

to bring home comrades fallen in the war that ended before many of them were born. They spend up to 200 days a year here working to recover remains for American families.

We are also grateful for the service of the members of the Central Identification Labs, who help to end the anguish of not knowing.

Our Nation has made a commitment that we will not rest until we've achieved the fullest possible accounting for our lost veterans. But it is only possible for us to fulfill our promise with the cooperation and support of the Vietnamese Government and the Vietnamese people.

I want to personally thank the people of this village, this district, and province for your kindness, for coming forward with artifacts and information to help the search, and for working so hard alongside our service members and citizens. I also want to express the profound thanks of the American people to the Vietnamese Government for its support. Among other things, it sent engineers and technicians here to help us figure out how we can dig without destabilizing the railroad nearby.

The United States is doing what we can to repay the cooperation of the Vietnamese and their Government by doing all we can to help the people of Vietnam find answers about their missing, as well. I brought with me over 350,000 pages of documents that I hope will provide some of those answers to the people of Vietnam. Whether we are American or Vietnamese, I

think we all want to know where our loved ones are buried; I think we all want to be able to honor them and visit their grave sites. This common endeavor we make as friends is unprecedented in all of human history.

Once we met here as adversaries; today we work as partners. We are committed to keep at it until we bring every possible fallen hero home. In the process, we are committed to building a new future for the children of Vietnam and the children of the United States, a future of friendship and cooperation.

While working together to recover those who were lost in a long-ago war, we reduce the chances that any of our children will know war.

Again, on behalf of the American people, I would like to thank all the Americans who are involved in this astonishing endeavor, and all of our Vietnamese partners, who stand in the mud, who work at the screens to try to find answers that are common to our humanity and go far beyond our differences.

I thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. at the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting Excavation site. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Harry B. Axson, USA, Commander, Lt. Col. Rennie M. Cory, USA, Commander, Detachment II, and Brig. Gen. Kathryn G. Frost, USA, Joint Task Force-Full Accounting; and Nguyen Ba Hung, director, Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Persons.

Statement on Establishing Formal Diplomatic Relations With the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

November 18, 2000

On November 17 the United States joined France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in establishing formal diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

We take this action in response to the remarkable changes in Yugoslavia following the democratic election of President Vojislav Kostunica and the ouster of Slobodan Milosevic. We and our allies are committed to supporting this historic democratic transition. As a first step, the United States will provide about \$45 million in emergency food aid to help the people of Serbia

through the winter. We are also consulting with Congress on how to utilize the \$100 million in assistance appropriated for Serbia, as well as \$89 million appropriated for assistance to the people of Montenegro.

President Kostunica and his government have already made dramatic progress in reversing the brutal policies of the old regime. And by taking membership in the United Nations and other international organizations on an equal status with other successor states of the former Yugoslavia, President Kostunica has signaled that his

country is ready to play a constructive and stabilizing role in the region.

The democratic transition in the FRY, however, is far from over. The new government is faced with an economy destroyed by years of mismanagement. Members of Milosevic's regime are still in positions of power. Indicted war criminals continue to escape justice for their heinous crimes. But President Kostunica and

leaders of the democratic forces have clearly put their country on a new path, one that includes a commitment to the rule of law and peaceful relations with its neighbors. By establishing diplomatic relations and ending the FRY's isolation, the United States and other Western countries are demonstrating our commitment to supporting the new leaders of the FRY on this journey.

Remarks on Demining in Hanoi, Vietnam

November 18, 2000

Thank you. Ambassador Peterson, Ambassador Le Bang, Mr. Khoan; my good friend Representative Snyder and the other Members of Congress and our American delegation. I want to say most of all how much I appreciate the work that all of you who are engaged in demining are doing.

I thank the Vietnamese people who are doing this, the members of the NGO's. And I'd also like to especially thank the American veterans who have been involved in this endeavor.

The problem of landmines is a global tragedy, and 90 percent of the victims of war are civilians, mostly because of landmines. In all probability, landmines kill more children than soldiers, and they keep killing long after wars are over. This is the tragedy of war for which peace provides no answer.

Vietnam has about 3.5 million mines in its soil and about 300,000 tons of unexploded ordnance. Each year some 2,000 Vietnamese are killed or injured as they go about their daily lives. This year, at Vietnam's request, we began providing assistance to the humanitarian demining efforts. Since June, we provided over \$3 million to purchase equipment and help survey the countryside.

I am happy to announce that we will also be working with Vietnam to develop a computer system and a database to help pinpoint the location of mines and ordnance used here during the war. We have also worked for some years with NGO's such as the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation to fund rehabilitation services for victims of landmines, an effort that owes so much to the leadership of Senator Pat Leahy. Today our Defense Department is donating

more than \$700,000 in hospital supplies to Quang Tri Province for the same purpose.

Finally, we support efforts by organizations such as PeaceTrees and Catholic Relief Services to educate local communities on how to avoid landmines. The children's paintings we saw over here are part of that effort, and again I'd like to thank those four beautiful young boys for being here and for having the courage to help all the rest of us deal with this problem.

Since I became President, the United States has spent about \$350 million around the world to pull the hidden killers out of the earth, the landmines, to deal with the unexploded ordnance. We usually spend slightly more than half of all the money spent in the world on this every year. But I think we should do more.

I am thankful for all the work the organizations are doing here. I am grateful for the request that the Government of Vietnam gave, that gave us the opportunity to be involved here. But I hope we will all remember these children who had the courage to come here and share their artwork and who want to give the rest of the children of Vietnam and the world a better future.

There are millions of these bombs in the ground in Africa, millions more in the Balkans. They are the curse of innocent children all over the world. I hope that tomorrow all over the world, people will see these children and their drawings, and it will enable us to get even more support for the work you were doing in Vietnam and the work that must be done like this in other countries. You will have America's support until you have found every landmine and every piece of unexploded ordnance.