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Proclamation 6884—Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 1996

April 11, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Today, the nations of the Western Hemisphere share a greater commitment to peace and democracy than they have at any other time in history. This consensus has at its core the ideas that liberalized markets work, that democracy is the foremost means of protecting individual human rights, that free trade is the best mechanism to promote growth, and that all of these principles combine to offer hope for improving people's lives. The interdependence of our many countries ensures our united efforts toward these common goals.

We have seen remarkable success from hemispheric cooperation in recent years—from migration issues, to counter-narcotics measures, to promoting trade. This cooperative spirit energized the Summit of the Americas in 1994, where representatives from 34 democratically-elected governments committed themselves to democratic principles, effective governance, sustainable economic growth, and a cleaner global environment. This historic gathering recognized that peace and economic prosperity in any one country are contingent on the health of its neighbors.

We can also take pride in our hemisphere's abilities to address the challenges of our rapidly changing world. The Mexican financial crisis that shook markets last year was contained and reversed because of U.S.-led international support and the region's governments' redoubled commitment to economic reform. Similarly, the progress toward resolving the border dispute between Peru and Ecuador demonstrated the dedication of the Guarantors of the Rio Protocol and others to keeping our hemisphere on a steady course. Nevertheless, recent violations of international law and human rights are sad reminders that one country continues to refuse to join our family of democratic nations.

As we approach the next century, let us celebrate our achievements and maintain high expectations for the continued progress of our hemispheric partnerships. In doing so, we can ensure that the Americas will continue to prosper, integrate, and solve problems in a cooperative, mutually beneficial manner.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 14, 1996, as Pan American Day and April 14 through April 20, 1996, as Pan American Week. I urge the Governors of the 50 States, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and officials of all other areas under the flag of the United States to honor these observances with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 15, 1996]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 12, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 16.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Civil War in Liberia

April 11, 1996

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On April 4, 1996, small arms and mortar fire broke out in Monrovia, Liberia, apparently as the result of renewed fighting between factions led by Charles Taylor and Roosevelt Johnson involved in the civil war in that country. On April 5, groups of angry civilians set up make-shift checkpoints near the international airport and within the city to protest the destruction of their property by the warring factions. On April 6, the American Embassy began receiving calls from American citizens reporting weapons

fire and the movement of large groups of armed individuals in the city. Further violence, including reported hostage-taking, has continued.

On April 9, due to the deterioration of the security situation and the resulting threat to American citizens, I ordered U.S. military forces to conduct the evacuation from Liberia of private U.S. citizens and certain third-country nationals who have taken refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound wishing to leave. U.S. military security assessment and enhancement teams deployed to Monrovia the same day in order to reinforce and assist the American Embassy. Evacuation operations commenced shortly thereafter. The evacuation, designated Operation Assured Response, is being carried out using MH–53 helicopters staged from Freetown, Sierra Leone. A small number of U.S. military aircraft are supporting this operation from Dakar, Senegal. Approximately 140 military personnel from the U.S. European Command's Special Operations Command are involved in this operation and are backed up by forces from the Southern European Task Force, U.S. Army, Europe. I have also ordered the deployment of U.S. Navy amphibious forces to the region to transport evacuees, if required.

Although U.S. military forces participating in the evacuation are equipped for combat, the evacuation is being undertaken for the purpose of protecting American citizens and is not intended to alter or preserve the existing political status quo in Liberia. I therefore expect that this operation will be of limited duration. A number of our helicopters have been fired upon, but have not been hit.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect American citizens.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 12.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Labour Party Leader Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

April 12, 1996

Q. Good morning, Mr. President—[*inaudible*].

The President. No, not yet. I may have something to say later today, but I think it's not appropriate for me to comment yet. We're trying to find out all of the facts.

Okinawa

Q. Mr. President, on Okinawa could you tell us some of the reasoning that went into that decision——

The President. Excuse me? I'm sorry.

Q. On the base in Okinawa——

The President. Yes. Well, Secretary Perry has been working very hard on that issue to try to deal with what we think are some very legitimate concerns the people of Okinawa have about the noise levels, access to land. And Japan has been a wonderful security partner for us for a long time, and they still are. They pay the highest percentage of support for American forces of any of our foreign host countries. And we thought we ought to try to work through these issues. And the Secretary has worked very hard at it, and so has the Japanese Government. And so I hope we've got a good resolution here that will permit us to defend our own security interests and pursue our interests in the Northern Pacific and fulfill our commitments to our Japanese allies.

Thank you.

President's Taxes

Q. [*Inaudible*]—your taxes. Do you have any advice for the American people?

The President. I always try to pay them. [*Laughter*] I've got an accountant, and I tell him to resolve all doubt in favor of the Government and go on. [*Laughter*] That's what I've been saying for 20 years now.