

Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

**Radio Remarks on the “Insure Kids Now” Initiative**

*February 23, 1999*

As every parent knows, nothing is more important than keeping our children healthy. So I have very good news for working parents. Even if you can't afford private health insurance, it's now possible to get help with doctor bills, medicines, and hospital care for your children. If your children are uninsured, please call 1-877-KIDS-NOW—1-877-KIDS-NOW. With a little help, your children can get the care they need to grow up healthy and strong.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 2:54 p.m. in the Oval Office on February 22 for later broadcast as a public service announcement. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 23. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Statement on the Kosovo Peace Talks**

*February 23, 1999*

The peace talks in Rambouillet, France, are a significant step forward in the search for a fair and lasting peace in Kosovo. In the last three weeks, the negotiations have produced more progress than we have seen in the decade since Kosovo's autonomy was stripped away by the Government in Belgrade.

By agreeing in principle to a strong plan that would provide substantial self-government for the people of Kosovo, the negotiators on the Albanian side have shown courage and leadership. The agreement by the Serb side to substantial autonomy for Kosovo also represents an important, but incomplete, recognition that only by allowing the people in Kosovo control over their day-to-day lives can there be a lasting peace.

The Kosovar negotiators have asked for time to consult with their constituents before formally signing the peace plan. I believe that

the Kosovar Albanian people will strongly support what their negotiators have done, because the agreement represents the opportunity for a better life after years of repression and fear. The Serbs should be prepared to return to the negotiations on March 15 with a commitment to sign the full agreement—including the indispensable provisions on the withdrawal of most Serb security forces from Kosovo and the deployment of a NATO-led peace implementation force.

In the meantime, it is imperative that all sides avoid provocations that would imperil this progress. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana retains the authority given to him by the NATO Council to act if necessary.

I want to thank Secretary Albright and all her negotiators for their tireless efforts that led to hopeful developments, and commend British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, the cochairs of Rambouillet, for their leadership.

**Statement on the Verdict in the James Byrd, Jr., Murder Trial**

*February 23, 1999*

When James Byrd, Jr., was murdered, it was my hope that people would join together across racial lines to demonstrate that an act of evil like this is not what our country is all about. That hope was fulfilled over the past 8 months, as citizens across the country expressed their outrage and grief over this tragedy and their determination to ensure that justice be done.

I hope that the verdict rendered today by 12 citizens in Jasper, Texas, will bring some sense of closure to the family and friends of Mr. Byrd. The First Lady and I offer our prayers for them and our hope that their memories of Mr. Byrd's life will sustain them in the difficult time ahead. The jury has spoken. Our work for racial reconciliation and an end to all crimes of hatred in this country will go on.

**Message to the Congress  
Transmitting a Report on a Western  
Hemisphere Drug Alliance**

February 23, 1999

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I am pleased to provide the attached report on a Western Hemisphere Drug Alliance in accordance with the provisions of section 2807 of the "Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998." This report underscores the Administration's commitment to enhancing multilateral counter-narcotics cooperation in the region.

Strengthening international narcotics control is one of my Administration's top foreign policy priorities. Because of the transnational nature of the Western Hemisphere drug trafficking threat, we have made enhanced multilateral cooperation a central feature of our regional drug control strategy. Our counter-narcotics diplomacy, foreign assistance, and operations have focused increasingly on making this objective a reality.

We are succeeding. Thanks to U.S. leadership in the Summit of the Americas, the Organization of American States, and other regional fora, the countries of the Western Hemisphere are taking the drug threat more seriously and responding more aggressively. South American cocaine organizations that were once regarded as among the largest and most violent crime syndicates in the world have been dismantled, and the level of coca cultivation is now plummeting as fast as it was once sky-rocketing. We are also currently working through the Organization of American States to create a counternarcotics multilateral evaluation mechanism in the hemisphere. These examples reflect fundamental narcotics control progress that was nearly unimaginable a few years ago.

While much remains to be done, I am confident that the Administration and the Congress, working together, can bolster cooperation in the hemisphere, accelerate this progress, and significantly diminish the drug threat to the American people. I look forward

to your continued support and cooperation in this critical area.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
February 23, 1999.

**Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony  
for President Jerry John Rawlings of  
Ghana**

February 24, 1999

President and Mrs. Rawlings, distinguished members of the Ghanaian delegation, my fellow Americans. Mr. President, Hillary and I are delighted to welcome you and Mrs. Rawlings to the United States. Nearly a year ago, your country gave us a greeting I will always remember. On that great day, it was over 100 degrees fahrenheit—[laughter]—and we had a half million people in Independence Square in Accra. We thought we should arrange a similar meeting here today. [Laughter]

Actually, for the South Grounds of the White House, we have a large crowd of people, young and old, from all parts of America, including a significant number of people whose roots are in your country. And in our hearts, our welcome is warm. In Independence Square, before the largest crowd I had ever addressed, I learned the meaning of *akwaaba*, your word for "welcome." It was also written on billboards and on posters, and unforgettably written in the faces of all the Ghanaian people we saw. Mr. President, Mrs. Rawlings, it gives me great pleasure to say to you this morning, *akwaaba*. Welcome to the United States.

Our trip to Ghana marked an important step forward for Africa and the United States, symbolizing a new beginning for both of us, a partnership built on mutual respect and mutual benefit. On our part, it signaled to the world our respect for Africa's achievements and aspirations after centuries of colonialism and decades of cold war. On Africa's part, it signaled your readiness to work with us to forge a better future of open societies and shared responsibilities.