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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

of 19 democracies, each with its own domestic pressures and procedures, but all united in our outrage and in our determination to see this mission through. In the meantime, we've got to do all we can to aid the victims of Mr. Milosevic's expulsion policy.

Before the Serbian offensive began, we pre-positioned 36,000 metric tons of food in the region, enough to feed half a million people for 3 months. We worked with the United Nations to ready lifesaving supplies at Kosovo's borders with Albania and Macedonia. But it is impossible to prepare fully for the chaos that this kind of cruelty inevitably creates.

We now have committed another $50 million, over and above the 100 million we had provided before the current crisis. Also at our urging, NATO has put its 11,000 troops in Macedonia to work addressing the humanitarian crisis. It is planning to deploy several thousand troops to Albania, not only to provide aid but to provide security for relief operations.

We've begun shipping 500,000 humanitarian daily rations for refugees in Albania, the first of which arrived in Tirana yesterday. Today a large shipment was delivered to Italy by the first of eight 747 flights. We'll be flying 10 missions daily by C–130 aircraft to Italy—from Italy to Tirana, and taking supplies from there to the border by helicopter.

The first of four shipments of tents for Albania will be flown from Travis Air Force Base in California soon. We're also shipping supplies out of bases in Germany for Macedonia, and we're preparing an additional 600,000 daily rations for that country.

Today, in Los Angeles, the Vice President is meeting with Albanian-American families whose relatives are suffering in Kosovo. Today Secretary Albright and I have named Brian Atwood, who is here with us today, the Administrator for our Agency for International Development, to coordinate our overall humanitarian response in the region.

He will head up a coordinating council that will include three other distinguished public officials. Julia Taft, our Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration will take the lead in response by civilian agencies to this humanitarian crisis. She is now in Geneva, conferring with the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees. James Lee Witt, the Director of our Federal Emergency Management Agency, who is also present, will coordinate private donations to the aid effort and help to ensure that they go where they need to go. FEMA will also provide its expertise to our assessment teams in the region. Finally, I am announcing that Lieutenant General Mike McDuffie, who is here, will be our military coordinator for this operation, which we are calling Operation Sustain Hope.

I hope American citizens will help, as well. We've established an 800 number. It's 1–800–USAID–RELIEF. Now, I know that's got 11 numbers in it, but we tried it just before we came in, and it works anyway. And it's easier to remember: 1–800–USAID–RELIEF. Any American can call and make contributions to private humanitarian organizations and can get information about the private organizations that are providing relief. Many of them are represented in this room today by the people who are sitting here, and I want to thank all of them from the bottom of my heart for their commitment and their tireless efforts.

Americans all over this country want to know what they can do. I can tell you, right now, in the short run, with all those people building up at the borders, the most important thing the American people can do right now is to make financial contributions to these organizations. They're there; they're organized; they know who the people are; they know how to deliver the relief; and we can get it done. We do need help. We're doing all we can. We need more help.

So if we can get this 800 number out—and again, I'm hoping that the fact that there are more numbers than normal in it will actually increase the knowledge of it—1–800–USAID–RELIEF. It will help a lot. I know the American people are profoundly concerned about this. We can tell by mail and the calls coming into the White House, and I hope very much that we will see a big upsurge in personal donations to help the relief effort as well.

Now, let me say in addition to that, we've got to do something to take the pressure off of Albania and Macedonia in terms of the sheer numbers of people that are there.

Many nations, from Norway to Turkey, have agreed to take in large numbers of refugees temporarily, until they can go home. As others do their part, we should be prepared to do ours, as well. Today I can say that we are prepared to accept up to 20,000 refugees. Our goal is to take some of the burden off the struggling frontline nations.

But let me be clear: The ethnic cleansing of Kosovo cannot stand as a permanent event. We cannot say, ''Well, we just take all these folks and forget about their rights to go home.'' I don't believe anyone wants to do that. That's not what we're about. But we have to help deal with the practical, immediate human problems these families face and that these frontline nations face. The refugees belong in their own homes, on their own land. Our immediate goal is to provide relief; our long-term goal is to give them their right to return.

Now, before I close, I'd like to say just a word about another important development in another part of the world, something that's been of concern to me for many years. Today the two suspects accused of carrying out the bombing of Pam Am 103 in 1988 were delivered by the United Nations to the custody of Dutch authorities, to be tried before a Scottish court sitting in The Netherlands. This is a moment much awaited and long overdue.

When I became President, we promised the families of Pan Am 103 that we would pursue the suspects in this case no matter how long it took. We have worked hard on this for years. I want to thank all the people who are still in the administration, and some of those who have gone on to other endeavors, for their passionate devotion to this effort.

For over a decade, the families have kept the memories of their loved ones alive. Now our determination and that of our friends in Great Britain and elsewhere finally has paid off. Finally, diplomacy and sanctions have produced the result we wanted. Finally, we have an opportunity to see justice done.

I know that I speak for all the American people when I say that our thoughts and prayers and support are with the families of Pan Am 103. And we thank all of those who are involved and who have played a role in making this important day come to pass.

Thank you very much.

Military Leaders' Support

Q. Mr. President, do your military share your goals in the operation on Kosovo? We have read many, many stories that——

The President. I know that.

Q. ——the Pentagon people are not with you.

The President. Let me say, I will answer this question, and then I think we might want Secretary Cohen and General Shelton to answer it, since they're here. And I want to give them a chance to comment.

First, let me say that one of the jobs that the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs have is to report to me faithfully the view of the Chiefs, the Service Chiefs, the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And they have performed that faithfully, so that when there is a difference of opinion, when there is even a nuance, they have let me know that, as far as I know, in every important matter. Ultimately, after all, I am responsible for all these decisions and must bear the burden of them, regardless.

Now, in this case, everybody's first choice was diplomacy. Let me remind—let's do a little bit of brief history here. In February of '98, over a year ago, this problem started. We worked on it through diplomacy and with the threat of NATO force, all the way up until last fall. In October we finally got an agreement that allowed hundreds of thousands of people to come down out of the hills to avoid starvation and freezing with the pending winter. We all knew—no one was blind to the difficulties of having to carry forward with any kind of military sanctions.

Now, that worked. Then the problems arose again this year. When the talks failed, we had a series of difficult choices. In the end, everybody agreed that of a bunch of bad options, our military campaign was the best available option to show aggressive action, to keep NATO's word, to keep our NATO allies together, and to give us a chance to preserve our objectives.

Secretary Albright made a point—I believe it was yesterday—that I would like to reiterate. We have a lot of tough questions to

answer about this operation. And I am quite sure that we cannot answer every one to everyone's satisfaction. But I would far rather be standing here answering these questions with these people talking about this endeavor, than I would to be standing here having you ask me why we are permitting a wholesale ethnic slaughter and ethnic cleansing and the creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees and not lifting a finger to do anything about it.

So I recognize that I cannot answer every question to everyone's satisfaction. That is a legitimate question; all the questions are. We are doing the best we can to keep the Alliance together, to be forthright, to be clear, and to achieve our objectives. And I believe we will prevail.

Q. Well, are the military with you?

The President. My impression is—and again, I think I owe it to the Secretary of Defense and General Shelton, to give them a chance to answer, because they're here—that everyone agreed that while there were problems with the air campaign, including the weather, which all of you saw last week, that this was the best available option for us to maximize the possibility of achieving our mission of standing up against ethnic cleansing, fulfilling NATO's commitment, getting the refugees to be able to go back home, live in peace and security, and have some autonomy.

So that's what I believe. But I want to—Mr. Secretary Cohen?

Q. Will you come back after they answer, Mr. President?

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

Q. Can we just ask——

The President. No, no, go ahead—I want Secretary Cohen to answer the question.

Secretary Cohen. Let me respond to the question. The President has outlined it exactly right. All of the issues, the military issues, were discussed by the Chiefs and amongst the Chiefs, and they looked at the options, and knowing that air power had limitations and knowing that there was going to be tough weather, a tough geography and a very robust air defense system.

And so those questions were raised; they were discussed; they were debated within the Armed Services, so to speak, and with the Chiefs in the tank. They came to the conclusion, unanimously, that the only option available other than sitting on the sidelines was to pursue the air campaign, given its limitations. There was no doubt or division on that ultimate decision.

That was not only made clear to the President; it was made clear to key Members of Congress, as both the Chairman and I briefed House Members and Senate Members on several occasions, and on each and every occasion, we raised the issues involved in waging a military campaign by air, everyone recognizing its limitations but ultimately understanding that this country could not sit on the sidelines and watch Slobodan Milosevic slaughter hundreds and thousands of people, which he was prepared to do, to drive them into the hills, to starve them, to have them freeze to death. We could simply not maintain any credibility as a moral leader in this world, and certainly not as a leader of the NATO force. So there was no question about the options, and this was the option that they unanimously agreed to.

Q. Mr. Secretary, the President has said again today that he will persist until the objectives are, in fact, achieved. You, yourself, have now said that everyone understood that air power has limitations. If air power has limitations and cannot achieve the objectives, what then? Abandon the objectives?

Secretary Cohen. The President did not say we could not achieve the objective. He laid out three——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—does not have limitations?

Secretary Cohen. He laid out—every military operation has limitations. There is no military operation, including ground forces, which does not have limitations. What the President said at the very beginning was that there are three objectives: Number one, that demonstrate resolve on the part of the NATO alliance—we've done that; number two, to try and deter Slobodan Milosevic from carrying out his campaign of ethnic cleansing and, failing that, to make him pay a serious, substantial price for doing so, and to take his military down as best we can through the air power.

Those were the objectives laid out. That is exactly what the Chiefs have signed up to.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); and Pan Am 103 bombing suspects Lamen Khalifa Fhimah and Abdal Basset Ali al-Megrahi.

Statement on the Delivery of the Suspects Accused of the 1988 Bombing of Pan Am Flight 103

April 5, 1999

I am gratified that the two suspects accused in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 were delivered by the United Nations to the custody of Dutch authorities. Legal proceedings will now take place in accordance with the U.S.-UK initiative for a Scottish trial before a Scottish court sitting in The Netherlands.

The terrorist bombing of Pan Am 103 provoked outrage the world over. It led to more than 10 years of effort by the United States and United Kingdom, with the support of other nations, to bring the suspects to justice.

I am especially thankful for the repeated intervention of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who worked tirelessly to implement the Security Council resolutions. I am also deeply grateful for the efforts of President Mandela, President Mubarak, and the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar, on behalf of King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah.

But most important, today is a day to remember the men and women who lost their lives on Pan Am 103. I know their loved ones have suffered greatly. They, too, have labored hard to bring justice. Last December, on the 10th anniversary of the bombing, I renewed my pledge to the families that I would make my best efforts to bring the accused to trial. Now, at last, the road to justice has begun.

NOTE: The President referred to President Nelson Mandela of South Africa and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Angola

April 5, 1999

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

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c) and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) that was declared in Executive Order 12865 of September 26, 1993.

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.

Remarks on the Proposed "Hate Crimes Prevention Act"

April 6, 1999

Thank you very much. Senator Leahy, Senator Specter, Congressmen Cardin and Delahunt, Secretary Riley, Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee; to our DC Police Chief, Charles Ramsey, and the other distinguished guests in the audience who are in support, broadened support of the ''Hate Crimes Prevention Act.'' Let me begin by thanking Attorney General Ketterer and Bishop Jane Holmes Dixon for being here.

I want you to know that the attorney general got up at 3 o'clock this morning to drive down here from Maine. And of course, he got up that early so he could stay lawfully within the speed limit—[*laughter*]—coming down here. And he set a good example, and he was wide awake and very persuasive on the law.

Bishop, we thank you for your very moving remarks. Remind me never to speak behind you again. [*Laughter*] It was—so much of what the bishop said about the setting of this is many things that I have thought. I think