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Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Chairman Stanislav Shushkevich of Belarus

July 22, 1993

Surgeon General Nominee

Q. Mr. President, are you confident that Dr. Elders has the answers to the questions she'll be asked tomorrow?

The President. I think she'll do very well.

Let me also say while Chairman Shushkevich is here that I am very honored to have him here in the White House. And I want to thank him publicly for the support his country has given to the nonproliferation regime and to START I. We're going to have a good partnership. I look forward to its development. And I very much appreciate the fact that he has come here off of a successful commitment by his nation to be nonnuclear. And it means a lot to the United States and to the world.

Midwest Disaster Assistance

Q. Are you concerned about getting the flood money from the House, sir?

The President. No, not from what I heard about that. I think it's okay.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Meeting With Chairman Stanislav Shushkevich of Belarus

July 22, 1993

In an Oval Office meeting, President Clinton today congratulated the head of state of Belarus, Stanislav Shushkevich, for the historic decision his country has taken to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The President praised Chairman Shushkevich for the support Belarus has given to the cause of nonproliferation.

The President noted that Belarus is the first of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union to fully honor its commitments under the Lisbon Protocol to ratify START and accede to the NPT. He applauded this courageous step, stating that under the leadership of Chairman Shushkevich, Belarus has been in the forefront of the global effort to safeguard mankind from the threat of nuclear destruction.

The President announced that this week our countries have signed three agreements providing for $59 million in assistance under the Nunn-Lugar legislation for projects aimed at dealing with the legacy of nuclear weapons in Belarus. We expect to be working closely with Belarus in the near term to develop additional projects.

President Clinton also stressed the strong interest of the U.S. in expanding economic ties with Belarus, particularly in trade and investment opportunities for American and Belarusian firms. He expressed his hope that the U.S. and Belarus will conclude soon a bilateral investment treaty, a tax treaty, and a Peace Corps agreement.

Chairman Shushkevich's visit to Washington represents the President's first official meeting in the United States with the head of state of one of the newly independent states.