

**Message on the Observance of
Cinco de Mayo, 1999**

May 4, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

It was 137 years ago today that General Ignacio Zaragoza Seguin led an outnumbered and ill-equipped Mexican militia into battle. With brave hearts, they successfully defended their young nation and set a powerful example of hope and determination for freedom-loving citizens around the world.

Well over a century has passed since this battle, but we can still learn much from the Mexican patriots who fought at Puebla. Their story reminds us to cherish our own independence and to honor those who struggled and sacrificed to attain it. It encourages us to stand up against injustice and to uphold our ideals. Finally, it shows us that brave men and women can overcome great odds when they are united in principle and purpose.

As we mark this special holiday, we also celebrate the enduring friendship between the United States and Mexico and the rich cultural heritage that Mexican Americans have brought to our society. As we stand at the threshold of the 21st century, let us vow to work together to forge a future of peace and prosperity for our hemisphere and the world.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes to all for a memorable celebration.

Bill Clinton

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Released U.S. Army Infantrymen at Ramstein Air Base, Germany

May 5, 1999

Captured Serbian Soldiers

Q. Mr. President, would you favor releasing the Yugoslav soldiers, now that the U.S. soldiers have been released?

The President. I think Secretary Cohen answered this earlier today, but several days ago I raised this issue with our national security people, asking them if they would look at it and make recommendations, and I expect to get it in a couple days, and right now

I'm just glad they're home, or they're halfway home, anyway—a couple days they'll be home.

What I think all Americans want for these fine soldiers is what we also want for the over one million people of Kosovo. We want them to go home, too.

And their families—I want to tell you I had occasion to talk with their families on a couple of occasions, and they were concerned, loving, and they were vigorous advocates for their loved ones. And I was very proud of the way they conducted themselves during this incredibly difficult time for them as well. And I want to thank them for the loyalty they had for their children, husbands, nephews, brothers and for the love they have for their country. I was also very moved by them.

Release of Captured U.S. Army Infantrymen

Q. Why do you think Milosevic let them go, sir?

The President. I think he had a number of motives. The important thing is that he did let them go. They were in a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia; they had nothing whatever to do with this. They never should have been taken in the first place. I appreciate what they were doing in Macedonia and their service to our country, and I'm glad they're free.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:53 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Proclamation 7194—Mother's Day 1999

May 5, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

There is nothing more precious than the bond between a mother and her child. With unconditional love and infinite patience, our mothers nurture us throughout our lives,