

to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council. My last report, consistent with Public Law 102-1, was transmitted on August 2, 1999. I shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 4.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the National Security Team and an Exchange With Reporters

October 4, 1999

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The President. Is everybody in? I'd like to make a brief statement, and then I'll answer your questions.

Our national security team is about to meet to discuss the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to end nuclear weapons testing forever. This is very important for protecting our people from the danger of nuclear war. That's why so many prominent Americans, including four former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, support it.

For 2 years, the opponents in the Senate have blocked any consideration of the treaty. Now, we have been given just 8 days before the Senate vote. I will do all I can to get the treaty ratified.

Our experts have concluded that we don't need more tests to keep our own nuclear forces strong. We stopped testing in 1992, and now we are spending \$4.5 billion a year to maintain a reliable nuclear force without testing. Since we don't need nuclear tests, it is strongly in our interest to achieve agreement that can help prevent other countries, like India, Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, and others, from testing and deploying nuclear weapons.

The treaty will also strengthen our ability to monitor if other countries are engaged in

suspicious activities, through global chains of sensors and onsite inspections, both of which the treaty provides for. This is a crucial decision the Senate is about to make that will affect the welfare of the American people well into the next century. I hope the American people will pay close attention to this, and I hope the Senate will pay close attention and that we will have a careful debate as much as possible within the time that's been allotted.

Q. Mr. President, why do you think the Republicans handled this in the way they did and just said, "Okay, let's go ahead and vote on it in a few days?" And you've been pushing this for a long time. Why is it that you're so behind the eightball on getting the votes for it?

The President. Well, we've been pushing it, but there has been no consideration of it. If you look at how other treaties have been handled in the past, you have 8 days of hearings in the Foreign Relations Committee, 12 days of hearings in the Foreign Relations Committee. The Democrats in the Senate were frustrated because the whole thing had been stonewalled. And finally, they said, "Okay, you can have a debate and a vote right now or no vote at all."

So we decided we would take the "right now" and do our very best to do it. I don't want to speculate on other people's motives. We'll have to ask them why they decided to do it this way.

Q. Mr. President, you need a lot of Republicans if you're going to pass this treaty. How many do you think you have right now?

The President. I don't know. We don't have enough now; I hope we can get them. I think the critical thing is, if you look at all these—anybody who expresses reservations, there can only be, it seems to me, two arguments against it. One is that we have to test and maintain our stockpile. And Secretary Richardson is here—the people at the energy labs and many other experts say that is absolutely not true. And we are spending \$4.5 billion a year to make sure it's not true, that we can maintain the integrity of our stockpile.

The other argument that we saw a version of in the press yesterday that I think is just a missing point is that maybe somebody,

somewhere, is doing a very small-scale test, and we won't pick it up. Well, the point I'd like to make about that is the following: Number one, if you get the really small test, they're hard to pick up. They're hard to pick up now; they'd be hard to pick up if this treaty is ratified. If this treaty is ratified, there are new tools to monitor the testing levels. We'll have monitoring stations; we can do on-site visits. There's the deterrent impact of a country signing and then getting caught violating it. So we'll have a lot more ability to pick up all kinds of testings at all levels and a lot more deterrent against it if we ratify the treaty than if we don't.

There is another thing the American people need to think about and the Senate needs to think about. If any of the 44 original signatories of this treaty don't sign and don't ratify it, then it cannot enter into force. For decades, the United States has led the world against proliferation. If the United States Senate votes this treaty down, it would be a signal that the United States now wants to lead the world away from the cause of nonproliferation. We would be giving the green light to all these other people.

We're not testing anyway. That's why Britain and France and nine other of our NATO Allies have already ratified this treaty. They understand this. That's why there is such overwhelming support for it. So it would be, in my judgment, a grave mistake not to ratify the treaty.

Chinese Nuclear Espionage

Q. Mr. President, on a related matter, I'm sure you've been briefed that the FBI is sort of starting all over this week on the Chinese espionage investigation. Are you concerned now, looking back, about the way the investigation was handled?

The President. I think the only thing I would say about that, I think the only appropriate thing for me to say is, number one, they ought to do whatever they can to find out whatever the truth is. Number two, this is another lesson that we should not assume anyone's guilt, ever. We should let the investigations take their course. And I think that's—we just have to support the proper—the investigative process.

Health Care Coverage

Q. Mr. President, on health care, do the new numbers mean that you've failed in your effort to expand coverage to people who are not insured?

The President. Well, first of all, they mean that the First Lady and I and all the rest of us were right in 1994 when we told you in 1994 that if this were voted down, the insurance companies would continue to drop people and employers would because of the system we have. So what has happened is exactly what we said would happen.

Now, what are we doing about it? We passed the 1997 Children's Health Insurance Program, but it was only this year that all the States finally signed up. I do believe you will see this year significant numbers of children enrolled in our Children's Health Insurance Program. And I've talked with Senator Kennedy and others in the Congress about what else we can do to try to get several million more children insured.

Number two, I do believe that the Kennedy-Jeffords bill will pass this year which will allow people with disabilities to go into the work force and keep their health insurance, and that will be good.

Number three, we have before the Congress and have had for 2 years a proposal to let people between the ages of 55 and 65, one of the biggest problem groups without insurance, buy into the Medicare program. That would help a lot if Congress would pass that. Some Republicans have said in the past that they favor that sort of approach. I would urge them to take another look at this. They ought to allow Medicare buy-in. It's the cheapest, least costly, least bureaucratic way for people in that age group to get insurance.

And number four, we have granted to some innovative States waivers from the Medicaid program which they have used to let people who are lower income working people buy into Medicaid. If we can get some more States to do that, that can make a big difference.

If you look at these numbers, you've got people between the ages of 55 and 65, you've got people who have moved from welfare to work and then get jobs above the income level when they're eligible for Medicaid. Then you've got all these middle class people

who work for companies that are dropping health insurance. So I think we ought to keep working on these things. I certainly don't think we ought to give up. I do think you'll see the numbers improve with children over the next 2 years.

I think that if we pass Kennedy-Jeffords, which I think we will, you'll see that improving. But we need the Medicaid buy-in and the Medicare buy-in for the older people and more States could solve this problem. We could give them the money through Medicaid waivers to let lower income working people buy into that. All those would make a big difference.

Let me also finally say I'm glad to see that this has become a source of discussion in the Presidential campaign for the Democrats, and I'm proud that the candidates in my party are trying to do something about it, and I hope that we will continue to see this debated. But these numbers confirm exactly what the First Lady said in '94, and we have some specific things we can do about it if the Congress and the States will help, and I hope they will.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Departure for the Pentagon and an Exchange With Reporters

October 5, 1999

Patients' Bill of Rights

The President. Good afternoon. I am delighted to be joined this afternoon by Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, and leaders of some of our Nation's top health, consumer, and provider organizations, including Dr. Thomas Reardon of the American Medical Association; Beverly Malone, the president of American Nurses Association; Judy Lichtman, the president of the National Partnership for Women and Families; John Seffrin, the CEO of the American Cancer Society; and Ron Pollack, the president of Families USA.

Before I leave for the Pentagon to sign legislation to enhance our national security,

I want to say a few words about legislation to enhance the security of patients and the health of our families.

Tomorrow the House is set to begin the long-awaited debate on the Patients' Bill of Rights. We are here today to urge Congress to act responsibly and pass strong, enforceable, bipartisan legislation to protect working families with the real health care protections they sorely need.

We have had enough of tragic stories from every corner of our land, families forced to switch doctors in the middle of pregnancy or cancer treatment, parents whose children had to bypass one or more emergency rooms before they received care, Americans who saw their loved ones die when their health plans overruled a doctor's urgent recommendations. The fact is Americans who are battling illness shouldn't have to also battle insurance companies for the coverage they need.

Our administration has done everything we could to protect patients. Through executive action, we've granted all of the safeguards in the Patients' Bill of Rights to more than 85 million Americans who get their health care through Federal plans. This past week I announced we'll publish rules to extend similar patient protections to every child covered under the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Many States are also making progress. But no State law, no executive action, can do what Congress alone has the power to achieve. Only Federal legislation can assure that all Americans, in all plans, get the patient protections they need and deserve.

Congressmen Charlie Norwood and John Dingell have a bill to do just that. It's a bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights that would guarantee Americans the right to see the medical specialist they need, the right to emergency care wherever and whenever a medical crisis arises, the right to stay with a health care provider throughout a program of treatment, the right to hold a health plan accountable for harmful decisions.

But before Americans can be assured these fundamental rights, the Norwood-Dingell bill must be assured a fundamental right of its own, and that's the right to be offered on the House floor, with a straight