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a press conference later. I'll answer more questions.

Q. Are you prepared to explain the veto, Mr. President—Clinton?

President Clinton. Sure. Yes, we'll have a press conference, and I'll answer all those questions. I'll be happy to answer that. And if no one gets to ask it, I will voluntarily answer it later.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

President Clinton. Let me begin by saying that it's a great honor for the United States to have President Mubarak back at the White House. His leadership for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East has been absolutely essential to any progress which has been made for 20 years now. We have worked closely together, and I'm looking forward to having this meeting.

Let me also say that we're going to have a press conference afterward, and we'll do our best to answer whatever questions you have.

Do you have anything you would like to say, Mr. President?

President Mubarak. Usually, I come to the United States to meet Mr. Clinton, for the United States is a full partner for the peace process, making tremendous efforts so the process will continue, so as to reach a comprehensive settlement and peace could prevail in the whole area and cooperation will continue among the countries in the Middle East.

I thank the President for his efforts, and we are going to discuss other issues now. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Mubarak

March 10, 1997

President Clinton. Good afternoon. I was glad to have the chance to welcome President Mubarak back to the White House. He has been a valued friend of the United States for 16 years now, one of the very first leaders to visit me in 1993 and also one of the first now to come to Washington during my second term.

Through this meeting and through consultations with other leaders from the region, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chairman Arafat, and King Hussein, who will be here next week, we are working to help the parties find common ground through progress toward lasting peace. We know that these efforts cannot succeed without the leadership of Egypt.

Since the Camp David accords in 1979, Egypt has been a powerful force for peace in the Middle East. That has continued to be true through the last 3½ years, a time of extraordinary progress toward peace and repeated challenges. Now, as Israel and the Palestinians embark on the difficult task of permanent status negotiations, as we look to revive negotiations between Israel and Syria, and then bring Lebanon into the process to complete the circle of peace, we know that Egypt's leadership will be vital to finish the job.

In January, Israelis and Palestinians once again demonstrated that even though the challenges are great, the will to create peace is there. An agreement on difficult issues can be achieved through genuine negotiations. But we've also been reminded recently of how difficult it is to maintain the momentum toward peace. Clearly, we're at a moment when all those with a stake in the peace process must rededicate themselves to building confidence and making progress.

Today the United States and Egypt have deepened our own understanding in our partnership, our determination to coordinate our efforts even more closely, and to encourage the parties to tackle the tough questions ahead. We also discussed how we can increase our cooperation on issues of regional security and expand the ties of commerce between our people. Stability and security in the region demands that the people of Egypt and all the peoples of the Middle East are rewarded in their efforts by greater prosperity.

I congratulated President Mubarak on the strong economic advances Egypt has made in the last 2 years, the work that he and Vice

President Gore have done. And the U.S.-Egypt partnership for economic growth and development has made a real difference by promoting privatization and tariff reduction.

The President's Council, a group of business leaders from the United States and Egypt, has achieved dramatic success, increasing trade and investment between our nations and deepening support for necessary economic reforms. Now Egypt is creating new growth and opportunity, building a better future for its people and for others throughout the Middle East.

Mr. President, you and I have been together here at the White House, in Cairo, at the Summit of the Peacemakers at Sharm al-Sheikh, and elsewhere, working for a just and lasting peace and a new day in the region. Now we're in a new phase, and we have to protect the hard work and achievements of the last 3½ years, and we know we'll have to work hard to fulfill the hopes for the Middle East and for peace. I know we can look to you as a friend and partner, and I look forward to being your friend and partner on this historic mission.

Welcome.

President Mubarak. Ladies and gentlemen, I was very pleased to meet once again with President Clinton and exchange with him views and ideas of matters of common concern. Let me first seize the opportunity to congratulate the President on the reaffirmation of the American people's confidence in his wise and inspiring leadership. It is most reassuring for many to know that they have a knowledgeable and farsighted friend in the White House.

In our discussion today, we had the opportunity to review several issues of special interest to us. First, we reviewed recent developments of the Middle East peace process. While we are pleased by the progress which has been attained on the Israel-Palestinian track, we were alarmed by the differences and the complications that have appeared lately. Such developments make the peace process a fragile and vulnerable one. I'm referring here specifically to the Israeli settlement activities, particularly in Jerusalem.

We all know that the issue of Jerusalem is as sensitive to Muslims and to Christians as it is to Jews. Hence, the rights and sentiments of all these people should be fully respected.

It was for this reason that I urged Prime Minister Netanyahu to reconsider the decision taken by the Israeli Cabinet to authorize the construction of thousands of housing units for Israelis in East Jerusalem. I urged him also not to close the Palestinian office there. Our purpose here is to eliminate all potential sources of tension and violence. It is equally important to avoid any violation of the interim agreement and related documents. We view such actions as flagrant violations that would not serve any useful purpose.

At any rate, I agreed with the Prime Minister to stay in touch and deal with these and other issues with an open mind, in light of their sensitivity. We are looking forward to the carrying out of further redeployments in good faith. On the other hand, we hope that the two parties engage in the final status negotiations without delay. Time is of essence. Every day that goes by without attaining meaningful progress, hurt the chance of peace.

Our commitment to a comprehensive peace requires us to exert maximum effort in order to get the negotiations resumed on the Syrian and the Lebanese track. I have discussed the matter at length with President Asad and found him positively inclined. He reiterated serious commitment to a just and comprehensive peace settlement on the basis of the Madrid formula.

He believes, not without justification, that the talks should be resumed from the point where the parties had left off a year ago. There is no reason why we should waste the progress which was achieved through the strenuous negotiations in Washington and Wye plantation. I discussed the issue with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and it is my earnest hope that we can work out an acceptable formula for the resumption of talks with the help of the United States. I need not emphasize the importance of the Syrian and Lebanese track. We should never miss another opportunity for making progress and peace.

President Clinton has assured me of the fact that the U.S. position on these various issues remains unchanged. That's very reassuring, indeed. It reinforces confidence in

the U.S. as a reliable sponsor and a promoter of peace in the Middle East. We are determined to pursue our joint efforts in the months ahead with zeal and hope. Together, we shall achieve our goal.

Mr. President, we are both pleased with the progress that has been achieved in our bilateral relations. In recent years, U.S.-Egyptian relations have entered a new era, expanded into new spheres of cooperation, and reached greater depth and warmth.

Today I can say with confidence that we have an economy that is moving toward the future on solid ground. We have established the infrastructure to growth and to have instituted the necessary reforms and the policies that have placed Egypt in the forefront of the emerging economies, attracting substantial capital flows. We now look forward to years of sustainable high growth, greater investment, and a steady increase in the standard of living of all Egyptians. As we did in the previous stages, we regard the U.S. as one of our most trusted partners in peace and socioeconomic progress.

In conclusion, I would like to thank President Clinton and the American people for their continued support and help. You are undertaking an historic mission at this crucial crossroads. And thank you very much.

Jerusalem Settlements

Q. Mr. President, in casting a veto on a new Israeli settlement in the U.N., the U.S. went against the conscience and the consensus of the world. The general assumption is that Israel is trying to force, with military backing, a preemptive solution to the status of Jerusalem rather than going through negotiations as promised. Is that your read on it?

President Clinton. Well, let me answer the two questions at once there. We made it very clear that the decision to build in the Har Homa neighborhood, in our view, would not build confidence, would not be conducive to negotiations, would be seen by the Palestinians and others as an attempt to, in effect, precondition some of the final status issues. And that's why we said that we thought it was a complication we would prefer strongly that it not have been made.

On the other hand, we felt that the resolution of the Security Council was also ill-advised for the general reason that we generally prefer that the Security Council resolutions not be injected into the peace negotiations, first, and second, because there was specific language in this resolution that we have previously vetoed because we also feel it attempts to shape the final status negotiations.

I think that we have seen—we have learned one thing, I have, in the last 4 years plus, and that is when the parties get together and negotiate in good faith and take risks for peace, good things happen. When they attempt to preclude the process of negotiations or preempt it or are insensitive to the needs and the feelings of people in the negotiating process, more destructive things happen and it becomes more difficult to make peace.

So I feel that we did the right thing from the point of view of the United States and the United Nations. But that should not be interpreted as an approval of the decision that was made by the Israeli Government.

Q. You don't think the U.N. has a role in peacemaking?

President Clinton. Oh, yes, I do think the U.N. has a role. But I think—again, I say, go back and read the language of the resolution. Look at the position we've taken in previous votes with the same kind of language. And remember that we believe it's our job to try to protect the final status issues for the final status negotiations.

You know, I had this same issue on completely the other side last year and the year before when there was a big move in Congress to move the Embassy to Jerusalem. And I opposed it because I thought it was a way by indirection of our taking a position on the final status, which I don't think we should do, I don't think any of us should do. We have got to force these parties to—and to help to work to create an environment in which they make the decisions together in an atmosphere of genuine negotiations. And that's the position that I hold.

Would you like to call on an Egyptian journalist?

President Mubarak. Yes.

Q. A question to both heads of state. Under the fourth Geneva Convention of August 12, 1949, concerning the protection of civilians under occupation, the Palestinians of East Jerusalem should be protected from

confiscation of land. In Cairo, when Prime Minister Netanyahu came, he boiled down the problem of—the East Jerusalem settlement, to a mere housing problem and made the dangerous claim that settlements are built on Jewish land, ignoring the fact that he is building on occupied territory. Can you then blame the Palestinians if they should sort of revolt, each in his own way?

President Clinton. Who's going first, Mr. President? [*Laughter*]

President Mubarak. Please, Mr. Clinton.

President Clinton. First of all, it's obvious that who owns the land is disputed and that—but the reason that I took the position that it would be—that notwithstanding whatever housing needs do or don't exist, it would be better if the houses not be built in the neighborhood, the Har Homa neighborhood—that I knew that it would be perceived by the Palestinians in just the way you have stated. And what I think is important is—on the other hand, if I were to answer the question in the way that you have established it, it would also seem that we were deciding a final status issue the other way.

That's why the people who set up the Oslo agreements and the people who signed the Israel-PLO accord here in September of 1993, they were very smart. They knew how explosive all these issues were, and they knew that a lot of confidence had to be built up first. And they knew that, for example, the land transfers had to be worked out in the West Bank and Gaza and other issues had to be worked out before the issue surrounding Jerusalem could be resolved. And that is why I think all these things are so terribly difficult and why the best thing is, insofar as both parties can do so, to let them be resolved by negotiations and final status issues without interference by anyone from the outside.

Now, having said that, yes, I still believe it would be a terrible mistake for the Palestinians to resort to violence. Every time they have done it, they wind up losing. They wind up getting hurt. They have a democratically elected leader. They have made dramatic progress in self-government. We are urging always on the Israelis more opportunities to let them progress more economically. We are urging on Mr. Arafat more reforms that will allow them to progress economically and politically. So I think that is the direction to go in. That's the direction that I support.

Do you want to answer the question, Mr. President?

President Mubarak. When Prime Minister Netanyahu was in Cairo last week, I opened this issue with him, and I discussed the issue of building new settlements in the area of Jerusalem. And I commented on his answers in the press conference, telling that this is illegal and this may create problems and we shouldn't touch the area of Jerusalem until the negotiations for the final status, as is the spirit of the Oslo agreement.

But he told me that "I'm building for both sides." But this is not satisfactory to persuade the Palestinians to accept this. We shouldn't build anything in the area of Jerusalem, although there is expansion and increase of population, until the negotiation of the final status come to an end. It will be much more convenient to both sides.

FBI and Alleged Chinese Efforts To Influence the 1996 Election

Q. Mr. President, two officials of the White House National Security Council were briefed by the FBI last June about suspicions that China was trying to influence the outcome of U.S. congressional elections, but supposedly this warning wasn't passed up the chain of command. Shouldn't the President be told when a foreign power is trying to influence U.S. elections, and isn't this the type of information you would want to know? And would this have raised a red flag about foreign contributions?

President Clinton. There are basically three things you've asked there. Let me try to—first of all, yes, the President should know. And I can tell you, if I had known about the reports—and again, these are reports; these are allegations; we have not reached a—as far as I know, no one in the Government has reached a conclusive decision about this. So it's very important not to accuse people of something that you don't know they have done. But had we known about the reports, the first thing I would have done is I would have given them to Leon Panetta and to Tony Lake and to Sandy Berger, and I'd say, "Listen, look at these,

evaluate them, and make recommendations about what, if any, changes we ought to make or what should we be alert to.'' So it would have provoked at least to that extent a red flag on my part.

Now, let's go back to the first question. I absolutely did not know it was done. It is my understanding that two members of the National Security Council were briefed by the FBI, and then the agent, for whatever reasons, asked that they not share the briefing, and they honored the request. And we did not know at any time between—for the rest of the year. We just didn't know, and certainly during the election period we did not know. And why that is, I don't know. But anyway, that happened.

So Mr. Berger has discussed this with the White House Counsel, and they are reviewing the whole episode to try to see what, if any, action is appropriate and what should have been done. But yes, I believe I should have known; no, I didn't know. If I had known, I would have asked the NSC and the Chief of Staff to look at the evidence and make whatever recommendations were appropriate.

Q. Are you going to ask Director Freeh why you weren't told?

President Clinton. I'm going to wait for a—for the National Security Council and the White House Counsel to get back to me on the whole episode and tell me what the facts were and what they think should have happened. And then I'll make whatever decision is appropriate then.

Jerusalem Settlements

Q. The question is for President Bill Clinton. The American administration has always been voicing its concern over the settlement issue. I want to revisit this issue again, if you will allow me. And you first described it as illegal and then as an obstacle to peace and as building mistrust and now dubbed it as a mere difficulty to peace. And a couple of days ago you vetoed a moderate decision by the United Nations over that issue.

Well, you've explained the position of the U.S. administration, but it looks—it's a little bit puzzling for us in the Arab world to understand that position, because don't you think that such a position places the U.S. credibility as an honest peace broker in question? And secondly, doesn't such a position also make the United States interests in the Arab world in jeopardy?

Thank you.

President Clinton. Well, let me say, first of all, in all candor, I'm very concerned about that. I'm concerned about—and I was very aware of how the veto might make the United States look in the Arab world, because I have worked very hard, as I told Mr. Arafat when he was here, to be fair to the Palestinians and fair to all the parties in the Middle East peace process and to see that their legitimate interests are advanced. And I worked hard to avoid, frankly, having a Security Council resolution. We were prepared to support a rather strong statement, Presidential statement, as an alternative.

But I think it's important—and I would say to the people in the Arab world who are looking at this and wondering what we're up to here, I'd like to say, you have to remember a couple of things.

Number one, if you go back and read that resolution, we have had a consistent position, even though I have abstained in some resolutions, I haven't vetoed all the resolutions criticizing Israel, but even though I have abstained in some, we've had a consistent position that we can never achieve peace through U.N. Security Council resolutions, number one.

Number two, there is language in this particular resolution which is identical to language that we have felt constrained to veto in the past because we felt that it, too, prejudged the final status.

And number three, I would say, just the way you asked the question makes my point. For the Arab world, the building in Har Homa is a settlement and, therefore, a violation. For the Israelis, they are building in a neighborhood that is already a part of their territory. So they are—they strongly dispute that it is a settlement in the sense that they admit other settlements exist.

Now, that very point makes a point I tried to make, which is why I believe the decision should not have been made. This should be part of the final status negotiations. Everything surrounding Jerusalem is of immense emotional, political, and religious signifi-

cance to all the parties involved here. That's why they wisely put it as a final status issue. And the only thing I can say to you is that you may disagree with this decision, but if you look at what I've done for the last 4 years and what I intend to do, I am trying to get to a point where the parties themselves can honestly make a just, fair, and lasting peace. And I will not do anything that I think undermines the ability of the United States to stand for that.

Gene [Gene Gibbon, Reuters].

FBI and Alleged Chinese Efforts To Influence the 1996 Election

Q. Mr. President, you don't seem particularly angry with the information about what's—the allegations that a foreign power was trying to subvert the U.S. elections was not brought to your attention. You're the person ultimately in charge of U.S. national security. I'm just wondering why you wouldn't pick up the phone and demand of Director Freeh why you weren't told. You certainly were the one person who probably should have known that information.

Thank you.

President Clinton. Well, what I seem and what I feel may be two different things. [*Laughter*] The older I get, the more I become aware of the fact that there's some things that there's no point in expending a lot of energy on. It didn't happen. It should have happened. It was a mistake.

But what I want to do now is—first of all, let's go back to the beginning here of when this came up—whenever it did, several weeks ago. The first thing we have to do is to allow the investigation to proceed, to find out—this is a very serious allegation, but as far as I know, it is only that. And it would be very serious if it were true. But it would also be a foolish error. Anyone who understands the sort of interplay of American politics, the scope and scale of the issues, the amount of investment involved, I mean, it just wouldn't make much sense. But it's a very serious thing.

The first and foremost thing we have to do is—now let's find out what the truth is, if we can, first. Second, let's find out exactly how this happened—which is why I asked the Counsel and the NSC to look into it—that is, what did these agents say? Were they instructed to say that? Did they just think it would be a good idea? Why did they do that? What was involved? We don't know the answers to a lot of questions.

So, Gene, until I know the answers to these questions, I think it's better for us to calm, to be disciplined, to be firm, to be straightforward. There's no point in shedding more heat than light on this. I'm interested in light being shed on this situation, and then as we know the facts, we'll all be able to make our judgments then about what should have been done and what we should do from here forward.

Final Status Negotiations

Q. Both of you have spoken about Jerusalem and how it should be only discussed in the final status negotiations. But these negotiations are supposed to start in 4 days, in fact. Do you believe that this deadline will be met, and if not, how will this affect the peace process?

President Mubarak. You're asking me? Both of us. You start, Mr. President.

President Clinton. I went first last time. That's not fair. [*Laughter*] Let me say, the deadline may not be met, but the important thing is to find the basis on which the parties can resume negotiations. I have been very impressed by how gifted the Palestinian negotiating team has been and how gifted the Israeli team has been. For anyone to just even look at the maps on Hebron, it's a stunning achievement, really, that they could come to grips with all this, the complexity of it.

But whether they're prepared to go on right now or whether we're going to have to figure out some way to build the confidence back to jumpstart it, we'll see. But if they don't start in 4 days, they're going to have to start sooner or later, or there won't be peace. So I would just bear down and keep working hard to try to get them back together, if they don't meet in 4 days.

President Mubarak. Concerning the Palestinians?

President Clinton. Yes. The Palestinians and the Israelis, yes.

President Mubarak. I know the problem between the Palestinians and the Israelis is

so complicated, anyway at least for this specific period of time, especially the rate of redeployment in Area C, which has been declared yesterday about 2.1 percent. I think it needs much more effort from the United States and Egypt to just persuade the two parts and find the solution for this so the negotiation could resume, especially the negotiation for the final status, which is very important, which could decide the whole thing at the end.

Welfare Reform

Q. Mr. President, with the welfare reform issue that you've been dealing with lately, and that's one of your main focuses, are you looking to hire welfare recipients here at the White House in the very near future, because you've gotten a lot of flack from civil rights groups as well as from the business community?

President Clinton. Well, let me just say the rules—the White House will be covered like everybody else, with the instruction that I sent out, which is that everyone will—each unit of Government under the various departments will have to send back a plan for what they might be able to do to hire welfare recipients. And then we will have our approach that will include every department in the Government, including the White House. So it depends. Here, it depends upon whether vacancies occur and in what area. But if they do, I certainly wouldn't rule it out, and I would want to rule it in. That is, I'd like to see us set an example, if we have a chance to do so.

Keep in mind, we have reduced the size of the Federal Government by about 285,000 now from the day I took office. But there are still enough vacancies every year that we can make a substantial contribution to the Nation's goal of having a million people move into jobs from welfare over the next 4 years. And yes, I'd like it very much if one of them was in the White House.

Jerusalem Settlements

Q. Mr. President Mubarak, you announced yesterday on CNN that you are going to ask Mr. Clinton to use his influence in Israel to stop carrying out the building of more settlement in Jerusalem. Did you raise this matter with His Excellency, and what is his reaction about that?

President Mubarak. I think I raised the question of the problem of the Middle East as such and as a whole, and we discussed the issue of the settlement activities. And it is well-known that the United States didn't change its mind, contending that building more settlements, changing the situation is illegal, runs against—creating a problem in the Middle East. We didn't differ in that issue.

President Clinton. We have to take a couple of more, because President Mubarak and I promised this lady she could have—Trudy [Trudy Feldman, Trans Features], do you have a question? And then we'll call on you.

Egypt's Economy

Q. For President Mubarak. May I? President, since you began privatizing your economy, foreign investors have shown increased interest in Egypt. So are you now a convert to free market economics—[*inaudible*]—private sector?

President Mubarak. Oh, sure. I'm inviting any of us who could come. We have changed the laws. We have market economy. We are open to any investors to come and work with us. And mind you, a couple of days ago we have about 17 or 18 businessmen from Israel and other places. And they ask of me if I could give green light to the business people to help there. I told them the green light has already been given years ago, and this depends only on the political atmosphere. But we never prevent anybody to work here or there, or we will not stop and stand against any of us to come to invest in Egypt. And we welcome them at any time.

Q. So you've become a convert?

President Clinton. I think we have just heard the Egyptian version of "Show me the money." [*Laughter*] There's a movie that was made in the United States about a sports agent, Mr. President, and they were always saying, "Show me the money."

Now, this lady, we promised her she could ask a question, didn't we?

President Mubarak. Yes, of course.

U.S. Veto of U.N. Resolution on Jerusalem

Q. A question for both Presidents, please. The whole Arab world was disappointed by the veto. Don't you think, first, that this policy pursued by the U.S. could encourage Israel to build more settlements inside Jerusalem which would make an obstacle—new obstacles to the peace process? And if you have discussed any new Syrian—any new ideas to push forward the Syrian track?

President Clinton. Yes, the answer to your first question is, it would—it might be seen as encouraging the present Israeli Government to do that if we had stated that we were vetoing the resolution because we agreed with Israel's decision. But we've made it clear we do not agree with Israel's decision and we—that we have to go back to the negotiations. So for that reason, I do not believe so.

Second question is, yes, we did. We had a very long, good detailed discussion about what we might do together to get the Syrian negotiations back on track. And we've both agreed now to go out and do a few things to try to see if we can't make that happen. Whether we can, of course, is up to President Asad and Prime Minister Netanyahu. But we believe it's important, and we believe that there is at least a potential there that the parties could reach across the ground that divides them.

President Mubarak. I may say concerning the veto that it's unfortunate that the resolution was not adopted because it might have given a signal to the Israelis to stop any settlement activities, especially in the area of Jerusalem, which is illegal. But I hope in the future we could avoid this.

President Clinton. Okay, one more from each. Go ahead.

Congressional Action on Certification for Mexico

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It seems like the Congress is trying to reverse your decision to certify Mexico. What are you going to do about it? And are you trying to ask Mexico some gesture in their part to strengthen your hand in Congress?

President Clinton. Well, first let me say, what we're going to do about it is we're going to make a full-court press to bring the administration's position and perspective to the Members of Congress before they vote at large. In fairness to the committee, which voted overwhelmingly against my position last week in the House, we really hadn't had much of a chance to have a discussion with them. And I don't think that there is a great difference about the facts here. The question is, which action by the United States, number one, is required by the law, and number two, is most likely to reduce the drug problem in the United States and in Mexico?

Now, the law says that we should certify Mexico if the government is fully cooperating and if there is some evidence of progress being made. Now, does the fact that the President announced that the drug czar was being dismissed for corruption mean that the government has not been cooperating or the government has been cooperating? I believe it's evidence that the government is cooperating.

Secondly, they have dismissed 1,200 other public officials in the last year because of corruption or suspected corruption. And then let's look at the other issue, have they gotten results? We have record numbers of eradications, arrests, and seizures of drugs. We have the first extraditions in history of suspected criminals, charged criminals, from Mexico to the United States. We have an agreement between Mexico and General McCaffrey to work together to design a strategy.

I think what we need to do is find a way to work with the Congress to see what the next steps are going to be. I think if Congress says, "If you want us to certify, we've got to know what the next steps are going to be," I think it's legitimate for the Congress to know that. And I think that President Zedillo and I both want to demonstrate—and I hope we will on my trip to Mexico—that we've got a plan to do this that's good for America, good for Mexico, and basically good for our entire region.

But I strongly feel we should certify them. That's the recommendation Secretary Albright has made to me. I think she was right, and I'm going to do my best to persuade the Congress that we're right.

President Clinton. Thank you.

President Mubarak. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 138th news conference began at 2:36 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; King Hussein I of Jordan; President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria; and President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico.

Statement on Senator Wendell H. Ford's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

March 10, 1997

Senator Wendell Ford has served his home State of Kentucky with pride and distinction for four terms as a Member of the U.S. Senate. He has been a leader in the Democratic Party and a personal friend for many years. Senator Ford's tireless efforts as a veteran, businessman, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor before coming to Washington, have earned him the admiration of all who know him. I will miss his leadership and advice on Capitol Hill but know that he will continue to find ways to improve the lives of the constituents he has served so well for so long. Kentucky and the Nation are better for his dedication and service. Hillary and I wish him, his wife, Jean, and their family well in the years to come.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Report on Peacekeeping Operations

March 10, 1997

Dear _____:

Enclosed is a copy of the 1996 Annual Report to the Congress on Peacekeeping, pursuant to section 407(d) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (Public Law 103–236).

Once again in 1996, multilateral peacekeeping operations proved their worth in helping to defuse conflict and alleviate humanitarian crises around the world. Our support for the United Nations and other peacekeeping options allows us to protect our interests before they are directly threatened and ensures that others share with us the risks and costs of maintaining stability in the post-Cold War world.

The concerted efforts we have made over the past few years have brought greater discipline to peacekeeping decision-making in national capitals and at the United Nations. Tough questions about the mandate, size, cost, duration, and exit strategy for proposed missions are asked and answered before they are approved. Careful attention is also given to ensuring that those responsible for leading the mission—whether the United Nations, NATO, or a coalition of concerned states—are capable of doing the job at hand.

I hope you will find the enclosed report a valuable and informative account of how the United States uses peacekeeping to promote stability and protect its interests. It is important that peacekeeping remain a viable choice when we face situations in which neither inaction nor unilateral American intervention is appropriate. To that end, I look forward to working with you on my proposal to continue our reform efforts at the United Nations and to pay off our peacekeeping debt.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Idential letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Strom Thurmond, chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations; Robert L. Livingston, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations; and Floyd Spence, chairman, House Committee on National Security.

Remarks to the Conference on Free TV and Political Reform and an Exchange With Reporters

March 11, 1997

The President. Thank you. What a gift. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Walter Cronkite. Thank you, Paul Taylor, for your passion and your commitment. Thank you, Senator McCain, Chairman Hundt, Ann McBride, Becky Cain. And thank you, Barry Diller, for what you have said about this important issue. I am delighted to have the chance to come here today, and I thank the sponsors of this event.