

**Statement on the Murder of Vice President Luis Maria Argana of Paraguay**

*March 24, 1999*

I want to express the profound sadness of the United States for the death earlier yesterday of the Vice President of Paraguay, Luis Maria Argana, and offer our condolences to the people of Paraguay and especially to the family of Vice President Argana. Vice President Argana was shot and killed yesterday by unknown assailants while on his way to the office. We strongly condemn this brutal murder, which occurred against the backdrop of continued political turmoil in Paraguay. I join the President of Paraguay, Cubas Grau, in urging all Paraguayans to put aside politics and draw together in the interest of all Paraguayans to support the democratic process.

**Statement on Legislation To Strengthen Medicare**

*March 24, 1999*

Today, the Senate Democrats introduced important amendments to address the major defect of the Republican budget: its complete failure to address Medicare. The majority's budget fails to set aside even one penny of the surplus to strengthen Medicare and does not extend its solvency by a single day. Yet, Medicare faces the same demographic challenges as Social Security and is projected to become insolvent even sooner. Instead of putting Medicare first, the Republican budget puts top priority on a tax cut that explodes in cost just at the time that baby boomers retire.

I applaud Senate Democratic efforts to fix the Republican budget by putting a higher priority on strengthening Medicare and by making sure that any lock-box includes Medicare. I urge Congress not to miss this historic opportunity to strengthen Medicare.

**Proclamation 7175—Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 1999**

*March 24, 1999*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

America has deep roots in Greece, and today we celebrate the friendship, values, and aspirations our two countries have shared for more than 2 centuries. Greek thought and the passion for truth and justice deeply influenced many of our Nation's earliest and greatest leaders. The documents our founders wrote to establish our democracy and the political and legal institutions they created to preserve our independence and protect our rights reveal that influence.

Later, recognizing this profound debt to Greek thought and culture and inspired by the struggle of modern Greece in the War of Greek Independence, many Americans left home to join in that distant fight for freedom between 1821 and 1832. In this century, the relationship between the Greek and American peoples deepened as we fought together in two world wars. The U.S. desire to help preserve freedom in Greece after the devastation of World War II moved President Truman to stand firm against isolationism and for postwar engagement abroad. Our nations stood together in Korea and in the Gulf War, and we continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder today in our efforts to find a lasting solution in the Balkans and to promote democracy around the world.

The bonds of family have further reinforced our ties of friendship and shared ideals. All across our Nation, Americans of Greek descent have brought their energy, grace, and determination to every field of endeavor, and they have added immeasurably to the richness and diversity of our national life. The sons and daughters of Greece have flourished in America, and with their help, America too has flourished.

Today, as we celebrate the 178th anniversary of the onset of modern Greece's struggle for independence, let us celebrate as well the great partnership between our nations and the precious heritage of freedom and democracy we share.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 25, 1999, as Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

**William J. Clinton**

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 24, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 26.

**Address to the Nation on Airstrikes  
Against Serbian Targets in the  
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia  
(Serbia and Montenegro)**

*March 24, 1999*

My fellow Americans, today our Armed Forces joined our NATO allies in airstrikes against Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo. We have acted with resolve for several reasons.

We act to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive. We act to prevent a wider war, to diffuse a powder keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before in this century with catastrophic results. And we act to stand united with our allies for peace. By acting now, we are upholding our values, protecting our interests, and advancing the cause of peace.

Tonight I want to speak to you about the tragedy in Kosovo and why it matters to America that we work with our allies to end it. First, let me explain what it is we are responding to. Kosovo is a province of Serbia, in the middle of southeastern Europe, about 160 miles east of Italy. That's less than the distance between Washington and New York and only about 70 miles north of Greece. Its people are mostly ethnic Albanian and mostly Muslim.

In 1989 Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milosevic, the same leader who started the wars in Bosnia and Croatia and moved against Slovenia in the last decade, stripped Kosovo of the constitutional autonomy its people enjoyed, thus denying them their right to speak their language, run their schools, shape their daily lives. For years, Kosovars struggled peacefully to get their rights back. When President Milosevic sent his troops and police to crush them, the struggle grew violent.

Last fall our diplomacy, backed by the threat of force from our NATO alliance, stopped the fighting for a while and rescued tens of thousands of people from freezing and starvation in the hills where they had fled to save their lives. And last month, with our allies and Russia, we proposed a peace agreement to end the fighting for good. The Kosovar leaders signed that agreement last week. Even though it does not give them all they want, even though their people were still being savaged, they saw that a just peace is better than a long and unwinnable war.

The Serbian leaders, on the other hand, refused even to discuss key elements of the peace agreement. As the Kosovars were saying yes to peace, Serbia stationed 40,000 troops in and around Kosovo in preparation for a major offensive—and in clear violation of the commitments they had made.

Now they've started moving from village to village, shelling civilians and torching their houses. We've seen innocent people taken from their homes, forced to kneel in the dirt, and sprayed with bullets; Kosovar men dragged from their families, fathers and sons together, lined up and shot in cold blood. This is not war in the traditional sense. It is an attack by tanks and artillery on a largely