

Carrickfergus in County Antrim. Every day, I look at those two old trees and think about our Nation's past and our Nation's future. Today, I will look at them with fresh eyes to think about Ireland's past and Ireland's future, the future of the people of Northern Ireland and the people of Ireland.

Thank you all, good luck, God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:19 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.

Remarks During a Meeting With Surgeon General-Designate Henry Foster and an Exchange With Reporters

May 26, 1995

Surgeon General Nomination

The President. I want to thank the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee for endorsing the nomination of Dr. Foster to be Surgeon General, and for doing it in a bipartisan fashion. I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to the people of Tennessee who stood with him, and especially to the young children in the "I Have A Future" program, who came up here and talked about how he helped to turn their lives around, helped to convince them to stay in school, to keep working, to turn away from drugs, from teen pregnancy, from the other problems that bother so many of our children.

This is a good day for the United States, and I look forward to going on to the next stage, and to working right through until we get Dr. Foster confirmed.

Q. Mr. President, what are you going to do if the——

The President. I would like for Dr. Foster to say something, too.

Dr. Foster. I, too, would like to thank the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee for a fair hearing and for moving this forward to the full Senate. I also particularly want to thank the person on that committee who knew me best, Senator William Frist, for supporting my nomination. And lastly, I want to thank the President, his administration, congressional Members, and my family

for supporting me so stoutly during these times.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, what are you going to do if the U.N. peacekeepers are harmed in Bosnia by the Serbs? They have threatened to retaliate on the bombing.

The President. We'll have to examine their actions as they take them. The United States is in a—I want to make clear the position we're in here—we, as a part of and a leader of NATO, responded to the request of the United Nations, which I thought was very appropriate, to deal with the shelling of Sarajevo and the shelling of civilians by the Bosnian Serbs, in clear violation of the understandings that have been in place for quite some time now. And we did that in an appropriate way against military targets, so that the taking of hostages, as well as the killing of civilians by them is totally wrong and inappropriate, and it should stop.

The United Nations, the forces on the ground and the United Nations Command obviously will have to analyze these circumstances on a daily basis. We will work with them, and we'll do whatever is appropriate. And I still believe that the action we took was appropriate. It was in response to the request from the U.N., and it certainly was provoked by the inappropriate shelling of civilians by the Bosnian Serbs.

Q. Do you have a backup plan if something happens? You're sending an aircraft carrier to the Adriatic? Does that have a——

The President. I can't comment any further on what's going on now. I think it's important for the United Nations, who have the forces on the ground, to be able to deal with this situation, and as the events unfold, I'll be happy to comment.

China

Q. Mr. President, why are you giving China MFN again, sir?

The President. Well, I haven't made a decision on that yet. But as you know, I said last year—and I believe—that we should continue to press China on the human rights issues, but I don't believe that singling China out on the MFN is necessarily the best way to do it. There are other countries with whom

we have human rights differences as well, and we have certainly pressed our differences with China, not only person-to-person, face-to-face with the Chinese but also in the appropriate international forum, and we will continue to do that.

And we also have other differences with them. I agreed to let President Li from Taiwan come here. I thought that was the appropriate thing to do. We won't always agree with the Chinese, but I think it's important that when we disagree, we do it in the right way, aggressively and forthrightly, but in the proper forum.

Q. President Yeltsin has called Mr. Major and Mr. Kohl complaining about the—[inaudible]—has he tried to reach you, and what would you tell him?

The President. Not yet, no. If he did, I would tell him just what I told you, that the United Nations asked for this; they certainly weren't put up to it, that the Bosnian Serbs went way beyond the bounds of acceptable conduct. There have been clear restrictions on bombing civilians and the shelling those areas for a long time now. I would ask him to call the Serbs and tell them to quit it and tell them to behave themselves and that this would not happen.

Surgeon General Nomination

Q. Are the Democrats ready to overcome a filibuster on the Foster nomination if it happens?

The President. The Democrats are not numerous enough to overcome a filibuster. But Senator Frist and Senator Jeffords put their country above their party today and did what they thought was right, and I think there will be others. There may even be some who may not think they should vote for him, Dr. Foster, who believe that it's wrong to filibuster a nomination of this kind.

In the past, when the Democrats were in the majority in the Senate, they often did that as well. They often gave Republican Presidents votes on their nominees, even if they didn't agree with them. This—it would be unusual and unwarranted if this fine man were denied his day in court in the Senate, and I don't believe the American people want that to happen, and I don't believe that

a majority of the Senate wants that to happen.

Q. What are you doing for the rest of the day?

The President. Working. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:33 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom; Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Executive Order 12961— Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses

May 26, 1995

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment. (a) There is hereby established the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (the "Committee"). The Committee shall be composed of not more than 12 members to be appointed by the President. The members of the Committee shall have expertise relevant to the functions of the Committee and shall not be full-time officials or employees of the executive branch of the Federal Government. The Committee shall be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

(b) The President shall designate a Chairperson from among the members of the Committee.

Sec. 2. Functions. (a) The Committee shall report to the President through the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(b) The Committee shall provide advice and recommendations based on its review of the following matters:

(1) *Research:* epidemiological, clinical, and other research concerning Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

(2) *Coordinating Efforts:* the activities of the Persian Gulf Veterans Coordinating Board, including the Research Coordinating