

Cyprus and last summer's intercommunal violence, the government's decision to go forward with the purchases was doubly regrettable. Additionally, I remain disappointed that the parties have not implemented alternative measures to reduce tensions along the cease-fire lines. Despite these clear setbacks, I believe the decision by Cyprus, at our urging, to defer importation of components of the SA-10 system for 16 months is a step in the right direction and provides us with a window of opportunity to make progress in resolving the Cyprus issue.

As Secretary Albright noted at her confirmation hearings, the parties need to take further steps to reduce tensions and improve the climate for negotiations. The United States remains committed to promoting a Cyprus settlement but needs the full cooperation of the parties, including Greece and Turkey, to achieve our mutual goals. We continue to see that the only way forward is direct, good faith negotiations between the parties themselves. The United States will continue to work toward bringing these negotiations about.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 29.

Statement on Sentencing Commission Action on Penalties for Drug Offenses

April 29, 1997

I commend the Sentencing Commission for moving forward with recommendations to Congress to reduce the disparity between crack and powder cocaine penalties. My administration will give them very serious consideration. I have asked Director McCaffrey and Attorney General Reno to review the recommendations and to report back to me in 60 days. I look forward to working with the Congress on this issue.

In October 1995, I signed legislation disapproving the Sentencing Commission's recommendation to equalize penalties for crack

and powder cocaine distribution by dramatically reducing the penalties for crack. I believe that was the wrong approach then and would be the wrong approach now.

Current law creates a substantial disparity between sentences for crack and powder cocaine. This disparity has led to a perception of unfairness and inconsistency in the Federal criminal justice system.

The sentencing laws must continue to reflect that crack cocaine is a more harmful form of cocaine. The Sentencing Commission's new recommendations do so. Trafficking in crack, and the violence it fosters, has a devastating impact on communities across America, especially inner-city communities. Any change in penalties must ensure that more dangerous offenders receive tougher sentences.

As I have stated before, however, some adjustment to the cocaine penalty structure is warranted as a matter of sound criminal justice policy. Federal prosecutors should target mid- and high-level drug traffickers, rather than low-level drug offenders. An adjustment to the penalty scheme will help ensure this allocation of resources and make our Federal efforts in fighting drugs more effective. That is why the legislation I signed directed the Sentencing Commission to undertake additional review of these issues and to report back with new recommendations.

I am also pleased that the Sentencing Commission has increased penalties for methamphetamine offenses pursuant to the legislation which I signed into law last year. This law asked the Commission to toughen penalties on this emerging drug to prevent the kind of epidemic we saw in the 1980's with cocaine use. We will carefully study these new penalties.

My administration has fought to stop drug abuse and its destructive consequences. Overall, drug use in the United States has fallen dramatically—by half in 15 years. And cocaine use has dramatically decreased since the high point in 1985—the number of current cocaine users is down by 74 percent over the last decade. While these are encouraging figures, I am fully committed to doing more to keep bringing drug use down—particularly among our children.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Jose Aznar of Spain and an Exchange With Reporters

April 30, 1997

President Clinton. Well, let me begin by welcoming President Aznar and his group of leaders from Spain. Spain has set an example for the world now for quite a few years in its transition to a remarkable and healthy and vibrant democracy, which produced your recent election, and has been a very valuable ally and partner of the United States in Bosnia and now in Guatemala and, of course, is going to be the host of our summit on NATO in July. So we're looking very much forward to being there. And we appreciate you very much.

Yes, we have our fingers crossed. [*Laughter*]

Budget Agreement

Q. Have you got a budget deal, Mr. President? And why did Chelsea pick Stanford? [*Laughter*]

President Clinton. Not yet, but if you look at the economic news this morning, it is one more clear example that we did the right thing in '93 and that the right strategy is to bring the deficit down, expand trade, and invest in education and training and science and technology. And so, if we can get an agreement that does all that—that is balances the budget but also continues to invest in the areas that our people need to grow the economy—then I will support it. And we're working hard. We worked hard yesterday. And perhaps it will happen.

Q. Before you go to Mexico?

President Clinton. Oh, I don't know about that.

Chelsea's College Decision

Q. Tell us about why Chelsea chose Stanford, why you think she did?

President Clinton. I don't know. She looked at all these schools, she had wonderful choices, and she made her own decision. And her mother and I are proud of her, and we support her.

You know, the great thing about America is that there are literally a few hundred world-class educational institutions in this

country. And she didn't have a bad choice; she just picked the decision she thought was best for her.

Q. How do you feel about her going so far away?

President Clinton. Well, the planes run out there, and the phones work out there. [*Laughter*] And the E-mail works out there. So we'll be all right.

Q. What was your role, sir, in the decision?

President Clinton. None, except I listened, asked questions, and attempted to have no influence whatever.

Hong Kong

Q. Mr. President, did you get any assurances from the Foreign Minister of Hong Kong that Hong Kong would enjoy greater autonomy under Chinese rule? Did you get any assurances?

President Clinton. Well, we had a good discussion about Hong Kong, and he assured me that China intended to observe the terms of the agreement of 1984 that they made with Great Britain and that the United States supported back then. I was quite satisfied with what he said. And I certainly hope that it will reflect Chinese policy.

The Vice President. Thank you. *Muchos gracias.*

Helms-Burton Amendment

Q. Do you consider the conflict on Helms-Burton completely finished, sir?

President Clinton. I hope so.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

President Clinton. Is everybody in?

Let me begin by welcoming President Aznar here to visit us. We have had a wonderful partnership with Spain for many years and have admired the vibrant democracy that the Spanish people enjoy, and have appreciated the partnership we have had with Spain in NATO, working together in Bosnia, most recently in Guatemala.

And I want to say a special word of appreciation, obviously, to the President for hosting the NATO summit in Madrid this July. I'm looking forward to that and hoping I can come a day or two early and look