

182 days on Vieques; this year they will be authorized for 90 days.

Second, to address the problems caused by past training, we will implement measures to meet the health, safety, environmental, and economic concerns of the people of Vieques. Measures we will implement include positioning Navy ships to reduce noise; development of a new ferry pier and terminal; creating a new commercial fishing area; temporary compensation for fishermen; expanding and improving roads; a bioluminescent bay preservation program; a job training program for young people; providing land to extend the airport runway; and a public health service study.

Third, I will also ask Congress to begin transferring title to land on the western quarter of the island to Puerto Rico.

In the event that the residents of Vieques vote to continue training on the island, in recognition of the burden such training places on the community, we will increase the investment we make to meet infrastructure and development needs. In the event that they vote for an end to training, we will dispose of the land through the normal Federal process.

To make this solution work, I need your help. I understand the deeply held views people have on this issue. I understand that for many residents the accident exacerbated old wounds about the effect the training was having on your quality of life. They reflect a distrust that, unfortunately, has been building for decades.

As a Defense Department panel found, we have not always been good neighbors on Vieques. But I believe this plan will help resolve the impasse over Vieques in the fairest possible way, because it gives the people most affected by the decision the ability to choose for themselves what the future of their island will be.

I hope I can count on the cooperation of all the people of Puerto Rico to implement the measure I have outlined, to allow the training of our troops to continue in a responsible and much more limited manner during this period, while addressing the long-time concerns of the residents of La Isla Nena.

I want to thank Governor Rosselló for his unceasing effort to work out a resolution to this difficult impasse. Puerto Ricans and the people of Vieques have contributed greatly to our Nation's security. I am very grateful for that. And I hope all of us can work together with our Congress and with the government and Governor of Puerto Rico to implement this plan.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The address was videotaped at approximately 6:15 p.m. on January 31 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was embargoed for release until 5 p.m. on February 1. In his remarks, the President referred to Gov. Pedro Rosselló and Resident Commissioner Carlos A. Romero-Barceló of Puerto Rico. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this address.

Statement on the Crash of Alaska Airlines Flight 261 *February 1, 2000*

In times of tragedy, the American people pull together as one and offer their prayers and solace to those in need. Today our Nation prays for the men and women who were aboard Alaska Airlines flight 261 and for their families and friends.

Since last evening, the United States Coast Guard has been on the scene engaged in search and rescue operations. The National Transportation Safety Board's Go Team arrives this morning, and a joint command center is being established at the Port Hueneme Naval Center.

Underlying all these efforts is a strong and heroic determination to save lives and to find out exactly what went wrong, so that lives can be saved in the future. Throughout this difficult day and in the days and weeks to come, we will keep the passengers and crew of flight 261 in our thoughts, and let us hope that God's mercy will shine on them and their families.