AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Statement on the Crash of an Air Force C–21 in Alabama

April 18, 1995

Hillary and I were very saddened to learn of the crash of an Air Force C–21 aircraft near Alexander City, Alabama, last night, with the loss of eight lives. The death of these individuals is a tragic loss for the U.S. Air Force and the Nation. Their death reminds us all how much we are indebted to those military and civilian personnel who serve in the defense of our Nation. Our hearts and our prayers go out to the families and friends of those who were killed.

The President's News Conference

April 18, 1995

The President. Good evening. Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin the press conference, I want to express on behalf of Hillary and myself our profoundest condolences to the families and to the loved ones of the eight Americans who were killed in the crash of the Air Force plane in Alabama last night.

Tonight I want to talk about welfare reform. But before I do, I'd like to take just a minute to put welfare reform into the context of what is going on now in the United States Congress. Before the Easter break, the House of Representatives produced a flurry of ideas and proposals. Some of them were good. Some need work. Some should be rejected. My job is to work with people of good faith in both parties, in both Houses, to do what is best for America.

I was not elected to produce a pile of vetoes. And the Congress was not elected to produce a pile of political issues for the next election. My philosophy is that we have to go beyond this kind of politics-as-usual, the old debate about whether there should be more Government or less Government. I think we need a better and different Government that helps people who are helping themselves, one that offers opportunity but demands responsibility.

I have some common goals with the new Republican majority in the Congress. They say they want to reduce the deficit and the size of Government. I support that. My administration has reduced the deficit by $600 billion and is reducing the size of Government by over 250,000 people. In fact, if it were not for the interest we have to pay on the debt run up between 1981 and 1992, our Government's budget would be in balance today. Let me say that again, because I don't think the American people know that. If it were not for the interest we have to pay this year on the debt run up between 1981 and 1992, our Government's budget would be in balance today.

The Republicans say that they want to be tough on crime. Our crime bill is tough on crime, and I want to work with them to build on that. The Republicans are supporting the line-item veto, and so am I. I worked hard to get a version of the line-item veto passed through the Senate, and I look forward to working with them, actually getting agreement in both Houses and having a line-item veto come into law.

As we look ahead, the issue is, what are we going to do on the outstanding matters? I have commented at length on them before the newspaper editors, but let me say again, I want us to show responsibility and common sense and decency. Do we need to cut regulation, as they say? Of course, we do. But we don't need to undermine our commitment to the safety of our skies or the purity of our water and air or the sanctity of our long-term commitment to the environment. Do we need to be tough on crime? Of course, we do, but we don't need to repeal the commitment to 100,000 police officers or the assault weapons ban. Do we need to cut taxes? I believe we do, but not as much as the House bill provides. I think the tax cuts should be targeted to the middle class and to education so we raise incomes and growth for America over the long run.

Now let's talk a little about welfare. That's an issue that the Republicans and I, and the congressional Democrats should be able to agree on. They say we should end welfare as we know it. That's a commitment I made in 1992 and again in 1993 and 1994. Welfare reform is surely an example where all the people ought to be able to get together in the Congress to have reform.

We all know what we need. We need time limits for welfare recipients. We need strict