

Eshoo and Waxman. I look forward to working with all Members of Congress of both parties to build a stronger nation with a healthier food supply for the 21st century.

Have a happy and healthy Fourth of July, and thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:37 p.m. on July 2 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Memorandum on the Safety of Imported Foods

July 3, 1999

Memorandum for the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of the Treasury

Subject: Safety of Imported Foods

While the United States has one of the safest food supplies in the world, outbreaks of foodborne illness are still all too prevalent. Millions of Americans are stricken by illness each year from foods they consume, and thousands, mostly the very young and the elderly, die as a result. The threats come from a variety of sources, including both imported and domestically produced foods.

Foodborne illness is difficult to control in a changing world. Consumers enjoy a greater variety of foods than they did 50 years ago, including a greater emphasis on food from all around the world. Americans also eat more foods prepared outside their homes, such as foods prepared in grocery stores, restaurants, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and day care centers. We also are seeing the emergence of new foodborne pathogens such as the highly virulent E. Coli O157:H7.

For these reasons, my Administration has made food safety a high priority. I have requested substantial annual increases to fund food safety initiatives such as a nationwide early warning system for foodborne illness, increased inspections, and the expansion of food safety research, risk assessment, and education. In January of 1997, I directed the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection

Agency to identify specific steps to improve the safety of the food supply. In October of 1997, I expanded my initiative to provide special emphasis on the safety of domestic and imported fruits and vegetables. Last year at this time, I announced the creation of a Joint Institute for Food Safety Research (JIFSR) to develop a strategic plan for conducting food safety research and efficiently coordinating all Federal food safety research. In August of 1998, I issued an Executive order to create the President's Council on Food Safety, which is charged with (1) developing a comprehensive plan for all Federal food safety activities, (2) advising agencies of food safety priorities and developing coordinated food safety budgets, and (3) overseeing the JIFSR. We have made significant steps domestically to help ensure the safety of our food supply.

Today, I am expanding my Administration's food safety efforts even further to focus on the safety of imported foods. While the majority of imported food is safe, problems do exist. These problems are the result of two major changes. At the turn of the century, relatively few foods were imported, but today, we are seeing a dramatic increase in the importation of foods. Imports have doubled over the past 7 years and, based on recent trends, we expect at least an additional 30 percent increase by 2002. Finished and fully packaged food products account for an increasing proportion of all imported foods and there has been a huge increase in fresh produce from all over the world.

While there is no evidence that imported foods pose more of a risk than domestic foods and most importers comply with the applicable requirements, there are a few "bad actor" importers who violate the rules and work to subvert the system. We must give the agencies responsible for food safety the tools necessary to deal with the importers who try to break the rules. While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspects domestic facilities, it has, in conjunction with the United States Customs Service (Customs), relied primarily on border inspection to ensure the safety of imported foods.

I recognize that there are limitations on our resources and statutory authority to take

measures to protect consumers against unsafe imported foods. Indeed, there are currently bills before the Congress that would grant explicit authority to improve the safety of imported foods. I applaud these legislative efforts and will continue to work with the Congress to improve our authority and resources.

Nevertheless, consistent with our international obligations, we must take whatever scientifically based steps we can to protect the public health in this area and provide the necessary tools to ensure the safety of imported food. Specifically, I direct you to take all actions available to:

(1) Prevent distribution of imported unsafe food by means such as requiring food to be held until reviewed by FDA;

(2) Destroy imported food that poses a serious public health threat;

(3) Prohibit the reimportation of food that has been previously refused admission and has not been brought into compliance with United States laws and regulations (so called "port shopping"), and require the marking of shipping containers and/or papers of imported food that is refused admission for safety reasons;

(4) Set standards for private laboratories for the collection and analysis of samples of imported food for the purpose of gaining entry into the United States;

(5) Increase the amount of the bond posted for imported foods when necessary to deter premature and illegal entry into the United States; and

(6) Enhance enforcement against violations of United States laws related to the importation of foods, including through the imposition of civil monetary penalties.

Accordingly, I direct you, in consultation with my Food Safety Council and relevant Federal agencies, particularly the Department of Agriculture and the United States Trade Representative, to report back to me within 90 days on the steps you will take in these areas to protect consumers from unsafe imported foods. We must do all that we can to protect Americans from unsafe food.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This memorandum was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 2 but

was embargoed for release until 10:06 a.m. on July 3. An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Joint Statement With Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan

July 4, 1999

President Clinton and Prime Minister Sharif share the view that the current fighting in the Kargil region of Kashmir is dangerous and contains the seeds of a wider conflict. They also agreed that it was vital for the peace of South Asia that the Line of Control in Kashmir be respected by both parties, in accordance with their 1972 Simla Accord. It was agreed between the President and the Prime Minister that concrete steps will be taken for the restoration of the line of control in accordance with the Simla Agreement. The President urged an immediate cessation of the hostilities once these steps are taken. The Prime Minister and President agreed that the bilateral dialogue begun in Lahore in February provides the best forum for resolving all issues dividing India and Pakistan, including Kashmir. The President said he would take a personal interest in encouraging an expeditious resumption and intensification of those bilateral efforts, once the sanctity of the Line of Control has been fully restored. The President reaffirmed his intent to pay an early visit to South Asia.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks to the Community in Hazard, Kentucky

July 5, 1999

Thank you very much. Well, the Governor always told me if I would only come to Appalachia, I would get a very warm welcome. I want to thank the good people of Hazard and Perry County for giving me that warm welcome. I want to thank all the people of eastern Kentucky who have made me and my party feel so welcome today—Paul and Judy Patton. I thank Mayor Gorman and Judge Noble. I thank those who have come with me today—our Agriculture Secretary—