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efforts to eliminate Iraq's prohibited weapons and missile programs, and economic sanctions that continue to deny the regime the means to reconstitute those threats to international peace and security. United States support for the Iraqi opposition will be carried out consistent with those policy objectives as well. Similarly, U.S. support must be attuned to what Iraqis can effectively make use of as it develops over time.

The United Nations Compensation Commission

The United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), established pursuant to Resolutions 687, 692, and 1210, continues to resolve claims against Iraq arising from Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The UNCC has issued over 1.3 million awards worth approximately $7 billion. Thirty percent of the proceeds from the oil sales permitted by Security Council resolutions have been allocated to the Compensation Fund to pay awards and to finance operations of the UNCC. Pursuant to decisions of the UNCC Governing Council, certain small claims are to receive initial payments of $2,500 toward the amounts approved on those claims before large claims of individuals and claims of corporations and governments may share in the funds available for claims payments. As money from Iraqi oil sales is deposited in the Compensation Fund the UNCC makes these initial $2,500 payments on eligible claims in the order in which those claims were approved by the UNCC. To date, the United States Government has received funds from the UNCC for initial installment payments on approximately 1435 claims of U.S. claimants.

Conclusion

Iraq remains a serious threat to international peace and security. I remain determined to see Iraq comply fully with all of its obligations under Security Council resolutions. The United States looks forward to the day when Iraq rejoins the family of nations as a responsible and law-abiding member. I appreciate the support of the Congress for our efforts and shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Robert G. Torricelli in Newark, New Jersey

March 3, 1999

Thank you for the wonderful, wonderful welcome, and I want to congratulate everyone who had anything to do with building this magnificent Performing Arts Center. It's a fabulous place.

I would like to thank the people whose presence brightened our night tonight. I thank Cissy Houston and my friend Kevin Spacey. I thank Gloria Gaynor. I was—when she was singing her songs, we were all back there singing offstage. And they said, now—they made me stand way back so no one could possibly take an embarrassing picture of me pretending that I was young again, and off key. And I was trying to decide whether I was—it was more appropriate for me to sing "I Will Survive," or —[*laughter*]—actually, I sort of like "I'm Never Going To Say Good-bye" better. [*Laughter.*]

I say that because the people of New Jersey have been wonderful to me, and I am profoundly grateful. I remember so well my first big political event here—Bob Janiszewski had me there—and thank you, Bob, and all the people from that magnificent county Democratic organization. And I had lost my voice that night, and they stuck with me anyway, which I really appreciate.

I'd like to thank Congressman Payne, Congressman Pallone, Congressman Holt, and Congressman Rothman for flying up on Air Force One with me tonight and for doing New Jersey proud every day in the United States Congress. And I want to thank Mayor Sharpe James and the other mayors and State assembly people who met me at the airport. And I thank Charles Kushner and Steve Ross for doing a great job on this event tonight.

I thank your State Democratic chairman, Tom Giblin, and your assembly leader, Joe Doria, who tells me we have a chance to win the assembly this year. And I want you to do that.

And most of all, I want to thank Bob Torricelli for many things, for being a great advocate. He is a ferocious advocate for New Jersey, for America, for democracy and human rights throughout the world; now, for the proposition that it's high time the Democrats took back the Senate, and he's leading our campaign committee. And he has been my friend, in good times and bad. And I will never forget it. I'm honored to be here tonight.

Bob was up here talking, and I thought: Shoot, he's giving my speech; I won't have anything to say when I get out there. [*Laughter*] Let me just say to all of you, again, I am profoundly grateful that the people of New Jersey twice voted to give their electoral votes to the Vice President and to me. I am grateful that Hillary and I and all of us in our administration had the chance to serve these last 6 years, to work to create the conditions and give the American people the tools that brought us to this day. How different this is than America was 6 years ago.

And I am grateful for that. I don't for a moment claim all the credit for every good thing that has happened in this country, but I do believe when I came to the people of New Jersey in 1992 and said we needed to change the direction of this country; we need to go back to a commitment to give opportunity to every responsible citizen; and we need to remind the American people that we're all one community across all the lines that divide us; and that we can only do well individually if we're committed to giving every American and every American family and every American community the chance to be a part of the future we dream for our own children.

And I'm glad and grateful that we have the lowest peacetime unemployment rate since 1957 and the longest peacetime economic expansion in history and the lowest crime rate in 30 years and welfare rolls cut in half and 90 percent of our kids immunized for the first time ever and the doors of college open to all Americans. I am simply grateful to have had the chance to participate in what we have done together as a nation.

But I want to say to you in more pointed and more specific terms what Bob just said. This country has been through a lot in the last 10, 15 years. We've had a lot of triumph. We've overcome a lot of economic and social trauma. And the easy thing to do when things are going well is to relax, maybe even go back to the old ways, go back to the stand patter. And I have to tell you that I think that would be a terrible mistake.

I am encouraged that the American people agree. In 1998, when our party picked up seats in the House of Representatives for the first time in the 6th year of a Presidency since 1822—including Russ Holt—it happened because we had the national agenda. We didn't stand back and say, ''Vote for us because we've got a surplus. Vote for us because we've got a good economy.'' We said, ''Vote for us because we have a chance to meet the big challenges still facing this country. Vote for us, and we will save Social Security. We will modernize our schools. We will pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. We will keep the American economy going in the right direction. We have an agenda.''

And so I say tonight, the thing I like most about Bob Torricelli is if you didn't want to be a Senator to have the honor of the title, he wanted to be a Senator to get up every day and get something done to help the lives of ordinary people in New Jersey, in the United States, and throughout the world.

And I can say to you—so many of you came through the line and said something specific to me about the peace process in the Middle East or democracy in Asia or in our own hemisphere or some specific domestic program, when we were visiting earlier, those of you who came through and talked to me—I think it is important that if the Democratic Party wishes to be the majority party over the long run, in the Congress and in the White House, that we continue to be both the conscience and the engine of America's civic life.

We have big challenges. If I haven't learned anything in the last 6 years, it is how quickly things are changing within and beyond our borders and what a terrible mistake it is to believe that, just because things are

good today, they'll be just fine tomorrow if you don't do anything else. That would be a significant mistake.

So I just want to say three or four things. I ask for your support, for your Members of Congress and for your Senator. And I ask you to fight for these things in the coming years when you have the election this year in New Jersey, next year for the Senate and the Congress races and in the Presidency.

Number one, we have got to face the fact that like every advanced country in the world, we are getting older as a nation. There will be twice as many people over 65 in 30 years as there are now. There will only be two people working for every one person retired and drawing Social Security. The present system cannot be sustained unless we do something about it. And I do not think what we should do about it is forget about it, because half the people in America today over 65 are out of poverty only because, in addition to their other income, they draw Social Security.

So I have said the first thing we've got to do is deal with the challenge of the aging of America, which means we have to save Social Security; we have to save Medicare for the 21st century. And the right way to do it—the right way to do it is to realize that it is also an enormous opportunity if we do it properly.

I want to set aside a little over three-quarters of this surplus that we think will come out in the next 15 years until we save Social Security and Medicare. Since we don't need the money right away, in the ensuing 15 years we can buy in the debt. And if we pay down the public debt for 15 years with this surplus, let me tell you what will happen. Fifteen years from now our country will have the smallest debt it's had since 1917, before we went into World War I. Fifteen years from now, when your Members of Congress go to vote on the budget, instead of taking 13 cents of every dollar you pay in taxes off the top to pay interest on the debt, it will be down to 2 cents. And they will be putting the money into Social Security, into Medicare, into education, into medical research, into protecting the environment, into growing the economy, into building America.

And in the meanwhile, because we'll be doing that, interest rates will be lower; business loans will be lower; college loans will be lower; consumer credit will be lower; home mortgages will be lower. There will be more jobs, higher income, and more prosperity.

Now, the easy thing to do is to say, "We've got this surplus. We've waited 30 years. Let's give it away. Let's give it back to the American people in a tax cut because it's your money anyway." Well, it is your money, anyway, but you would be better off with a strong, healthy American economy and preserving our obligations for the 21st century, saving Social Security and Medicare. And that is what we ought to do.

We can do that and still have a sizable tax cut and invest more in education and meet our national security needs. But we ought to put first things first. And we will rue the day that we missed the opportunity to meet our obligations to the next generation of elderly and to lift from their children and grandchildren the burden of knowing that they have to care for their parents more than they should and their incomes will be eroded.

We can make the 21st century more secure, more vital, and economically stronger. That is the first and most important mission we have. We have to do more for the children and families of the 21st century. We're a long way from guaranteeing excellence in education for every child. I have loved going into the schools of New Jersey. I have loved seeing the proliferation of computer technology for poor students and immigrant families, as well as for those of middle class and upper-income children and their families. But we have a long way to go, and we have to do better.

We have a long way to go before we can honestly say that we have made it possible for every working family in this country to succeed both at work and in raising their children. That's why we have a major child care initiative. I cannot tell you how many million families every day are confronted with nagging worries—even in this prosperous economy—about whether they can meet their obligations at work and still afford quality child care for their kids. And I will not rest until I believe every American family can do both and take care of their children and their job.

I am proud that the air is cleaner and the water is cleaner and there are fewer toxic waste dumps and the environment is making progress. And I am proud of the fact that the Democrats proved that you could grow the economy and improve the environment at the same time, something our friends in the other party always denied. That is not true. You can grow the economy and improve the environment at the same time. But we now have a $2 billion livability agenda before the Congress that's terribly important to me. Why? Because it will help communities deal with everything from traffic congestion to the need for more green space, it will help us to set aside precious lands in urban areas and remote wilderness, and we ought to do it to continue our work.

And let me just say one last thing that you, here in New Jersey, know is true. Not every neighborhood in every city or every small town or every rural area has participated in this recovery. And I have asked the Congress to pass a comprehensive plan to create new markets for American business and new jobs right here at home, by giving the same kind of incentives to people to invest and create private sector jobs in poor urban and rural and small town neighborhoods that we already give people to invest overseas. If it works there, it will work here, and we should support it.

Finally, let me make one other point. We've had a wonderful night, and I don't have to give my State of the Union Address to you again. But if you asked me today what is the distinguishing characteristic of what it is we have tried to do, Senator Torricelli and I and our allies over the last 6 years, and what is the difference between what you have tried to do and what those who have opposed you have tried to do, I would say it is this: Number one, we believe that we have an obligation to give every single American the ability to live out his or her dream. And number two, we believe that with all that divides us, by race, by region, by culture, by religion, by lifestyle, by whatever, we still have to make one family.

When some of you were going through the line tonight saying thank you for what you've done in the Middle East, thank you for what you've tried to do in Northern Ireland, what we're trying to do in Kosovo to head off another bloodshed, what I'd still like to do on the Indian subcontinent and other places in the world, what we've tried to do in helping to end tribal wars in Africa, you think about it. Here we are, on the verge of a new millennium in this high-tech age, and what are we worried about? We're worried about people getting hold of high-technology information and weapons to pursue ancient hatreds or age-old greed, whether they're organized criminals or drug traffickers or people fighting these awful religious and racial wars all across the world.

If you want America to do good in the 21st century, America first must be good at home. We must be a country of all Americans under the law. And I have said this before, but I have tried to make the Democratic Party and our administration faithful to the traditions not only of Jefferson and Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt but also to those of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. We have embraced the best of America's past, to prepare for America's best days in the 21st century. And I can't think of any Member of Congress who can do more to give us the kind of America that all our children deserve than Bob Torricelli.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:04 p.m. in Prudential Hall at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Cissy Houston, Kevin Spacey, and Gloria Gaynor; Hudson County Executive Bob Janiszewski; Mayor Sharpe James of Newark; event cochairs Charles Kushner and Steve Moses; and State Assembly Minority Leader Joseph V. Doria, Jr.

Interview With Janet Langhart Cohen of the Armed Forces Television Network

February 25, 1999

President's Impression of Personnel

Mrs. Cohen. Mr. President, thanks very much for this interview. I want to talk about your impressions of our military. You get a chance to travel all over the world and see our men and women in uniform. What is your impression of them?