

grant programs, providing important protections for battered immigrant women, reauthorizing the domestic violence hotline, and helping State and tribal courts improve interstate enforcement of protection orders. It is especially fitting that Congress passed this crucial legislation in the month designated as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the National Security Team

October 12, 2000

Situation in the Middle East/U.S.S. Cole

The President. I have just been meeting with my national security team on today's tragic events in the Middle East, and I would like to make a brief statement.

First, as you know, an explosion claimed the lives of at least four sailors on one of our naval vessels, the U.S.S. *Cole*, this morning. Many were injured; a number are still missing. They were simply doing their duty. The ship was refueling in a port in Yemen while en route to the Persian Gulf. We're rushing medical assistance to the scene, and our prayers are with the families who have lost their loved ones or are still awaiting news.

If, as it now appears, this was an act of terrorism, it was a despicable and cowardly act. We will find out who was responsible and hold them accountable. If their intention was to deter us from our mission of promoting peace and security in the Middle East, they will fail utterly.

I have directed the Department of Defense, the FBI, and the State Department to send officials to Yemen to begin the investigation. Secretary Albright has spoken with President Salih of Yemen, and we expect to work closely with his government to that effect.

Our military forces and our Embassies in the region have been on heightened state of alert for some time now. I have ordered our ships in the region to pull out of port and our land forces to increase their security.

Tensions are extremely high today throughout the entire region, as all of you know. I strongly condemn the murder of Israeli soldiers in Ram Allah today. While I

understand the anguish Palestinians feel over the losses they have suffered, there can be no possible justification for mob violence. I call on both sides to undertake a cease-fire immediately and immediately to condemn all acts of violence.

Finally, let me say this. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the greatest tragedies and most difficult problems of our time. But it can be solved. The progress of the last few years—progress that brought Israel to the hope of a final peace with true security and Palestinians to the hope of a sovereign state recognized by the entire world—was not made through violence. It happened because both sides sat down together, negotiated, and slowly built up the trust that violence destroys.

Now is the time to stop the bloodshed, to restore calm, to return to dialog and ultimately to the negotiating table. The alternative to the peace process is now no longer merely hypothetical. It is unfolding today before our very eyes.

Now I need to go back to work on this, and so I won't take questions right now. But the Department of Defense will offer a briefing today and will be able to answer the questions that are relevant to today's events.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Ali Salih of Yemen.

Statement on Efforts To Lift Sanctions Against Serbia

October 12, 2000

Today I have directed the Department of the Treasury and the Department of State to take immediate steps to begin lifting the trade and financial sanctions imposed against Serbia in 1998, except those targeted against members of the former regime. This includes lifting the oil embargo and flight ban, which will be effective immediately.

The victory of freedom in Serbia is one of the most hopeful developments in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It ended a dictatorship, and it can liberate an entire region from the nagging fear that ethnic differences will again be exploited to start wars