AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Statement on the Situation in Kosovo

January 16, 1999

I condemn in the strongest possible terms the massacre of civilians by Serb security forces that took place last night in the village of Racak in Kosovo. This was a deliberate and indiscriminate act of murder designed to sow fear among the people of Kosovo. It is a clear violation of the commitments Serbian authorities have made to NATO. There can be no justification for it.

The perpetrators must be brought to justice. The Serb authorities must act immediately to identify those responsible. They must cooperate with the Kosovo Verification Mission and the International War Crime Tribunal. They must withdraw security forces, carry out all the commitments they have made to NATO, and cease their repression.

We are in close contact with Secretary-General Solana and our NATO allies. Together, we will work to stop the repression and prevent an escalation of fighting.

It is urgent that these murders not trigger a spiral of reprisals. Both sides have a responsibility to work towards a peaceful resolution of this crisis and for a settlement that allows the people of Kosovo the self-government they so clearly deserve.

Remarks to AmeriCorps Volunteers

January 18, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. First of all, I'd like to say that I am very grateful to be here at Regency House with all of you. I want to thank the residency council for making us feel welcome—Sarah Beaner, Kenneth Brown and others.

I want to say to the members of the press here—you know, the press, they all think that we're all on automatic, because they give us little notes here to read about every place we go. But I think it would be interesting for you to know the note I got on Regency House here: Sarah Beaner is the president of the residency council; Kenneth Brown is the past president and is now serving as the vice president, not such a bad idea. [*Laughter*] Regency House has 157 tenants. The tenant population is made up of seniors and the disabled. They are all current in their rent. [*Laughter*] Good for you; that's great.

Let me say to the mayor and Councilmember Patterson and Delegate Norton, I am honored to be here to participate in Martin Luther King Day as a day of service, as provided by law and in the spirit of what Dr. King said. And I am proud that I live in a city with truly outstanding leadership. Eleanor Holmes Norton has been my friend for a very long time and is one of the most remarkable women in any leadership capacity of any kind in the United States. DC is fortunate to have her.

The mayor, in his former life, was actually a member of our administration in the Agriculture Department. And you know, it didn't really offend me that we'd already torn the wall down by the time he showed up today—[*laughter*]—because he's working hard, and he's got a lot of things to do. And I feel good about what he's going to achieve. And, Mr. Mayor, you just stay on the job, and I'll tear a wall down for you any day your want, any time, anywhere, and I thank you.

I want to thank David Gilmore of the DC Housing Authority and my great member of the White House staff Ben Johnson who did used to be a former director of DC Public Housing. The others whom the Vice President mentioned with AmeriCorps—Deb Jospin, John Gomperts. But mostly I want to thank these young volunteers behind me.

Near the end of Dr. King's life, he envisioned a partnership in America across racial lines. He could never have imagined that America would become so diverse as it is today. But AmeriCorps, it seems to me, is the living, breathing embodiment of the way Martin Luther King thought all of America ought to work. And that's what I wanted to do when we established it.

You might be interested to know that in only 4 years, since we set AmeriCorps up and got it going, more than 100,000 volunteers have joined AmeriCorps. It took the Peace Corps 20 years to reach that milestone. And they have done unbelievable things to make America a better place: helping to deal

with natural emergencies, helping to build houses, helping to tutor children, helping to immunize children, working in a thousand communities across this country.

And if you just look at these young people standing behind me, you know they come from all different parts of America; they come from all different backgrounds; they had different kind of reasons for joining AmeriCorps. They came here after different points of experience in their lives. And I'm very, very proud of them, and I thank them.

You should know that today more than 100,000 volunteers are out there keeping Dr. King's dream alive. AmeriCorps members, seniors, students, soldiers are rehabilitating buildings, painting schools, cleaning neighborhoods, reading to children. They are doing what Dr. King would want us to do.

I also want to mention one other thing. The Vice President talked about the need to continue to fight discrimination. Dr. King believed that every American, regardless of race, religion, or background should be able to live in a home without discrimination. Today, on this Martin Luther King Day, I am pleased to announce the largest settlement in history in a lending discrimination for home lending.

Let me tell you about it; it will affect a lot of people's lives. Thanks to the efforts of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the leadership of Secretary Cuomo, the Columbia National Mortgage Company will offer—listen to this—$6.5 billion in home mortgages and extra effort to help 78,000 minority and low and moderate income families unlock the door to homeownership. This settlement was made under the Fair Housing Act which Congress passed just 6 days—just 6 days—after Dr. King was killed. He had worked for years to outlaw discrimination in housing. And many who voted for the measure said they did it in tribute to him. So here all these years later—31 years later, to be exact—we're proud that it's happened on Dr. King's national holiday.

Now let me just say one final thing. Yesterday, in the church that Hillary and I attend, they observed Dr. King's birthday with some special music. They had a wonderful singer from the Army Chorus, they did a lot—but one of the songs they sang that I love so well was one of Martin Luther King's favorite hymns, and it embodies what we are doing here today. The first line of the hymn is, "If I can help somebody," and the last line is, "then my living will not be in vain."

All these people are here not only because they want to help you, but because their lives are richer because of it. And we're all learning and growing. And besides that, as the press pointed out, it did the Vice President and me a lot of good to pick up those hammers and crowbars and tear something down. [*Laughter*] You know, we do this desk work all the time and we do this word work all the time, and there's not always a beginning, a middle, and an end. There was a beginning to that wall, a middle, and it is no longer; it is over. [*Laughter*] So we are very grateful that you gave us the chance to be part of this today, and we thank you.

Again, I want to say I hope all across America people will hear this. Look at these young people—they're here with you; they're getting something out of this, too. Their lives will be richer and better. They will be wiser sooner. They will be more sensitive and more understanding more quickly in their lives because of the experience they've had here and the other experiences in AmeriCorps. Every American needs to serve. And remember what Dr. King said: Everyone can be great because everyone can serve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Now, I know we're done, but I want to say a special word of recognition to Melody Scales and Beth McCarthy of AmeriCorps who work with me, and to Donald Stokes, who is a resident here. I'd like for them to come up and be recognized, since they worked with the Vice President and me. Come on up here. [*Applause*] This is our crew, and if you need a wall torn down, you couldn't do better than this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:53 p.m. at Regency House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams and Ward 3 Councilmember Kathy Patterson of Washington, DC.

Address on the Observance of Id al-Fítr

January 19, 1999

On behalf of Muslim Americans and, indeed, all Americans, I would like to send my best wishes to the Islamic world as the holy month of Ramadan draws to a close, and you celebrate the festival of Id al-Fítr. The month of fasting you have completed demands sacrifice and discipline. But it delivers a profound reward, the chance to teach people of every faith what is precious about Islam: its charity, its generosity, its essential humanity. All people in the world are moved by the observance of Ramadan, by the devotion and dignity that makes Islam one of the world's great religions.

I fervently hope that the new Moon will stand for a rising tide of peace on Earth, in the Middle East, Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Africa, every place where devoted people aspire and deserve to lead lives of fulfillment and self-respect. I especially hope we will see the lives of the Iraqi people improve. They have suffered for too long from oppression and war.

One of the central challenges of our time is to build greater understanding among people who practice different forms of worship. As the leader of a nation of many, many faiths, I pledge that we will do all we can to strengthen relations with the Islamic community around the world in the year ahead. In the United States, we deeply respect the Muslim Americans who observe Ramadan. And we look forward to working with Muslims everywhere, everywhere in the world, to build a world where faith and friendship can truly flourish.

As-salaamu alaykum.

NOTE: The address was videotaped at approximately 5:10 p.m. in Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building on January 12 for later broadcast on the U.S. Information Agency Worldnet, and it was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 19.

Message on the Observance of Id al-Fítr

January 19, 1999

Warm greetings to Muslims across America and around the world as you mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan and celebrate the festival of Id al-Fitr.

The month of fasting that you have just completed demands discipline and a spirit of sacrifice. But it also delivers a profound reward: the opportunity to show people of every faith what is precious about Islam—its charity, its generosity, and its essential humanity. All people in the world are moved by your observance of Ramadan and by the devotion and dignity that make Islam one of the world's great religions.

As you welcome the appearance of the new moon and the close of Ramadan, Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a memorable celebration and for peace, health, and prosperity in the year to come.

Bill Clinton

Statement on the Proposed "Affordable Child Care for Early Success and Security Act"

January 19, 1999

Tonight, in my State of the Union Address, I will outline my agenda to help parents struggling to meet their responsibilities at work and at home. This agenda includes an ambitious initiative to make child care safer, better, and more affordable for America's working families. Today Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D–CT) and many of his Democratic colleagues in the Senate have taken an important step toward reaching that goal by introducing the ''Affordable Child Care for Early Success and Security Act'' (A.C.C.E.S.S.).

This proposal, like mine, significantly increases child care subsidies for poor children, provides greater tax relief to help low- and middle-income families pay for child care and to support parents who chose to stay at home to care for their young children. This