lincoln, in what is now the Lincoln Bedroom, signed the Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1862. It became effective January 1, 1863. But most of the slaves who were freed did not find out until after the Civil War, because the proclamation ran to the States that had seceded. And formal notice came on June 19th in Texas, and it became known as Juneteenth. In the western part of the Southern States, it's still not uncommon to see these "Juneteenth" celebrations all across the South, particularly in little towns who have family ties going back to that period. And Al