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Week Ending Friday, April 6, 2001

The President's Radio Address

March 31, 2001

Good morning. This week the House of Representatives approved my budget plan, and next week the Senate will vote on it, as well.

My budget is shaped by a simple commitment: We can address our country's needs and still be responsible with taxpayers' money; and we can fund our priorities without expanding Government beyond the bounds of responsibility.

Today I want to give you a little more detail about some of my top priorities, the education and health and character of American children. My budget spends additional money on these goals and spends it in effective, creative ways.

We place a new national emphasis on teaching reading with a Reading First program to help all children learn to read by the third grade. Reading First will more than triple the existing funding for Federal reading programs, funding for early intervention and teacher training.

Another program called Early Reading First will put the best reading methods to use in preschool and Head Start Programs. Again, Early Reading First will triple the existing funding for Federal early reading programs.

My budget increases the funding for Head Start, while giving it a clear mission: to prepare our Nation's most disadvantaged children to learn as soon as they enter school.

My budget cares for children's health, as well as for their minds. In 2002, we'll spend well over $25 billion on health coverage for children under Medicaid and related programs. We invest more than a billion dollars, up 12 percent from 2001, in research into childhood diseases at the National Institutes for Health. We fund 1,200 new community health centers over the next 5 years, to bring better care to poor children. Thirty percent of the health care center patients are under 12 years old.

We add 94 million to the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program. In 2002, that program will aid more than 7 million people. The Centers for Disease Control will get a $22 million increase for their childhood immunization program. My budget plan increases Federal spending on childcare by 350 million, to reach a half million additional children.

We provide 200 million extra to provide services for children, services that prevent child abuse and keep families together. And we offer 60 million to help children raised in the foster care system with the cost of college or vocational training.

The values of our children must be a priority of our Nation. So my budget invests in abstinence education and drug treatment. We create a new $67 million program that will make grants to faith-based and community organizations who mentor the children of parents in prison.

This is a long list, but I wanted to make a point: My budget is active and compassionate. Discretionary spending grows by a healthy, responsible 4 percent, enough to meet our needs. We fund goals like education, health, and defense. We reduce debt at a record rate. We set aside a fund for future emergencies. We then have enough money to provide broad tax relief, including relief from the marriage penalty and a doubling of the child tax credit.

Those of us in Washington must always understand the surplus is not the Government's money; the surplus is the people's money.

My budget has the right balance. And I hope you'll encourage your Representatives in Congress to support my budget. And I thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:13 p.m. on March 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 31.

The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Arrest of Former President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)

April 1, 2001

I welcome today's arrest of Slobodan Milosevic, the former President of Yugoslavia. His arrest represents an important step in bringing to a close the tragic era of his brutal dictatorship.

Milosevic was responsible for great suffering throughout the Balkan region. He deserves to be tried for his crimes against the Serbian people. He also deserves to be tried for violations of international law. We cannot and must not forget the chilling images of terrified women and children herded onto trains, emaciated prisoners interned behind barbed wire, and mass graves unearthed by U.N. investigators.

Milosevic's arrest should be a first step toward trying him for the crimes against humanity with which he is charged. I am confident that Yugoslavia will continue down the path of cooperation with the U.N. War Crimes Tribunal. I am encouraged by the actions that Belgrade has already taken to work with the Tribunal, including its assistance over the last several weeks in transferring two indictees to The Hague. I call on President Kostunica to continue this cooperation and to see that Milosevic is likewise brought to justice.

The United States appreciates the hard job that Yugoslavia faces in building its new democracy. I assure the Yugoslav Government and people that they can count on the friendship of the United States as they continue down the path of democratic and economic reform. We look forward to the day that Yugoslavia is fully part of a Europe that is whole and free and at peace.

NOTE: In the statement, the President referred to President Vojislav Kostunica, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks on the United States Navy Aircraft Incident in the South China Sea

April 2, 2001

Late Saturday night in Washington, Sunday morning in China, a United States naval maritime patrol aircraft on a routine surveillance mission in international airspace over the South China Sea collided with one of two Chinese fighters that were shadowing our plane. Both our aircraft and a Chinese aircraft were damaged in the collision. Our aircraft made an emergency landing at an airfield on China's Hainan Island.

We have been in contact with the Chinese Government about this incident since Saturday night. From our own information, we know that the United States naval plane landed safely. Our Embassy in Beijing has been told by the Chinese Government that all 24 crewmembers are safe.

Our priorities are the prompt and safe return of the crew and the return of the aircraft without further damaging or tampering. The first step should be immediate access by our Embassy personnel to our crewmembers. I am troubled by the lack of a timely Chinese response to our request for this access. Our Embassy officials are on the ground and prepared to visit the crew and aircraft as soon as the Chinese Government allows them to do so, and I call on the Chinese Government to grant this access promptly.

Failure of the Chinese Government to react promptly to our request is inconsistent with standard diplomatic practice and with the expressed desire of both our countries for better relations.

Finally, we have offered to provide search and rescue assistance to help the Chinese Government locate its missing aircraft and pilot. Our military stands ready to help.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.