

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Report on Chemical and Biological Weapons Defense

February 24, 1998

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Attached is a report to the Congress on Chemical and Biological Weapons Defense, submitted pursuant to Condition 11(F) of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives;

Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Strom Thurmond, chairman, and Carl Levin, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Arlen Specter, chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; Robert L. Livingston, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; and Floyd Spence, chairman, and Ike Skelton, ranking member, House Committee on National Security.

## Remarks After Touring Tornado Damage in Kissimmee, Florida

February 25, 1998

Ladies and gentlemen, first let me say a word of thanks to all of those who have given me this tour and who have been working so hard since Monday. I brought down here with me our FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, who's already been here; Attorney General Reno; Administrator of the EPA Carol Browner—both of them are from Florida, as I'm sure you know—and our Small Business Administrator, Aida Alvarez.

I want to thank Senator Graham and Congresswoman Brown and Representative Mica for coming down with me today, and to say that Congressman Boyd and Congresswoman Thurman also wished to come and could not because of their work requirements, but they expressed their concern and support.

I thank Governor Chiles and Lieutenant Governor MacKay, the leaders of the legislature who are here, Speaker Bronson, Minority Leader Senator Dyer, Senator Webster—I mean Senator Bronson, and—Representative Bronson and Speaker Webster.

Mayor Atkinson, thank you for making us feel at home today and for introducing us to some

of your citizens and some of your winter visitors. I thank the Osceola County commissioners with whom I've met, Chairman Dunnick and others; General Harrison and the Florida National Guard; all the people who have been working on this. I had a chance to meet a number of them. I want to thank them for what they have done.

Some of you know that James Lee Witt, before he became the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, was the director of our State emergency program in Arkansas when I was Governor. Our State has the highest number of tornadoes per capita every year. But no matter how many of these I have seen over the last 20 years, I don't think anybody can fail to be moved and awestruck by the amount of damage that can be done, and the lives and the treasures that can be taken away in a matter of just a few seconds.

And I think we all acknowledge here today that what took just seconds to destroy will take weeks and months and, in some cases, maybe even years to rebuild. Some of you may have lost precious pictures, letters, service medals,

other mementos of loved ones and family members that may never be able to be replaced. We know that. But it's also important for you to know that we understand that you'll be going through a period in which you'll feel all different kinds of emotions. You may be in shock. You may feel like crying. You may feel angry. And some of the people that are supposed to help you may or may not do as good a job as they should the first time you ask for it or need it.

What I want to say today is that, all over this country, your fellow Americans are praying for you and pulling for you. And whatever it is within our power to do to help you return to normal lives, we will do.

I have already designated Federal assistance to 34 Florida counties affected by the tornadoes. Twelve will now be able to receive aid to restore public facilities and infrastructure and to take protective measures: Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Duval, Hamilton, Hardee, Highlands, Marion, Nassau, Osceola, Suwannee, and Union Counties. And we are also providing today \$3 million from the Department of Labor for temporary jobs for workers to assist in the disaster recovery work so that we can complete it more quickly.

My experience has been that the efforts you see going on around you to just clean out the debris and help people look at a place as nearly as possible as it once was before the tornado is psychologically one of the most important things that can be done to help the healing process and to get people back to normal.

We'll also continue under FEMA's direction to provide the resources necessary to meeting the immediate disaster needs. Already FEMA staffers, the SBA, the Department of Labor, the Corps of Engineers, and some of our young AmeriCorps volunteers are here helping in the effort.

Let me say again a special work of commendation not only to the State and local emergency management officials and the search and rescue teams and the volunteers who have been

working for 72 hours, but I'd also like to say a word of appreciation to Governor Chiles and to Lieutenant Governor MacKay with whom, unfortunately, I have had the opportunity to work now through more than one disaster. Florida has seen a lot of its natural disaster shares. I think you've used up your quota for the next 20 or 30 years in the last few years. But I've had an opportunity to see a caring team of State leaders who work hard, work fast, and stay after us at the national level to do our part, and I want to thank them for that.

Let me also just say, for a moment, you may have seen in the news media that California, which has been beset by unusual amounts of raining and flooding because of El Nino, yesterday was badly hit by storms. People died there, and our thoughts are with their loved ones. I've asked Mr. Witt to go with me to California today so that he can go to the impacted area and see what is going on there.

Again, let me say that the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with you. In the Book of Isaiah in the Bible there is this chapter—I'd like to read it to you: "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with you in stones. The sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." We want to see you do that, brick by brick, home by home, street by street. You can do it, and we want to be there to help.

God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. at the Ponderosa Park Campground. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida; State Senators Charlie Bronson and Florida Senate Minority Leader Buddy Dyer; Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Daniel Webster; Mayor Frank Atkinson of Kissimmee; Chuck Dunnick, chair, Osceola County Commissioners; and Maj. Gen. Ronald O. Harrison, adjutant general of Florida. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.