

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces to East Timor

February 25, 2000

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

On October 8, 1999, I reported to the Congress, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, the deployment of a limited number of U.S. military forces to East Timor to provide support to the multinational force (INTERFET) peacekeeping mission in East Timor. This force, established by the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter, was to restore peace and security in East Timor, protect and support the United Nations Mission in East Timor, and, within force capabilities, facilitate humanitarian assistance operations. The U.S. support to the multinational force was limited to planning and staff, communications, intelligence, and logistics.

This multinational force was formally replaced in East Timor on February 23, 2000, by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Consequently, the U.S. personnel who were the subject of my October 8 report have redeployed from East Timor. The UNTAET, which was established by Security Council Resolution 1272, has a mandate that includes maintaining law and order throughout East Timor, establishing an effective administration, ensuring the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance, and supporting capacity-building for self-government. To implement this plan, the Security Council authorized UNTAET to deploy up to 8,950 military personnel, 200 military observers, and 1,640 civilian police.

The U.S. military contribution to UNTAET is small. The United States has agreed to provide three military observers and one judge advocate; these personnel serve in the United Nations pursuant to the United Nations Participation Act (Public Law 79-264) and will operate under U.N. operational control.

Nonetheless, because the United States has a strong national security interest in promoting regional security and supporting East Timor's transition to independence, the United States will maintain a credible and visible presence in East Timor. The United Nations also supports a continued U.S. presence in East Timor and has indicated that East Timor would benefit

greatly from U.S. military deployments to and engagement activities in East Timor. As a result, I have authorized the deployment of a support group (USGET), consisting of approximately 30 U.S. personnel, to facilitate and coordinate U.S. military activities in East Timor. Personnel assigned to USGET will operate under U.S. command and control and rules of engagement. In addition, I have authorized a rotational presence of U.S. forces to be achieved through temporary deployments, including periodic ship visits, to East Timor during which U.S. forces will conduct humanitarian and assistance activities throughout East Timor. These rotational presence operations will provide peacetime exercise opportunities for U.S. forces in East Timor, allow for a flexible and visible U.S. force presence independent of UNTAET, and provide humanitarian and civic assistance to East Timor's citizens in critical areas.

The first rotational presence operation, involving the USS BONHOMME RICHARD amphibious group, her embarked helicopters, and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), commenced in East Timor on February 23, 2000. These forces are operating under U.S. command and control and rules of engagement.

At this point, our rotational presence operations are envisioned to continue through the summer of 2000. It is likely that future rotational presence operations will include rotation of naval assets, embarked aircraft, and small light engineer units. Certain of these forces, including those of the BONHOMME RICHARD, will be equipped with the normal complement of defensive weapons. The duration of our support depends upon the course of events in East Timor. It is, however, our objective to redeploy USGET and reduce rotational presence operations as circumstances permit.

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

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of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the 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.

The President's Radio Address

February 26, 2000

Good morning. Last month, in my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to help us launch a 21st century revolution in education, guided by our faith that every child can learn. This morning I'm announcing new steps to do just that, to provide tools for States and local communities to turn around their worst performing schools or shut them down.

If our Nation is going to make the most of the promise of the new economy, we must help every American make the most of their God-given potential. But students can't aim high in schools that perform low. Every child deserves a high-quality education.

Over the last 7 years we've followed a commonsense reform strategy: Invest more in our schools and demand more in return. I'm proud that our administration has enacted the largest investments in education in three decades, while at the same time working hard for higher standards, greater accountability, and extra help so that all children can meet those high standards.

It's working. Across our Nation, reading and math scores are on the rise. But in spite of this progress, too many schools in our poorest neighborhoods still fail to offer a quality education, and too few of these failing schools ever get enough help to turn around.

That's why I challenged Congress last year to pass my plan to establish a new school accountability fund to help States and local communities to fix failing schools. Together, we enacted a landmark initiative to provide \$134 million to States and school districts this year alone. Today I'm releasing official guidelines to ensure that these funds are invested in what works.

We're taking two unprecedented steps. First, under our plan districts and States will soon receive money dedicated entirely to turning around failing schools. This accountability fund

will enable districts to take firm measures, putting in a tougher curriculum, helping teachers get the skills and training they need, and if necessary, closing down a failing school and re-opening it under new management or as a public charter school.

Second, my plan also expands public school choice. For the first time ever, we'll require that districts give students in a chronically failing school the option to transfer to a better performing public school.

We know accountability works because that's what the experience of local communities tells us. Two years ago, for example, North Carolina drew up a list of the State's 15 worst performing schools and sent assistance teams to each school. Just a year later, reading and math scores shot up, and 14 of those 15 schools improved their performance enough to be taken off the list. I've been to schools all over our country that are achieving in the very same way.

Ultimately, of course, it's up to States and local communities to take the reins and turn around a failing school, but the Federal Government must play a key role by granting more flexibility, demanding more accountability, and investing more in education. With today's action, we're declaring as a nation that we will not fail our children by tolerating failing schools. We must do more.

In our budget for the coming year, I'm doubling the size of the accountability fund to \$250 million and doubling our support for after-school and summer school programs, so that every child in a low-performing school has the opportunity to participate. I ask Congress to do its part and make these vital investments.

Again, I also ask Congress to pass my "Education Accountability Act," which will make our schools even more focused on results. We must