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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