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NOTE: H.R. 3116, approved March 20, was assigned Public Law No. 105–164.

Statement on Cuba

March 20, 1998

Eight weeks ago, His Holiness John Paul II made an historic visit to Cuba. He spoke to and for the Catholic faithful who have for decades endured a system that denied their right to worship freely.

In anticipation and in support of that visit, my administration made a number of exceptions to our policy regarding travel and shipment of humanitarian supplies to Cuba. The response of the Cuban people to that visit has since convinced me that we should continue to look for ways to support Cuba's people without supporting its regime, by providing additional humanitarian relief, increasing human contacts, and helping the Cuban people prepare for a peaceful transition to a free, independent, and prosperous nation.

Prior to the Pope's visit, we authorized direct charter flights for pilgrims to attend Papal services. We also authorized direct humanitarian cargo flights to Cuba in order to reduce the cost of getting these needed supplies to the Cuban people. The deliveries were carefully monitored to ensure that they reached the people for whom they were intended.

These measures were fully consistent with the letter and spirit of the Cuban Democracy Act and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which, in addition to sustaining tough economic sanctions, also enable and encourage the administration to conduct a program of support for the Cuban people.

I continue to believe in the validity of our policy built on four main components:

—pressure on the regime for democratic change;

—support for the Cuban people through humanitarian assistance and help in developing civil society;

—promotion of more concerted multilateral effort to promote democracy and human rights; and

—cooperative arrangements to move migration into safe, legal and orderly channels.

I have been following carefully the various proposals put forward by Members of Congress and other interested groups for expanding humanitarian assistance to the people of Cuba, including food. I have asked Secretary Albright to work on a bipartisan basis with the Congress to fashion an approach to the transfer of food to the Cuban people.

To build further on the impact of the Pope's visit, to support the role of the Church and other elements of civil society in Cuba, and to thereby help prepare the Cuban people for a democratic transition, I have also decided to take the following steps:

—Resume licensing direct humanitarian charter flights to Cuba. Direct humanitarian flights under applicable agency regulations will make it easier for Cuban-Americans to visit loved ones on the island, and for humanitarian organizations to provide needed assistance more expeditiously and at lower cost.

—Establish new licensing arrangements to permit Cuban-Americans and Cuban families living here in the United States to send humanitarian remittances to their families in Cuba at the level of $300 per quarter, as was permitted until 1994. This will enable Cuban-Americans to provide direct support to relatives in Cuba, while moving the current flow of remittances back into legal, orderly channels.

—Streamline and expedite the issuance of licenses for the sale of medicines and medical supplies and equipment to Cuba. Based on experience of the past several years, including during the Papal visit, we believe that the end-use verification called for in the Cuban Democracy Act can be met through simplified arrangements.

The Departments of Treasury, Commerce and State will develop and promulgate new licensing arrangements in these three areas in the coming weeks.

The people of Cuba continue to live under a regime which deprives them of their freedom, and denies them economic opportunity. The overarching goal of American policy must be to promote a peaceful transition to democracy on the island. Such a transition will depend upon the efforts of Cubans

who seek to build a vibrant civil society and to secure respect for basic human rights. The presence of His Holiness John Paul II in Cuba inspired the Cuban people, providing an important psychological boost to the Cuban Catholic Church, to Cuba's nascent civil society, and to the Cuban people. The measures I have announced today are designed to build upon that visit, to support the Cuban people through the hardships and difficulties ahead, to contribute to the growth of a civil society and to help prepare for a peaceful transition to democracy.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Saint Kitts/Nevis-United States Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and Documentation

March 20, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Basseterre on September 18, 1997, and a related exchange of notes signed at Bridgetown on October 29, 1997, and February 4, 1998. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the Report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties being negotiated by the United States in order to counter criminal activities more effectively. The Treaty should be an effective tool to assist in the prosecution of a wide variety of crimes, including drug trafficking offenses. The Treaty is self-executing.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Mutual assistance available under the Treaty includes: taking of testimony or statements of persons; providing documents, records, and articles of evidence; serving documents; locating or identifying persons; transferring persons in custody for testimony or other purposes; executing requests for searches and seizures; assisting in proceedings related to immobilization and forfeiture of assets; restitution; collection of fines; and any other form of assistance not prohibited by the laws of the Requested State.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty and related exchange of notes, and give its advice and consent to ratification.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 20, 1998.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 15

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton returned to Washington, DC, from Camp David, MD.

March 16

In the morning, the President traveled to Silver Spring, MD, and in the afternoon, he returned to Washington, DC.

In an evening ceremony in the Oval Office, the President received diplomatic credentials from Ambassadors Petrit Bushati of Albania, Bruno Nongoma Zidouemba of Burkina Faso, Samson K. Chemai of Kenya, Marcelo Perez Monasterios of Bolivia, Michael Arneaud of Trinidad and Tobago, Rachel Gbenyon Diggs of Liberia, Jon Baldvin Hannibalsson of Iceland, Eloy Alfaro de Alba of Panama, Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti of Indonesia, Nicholas J.O. Liverpool of Dominica, Li Zhaoxing of China, and Claude Sylvestre Anthony Morel of Seychelles.

Later, the President met with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein in the Oval Office.

The President announced his intention to appoint Curtis A. Prins to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation.