

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Abdou Diouf of Senegal in Dakar April 1, 1998

African Crisis Response Initiative

Q. Mr. President, are you—how important do you feel an African force is—[inaudible]?

The President. Well, I think it's potentially very important because an African Crisis Response Force can enable the Africans to stop problems before they get out of hand. And of course, the President and I are going to review one of the training exercises here in Senegal. We've had one in Uganda. We will have one in Ghana. President Mandela said that he would be interested in participating, so I'm encouraged by that. I think there's an enormous sense among African leaders that if they have infrastructure and the training to do it, they could solve a lot of their own problems. I'm very excited about it.

Q. Will you be talking to—[inaudible]—about reports of—[inaudible]—party politics here? There is criticism that perhaps the ruling party has too much power and is too controlling.

The President. Well, we'll discuss the whole range of things. But the main thing I want to do today is to thank the President for the support that he's given to peacekeeping around the world and to—[inaudible]—Senegal's long experience with elected Presidencies and to work on this African Crisis Response Initiative.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 11 a.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, the President referred to President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Senegalese Troops Trained for the African Crisis Response Initiative in Thies, Senegal April 1, 1998

President Diouf, distinguished leaders of Senegal and the United States, members of the Senegalese and American Armed Forces, ladies and gentlemen. We have just seen a training exercise involving dedicated soldiers from our two nations, part of the African Crisis Response Initiative.

I'd like to thank the Senegalese soldiers and the United States Armed Forces. I'd like to especially thank the distinguished officers who briefed us, Lieutenant Colonel Diallo and Major Erckenbrack. And I'd also like to express my appreciation to the other Senegalese soldiers and gendarmes who were standing there who have served with multinational peacekeeping forces in Haiti and Bosnia, Africa and the Middle East.

Senegal is respected around the world for its tradition of peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. You are a leader among the more than 15 African countries that regularly contribute troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions. I thank Senegalese troops for their commitment

to peace, and I thank our American troops for your work here.

Africa and America have a great stake in the success of the soldiers like those President Diouf and I have seen here today. Where bullets and bombs prevent children from going to school and parents from going to work, amid chaos and ruin, these soldiers and other like them can bring security, hope, and a future.

Terrible violence continues to plague our world, and Africa has seen some of the worst. In some cases, children, often against their will, have stood on the frontlines of armies as cannon fodder for the ambitions of others. A few days ago, I met in Rwanda with some of the survivors of the 1994 genocide there. As I said to them, let me say again: We must find better ways to prevent such horrors from occurring.

While peace has started to take hold in many nations that once knew only violence—Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, and elsewhere—tensions linger in some of these nations, and