

**Statement on the Military
Construction Appropriations Act,
1999**

September 20, 1998

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4059, the "Military Construction Appropriations Act, FY 1999," which provides funding for military construction and family housing programs of the Department of Defense (DOD).

The Act funds the vast majority of my request for military construction projects, including the military family housing program, other quality-of-life projects for our military personnel and their families, and the DOD base closure and realignment program.

I do have several concerns with the bill. The Congress has chosen to add funds for projects that the DOD has not identified as priorities. In particular, \$243 million is provided for 38 projects that are not in the DOD's Future Years Defense Program. The bill also includes a prohibition on the use of any funds appropriated in the Act for Partnership for Peace Programs or to provide support for non-NATO countries. This restriction could impede NATO activities and could adversely affect future NATO-led military operations.

In addition, the Congress has again included a provision that requires the Secretary of Defense to give 30 days advance notice to certain congressional committees of any proposed military exercise involving construction costs anticipated to exceed \$100,000. In approving H.R. 4059, I wish to reiterate an understanding, expressed by Presidents Reagan and Bush when they signed Military Construction Appropriations Acts containing a similar provision, that this section encompasses only exercises for which providing 30 days advance notice is feasible and consistent with my constitutional authority and duty to protect the national security.

I urge the Congress to complete action on the remaining FY 1999 appropriations bills

as quickly as possible, and to send them to me in acceptable form.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
September 20, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4059, approved September 20, was assigned Public Law No. 105-237.

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Today I signed the Military Construction Appropriations Act, an important step for the well-being of our men and women in uniform and their families.

This is an example of what we can achieve when we work together—Congress and the President, Republicans and Democrats—for the public good. Unfortunately, with less than 2 weeks to go before the beginning of the new fiscal year, Congress has yet to pass a budget. In fact, Congress has finished work on only one of 13 appropriations bills—bills that are necessary to keep the Government running and to advance the interests of the American people.

I am pleased that the Senate has taken steps to support the priorities laid out in my budget. But on key investments to improve education, provide affordable child care, expand health care coverage, protect our environment, and stabilize the international economy, the House of Representatives is moving in the wrong direction. For example, the House is preparing to deny funding for smaller classes, after-school programs, technology in the classroom, and summer job programs. At the same time, some lawmakers have attached controversial and unrelated provisions guaranteed to mire these bills in unnecessary delay.

The new fiscal year begins on October 1. It is time for Congress to put progress ahead of partisanship and focus on the urgent challenges facing the American people.

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Remarks to the Opening Session of the 53d United Nations General Assembly in New York City

September 21, 1998

Thank you very much. Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, the delegates of this 53d session of the General Assembly, let me begin by thanking you for your very kind and generous welcome and by noting that at the opening of this General Assembly the world has much to celebrate.

Peace has come to Northern Ireland after 29 long years. Bosnia has just held its freest elections ever. The United Nations is actively mediating crises before they explode into war all around the world. And today, more people determine their own destiny than at any previous moment in history.

We celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with those rights more widely embraced than ever before. On every continent, people are leading lives of integrity and self-respect, and a great deal of credit for that belongs to the United Nations.

Still, as every person in this room knows, the promise of our time is attended by perils. Global economic turmoil today threatens to undermine confidence in free markets and democracy. Those of us who benefit particularly from this economy have a special responsibility to do more to minimize the turmoil and extend the benefits of global markets to all citizens. And the United States is determined to do that.

We still are bedeviled by ethnic, racial, religious, and tribal hatreds; by the spread of weapons of mass destruction; by the almost frantic effort of too many states to acquire such weapons. And despite all efforts to contain it, terrorism is not fading away with the end of the 20th century. It is a continuing defiance of Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says, and I quote, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person."

Here at the U.N., at international summits around the world, and on many occasions in

the United States, I have had the opportunity to address this subject in detail, to describe what we have done, what we are doing, and what we must yet do to combat terror. Today I would like to talk to you about why all nations must put the fight against terrorism at the top of our agenda.

Obviously this is a matter of profound concern to us. In the last 15 years, our citizens have been targeted over and over again, in Beirut, over Lockerbie, in Saudi Arabia, at home in Oklahoma City by one of our own citizens, and even here in New York in one of our most public buildings, and most recently on August 7th in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, where Americans who devoted their lives to building bridges between nations, people very much like all of you, died in a campaign of hatred against the United States.

Because we are blessed to be a wealthy nation with a powerful military and worldwide presence active in promoting peace and security, we are often a target. We love our country for its dedication to political and religious freedom, to economic opportunity, to respect for the rights of the individual. But we know many people see us as a symbol of a system and values they reject, and often they find it expedient to blame us for problems with deep roots elsewhere.

But we are no threat to any peaceful nation, and we believe the best way to disprove these claims is to continue our work for peace and prosperity around the world. For us to pull back from the world's trouble spots, to turn our backs on those taking risks for peace, to weaken our own opposition to terrorism, would hand the enemies of peace a victory they must never have.

Still, it is a grave misconception to see terrorism as only, or even mostly, an American problem. Indeed, it is a clear and present danger to tolerant and open societies and innocent people everywhere. No one in this room, nor the people you represent, are immune.

Certainly not the people of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. For every American killed there, roughly 20 Africans were murdered and 500 more injured, innocent people going about their business on a busy morning. Not the people of Omagh, in Northern Ireland,