

to their homes and their lives with safety and self-government.

And the United States will have stood for the proposition that we can't expect everyone to get along; we can't expect people never to fight; but we do expect that when we can stop it, innocent civilians will not be slaughtered, burned out of their homes, have their houses of worship blown up, have their personal records destroyed, have their children abused. We will not tolerate ethnic cleansing and killing. It should not be a part of the 21st century world, thanks to you.

And so let me say just one last time, as you prepare to leave O'Hare, to retire or head for your new homes and duties, the whole world is grateful to you. You have ended this chapter in the history of your Wing and your units on

a truly triumphant note. You have helped to end this century, which has seen so much bloodshed and hatred, not with a feeling of helpless indignation at yet another travesty but instead with a ringing reaffirmation of the dignity of all human beings. You did it. It's quite a way to close out your stay here.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in Hangar 30 at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Harold E. Keistler, USAF, Commander, 126th Air Refueling Wing; Brig. Gen. Frank D. Rezac, USAF, Commander, Illinois Air National Guard; and Maj. Gen. Richard G. Austin, Illinois National Guard, Adjutant General, State of Illinois.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Military Personnel as Part of the Kosovo International Security Force

June 12, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On March 26, April 7, and May 25, 1999, I reported to the Congress, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, concerning U.S. participation in the NATO air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and in supporting operations in the region, in response to the FRY Government's campaign of violence and repression against the civilian population of Kosovo. In my report of June 5, 1999, under section 8115 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1999 (Public Law 105-262), I noted the FRY had accepted the detailed set of principles for ending the conflict, as presented by Finnish President Ahtisaari along with Russian Special Envoy Chernomyrdin. I also stated that I had authorized the deployment of a significant contingent of military personnel to Kosovo as part of an international security presence (KFOR), provided it became clear that Belgrade had fully adopted NATO's conditions and was withdrawing its forces.

I can now confirm that the FRY has accepted NATO's conditions, and the process of implementing them has begun. On June 9, Lieutenant General Sir Michael Jackson, the NATO com-

mander of KFOR, concluded a Military-Technical Agreement (MTA) with FRY authorities. The MTA specifies the detailed modalities and schedule for the full withdrawal of all FRY military, paramilitary and police forces from Kosovo. The MTA also details the role and authorities of KFOR, confirming that it can take the measures necessary to create a secure environment for the return of the Kosovars to their homes in safety and self-government. Among other authorities, KFOR is empowered to ensure that the withdrawal of FRY forces proceeds on schedule, to protect KFOR and the civil implementation presence, and assist other international entities involved in restoring peace to Kosovo.

Conclusion of the MTA and the subsequent start of Serb force withdrawals paved the way for NATO to suspend its air campaign on June 10, 1999, and for the United Nations Security Council on the same day to adopt Resolution 1244 authorizing the establishment of the international security force.

In view of these events, I have directed the deployment of approximately 7,000 U.S. military

June 14 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

personnel as the U.S. contribution to the approximately 50,000-member, NATO-led security force (KFOR) now being deployed into Kosovo. The KFOR will operate under unified NATO command and control, and with rules of engagement set by the Alliance. As part of the central NATO role that we have insisted upon, and consistent with the recommendations of my senior civilian and military advisors, U.S. personnel participating in these efforts will be under the operational control solely of officers from the United States or other NATO countries. In addition, a total of approximately 1,500 U.S. military personnel, under separate U.S. command and control, will deploy to other countries in the region, as our national support element, in support of KFOR.

I expect that after the withdrawal of all Serb forces from Kosovo and an initial stabilization period, KFOR will be progressively reduced as the security situation permits and international

and local police forces are established. The KFOR ultimately will transfer responsibilities to the international provisional administration, local institutions, and other appropriate organizations.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the continued support of the Congress in this action.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 14.

Remarks on Gun Control Legislation June 15, 1999

The President. Please be seated, everyone. Welcome to the Rose Garden on this beautiful afternoon. I want to especially thank those who will be speaking after me, Representatives Connie Morella and Carolyn McCarthy and our leader of the Democrats in the House, Dick Gephardt. I thank the many Members of Congress who are here, and others for whom they speak who are not able to be here this afternoon.

I also want to thank Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, Treasury Under Secretary Jim Johnson, Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics Jan Chaiken, representatives of the law enforcement and faith communities, gun advocacy, and victims groups who are here today.

Five and a half years ago, here at the White House, I signed the Brady bill into law. I was especially pleased to be standing that day beside two great women fighters against gun violence, Sarah Brady and Attorney General Janet Reno. Today I am proud to be here with Congresswoman Morella and Congresswoman McCarthy and many other of the women Members of the United States House of Representatives, along

with some men they allowed to come along today—[laughter]—and who appreciated being invited.

I think it is important to note that women Members of both parties in Washington and women who belong to both parties in America, all over this country, have been in the forefront of this fight. They care about it as mothers, as sisters, as daughters, as citizens of this country. In the audience with us today are a number of mothers and fathers whose children have been victims of gun violence, and others who have personally suffered from it. Particularly to those who have been personally affected, I thank you for coming.

On that day when I signed the Brady bill, I said that our efforts to produce this bill proved once again that democracy can work. The American people and their grassroots demand for commonsense action against gun violence prevailed over the entrenched and very powerful Washington gun lobby. Now, in the aftermath of the terrible shootings at Littleton, our Nation is even more galvanized to act on every front