AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Subsidy Funds program, which provides capital funds for FHA-insured multifamily housing;

Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration, $82 million—to repair damages and to help meet other anticipated emergency relief needs in fiscal 1997;

Small Business Administration's Disaster Loan Program, $22 million—to quickly service disaster loans in the affected States; and

Army Corps of Engineers, $18.8 million—for high-priority emergency dredging and debris removal in critical waterways.

I strongly urge the Congress to quickly approve this request for supplemental funding. Together, we can provide the assistance that our fellow Americans—the victims of these natural disasters—so desperately need.

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997 and an Exchange With Reporters

September 23, 1996

The President. Today I have the privilege of signing legislation that will increase the security of our country and our families. Before I finish my statement, I would like to say a special word of thanks to three legislators who are retiring from the Congress who have provided great leadership on national security issues for a very long time.

I thank my friend Senator Nunn, who has been here since 1972, for many years was the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. And since he has been here we have always had a defense authorization bill, many times only because of his persistent efforts.

I thank Senator Cohen for so many things that he's done, particularly in the area of national defense and security, for his willingness to work for a genuine bipartisan foreign policy, and especially in view of the events of the last several days, for his decisive votes with regard to the Saudi AWACS which was a critical decision which enabled us to contain Saddam Hussein.

And finally, I thank Congressman Sonny Montgomery, the father of the GI bill, a great friend of the National Guard and Reserve and the veterans of this country, for more than 30 years of service here in the Congress.

So I thank them all for their role not only in this legislation but for their entire careers, which will be ending shortly and too shortly for many of us.

One of our central missions is to ensure that our country remains the strongest force for peace and freedom in the world. This bill makes good on our pledge to keep our Armed Forces the best trained, best equipped fighting force on Earth. It carries forward our modernization programs by funding crucial weapons systems, such as the F–22 and F/A–18E/F fighters, the Comanche helicopters, and the V–22 Osprey. It gives us the technological edge to prevail on the battlefields of tomorrow. It builds on our progress in reducing the nuclear threat. It continues programs sponsored by Senators Nunn and Lugar to destroy thousands of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union and to prevent dangerous materials from these weapons from falling into the wrong hands.

This month our Nation has again been reminded of the extraordinary skill and dedication of our Armed Forces. In Iraq our men and women in uniform have shown their strength in advancing our strategic interests. In Bosnia our troops and their IFOR counterparts have helped to make possible the elections which mark another milestone on the road of that nation's recovery.

Our service men and women go the extra mile for us and we in turn should do the same for them. This bill does that by paying for improvements in family and troop housing, along with new starts in military construction projects. It provides a pay raise of 3 percent, nearly 1 percent more than the law now provides. Our troops have more than earned that.

The legislation protects not only our national security but also our security at home. The Interstate Stalking Punishment and Prevention Act of 1996, which is part of this legislation, dramatically toughens the law against stalkers, those who would threaten, harass, and instill fear in others, especially

women and girls. Though most States have strong antistalking laws, still there are big loopholes for those stalkers to slip through. We started to close those in the 1994 crime bill. Thanks to that law, stalkers now can be charged with violating restraining orders if they travel from one State to another to pursue their victims.

But many who are being stalked and harassed do not have protection orders and may not even know who is pursuing them. Until now they were not protected by Federal law. Until now, those being pursued across State lines by a spouse or an intimate had to wait until they had suffered an act of violence before we could use Federal resources to protect them. For the very first time, this legislation makes it a Federal crime for any stalker to cross State lines to pursue a victim, whether or not there is a protection order in effect, whether or not they have committed an actual act of violence, whether or not they are a spouse or an intimate of the victim.

Today we say loud and clear, if you stalk and harass, the law will follow you wherever you go. And if you are the victim of stalking and want to build a new life somewhere else, you will have the full protection of Federal law.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, the bill's sponsor, a victim of stalking who fought back; to Senator Dianne Feinstein, who's done so much to bring this legislation here today; to the victims and families who are here today, including Bonnie Campbell, a survivor of stalking; Shari De Priest and her son, Jesse—Shari's stalker is currently behind bars; Ricardo Wiggs, who lost his wife to a stalker and is here with their daughters, Jenine and Janelle. These are the true faces of this legislation and the reason we worked so hard for these new protections.

We have continued to work to make American life safer for women and children and families. We have more to do. I am calling for a constitutional amendment to guarantee victims' rights, legislation to extend the Brady bill to keep guns away from people with a history of domestic violence.

This legislation is proof, I will say in closing, of the progress we can make for the American people when we put the national security and the security of America's families first. And I thank those who have done so much work on this. I'd like to thank the Vice President especially and ask him to now make just a few comments about the reinventing Government aspects of this bill—some of them are remarkable and important—and then I will sign the legislation.

[*At this point, the Vice President explained the reinventing Government initiatives in the bill.*]

The President. Thank you.

Now I'd like to sign the bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the legislation.*]

Presidential Debates

Q. Mr. President, are you supporting Perot's bid to participate in the debates?

The President. We signed an agreement with the Dole campaign when it was obvious that there would be no debates if Mr. Perot was involved. And I thought the American people were entitled to a debate between Senator Dole and me, so eventually, the people that were negotiating for me told me—I told them to go ahead and make the agreement.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned that Boris Yeltsin's health, his apparently deteriorating health, is creating a destabilizing situation in the Soviet Union?

The President. I think they've come a long way in developing constitutional mechanisms of authority. They have worked out the relationships that will exist between President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. And we have regular contact with him, with the Foreign Minister, Mr. Primakov, with others in the executive office of the President, and I feel comfortable right now that our relationship will proceed on a normal course and a positive one.

United Nations

Q. Mr. President, what's it going to be like to go to the U.N. tomorrow with your campaign to force out Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the $1.7 billion debt that the United States owes,

and the questions about the Persian Gulf coalition? Is there any awkwardness there?

The President. No. It's going to be a happy day because we're going to be the first country to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. So it will be a milestone day for the United States and for the world. And that issue will—and then what we now have to do to follow up on it is what I intend to talk about and will overshadow everything else.

I believe that things are proceeding reasonably well now in Iraq, based on what I know today. I feel good about that. I think the United States should pay its U.N. dues. We're going to pay our dues this year, and we'll start to pay our debts on a regular basis until we get our debt paid back. I think we ought to, and I've always felt that, as you know.

And our position on the future of the U.N. and the Secretary General, a man for whom I have great personal respect, has been clear for many months now. So nothing's changed there. That's not new, not a surprise. And I expect it to be a good day.

Q. Have you got a replacement for him? Do you have a successor in mind?

1996 Elections

Q. What do you think about Bob Dole calling you a closet liberal and hitting you so personally on the drug issue?

The President. Well, let me—I'll just answer the liberal thing. I'll save the other one. I've got to have something to say at the debate. [*Laughter*]

But there's a real problem with that. One is my record, my record as Governor, my record as President. If you look at what we did on the deficit, bringing it down 4 years in a row for the first time since before the Civil War; what we did with the crime bill, which had the death penalty for drug kingpins and people who kill police officers and "three strikes and you're out" and 100,000 police and the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill; when you look at what we have done on welfare reform, starting in '93, that now has reduced the rolls on welfare by almost 2 million, the record doesn't support the charge. If you look at what I'm advocating for the next 4 years, it doesn't support the charge.

It is true that he and I had differences over the budget last year. And we will again in this campaign. And we have different tax cut plans. But I don't think that that qualifies me as a closet liberal.

Besides that, a President is too exposed. You can't be a—I don't have a closet. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Ross Perot, Reform Party candidate for President. H.R. 3230, approved September 23, was assigned Public Law No. 104–201.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997

September 23, 1996

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3230, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997," legislation authorizing fiscal 1997 appropriations for military activities of the Department of Defense, military construction, and defense activities of the Department of Energy. While I have reservations about parts of this Act, it is a step in the right direction, authorizing much of what my administration sought and omitting a number of provisions that we opposed.

First, the Act will improve the quality of life for military personnel by providing a 3 percent pay increase and better housing opportunities.

Second, the Act authorizes appropriations for important modernization programs requested in my budget. These programs, which are designed to provide our forces with the most modern equipment found anywhere on the globe, include the Army's Comanche helicopter, the Navy's Seawolf submarine, the Air Force's C–17 transport, and the V–22 Osprey for the Marine Corps.

Third, the Act authorizes additional appropriations for counter-narcotics programs, which my Administration sought in a FY 1996 supplemental appropriations request.