Week Ending Friday, August 20, 1999

The President's Radio Address

August 14, 1999

Good morning. Throughout our history, American families have spent the summer enjoying the natural beauty of our Nation's waterways. Today more Americans than ever are spending their vacations by our beaches, our lakes, our rivers. And it's important to ensure that the water our families swim and fish in is as clean and safe as we can possibly make it.

Clean water is the most simple necessity of our lives, and we almost take it for granted. But 25 years ago, many of our waterways were so dirty they actually posed a serious threat to public health. Then Congress passed the Clean Water Act, and we began the long process of reclaiming our waterways and preserving them for the future.

For more than 6½ years now, Vice President Gore and I have worked to continue that legacy. We've strengthened the Safe Drinking Water Act, helping communities upgrade water treatment plants. We demanded more industries publicly disclose the chemicals they release into the air and water. We required water systems across the country to give customers regular reports on the safety of the water flowing from their taps. We strengthened protections for vital wetlands. And last year we launched a new clean water action plan to help finish the job the Clean Water Act started 25 years ago. We can all be proud of the progress we've made so far, but when 40 percent of our Nation's surveyed waterways are still too polluted for swimming or fishing, we know we have to do more.

Like many Americans, I was shocked to learn that several young children became gravely ill last week after swimming in a lake that may have been contaminated with *E. coli* bacteria. That is simply unacceptable. Parents have a right to expect that our recreational waters are safe for their children to swim in. All Americans have a right to expect we're doing all we can to clean up our waterways.

So today I'm pleased to announce that we're taking new action to ensure that every river, lake, and bay in America is clean and safe. The EPA will work in partnership with States to assess the state of all our waterways, to identify the most polluted waters, and to develop strong, enforceable plans to restore them to health. These steps will chart a course to clean up 20,000 waterways, and ensure that they remain safe for generations to come. But just as we're taking new action to preserve our environment for future generations, the Republican leadership in Congress is laying plans to roll back more than a quarter century of bipartisan progress in public health and environmental protection.

Without explanation or excuse, the Republicans' spending bills slash important environmental initiatives, like our lands legacy program to preserve natural treasures, farms, urban parks, wetlands, and other green spaces. They shortchange vital research and development programs that address the threat of global warming, that help us to develop alternative fuels in vehicles that pollute less and to make the maximum use of available energy conservation technologies. And their spending bills are also loaded with unrelated provisions that would sacrifice crucial environmental protections for the sake of special interests. I vetoed bills before because they contain such anti-environmental riders, and if necessary, I'm prepared to do it again.

The budget of the Republican leadership isn't simply turning back the clock on environmental protection. It's also turning its back on 6 years of fiscal responsibility and prudent investment, a policy that's produced the strongest economy in a generation, the longest peacetime expansion in our history, the largest surplus in our history.

Their budget plan, because it contains such a large tax cut, would actually threaten our environment because it would require big cuts in environmental enforcement, letting toxic waste dumps fester, even shutting down national parks. In addition to that, we'd have across-the-board cuts in everything from education to medical research to defense, and they wouldn't add a day to the life of the Social Security or Medicare Trust Fund, nor would they pay off the debt.

Our budget continues to invest in the environment and education and medical research and defense. It pays off the debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835, and it lengthens the life of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. It's a good budget, and it also provides for a modest tax cut.

We have proved time and again that we don't have to choose between growing our economy or preserving our environment. We can do both with discipline. So again, I ask Congress, let's put politics aside and continue the commonsense course that is already leading us toward a cleaner environment, a stronger economy, and a stronger America for the 21st century. Let's work together to give our children the gift of a better, healthier world.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:04 p.m. on August 12 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Death of Lane Kirkland

August 14, 1999

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the passing of Lane Kirkland, one of the towering figures in the American labor movement. For nearly five decades, he was a guiding force for workplace fairness, dignity, and innovation, and a catalyst for international democracy.

Lane led the AFL–CIO during 15 of the most challenging years in labor's history. With skill, determination, and unparalleled intellect, he reunited the major unions and reaffirmed labor's place at the table of American democracy. With his unflagging support of free trade unionism internationally, especially in Poland, he helped hasten the fall of the Iron Curtain while showing America that it is possible to stand up to communism abroad while standing up for working men and women here at home. From his days as a merchant marine during World War II to his work on the Board of Directors of the Institute of Peace, he was always ready and willing to serve his country. I valued his friendship, strong support, and keen advice. He was a great American, and he will be greatly missed.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Irena, and his family in this time of mourning.

Memorandum on Additional Refugee Admissions

August 12, 1999

Presidential Determination No. 99–33

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Emergency Presidential Determination on Additional FY 99 Refugee Admissions Numbers Pursuant to Section 207(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act

In accordance with section 207(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the "Act") (8 U.S.C. 1157(b)), and after appropriate consultations with the Congress, I hereby determine that an unforeseen refugee emergency exists in Europe, and that the admission to the United States of Kosovar refugees in response to this emergency is justified by grave humanitarian concerns and is in the national interest. The admission of these refugees cannot be accomplished under the worldwide refugee admissions ceiling of 78,000 for Fiscal Year 1999, as authorized in Presidential Determination 98–39 of September 30, 1998, and an increase to 91,000 is warranted. The revised regional allocations are as follows:

Africa	12,000
East Asia	9,000
Europe	61,000
Latin America/Caribbean	3,000

Near East/South Asia	4,000
Unallocated	2,000

The provisions of Presidential Determination 98–39 are retained, except to the extent superseded by this determination.

You are hereby directed to report this determination to the Congress immediately and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16.

Memorandum on Military Assistance to the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group

August 13, 1999

Presidential Determination No. 99–34

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Determination to Authorize the Furnishing of Nonlethal Emergency Military Assistance to the States Participating in the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) Under Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2318(a)(1) (the ''Act''), I hereby determine that:

(1) an unforeseen emergency exists that requires immediate military assistance to states currently participating in, and to states that may in the future participate in, ECOMOG; and

(2) the emergency requirement cannot be met under the authority of the Arms Export Control Act or any other law except section 506(a)(1) of the Act.

Therefore, I direct the drawdown from the inventory and resources of the Department of Defense of an aggregate value not to exceed $3 million in defense articles from the stocks of the Department of Defense, defense services of the Department of Defense, and military education and training, to provide drawdown assistance to the states currently participating (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Guinea), and to those states that in the future may participate, in ECOMOG to enhance ECOMOG's capabilities to participate in efforts to restore peace and security in Sierra Leone.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to report this determination to the Congress and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16.

Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States 100th National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri

August 16, 1999

Thank you very much, Commander Pouliot; distinguished officers of the VFW; Congressman Skelton, Congressman Moore, Congresswoman Kaptur; Secretary West and Deputy Secretary Gober; ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor for me to be here in Kansas City today to help to celebrate a hundred proud years for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You should clap for yourselves. [*Applause*] That's good.

I'd like to begin with just a few reflections of what these 100 years mean for you and for the United States. We are less than 150 days now from the beginning of one century and the end of another, which many have called the American Century. Lately, there have been a number of looks back at the people and personalities and events that made this 20th century: the leaders who led freedom's triumph over tyranny, like Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Marshall; inventors like the Wright brothers, whose ideas changed the way we lived; moral forces like Martin Luther King and Eleanor Roosevelt, whose ideas and examples changed the world; scientists like Dr. Jonas Salk, whose discoveries liberated a generation of parents from the mortal fear that their children would have polio and be crippled. But if you ask who has been most responsible for making this the American

Century, one answer would be at the top of anyone's list after two World Wars and a long cold war. That answer would be America's service men and women.

Today, as we celebrate your centennial anniversary, we must never forget that tens, even hundreds of millions of people, in the United States and all around the world sleep in peace because hundreds of thousands of Americans rest in peace in graves, marked and unmarked, all across the world, fallen veterans of foreign wars.

It is no accident, therefore, that the American Century also marks the VFW century. For over the last 100 years, America's men and women have sacrificed whatever was necessary, not for territorial gain, nor for the domination of others, but to secure the rights and freedoms of others so that Americans might have their freedom secure. You have made our Nation proud.

Thanks to you, we will begin a new century with a truly historic achievement, for in the last few years, for the first time in all of human history, more than half the world's people live under free governments freely elected. Still, you and I know this is not a world free from danger. There is the potential for major wars, rooted in ethnic and religious hatred. There is the chance that former adversaries will not succeed in their transition to democracy and could become adversaries again. There is the risk that nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons will fall into the wrong hands. There is the risk of terrorist groups with increasing access to money, to technology, to sophisticated weaponry. There is the possibility that global financial vulnerabilities could overwhelm free societies. Therefore, we cannot assume that, because we are today secure and at peace, we don't need military strength or alliances or that, because we are today prosperous, we are immune from turmoil half a world away.

America must still be engaged in the world, working with others to advance peace and prosperity, freedom and security, and America must remain strong. That is what our most recent conflict in Kosovo was all about. I want to thank you profoundly for the support the VFW gave us during the conflict there. I know it wasn't easy for you to do. We were still in the early stages of the longest and most difficult military campaign in the 50-year history of NATO. Critics were convinced from the beginning that we could not succeed. But you stood with us, and more importantly, you stood with our men and women in uniform. NATO and the United States prevailed. We are all grateful for your support.

Many of you in this room today fought in World War II against the tyrants who preached racial and religious superiority. In Kosovo, innocent men, women, and children were systematically targeted for killing and mass expulsion by their governments simply because of their ethnic heritage or the way they chose to worship God. After World War II, after ending the 4-year war of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, NATO could not accept that kind of behavior on its own borders. It could not stand by, once again, and see people driven from their homes, loaded on railcars, having their history erased.

So, instead, the century ends with a powerful statement by NATO's 19 democracies, reaffirming human life and human dignity, giving us the chance after two World Wars, the cold war, and the Balkan conflicts, for the first time ever to have an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe. It shares our values, strengthens our economy, helps us meet our common aspirations, and will not call young Americans to go there to fight and die in the 21st century.

We prevailed in Kosovo because our cause was just, our goals were clear, our Alliance were strong, and our strategy worked, thanks to the performance of our men and women in uniform. In 78 days, they flew more than 37,000 support and strike sorties in the face of constant danger, including surface-to-air missiles. Many times our pilots risked their lives because they would not fire back at the Serb gunners who were positioned in heavily populated areas and they didn't want to kill innocent civilians.

In the end, thank God we had zero combat fatalities and only two planes shot down. That is an astonishing record and a tribute to the professionalism we see every day from our military forces the world over. They are good people. They are good people who are well-trained, well-led, and well-equipped. Rigorous training is critical and, as all of you

know, dangerous in and of itself. Indeed, we must always remember our two Army airmen who died in training exercises in Albania during the Kosovo conflict. And we thank God there weren't more casualties in Kosovo, in part because the men and women trained so hard with the world's best equipment. As long as I am President, I intend to keep the commitment I made from the first day of our administration that our men and women in uniform will remain the best trained, the best equipped, the best prepared military in the entire world.

All of you know we have challenges in keeping that commitment. Thanks to the strength of our economy, in part, we're having a harder time recruiting and keeping some of our best people. And we have a lot of tough decisions to make to maintain the readiness of our equipment and to keep ahead of the latest generation in military developments. I have asked Congress for the support necessary to deal with these challenges. I believe it will be forthcoming, and I ask for your support in making sure that it is.

We also recognize another simple truth here, on your centennial: The troops of tomorrow will only be as good as our commitment to veterans today. Way back in 1903, Theodore Roosevelt said, ''A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards.''

One of the great privileges I have had in being President is to work for and with our country's veterans and their organizations. The White House doors have been open to veterans, to help to shape policy affecting veterans, especially when it comes to critical matters like health care. Early in our administration, Hershel Gober recommended that we look for ways to bring health care closer to veterans who needed it. Since then we have opened more than 600 outpatient clinics all across America and have more planned over the next 2 years. We expect to treat 400,000 more veterans this year than last year.

We've also confronted some long-neglected problems head on. We've reached out to more than 40,000 veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, to tell them about the expanded benefits available to them. I pressed hard for answers to the Gulf war syndrome and proper care for those who suffer from it. We are in the process of building five new national cemeteries, the most since the Civil War. And we are making a special effort to end something I know is unacceptable to all of us here today, homeless veterans. They should be brought back into the society they did so much to defend.

In all these efforts, I want to thank Secretary West, his predecessor, Secretary Brown, and Deputy Secretary Gober and all those at the Department of Veterans Affairs that have worked so hard to reach out to you and to work with you. We know there is more to do.

As Vice President Gore announced last month, we will continue to work with the VFW and others to make sure that all veterans receive the high-quality care they deserve next year and every year, and we expect this year's budget to reflect that commitment.

I would like to make another point today. Standing by our military and standing by our veterans means more than simply preparing people to fight wars and taking care of them after they wear our Nation's uniform. We must also work with equal determination to prevent wars. That means paying attention not only to military readiness, but to diplomatic readiness as well. We know that if diplomacy is not backed by real, credible threats of force, it can be empty, indeed, dangerous. But if we don't use diplomacy first to promote our interests, if we rely on our military as the only line of defense, it almost certainly will become our only line of defense.

Of course, international engagement costs money, but the costliest peace is far cheaper than the cheapest war. Ever since I became President, I've been trying hard to convince Congress of that basic truth. It has been a considerable challenge. Our international affairs programs, which fund everything from resolving conflicts to strengthening young democracies, to combating terrorism, to fighting dangerous drugs, to promoting our exports, to maintaining our Embassies all around the world, amount to less than one percent of the Federal budget and less than

one-fifteenth of our defense budget. But I regret to say that since 1985 these programs have been cut significantly. This year the House and Senate have passed spending bills that would cut our request for international affairs by more than $2 billion. In other words, we're cutting the very programs designed to keep our soldiers out of war in the first place.

Underfunding our arsenal of peace is as risky as underfunding our arsenal for war. For if we continue to underfund diplomacy, we will end up overusing our military. Problems we might have been able to resolve peacefully will turn into crises that we can only resolve at a cost of life and treasure. If this trend continues, there will be real consequences for important American interests.

Let me mention just a few, beginning with our interest in peace and stability across the Atlantic. Today, after the victory in Kosovo and in Bosnia, we have an opportunity to invest in peace so that future wars do not occur there. The people of the Balkans have been crippled by conflict, really, since the end of the cold war. Today, we have a chance to integrate them with each other and into the mainstream of Europe, where they will have strong incentives to maintain democracy and good behavior and avoid conflicts.

To do this, we don't need anything as ambitious as the Marshall plan. And whatever is done, we must insist that our European partners carry most of the load and that Balkan leaders themselves take responsibility for changing their policies. Still, the United States should be a part of this process. If we don't and the effort fails, make no mistake, there will be another bloody war that starts in the Balkans and spreads throughout southeastern Europe. And some day, more young Americans may be asked to risk their lives at far greater cost than our part of the rebuilding of the region.

If we are to succeed in winning the peace, we may see a 21st century—I'll say again—in which we do not have to send the young people of America to fight in another European war. That is a worthy objective. We have seen enough wars in Europe, claiming the lives of their children and America's young people. Now we have a chance to avoid it, and we ought to take the chance.

We also have a responsibility to protect American people from the dangers most likely to surface in the 21st century. The gravest of those may not be another country launching a nuclear weapon but that weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of terrorists and their rogue-state sponsors. We have worked to reduce that doomsday scenario. Since 1992, our support has helped to deactivate almost 5,000 nuclear warheads in the former Soviet Union; to eliminate nuclear weapons from three former Soviet republics; to strengthen the security of weapons and materials at over 100 sites; to tighten export controls in Russia and to purchase hundreds of tons, literally hundreds of tons, of highly enriched uranium that otherwise could be used for nuclear weapons that end up in the wrong hands.

This effort has received strong bipartisan support in the Congress for which I am very grateful. Today, the Russian economy is struggling, as we all know. The average salary of a highly trained weapons scientist in Russia—listen to this—the average salary of a highly trained weapons scientist in Russia is less than $100 a month.

Now, for a small investment, we can help them turn that expertise to peaceful projects that help the world and draw a living wage doing it. Or we can do nothing and pray that each and every one of those thousands of scientists will somehow resist the temptation to market their expertise to those who wish to do us and the cause of freedom harm. Common sense says to me that we ought to give them something useful and good to do and let them make a decent living.

That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I proposed increasing funding for threat reduction by two-thirds over the next 5 years. I want to work with Congress to make these investments to make the world a safer place.

Another challenge is to create a durable and comprehensive peace in the region that every President since Richard Nixon has considered among the most dangerous in the world, the Middle East. Today, we have a real opportunity to do that. The new Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, formerly the commander of all Israel's military forces, has