

The Cuban regime's lawless downing of two unarmed planes served as a harsh reminder of why a democratic Cuba is vitally important both to the Cuban and to the American people. The LIBERTAD Act, which I have signed into law in memory of the four victims of this cruel attack, reasserts our resolve to help carry the tide of democracy to the shores of Cuba.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 12, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 927, approved March 12, was assigned Public Law No. 104-114.

Remarks on Departure for the Summit of the Peacemakers

March 12, 1996

Good afternoon. As you know, I am on my way to Sharm al-Sheikh for an unprecedented summit in support of peace in the Middle East. I will meet there with the leaders of Israel, many of the Arab countries, Russia, Europe, and other nations to condemn the appalling acts of terror that have occurred in Israel in the last several days and to find ways to combat those who still seek to kill peace with violence.

The will of the people for peace is clearly greater than the forces of division. As we have seen in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and around the world, America must continue to support those who seek peace, and America will continue to support those who seek peace.

This summit of the peacemakers can be an important step in the process toward peace in the Middle East. After the summit I will also make a short visit to Israel to stand with the people there in their time of grief. I will also bring a message that, in this time of difficulty and in the battle against terror and the struggle for peace, Israel is not alone.

Before I leave I would also like to say something to the Congress. We face here urgent domestic issues that demand our attention and our action. This Friday the Government will shut down for a third time if Congress does not pass a funding bill. Today I

signed a temporary measure to ensure the creditworthiness of the United States until approximately the end of the month.

But to preserve the full faith and credit of America, Congress must pass a long-term straightforward debt extension. Other significant legislation also awaits action. We should pass a balanced budget plan that reflects our values and supports our economic growth.

The Congress and I have identified in common over \$700 billion in savings, more than enough to balance the budget in 7 years and to protect Medicare and Medicaid and our investments in education and the environment, and to provide modest but important tax relief. We should also pass a bipartisan welfare reform bill that genuinely moves people from welfare to work and strengthens families. And we should pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum health care bill so that working people do not lose their health insurance when they change jobs or when someone in the family gets sick.

Agreement on all these bills is clearly within reach. Our Nation must move forward. We cannot wait until after November to do the people's business. We have an obligation to keep the Government open and funded, and we have a distinct opportunity, if we act now, to pass the right kind of balanced budget, welfare reform, and health insurance reform.

I say again to Congress what I said in the State of the Union Address, and what I have said repeatedly since: My door is open. I am ready to meet with the leaders of the Congress at any time to move forward on any or all of these matters of national urgency. It is time to put partisan politics aside and work together in the national interest.

Spring is coming and we ought to give the American people a rebirth of bipartisan, productive accomplishment in this new spring.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With King Hussein of Jordan Aboard Air Force One

March 12, 1996

President's Health

Q. How's your cold?

The President. It's okay. Like I said, Hillary had a cough and then Chelsea was sick and I sort of got it. It'll be gone in a day or two. It's just a head cold, it's not any big deal—just from the neck up.

Q. Does it bother your ears?

The President. No.

Air Force One

Q. You know—[inaudible]—is a certified pilot of this aircraft.

The President. Right. Well, he was up there on take off. I don't know if he lifted us off or not.

King Hussein. I watched and was very impressed by the wonderful, professional team up there.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. What are you guys going to talk about?

The President. A lot of—[inaudible].

Q. Any surprises coming out of this summit, Mr. President? What do you expect?

The President. I don't know. I think a very strong statement will come out of it and that we may have some pretty good ideas come out of it for what we can all do together. I hope so. But I thank His Majesty for standing up for the right thing in the Middle East and helping to get so many other countries involved in this. He's got quite a remarkable array of people actually coming together on short notice.

Q. What would make the meeting a success?

The President. Well, I think a strong united stand for keeping the peace process going and standing against the terror as a precondition of that, because unless people are secure they can't go forward. I think that's the most important thing. And then, obviously, we want to come out with some more concrete steps. We've taken some already; we intend to take some more.

Q. Anything on Iran?

The President. Well, wait a minute, we've got to have the meeting. We haven't had the meeting yet.

Q. What about Syria? What about the lack of Syrians present?

The President. Well, I wish they were there—the Syrians—I wish they were there. But I believe that in terms of continuing the peace process and keeping commitments, that President Asad will do that. And that's very important, very important.

I hope you all get some sleep.

Q. You, too.

The President. It's 10 minutes after 10 Egyptian time—[laughter]—so watch a movie and go to bed. It's real important. You're going to have a hard day tomorrow.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the Opening of the Summit of the Peacemakers in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt

March 13, 1996

Thank you very much, President Mubarak. Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, heads of state, heads of government, Foreign Ministers, and Mr. Secretary-General.

I'd like to begin by thanking President Mubarak for his extraordinary efforts in the last few days to convene this meeting, to host us here, and to make us feel welcome. I thank President Yeltsin, my distinguished co-sponsor of the peace process, and all the rest of you who have come so far on such short notice to this very important meeting.

From all around the world we have come to the Sinai to deliver one simple, unified message: Peace will prevail. This summit is unprecedented in the history of the Middle East. It would have been inconceivable just a few short years ago. It stands as proof and promise that this region has changed for good. Leaders from Israel and the Arab world, from Europe, from Asia, from North America, 29 of us, shoulder-to-shoulder, joined in support of peace. We have gathered before to celebrate new milestones in our journey; today we join in common defense