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Week Ending Friday, November 22, 1996

The President's Radio Address

November 16, 1996

Good morning. As I've said many times, America is the world's indispensable nation, the one the world looks to for leadership because of our strength and our values. This week I've taken two important decisions that are part of America's responsibilities in the world. The first is agreement, in principle, for our troops to take limited part in a mission to ease the suffering in Zaire. The second is approval, again in principle, for our troops to be part of a follow-on security presence in Bosnia. Today I want to tell you why our role in these missions matters.

Two years ago, following genocide in Rwanda, more than a million Rwandan refugees fled for Zaire. Recently their plight has worsened as fighting among militant forces has driven them from their camps. Relief agencies have been unable to provide food and water. Disease is breaking out.

As the world's most powerful nation, we cannot turn our back when so many people, especially so many innocent children, are at mortal risk. That is why, when Canada proposed to lead an international humanitarian force, I agreed that, under appropriate circumstances, America would participate. I've set out clear conditions for American participation to minimize risk and give our troops the best possible chance to make a difference.

The mission's aim must be to speed delivery of humanitarian aid and to help refugees who want to go home. Our contribution will reflect our special capabilities, such as providing airport security and helping to airlift forces. We know the mission is not risk-free, but hundreds of thousands of people are in desperate need. This is the right thing to do.

In Bosnia, because of our leadership, nearly 4 years of brutal war are over, and American troops, through the NATO-led force called IFOR, have helped to create conditions in which the Bosnians could start to rebuild. IFOR has completed its mission more successfully than anyone expected, ending the fighting, separating the forces, creating security for democratic elections. But these remarkable achievements on the military side have not been matched, despite all our efforts, by similar progress on the civilian side.

Rebuilding the fabric of Bosnia's political and economic life is taking more time than anticipated. NATO has been studying options to help give the Bosnian people more time with a new security presence in Bosnia when IFOR withdraws. Having carefully reviewed these options, I have agreed that America should take part.

Before making a commitment, I must be satisfied that the new mission is clear, is limited, and is achievable. Its focus should be preventing a renewal of fighting so that reconstruction and reconciliation can accelerate. That will require a strong but limited military presence in Bosnia, able to respond quickly and decisively to any cease-fire violations. This new mission will be more limited than IFOR, charged with maintaining the stability that IFOR created.

Our military planners believe the mission will require less than half the troops our Nation contributed to IFOR, about 8,500. There will be an American commander and tough rules of engagement, and every 6 months we will review whether stability can be upheld with fewer forces.

By the end of 1997, we expect to draw down to a much smaller deterrent force, half the initial size. We will propose to our NATO allies that by June 1998 the mission's work should be done, and the force should be able to withdraw.

As Zaire and Bosnia remind us, differences among people can fuel the most vicious and violent hatreds. Whether these differences are ethnic, tribal or religious, the result is tragedy and despair. In our own country, we

have seen the price we all pay whenever discrimination and hatred occur. But we also know how much is possible when people find unity and strength in their diversity. The world looks to America as a living example of how people can triumph over hatred and fear and come together as one nation under God.

This week, we lost a great American who taught us the importance of this lesson and whom people all over the world looked up to as the embodiment of the values that keep America strong, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago. As one of the most influential Roman Catholics in modern history, Cardinal Bernardin devoted himself to bringing out the best in humanity. He taught us that what unites us is more important than what divides us, that we can meet our challenges, but only by coming together across our differences. As he said shortly before he died, ''It is wrong to waste the precious gift of time given to us on acrimony and division.''

This true man of God spent his entire life helping people to find their way to common ground. That was, in fact, the project he was most involved with when he died, the common-ground project to unite Catholics of different views. Hillary and I counted him as our friend, and we'll miss him very much.

So let us all strive to find that common ground where all Americans can stand in dignity and help one another make the most of their dreams, and let us be ready to share our strength when our values and our interests demand it, with others around the world who need a hand to help themselves to reach their dreams.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:02 p.m. on November 15 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 16.

Proclamation 6956—National Family Week, 1996

November 19, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our families are among the great blessings we acknowledge each year at Thanksgiving.

The influence of the family is profound. Families provide essential nurturing and unconditional love; share their values, wisdom, and religious convictions; and give their members the hope and self-confidence they need to succeed. They form the foundation from which our Nation draws its strength and upon which we build our national character.

If our country is to succeed in the 21st century and beyond, we must commit ourselves now to ensuring the health and well-being of the American family. Parents, educators, business, religious, and community leaders must work together to strengthen our Nation's families. Government policies at the Federal, State, and local levels must support families with compassion and a willingness to give all Americans the tools they need to make the most of their own lives.

We must create economic opportunity so that hardworking parents can provide for their children and succeed both at work and at home. We must give our families safe neighborhoods in which to grow, free from guns and gangs, drugs and violence. We must reinforce parents' efforts to set a good example by helping to protect their children from the corrosive influences of alcohol and tobacco and to limit their exposure to explicit sexuality and violence in the entertainment media.

In doing so, we will reaffirm the vital lessons of love, responsibility, and compassion that so many of us have been fortunate to learn in our own families, and ensure that those lessons are passed on to the generations to come.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America,