

Statement on the Helicopter Crash in Vietnam April 7, 2001

Laura and I were deeply saddened to learn of the crash this morning in central Vietnam of a helicopter carrying 16 people, including 7 U.S. military personnel, who were on an important mission to find and recover the remains of servicemen missing from the Vietnam war. The families of the service personnel lost in today's tragic accident know better than most the contribution their loved ones made in bringing clo-

sure to scores of families across America. Today's loss is a terrible one for our Nation. Although not lost in a hostile act, like those for whom they search, they too have lived lives of great consequence, answering a calling of service to their fellow citizens. As we enter a period of religious holidays across America, may we remember their sacrifice and keep them and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters April 9, 2001

Federal Budget

The President. Good morning. I'm discussing the budget we're sending to the Hill today with my Cabinet. It's a budget that protects taxpayers, protects children, protects our surplus. It represents compassionate conservatism. It's a budget that sets priorities. It's a budget that recognizes there are some good programs here in Washington that need to be funded.

For example, the budget provides a \$21 million increase for food safety programs, \$1 billion increase for Pell grants for low-income students, \$350 million increase for childcare. We help children whose parents are in prison with a \$67 million mentoring program. We increase funding available to prevent child abuse by 66 percent. We fight crime—\$87 million increase for front-line prosecutors. We give \$75 million for Project Child Safe, which is a program that provides gun safety locks for families. It fights corporate subsidies. It eliminates thousands of one-time earmarked projects.

Washington is known for pork. This budget funds our needs without the fat. It also represents a new way of doing business in Washington and a new way of

thinking. The budget puts the taxpayers first, and that's exactly where they belong.

I'll be glad to answer questions.

U.S. Navy Aircraft Incident

Q. Mr. President, members of your administration expected the crew to be freed over the weekend. At this point, how can you not agree with Chairman Hyde that they are hostages?

The President. First, I just talked to General Sealock, who had a good visit with all 24 crewmembers. His report is that their spirits are very high, that they're doing well, and that's good news. Secondly, all of us around this table understand diplomacy takes time. But there is a point—the longer it goes—there's a point at which our relations with China could become damaged.

Q. Is there any more that you can do or say, sir?

The President. Every day that goes by increases the potential that our relations with China could be damaged. And our hope is that this matter gets resolved quickly.

Q. Is there anything else you can do? You said a week ago that it's time for them to come home. They're still not home.