

again today. Those damages were repaired by determined people, and because of their work, our people were able to enjoy the paths and the beauty along the canal through the summer. Much of that work will now have to be done again because it's been undone by the flooding. But our people have always been resilient in the face of disasters, and we know that they will be resilient again.

We will do everything we can to get help to them as quickly as we can, and to stay with them for as long as it takes. Again, let me thank Secretary Babbitt, Secretary Cisneros, Secretary Pena, the others who have worked on this, and especially, as always, Director Witt, for an excellent job. Thank you very much.

Flood Assessment

Q. Mr. President, there's another storm brewing in the Caribbean, Hurricane Hortense. How many—what if that should hit the States, and how many can we afford for emergency relief?

The President. Well, Hortense is brewing in the Caribbean, and of course, our first concern now, as I understand it, is for Puerto Rico. And we will just watch it, but we'll have to afford as many as we have to sustain. We have to put a high priority on this.

I think the thing that impressed me—you asked me if there was any one thing I saw that impressed me—the thing that impressed me today was seeing those areas so heavily flooded around Great Falls that I visited. You remember the Vice President and I went out there—I think it was on Earth Day—and helped to clean away some of the debris with a lot of the young people that were there with the AmeriCorps and local conservation programs. To see it all under water again and the power—

the sheer energy and power of the Potomac manifesting itself all the way downriver and the flooding of Old Town in Alexandria, the inundation of Hains Point, where I run so many times, and those other places that it really reminds you of the incredible impact that a hurricane and its storm center can have, even in areas where it doesn't directly hit.

Q. Is that area salvageable now, sir? This is the second big hit in—

The President. Absolutely, sure it is. Secretary Babbitt pointed out that actually a lot of the major investments that were approved by the Congress to fix what was done before have not been made yet. So they have almost all their major capital investments still to make. And therefore, the funds have not been, if you will, wasted or broken, and we'll be able to go forward.

Is that right?

Director James Lee Witt. Absolutely.

Q. Sir, do you see the—to the Republicans—*[inaudible]*—

The President. No, I think Americans, without regard to party, believe in aggressive disaster relief. I would hope they do. We've been through a 500-year flood in the Middle West, the big flooding in the Pacific Northwest, the earthquake, and all the terrible other problems that we had in California, the fires and the floodings. So just about every region of America has been touched in the last 4 years by some form of disaster or another, and I think we all understand our shared responsibilities there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters

September 9, 1996

The President. Is everybody in? Let me just say very briefly, it's a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu back to the White House; Mr. Gold; our new Ambassador from Israel, welcome, sir. I'm especially glad to have this chance to visit with him so soon after his historic meet-

ing with Mr. Arafat, and I'm looking forward to getting a briefing on that and discussing the issues that are still outstanding.

All of you know the United States is still committed to peace and security, and I think we're making some progress in that direction.

And I'm going to do whatever I can to advance it.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, when do you think you'll pull your occupation troops out of the Golan Heights and Lebanon?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, you didn't waste any time. [*Laughter*] First of all, let me say that I'm delighted to be here with President Clinton and Vice President Gore and Secretary Christopher.

We've renewed our commitment to achieving peace with the Palestinians and with the Syrians. I think that we've been greatly assisted by President Clinton and his staff in resuming the negotiations with the Palestinians. It's not an easy road ahead, but it's one we're committed to and we'll pursue it. And I went over the notes of the conversation that I had with President Clinton a few months ago here, and we've pretty much done what we set out to do, again, with

the support—I think the very important support of the United States.

I hope to have the same kind of support as we seek to resume the peace talks with the Syrians. And in fact, we're enjoying American assistance, and so far we're awaiting the Syrian response.

Q. Where do both of you see the process going with, first, with the Palestinians, and with the Syrians?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Mr. President.

The President. Well, that's what we're going to talk about.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dore Gold, Policy Adviser to Prime Minister Netanyahu; Israeli Ambassador to the United States Eliahu Ben-Elissar; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister John Bruton of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters

September 9, 1996

The President. I'm delighted to have the *Taoiseach* here today and a good day: The talks began again today. Senator Mitchell is over in Belfast, and I just want to talk to him about where we go from here.

Also, I want to note that Ireland is assuming the Presidency of the European Union, and we have a lot of common interests there, a lot of things we have to work on together, including our common interest in the worldwide fight against narcotics trafficking, and so we'll have lots to talk about, and I'm glad to have you here, sir.

Prime Minister Bruton. Thanks very much, indeed. Well, the talks have gotten off to a very good start in Belfast today. Obviously, we'd like to see an IRA cease-fire, because as long as the threat of violence is there, the negotiations are not going to work as fully as they need to.

Also, I'll be awaiting the opportunity to talk to the President about European Union business. As the President has said, we need to

cooperate to combat drug trafficking, and we also need, I think, more business cooperation between Europe and North America, and the United States in particular, and I have certain ideas I'll be putting forth to the President on that matter.

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, at this point, do you really see any advance in the talks? I know they started in June, but it doesn't really seem like they've gone very far.

The President. I would go back to what the Prime Minister said: We'd like to see a cease-fire restored. But I think that actually, we do have a chance to make some progress in these talks, and that's one of the things we're going to talk about here.

We're always better off when they're talking than when they're not, and I can see circumstances under which we can make some real progress there if we got one or two good breaks, so we're going to keep working.