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Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Decision To Send Certain United States Forces to Macedonia and Albania

April 4, 1999

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

Further to my report to the Congress of March 25 and April 3, 1999, under section 8115 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1999 (Public Law 105–262), this report is to inform you of my decision to deploy additional U.S. forces to Albania in support of ongoing NATO air operations to reduce the capacity of the Serbian military and security forces to conduct offensive operations.

In particular, rotary wing, artillery, and tactical missile systems will be deployed to establish a deep strike task force in Albania to enhance NATO's ability to conduct effective air operations in Kosovo as part of the current NATO mission. In regard to the elements of section 8115(a)(1)–(8), I am providing the following to supplement information provided on these elements in my reports of March 25 and April 3, 1999.

1 & 2. *National Security Interests.* I hereby certify that the deployment of additional forces to Albania as described above is necessary in the national security interests of the United States. This deployment will provide additional specialized forces to reduce the capacity of the Serbian military and security forces to continue repression and ethnic cleansing and to deter the threat to regional peace and security.

3. *Numbers.* I anticipate that a substantial deep strike task force, comprised of rotary wing, artillery, and tactical missile systems, together with supporting and security elements, will be deployed to Albania for these purposes. There is not at this time a definitive number of U.S. military personnel who will be deployed as part of this task force, but I anticipate that, at a minimum, approximately 2,000 will be required. I will ensure that the Congress is informed in a timely manner about the deployment described in this report when the information is available.

4. *Mission/Objectives.* The overall objective of our efforts with our allies in the region has been detailed in my previous reports of March 25 and April 3, 1999. The specific military mission of the strike task force deployed to Albania will be to support ongoing NATO air operations to reduce the capacity of the Serbian military and security forces to conduct offensive operations. The ground force component is for the support and security of the deep strike elements. Their mission does not include any planned deployment of ground troops into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

5. *Schedule.* Although it is not possible at this time to determine how long NATO operations will need to continue, we are determined to sustain this effort along with our allies as long as necessary to meet our objectives.

6. *Exit Strategy.* The duration of the requirement for this strike task force deployment to Albania will depend on the course of events, and in particular, on Belgarde's reaction to NATO operations.

7. *Costs.* The costs of the deployment covered by this notice, like the costs of the U.S. contribution to NATO air operations, will be paid initially from FY99 Defense Operations and Maintenance appropriations. An estimate of likely costs for these deployments is being prepared, and I will ensure that it is provided to the Congress as soon as it is available.

8. *Effect on Morale, Retention and Readiness.* In addition to the specific points I made on these matters in my reports of March 25 and April 3, I would only underscore and express my deep gratitude for the great pride, courage, professionalism, and enthusiasm of the men and women of our Armed Forces who are carrying out this critical mission.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 5.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll

April 5, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. I want to welcome you to the White House today. And before I say anything else, I want to say in this season of peace for us I know all of us will send our thoughts and prayers to our men and women in uniform in Kosovo and our prayers and best wishes to the many thousands of refugees that have been generated by that terrible conflict.

Now, let me first begin by thanking our sponsors who make this possible every year, and I thank the White House volunteers. I'd also like to thank the staff for preparing—listen to this—7,000 eggs for today's event. That's more than we ask them to prepare for a state dinner. [*Laughter*] I'd also like to thank Scholastic, Inc., for the Prescription for Reading program that Hillary mentioned and tell you all that we have tried to make this an occasion for family learning, for children and their parents to learn together. The Prescription is one example.

You can also see an electronic presentation on the White House at the CD–ROM pavilion. You can meet American figures in our history at the Historical Fun Stage. There will be a lot of storytelling sessions. We have a lot of old regulars here and a lot of new people, like Jamie Lee Curtis, who's come to join us this year. And we thank all of them for participating.

Now, I want to get on with the show, but I want to know: Where are the people for the Easter egg roll? Are we down there? Turn around. If you want to see it, they're down right behind us.

The First Lady. And over there, too.

The President. And over there. Are you ready? Where's our famous, faithful whistle blower? Hey, Bernie. All right.

On your mark. Get ready, set, go!

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actress Jamie Lee Curtis and Bernie Fairbanks, White House volunteer.

Remarks on the Situation in the Balkans and an Exchange With Reporters

April 5, 1999

The President. Good afternoon. I want to speak for a few moments today about the situation in Kosovo, the goals of our mission, and our efforts to respond to the humanitarian crisis there.

The weather is now clearing in the region and the air campaign is continuing. We're striking hard at Serbia's machinery of repression, while making a deliberate effort to minimize harm to innocent people. Serbian forces, on the other hand, continue their deliberate, systematic attacks against civilians, who are guilty of nothing more than being ethnic Albanians.

Mr. Milosevic has created a humanitarian disaster in Kosovo. He can end it today by stopping the killing. He could end the bombing. He could end the suffering of the refugees by withdrawing from Kosovo his military police and paramilitary forces, by accepting the deployment of an international security force, and making it possible for all refugees to return, as we move toward a political framework for Kosovo on the basis of the Rambouillet accords.

But more empty promises and token half-measures won't do the job. A commitment to cease killing in a Kosovo denied its freedom and devoid of its people is not acceptable.

If Mr. Milosevic does not do what is necessary, NATO will continue an air campaign. It will be undiminished, unceasing, and unrelenting. It will inflict such damage that either he will change his calculations, or we will seriously diminish his capacity to maintain his grip and impose his control on Kosovo. We are prepared to sustain this effort for the long haul. Our plan is to persist until we prevail.

We know we are up against a dictator who has shown time and again that he would rather rule over rubble than not rule at all, someone who recognized no limits on his behavior except those imposed by others. We have seen this kind of evil conduct before in this century, but rarely has the world stood up to it as rapidly and with such unity and resolve as we see today with NATO's coalition