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Statement on Signing Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Legislation
June 17, 1997

I am pleased to have signed into law H.R. 1871, the ''1997 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from Natural Disasters, and for Overseas Peacekeeping Efforts, Including Those in Bosnia.''

This bill provides over $5.8 billion so that Federal agencies can help the hundreds of thousands of people who have suffered terribly from the flooding and other natural disasters that have ravaged the Dakotas, Minnesota, California, and 29 other States. The bill also provides $1.8 billion to replenish Department of Defense accounts in connection with our peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia and Southwest Asia, and to assure that the Department can maintain maximum readiness of the troops.

With regard to the funds described above, I hereby designate as emergency requirements all funds in this Act so designated by the Congress that I have not previously designated pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(D)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended.

I commend the Congress for approving my request to extend Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid benefits through the end of fiscal 1997 to all legal immigrants who would otherwise lose them. This approach ensures that the Congress has the time to restore SSI and Medicaid benefits for disabled legal immigrants, consistent with the recent Bipartisan Budget Agreement.

I am disappointed that the Congress chose to include several objectionable items that I identified in my veto message of June 9. Funding included in the bill for the Commission for the Advancement of Federal Law Enforcement not only will waste valuable Federal resources but also could interfere with Federal law enforcement policy and operations. As I indicated in my veto message, this type of oversight is more properly the role of the Congress, not an unelected commission.

I am also disappointed that the Congress chose to rescind funds for the Ounce of Prevention Council and the Department of Defense Dual-Use Applications Program. The Council will be forced to reduce the level of grants for youth substance abuse prevention, for which about 300 applications are under review. The reduction in the Dual-Use Applications program will result in higher costs of future defense systems.

On balance, however, this bill is a vast improvement over the legislation that I vetoed on June 9. It includes the desperately needed resources for our Nation's hard-hit areas, but it does not include extraneous riders that had nothing to do with the goal of providing disaster relief. I am pleased that my Administration and the Congress worked together in a bipartisan fashion.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 17, 1997.

NOTE: H.R. 1871, approved June 12, was assigned Public Law No. 105–18.

Remarks at ''In Performance at the White House''
June 17, 1997

The President. Thank you. Tonight we're going to have a celebration of one of the most gifted singers and performers of the last four decades, Gladys Knight.

It's a special honor to have her perform here at the White House because her music and her artistry are uniquely American. Some call it soul; some call it rhythm and blues; some may even call it rock and roll. But the music Gladys helped to popularize really has much deeper and more spiritual roots in the rich gospel and soaring harmonies of the African-American church.

Today's popular music has many different points of origin, from the dark and cynical swagger of the blues to the lilt of country music, to the stark simplicity of our folk music. As all of you know, I love them all. But the gospel strain gives the best American music its transcendent quality. That's where the soul comes from. And that's where Gladys Knight's true gift resides. That is the spark she brings to all her diverse repertoire of songs.

She had her first public performance in the church as a member of the Mount Mariah Baptist Church choir when she was all of 4 years old. She won Ted Mack's famous ''Amateur Hour''—I'm old enough to remember that—[*laughter*]—at the age of 7. She continued to sing gospel, and she even performed with the legendary Gladys Knight and the Pips, with her brothers and cousins, and still continued to sing gospel on the side. It was the fusion of pop and gospel styles that made Gladys Knight and the Pips so special, that and her stunning voice. As far as I'm concerned, she could still sing the phone book, and I would like it. [*Laughter*]

As one of the earliest Motown successes, Gladys Knight and the Pips helped to lay the foundation for the close harmony groups that dominated the airways in my youth and, I'm glad to say, are topping the charts again today. She deserves a lot of the credit for bringing those sounds to a much wider audience through a long string of hit records. And she's gotten a fair amount of that credit, from gold and platinum records to Grammy Awards, to her induction last year along with the Pips into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

We're delighted to have Gladys back at the White House. She's a true American original. And I'm pleased to be able to share her wonderful talent with you tonight.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Gladys Knight.

[*At this point, Gladys Knight performed.*]

The President. Now, wait a minute here; this is not on the script. First, I think Bubba should run for office. You know, the shy, retiring type gets a lot of votes these days. [*Laughter*]

I want to tell you something, Gladys. When you sang that last round of Georgia songs, some of us knew the answers were Vicki Lawrence, Brook Benton, Ray Charles, and Gladys Knight. And when you started singing ''Georgia on My Mind'' and then you went into ''Midnight Train,'' I leaned over and asked Hillary exactly what today was—the 17th. And I'll tell you a story: Exactly one week and 30 years ago, across the street over there at Constitution Hall, I went to hear Ray Charles sing. And you can see it made a fairly deep impression on me. [*Laughter*] I carried the ticket stub for 25 years. And I will carry the memory of this for the rest of my life. You were wonderful tonight.

Ms. Knight. Thank you so much.

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, Billboard magazine once said it is unlikely that Gladys Knight could make a bad record. And tonight she has shown us how right Billboard was. So thank you, Gladys. Thank you, Bubba. Thank you, musicians. And thank you. We're going to be cheering for you for a long, long, long time.

Thank you for joining us, and good night. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:57 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Merald (Bubba) Knight, one of the Pips; and entertainers Vicki Lawrence, Brook Benton, and Ray Charles.

Statement on the Return of Mir Aimal Kansi to the United States

June 18, 1997

I want to express my deep appreciation to the FBI, CIA, and the Departments of State, Justice, and Defense for their extraordinary work in bringing Mir Aimal Kansi to the United States. Kansi is believed to be responsible for the killing of two CIA employees and the wounding of three others in an attack on January 25, 1993. The men and women who participated in the effort to bring Kansi here showed great courage in carrying out this mission.

The success in apprehending Kansi demonstrates that we are determined to do what