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Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea and Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan and an Exchange With Reporters in Auckland

September 12, 1999

President Clinton. Let me say just very briefly, I am honored to have the opportunity to have this meeting with President Kim and Prime Minister Obuchi. We have much to discuss, but I would just mention two or three issues: our common interest in stability and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, our concern about events in East Timor, our commitment to try to find a common ground on economic issues here and at the WTO meeting to be held in Seattle in the next couple of months, and our commitment to continued, sustained economic growth in the nations of Asia.

I'm very concerned and pleased with the apparent economic turnaround in the region, and I want to do whatever I can to continue to support both these leaders as they attempt to lead the way there.

I also will reaffirm what I said yesterday in my meeting with President Jiang, which is the interests of the United States in the long-term stable, constructive relationship with China, something I know that is supported by both President Kim and Prime Minister Obuchi.

So I am delighted to have them here.

East Timor

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned earlier that you would support an international force in East Timor, but you didn't say anything about a commitment of U.S. troops. Could you give us your thinking on that, sir?

President Clinton. Well, the discussions that I have had with Prime Minister Howard and others—but since Australia would lead this mission and provide most of the troops—have centered around our providing some of the things that only we can provide, probably, like extensive airlift support to bring troops from other countries, primarily of Asia, into the theater, other logistical support—intelligence, communications—some things which would require our presence in a limited way within the country, within East Timor.

Our people are working that out. General Shelton and our commander, our commander in chief of the Pacific, Admiral Blair, are working with the Australians, and no final decisions have been made, nor could they be until I have extensive congressional consultations. I've talked to, oh, probably 8 or 10 congressional leaders on this, and the Secretary of Defense and Mr. Podesta, on my behalf back home, have talked to many more. But we haven't finalized anything yet.

Keep in mind, the position of the international community at the moment is that such a force would have to be approved by the United Nations, which would only happen if Indonesia asked for it. So right now I think the important thing is to keep the pressure up here to try to get the Indonesians to fix the problem and, if not, to go on and ask for help, support from the United Nations.

[*At this point, a question was asked, and President Kim answered, in Korean, and no translation was provided.*]

President Clinton. Would you like to say anything?

[*At this point, Prime Minister Obuchi made brief remarks in Japanese, and no translation was provided.*]

President Clinton. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. in the Stamford Ballroom at the Stamford Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Jiang Zemin of China; and Prime Minister John Howard of Australia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Trilateral Summit Joint Press Statement

September 12, 1999

United States President William Jefferson Clinton, Republic of Korea President Kim Dae-jung and Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo met today in Auckland to continue to coordinate their respective policies toward the DPRK and to discuss regional and global issues.