

the communities and the families that were hit hard by the closure of our military facilities. And as we've reduced our force levels, he's been the first to voice concerns for the men and women in uniform who shoulder the burden of our national security.

His leadership has also been invaluable in helping our country to adapt to our military social changes. He led the way in our efforts to open the doors for women to serve our Nation in combat roles and helped to ensure more equitable rules toward homosexuals in our military. He's provided creative leadership as he's mobilized the Pentagon to develop new and stronger responses to the many security challenges of this new era, such as his new counterproliferation initiative. And on a range of tough decisions and tough challenges abroad, from Bosnia to Korea, he has called them as he saw them, bringing to bear a lifetime of experience and dedication and a razor-sharp mind to our Nation's security interest.

Above all, Secretary Aspin has provided deep strategic thinking and leadership at a time of profound change in this world. As a result, when our citizens go to bed tonight, we can do so secure in the knowledge that our Nation is building the right forces and acquiring the right capabilities for this new era.

I will always appreciate the thoughtful and dedicated and ultimately selfless service that Les Aspin provided to me and to this Nation over this last year. I asked a lot of him, tough times and tough problems. He gave even more to me, to our military, and to our country than was asked, and I will always be very, very grateful.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:21 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Letter Accepting the Resignation of Les Aspin as Secretary of Defense

December 15, 1993

Dear Les:

It is with deep sadness that I accept your request that, for personal reasons, you be relieved of your duties after your years of in-

tense, unselfish and extraordinarily effective service to our nation and its security. I am grateful that you are prepared to remain at your post through January 20, or beyond if necessary, as we work through the immediate issues before us and as we manage a smooth transition to your successor.

I hope that after you have taken the break you have requested, you will consider other important assignments that you would find challenging and personally rewarding.

I am proud of your accomplishments over the past year, and you should be, as well. In the Congress, in the campaign and as Secretary of Defense, you have been an effective leader in efforts to harness together our defense strategy and defense resources, culminating in this year's Bottom Up Review. Together with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you skillfully managed difficult issues—such as the military service of homosexuals and women in combat—that could have proved both deeply divisive and damaging to our military effectiveness and readiness. You helped conduct the first review of our nuclear posture since the end of the Cold War and advanced a new counter proliferation strategy. And you helped in the distinguished appointment of a new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili.

All of this took skill and hard work, and all Americans are in your debt for it.

I look forward to urging you once again to bring your great skills and deep devotion to your country's service.

With admiration,

Bill Clinton

Dear Mr. President,

It has been one year since you asked me to serve as your Secretary of Defense. It has been an honor for me to work with you as we have reshaped our country's military to protect Americans in a vastly changed world.

I am proud of the progress we have made in dealing with these changes. We now have a clear strategic sense of the new dangers we now face. After a year's work we will be able to secure our country against these new dangers with a Bottom Up Force. By strategically defining the strengths we need and hon-

estly projecting how much this force will cost, we have also built a new consensus to invest what is necessary to underwrite this Bottom Up Force. As a result we have moved for the first time in fifteen years away from the polarizing debates about how much we should spend on defense and worked together to build the military strengths we know we need. This has helped end the gridlock that for years kept us from governing and from concentrating on our agenda at home.

We have also worked together with our uniformed military leadership to find common ground on some difficult social issues that were avoided in the past and which could have divided our military. So we can now ensure that we will have a ready to fight force without the continuing distractions of these controversies.

As you know, dealing with these changes have made it a tough year for us all—tough issues, tough calls.

I share your pride in the progress we have made. But now, as we have discussed on previous occasions, I ask you to relieve me of the duty as your Secretary of Defense on January 20. I ask this for quite personal reasons. I have been working continually for over two decades to help build a strong American military. It's time now for me to take a break and undertake a new kind of work.

Of course, I pledge my every effort to support you and my successor in a smooth and orderly transition. You can continue to draw on one of the strongest and most talented senior management teams the Department of Defense has ever seen. Bill Perry and General Shali will give you a continuity of leadership as my successor works with the Senate to assume office.

Finally, I want to thank you for the honor of serving you and our country. You are a great Commander-In-Chief. I know that while you are our President our country will grow in all of its strengths, Americans will continue to be secure, our men and women in uniform will always be honored, and we will be true to our best values as a people.

Sincerely,

Les Aspin

NOTE: These letters were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 15 but were not issued as White House press releases.

Proclamation 6640—Modification of Import Limitations on Certain Dairy Products

December 15, 1993

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

1. Quantitative limitations on imports of certain dairy products established pursuant to section 22 of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, as amended (7 U.S.C. 624) (the "Act"), are set forth in subchapter IV of chapter 99 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States ("HTS").

2. In accordance with section 22 of the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture advised the President that he has reason to believe that changed circumstances exist with respect to the product coverage of the import quota for malted milk and articles of milk or cream, and that changed circumstances exist with respect to the import quota licensing requirement for dried cream and for malted milk and articles of milk or cream. The Secretary further advised that circumstances exist that require restoration of the quota treatment for margarine cheese that existed prior to the conversion of the Tariff Schedules of the United States to the HTS. Furthermore, the Secretary advised that circumstances exist that require that U.S. Note 3(a)(iii) to subchapter IV of chapter 99 of the HTS be clarified with respect to the term "other" countries as it appears in the subheadings subject to the provisions of such note.

3. Based upon this advice, the President directed the United States International Trade Commission (the "Commission") to initiate an investigation under section 22(d) of the Act (7 U.S.C. 624(d)) to determine whether the HTS should be modified with respect to: (a) the exclusion of cajeta not made from cow's milk, provided for in subheading 1901.90.30 of the HTS, from the quota on malted milk and articles of milk or