

Statement on the Korean War Incident at No Gun Ri *January 11, 2001*

On behalf of the United States of America, I deeply regret that Korean civilians lost their lives at No Gun Ri in late July 1950. The intensive, yearlong investigation into this incident has served as a painful reminder of the tragedies of war and the scars they leave behind on people and on nations.

Although we have been unable to determine precisely the events that occurred at No Gun Ri, the U.S. and South Korean Governments have concluded in the Statement of Mutual Understanding that an unconfirmed number of innocent Korean refugees were killed or injured there. To those Koreans who lost loved ones at No Gun Ri, I offer my condolences. Many Americans have experienced the anguish of innocent casualties of war. We understand and sympathize with the sense of loss and sorrow that remains even after a half a century has

passed. I sincerely hope that the memorial the United States will construct to these and all other innocent Korean civilians killed during the war will bring a measure of solace and closure. The commemorative scholarship fund that we will launch will serve as a living tribute to their memory.

As we honor those civilians who fell victim to this conflict, let us not forget that pain is not the only legacy of the Korean war. American and Korean veterans fought shoulder to shoulder in the harshest of conditions for the cause of freedom, and they prevailed. The vibrancy of democracy in the Republic of Korea, the strong alliance between our two countries, and the closeness of our two peoples today is a testament to the sacrifices made by both of our nations 50 years ago.

Remarks at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts *January 11, 2001*

Thank you. Those are the AmeriCorps rowdies over there. Thank you very much.

Well, President Freeland, let me begin by saying I'm delighted to be back at Northeastern. I remember so well when I spoke here to your commencement early in my term. I remember the honorary degree I got. Now that I have to make a living, maybe I can put it to some use. *[Laughter]* I remember the young man who spoke there, representing the students, all the students whose hands I shook and whose stories I heard. This is a great American urban institution of opportunity, and I am honored to be back. I thank you for that.

Mayor Menino, Mr. Mayor, I thank you for being my friend and for proving that the ideas that Al Gore and I brought to the American people in 1992 and 1996 would work anywhere because you made them work in Boston. Whether it was the economy, crime, welfare, education, you did it.

You might be interested to know, Mr. Mayor, we're still borrowing from Boston. Just last week

we announced that we're going to give Federal employees the same benefit you have given to Boston city workers, time off for medical screenings to catch cancer and other problems early on. Thank you again, Mr. Mayor.

And to your Representative, Mr. Capuano, I have never heard you give such a vigorous public speech in my life. *[Laughter]* And you even talked about things I'd forgotten I'd done. *[Laughter]* But your congressional district and this State have been wonderful to me. And you have been great, and I thank you. And I thank you for what you've done for them in Congress. And I want to thank Bill Delahunt, who has been so great on many issues but who's been particularly helpful in pushing our criminal justice agenda in the United States Congress, giving us the lowest crime rate in America in 25 years.

And I want to thank Jim McGovern for many things, but I think everyone in Massachusetts should know that Congressman McGovern was the number one advocate in Congress for one

of the most recent initiatives we announced, which is that the United States of America is going to provide a free, hot, nutritious meal to 9 million children in poor countries throughout the world if they will come to school in their countries. Thank you, Jim McGovern.

Now finally, let me say, I don't know what to say about Senator Kennedy. I met—Ted Kennedy I met in 1978 in Memphis, Tennessee, at the midterm convention of the Democratic Party. I was the Governor-elect of my State, 32 years old, looked like I was about 20. [Laughter] You all, in the last 8 years, have taken care of that. [Laughter] And they said to me that President Carter's administration called, and they said, "Governor, we want you to moderate this panel in Memphis on health care." And I had been a big supporter of President Carter, you know. They said that "We think that you can keep everything in a good humor. And on our side, we're going to have Joe Califano," who was the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. He was a very great fellow, by the way, and the number one advocate in America for doing something about the dangers of tobacco and a lot of other things. He had done a lot of great things. "And on the other side, we're going to have Senator Kennedy, who thinks that we're too weak on health care." I said, "You want me to bridle Ted Kennedy?" [Laughter] And I'm 32 years old, and I—so I said, "Okay, I'll do it." [Laughter] I just wanted to be on the program and see if I could keep up, you know?

So we had this incredible meeting on health care. And I don't even know if I've ever said this to him, but he got up and he talked about his beloved son and the health problems he had had, how he had managed to survive, and survives to this day, had a magnificent life, and how wrong it was that his son had done well because of the good fortunes of his family but that other families didn't.

And he made an impression on me that day that has lasted over these 22-plus years. And I promised myself that day that if I ever got a chance to give health care to more Americans and keep more young children like his son alive, I would do it. I owe him that, for 22 years.

And I have not had a better friend or stronger advocate in the United States Senate these last 8 years. And I can tell you that no Member of the Senate is more respected, even by the Republicans. They hate to admit it in public,

but you get them in private, and they'll tell you the same thing. He is the best and most effective Member of the United States Senate.

Now, in these last 8 years, Ted and Vicki and our families have become—we've become much closer. And he's taken a lot of risks for his friendship for me. I know what you're thinking, but that's not the risk you took. [Laughter] He let me sail his boat into the Menemsha Harbor. [Laughter] I come from a landlocked State, and he still let me sail his boat into Menemsha Harbor. I will never forget that. And all I could do in return was help send Hillary to the Senate to give him a little support, and I've done the best I could. [Applause] Thank you.

Three former Presidents have spoken in this hall, three Presidents in whose tradition and footsteps I have tried to follow: Theodore Roosevelt, the last great progressive Republican President; Franklin Roosevelt; and your John Kennedy. When Franklin Roosevelt spoke here in 1932 in the campaign, his first, he said, "We are through with delay. We are through with despair. We are ready for better things." That's exactly how I felt when I came here in 1992. And Massachusetts and the city of Boston, as you have heard, more than any other State in the Union, gave me a chance to work hard to bring better things to the United States. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I am here, more than anything else, just to say thank you. There are a few places I felt I had to go in the closing days of my term just to thank people. A couple of days ago I went back to Chicago, which is my wife's hometown, and to East Lansing, Michigan, where they have a basketball team you may have noticed. They come over here sometimes. I went there because those two States voted for me on Saint Patrick's Day in 1992 and sealed my nomination.

I went back to New Hampshire today because—anybody here from New Hampshire?—because that's where it all started and because I was pronounced dead by all the pundits, and the people of New Hampshire decided they would lift me up. And since they raised me up, I wanted to go back and thank them.

But as you have heard repeatedly, in election after election and in good times and bad, the one place that I knew would always be there to stick with Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and the direction we were taking America, was Boston

and the State of Massachusetts. And I could not leave office without coming here to say thank you. *[Applause]* Thank you.

Now, I mostly want you to think about the future, because most of the people in this audience are young and because America is always about the future. But I want to take a minute to walk down memory lane.

Eight years ago, when I came here, 10 million Americans were out of work. The deficit was \$290 billion and rising. The debt of the country had quadrupled in the previous 12 years, imposing a crushing burden on our children. Welfare rolls, crime rates, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, income inequality all were going up. What a difference 8 years can make.

The one thing that hasn't been said tonight that I want to say again is, I believe politics should be about uniting people, not dividing them, should be about ideas, not insults. We had ideas in 1992 that we believed could put the American people first and build our bridge to a new century and a whole new aspect of human affairs.

All of you who are students here will live in a time where people look, work, live, and relate to one another in ways that are profoundly different than the America in which I grew up. And it is important that we hold fast to the basic values of this country: opportunity for every responsible citizen; a community of all Americans; and that we then have the courage to implement ideas that will meet the challenges of this era. That's what I tried to do. I tried to make politics in Washington about you, not about the politicians and the pundits in Washington; about ideas, not about insults; about how you were doing, not how we were doing.

In Boston, when I took the oath of office, unemployment was 6.9 percent. Today, it's 1.9 percent. Poverty is down. Average income is up nearly 20 percent. Crime has dropped, as the mayor said, by more than a third, and we've been there to help.

The same thing has happened in the Nation. Unemployment is at a 30-year low. We have 22½ million new jobs, the longest economic expansion in history, the lowest minority unemployment ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment in 40 years.

Now, because we turned those record deficits into record surpluses in this last budget year—it's the last one for which I am responsible—

when it's over, we will have paid down \$500 billion on the national debt, meaning lower interest rates for college loans, home mortgages, car payments, business loans, more jobs, higher incomes, a brighter future for all Americans.

But there were ideas behind this. There were ideas behind getting the crime rate down, ideas practiced in Boston. You know, before I became President, I noticed out there in the country, looking at Washington, that most politicians thought the only way to be safe on crime was just to talk tough. And if you were just for catching whoever you could catch and putting them in jail and throwing the key away, you would never get in trouble on crime. On the other hand, you'd never lower the crime rate either.

So we said, "No, let's put 100,000 police on the street. Let's do more to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals." The Brady bill kept 600,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting hand guns. We put 130,000 police on the street.

On welfare, the Democrats defended the programs that supported the poor, as we should. Many in the other party said, "Oh, they don't want to work. We ought to cut them off." I thought that was nuts. I had spent enough time in welfare offices to know that people did want to work, but you couldn't expect people to go to work if they were going to have to hurt their kids. So we said, "Okay, require able-bodied people to work but train them. Give them child care, give them transportation, and don't take the food and the medicine away from the kids and the parents if they go to work." And it worked.

There were people who said, "Well, the cities are economic basket cases, and nobody wants to put their money there." I thought that was not true. And we revitalized the Community Reinvestment Act, a law that basically says banks have to put money back into their communities. It seems reasonable, but it had been on the books since the 1970's, and hardly any money had been put back into poor communities. In the 8 years we've been in—now, this law's been on the books for over 22 years—95 percent of all the money, \$15 billion or more has been put back into communities under the Community Reinvestment Act.

We created this empowerment zone program that the Vice President ran. We created community development banks solely to loan money

to people who couldn't get money otherwise. We did a lot of other things to put more housing in, to let poor people who were working have houses in different kinds of neighborhoods. The economic justice issue that your Congressman mentioned was very important, the environmental justice, because we found that we couldn't get people to invest unless we cleaned up urban brownfields, for example, and we stopped people from being exposed to various kinds of pollution just because they happened to be poor. All over the country, poverty in the inner cities has fallen by 23 percent, and wages have grown even faster than in the country as a whole.

In education, with the leadership of Senator Kennedy, we have reduced the size of the Federal Government to its smallest size since his brother was President. We got rid of the deficit and turned surpluses, but we more than doubled our investment in education in these last 8 years. Thank you, Ted Kennedy, for that.

Just this year—when we took office, only 3 percent of the classrooms and 35 percent of the schools in this country had an Internet connection. Today, 65 percent of the classrooms and 95 percent of the schools are connected to the Internet, and thanks to the Vice President's E-rate program, they can afford to log on and to use it for their students.

We never gave any money to cities for after-school and summer school programs. Thanks to the leadership of Senator Kennedy, this year in the budget we just signed, there's money to keep 1.3 million kids in the United States of America in after-school programs so they don't get in trouble, and they do learn their lessons.

President Freeland talked about the college aid program. The Pell grant this year will be \$3,750, a huge increase. Thirteen million families are taking advantage of the HOPE scholarship tax credit and the lifetime learning tax credit. The direct loan program has saved students \$9 billion in college loan costs. If your school is in it anywhere in America, the average \$10,000 loan is \$1,300 cheaper for an American student to pay off than it was when we took office. We are moving this country toward a more educated society and a more united one.

The air is cleaner. The water is cleaner. The drinking water is safer. The food is safer. We've cleaned up twice as many toxic waste dumps in 8 years as the previous two administrations

did in 12. And we've set aside more land in perpetuity than any administration since Theodore Roosevelt 100 years ago. And all the way, people said, "This is bad for the economy." It turned out not to be so.

We also have tried to help people balance work and family, raising the minimum wage, raising the earned-income tax credit for lower wage workers. One of the things I'm proudest of about this economic recovery is that, yes, we made more billionaires and millionaires, and that's good, but we also had everybody doing better. And in the last 3 years, working families in the lowest 20 percent of the income group had the highest percentage increase in income. This program is raising all of those.

I remember when Senator Kennedy and Senator Dodd and some others were pushing the family and medical leave law. It had already been vetoed once, before I became President, because everybody said, "This is bad for business. You know, it's a nice idea, letting somebody off from work when a baby's born or a baby's sick or the parent's sick or the wheels have totally run off in the family, but it just is something we can't possibly afford." I thought that was crazy, because I can tell you, once you become a parent—everything else in life can be going right for you, and if your kid's having trouble, nothing works. Nothing else matters. Nothing in the world matters if something's wrong with your family, all the success in the world, all the wealth in the world—nothing matters.

And I don't know anybody my age or younger that hasn't had some conflict between work and parenting, even upper income people. This is a big challenge for all of you, by the way, in the future. So the first law I signed was the family and medical leave law. And I heard all that going on about how terrible it was going to be. Well, let me tell you something. We've had the law on the books now for 7½ years. You know what's happened? Thirty-five million people have taken advantage of it, and 22½ million new jobs have been created. We were right, and they were wrong about that. You have to balance work and family.

The most important thing I worked on is embodied by the kids in AmeriCorps, our national service program. Senator Kennedy and I were together when we signed the bill on the South Lawn, and I signed it with the same pen John Kennedy used to sign the bill creating the Peace

Corps. In the last 6½ years we've had over 150,000 young people working in community service and earning some money to go to college.

It's not all we did. We also fought for stronger civil rights enforcement. We sought to reduce discrimination against gays in the Federal workplace and throughout the country. And I hope, by the way, Senator, now that we've got a little bit better Congress, I hope we will pass the hate crimes bill and the employment non-discrimination bill and the equal pay laws in this session of Congress.

But in just the last year of my service, at a time when most people say we couldn't get anything done because it was my last year, and besides, they were having a Presidential race and the congressional races, and everything seemed so divided in Congress, thanks to the support of the people on this platform and people like them throughout the country, we've passed the biggest and best education budget ever, the biggest increase in Head Start ever.

We set aside for the first time, in the lands legacy program, a permanent fund to buy precious lands and green spaces in cities from now on, all over America, to protect land—never happened before. We got the first money ever from the Federal Government since World War II to help repair schools that are in trouble, because we've got so many kids in schools that are so old, they're falling down or so overcrowded, half the kids are in trailers. We passed legislation designed to get new investment in the cities, the new markets initiative, a completely bipartisan initiative.

We did what I said. With Congressman McGovern's plan, we're going to provide over the next several years—if we keep working at it, we'll be able to offer every poor child in every poor country in the world a good, nutritious meal if they come to school. Sixty percent of the kids in this world who are not in school are girls. This is a huge problem all over the world, and just by feeding them we'll be able

to get them to school. That will change the whole future of the world the young people will be able to live in.

And that's just part of what we did. What's the point of all this? Here's the point I want to make for you, for you young people here. Eight and a half days from now, when I walk out of the White House at high noon on January 20th, I want you to know something: I will leave more optimistic than I entered. I will be more idealistic than I was the day I first took the oath of office as President.

This country can do whatever we have to do. We can meet any challenge. We can seize any opportunity. But we have to remember basic things. You really do have to put people first, and you really do have to believe that we all are part of one community. Politics is about addition and multiplication, not subtraction and division. It's about teamwork. It's about working together. And there are so many things out there for you. The best days in this country are still out there, but there are some big challenges out there. And I hope you will never forget these 8 years. I hope you will always be proud of the support you gave to me and to Al Gore and what we did.

But believe me, the greatest gift you could ever give me is to never lose the fervor I sense in this room tonight. Never lose your belief in your country. Never lose your belief in your capacity to change it for the better. And never get tired when you don't win every election. Bear down. Look forward. The best is still out there.

I will always love Massachusetts. Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. in Matthews Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Richard M. Freeland, president, Northeastern University; Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston; and Vicki Kennedy, wife of Senator Edward M. Kennedy.