

Remarks Announcing the Child Survival Initiative for Bosnia-Herzegovina and an Exchange With Reporters

November 27, 1995

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be here today, especially with Congressman Tony Hall, a longstanding champion of children in our own country and throughout the world and the leading fighter in the Congress and perhaps in the entire United States in combating hunger. After visiting Bosnia this fall, Representative Hall worked with UNICEF to design the important child survival initiative that we announce today. I thank UNICEF Director Carol Belamy, not only for her work at UNICEF but for her previous service in our administration as the Director of the Peace Corps; and the USAID Administrator, Brian Atwood, who has been a tireless advocate of America's role in promoting sustainable development, in providing developmental assistance, and protecting the welfare of children throughout the world.

I want to especially welcome here two Bosnian families, the Kapetanovic family and the Mundzahasic family, who fled the fighting in their homeland and have been resettled as refugees here in the United States. Welcome to both of you.

These families know firsthand the terrible costs of war, the breakdown of basic human services, the lack of medical care, the forced closure of schools. They know how desperately the people of Bosnia need support and assistance from the international community right now.

Since the conflict in Bosnia began nearly 4 years ago, our Nation has played a major role in providing emergency assistance, including support for children, clean water and sanitation, food, shelter, and health care. But even with these efforts, the war in Bosnia has seriously harmed the most innocent and most vulnerable members of that society, its children.

Immunization rates have declined dramatically, putting tens of thousands of children at risk of potentially deadly whooping cough, measles, and diphtheria. The situation has been aggravated by the onset of harsh

winters and overcrowded living conditions. Half of Bosnia's pre-war population was driven from their homes during the conflict, and even today, more than one million of them remain homeless.

In addition, the basic education systems in the region are in deep crisis. It is estimated that 40 percent of the primary schools in Croatia and 55 percent of those in Bosnia have been either damaged or destroyed.

Now that a lasting peace is at hand, we have to bring the Bosnian people the benefits of that peace, starting with the children. And that is exactly what USAID and UNICEF are doing. Together, they will lead a new, multinational initiative to immunize the children of Bosnia, Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who have not had access to decent health care during this war. Efforts should begin before Christmas. Most of the approximately 150,000 needy children in the region should be immunized within just 6 months.

This initiative will also provide support for basic education systems. Remember the comment of Zlata Filipovic, the Sarajevo girl who shared her experience of the war through her remarkable diary. "For me," she said, "the school is a symbol of normal life. When they take away my school, I said this really means something. They took my childhood, they took my school." With this program we can at least begin to give those children back their childhoods which were stolen.

USAID and UNICEF are finalizing plans for this \$15 million initiative. The United States will devote \$2 million to back the effort now, and our goal is to contribute \$5 million. We'll also do our part to mobilize other donors. We hope our friends and our allies will join us in supporting this important program for the children of the former Yugoslavia.

We have just celebrated one of our most treasured holidays, Thanksgiving. All across our country, Americans came together to give thanks for the blessings in their lives and the lives of their families.

This Thanksgiving, our Nation helped to give the people of Bosnia a blessing as well: the first real hope of peace in nearly 4 years. I want to say a special thanks again to the

citizens of Dayton, Ohio, who welcomed the Balkan leaders to Dayton and who demonstrated on our behalf our vast and diverse Nation all committed to living together in peace.

Now we have a responsibility to see this achievement through. That is who we are as a people. That is what we stand for as a nation. The people of Bosnia, the children of Bosnia, have suffered unspeakable atrocities. We must not, and we will not, turn our backs on peace. And I am very proud to begin this very important day of discussion with the American people with this important announcement.

And again, I want to say a special word of thanks to Congressman Tony Hall for coming to me with this idea and helping me to develop it and push it through to the point where we could announce it today.

Thank you all, and thank you, Congressman.

President's Address to the Nation

Q. Mr. President, how hard a sell do you face tonight with your speech?

The President. I think the American people will respond. I believe that they're entitled to an explanation, that our values and our interests are very much at stake in the decision we make. And they're also entitled to an explanation about what exactly I propose to have our troops do there as part of the NATO mission. And I will do that this evening.

But I believe they will respond. This is an extraordinary opportunity and we have a very compelling responsibility, and I expect the American people to support it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:44 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Address to the Nation on Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina November 27, 1995

Good evening. Last week, the warring factions in Bosnia reached a peace agreement, as a result of our efforts in Dayton, Ohio, and the support of our European and Rus-

sian partners. Tonight, I want to speak with you about implementing the Bosnian peace agreement, and why our values and interests as Americans require that we participate.

Let me say at the outset, America's role will not be about fighting a war. It will be about helping the people of Bosnia to secure their own peace agreement. Our mission will be limited, focused, and under the command of an American general.

In fulfilling this mission, we will have the chance to help stop the killing of innocent civilians, especially children, and at the same time, to bring stability to Central Europe, a region of the world that is vital to our national interests. It is the right thing to do.

From our birth, America has always been more than just a place. America has embodied an idea that has become the ideal for billions of people throughout the world. Our Founders said it best: America is about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In this century especially, America has done more than simply stand for these ideals. We have acted on them and sacrificed for them. Our people fought two World Wars so that freedom could triumph over tyranny. After World War I, we pulled back from the world, leaving a vacuum that was filled by the forces of hatred. After World War II, we continued to lead the world. We made the commitments that kept the peace, that helped to spread democracy, that created unparalleled prosperity, and that brought victory in the cold war.

Today, because of our dedication, America's ideals—liberty, democracy, and peace—are more and more the aspirations of people everywhere in the world. It is the power of our ideas, even more than our size, our wealth, and our military might, that makes America a uniquely trusted nation.

With the cold war over, some people now question the need for our continued active leadership in the world. They believe that, much like after World War I, America can now step back from the responsibilities of leadership. They argue that to be secure we need only to keep our own borders safe and that the time has come now to leave to others the hard work of leadership beyond our borders. I strongly disagree.