

Statement on Establishing Formal Diplomatic Relations With the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

November 18, 2000

On November 17 the United States joined France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in establishing formal diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

We take this action in response to the remarkable changes in Yugoslavia following the democratic election of President Vojislav Kostunica and the ouster of Slobodan Milosevic. We and our allies are committed to supporting this historic democratic transition. As a first step, the United States will provide about \$45 million in emergency food aid to help the people of Serbia through the winter. We are also consulting with Congress on how to utilize the \$100 million in assistance appropriated for Serbia, as well as \$89 million appropriated for assistance to the people of Montenegro.

President Kostunica and his government have already made dramatic progress in reversing the brutal policies of the old regime. And by taking membership in the United Nations and other international organizations on an equal status with other successor states of the former Yugoslavia, President Kostunica has signaled that his country is ready to play a constructive and stabilizing role in the region.

The democratic transition in the FRY, however, is far from over. The new government is faced with an economy destroyed by years of mismanagement. Members of Milosevic's regime are still in positions of power. Indicted war criminals continue to escape justice for their heinous crimes. But President Kostunica and leaders of the democratic forces have clearly put their country on a new path, one that includes a commitment to the rule of law and peaceful relations with its neighbors. By establishing diplomatic relations and ending the FRY's isolation, the United States and other Western countries are demonstrating our commitment to supporting the new leaders of the FRY on this journey.

Remarks on Demining in Hanoi, Vietnam

November 18, 2000

Ambassador Peterson, Ambassador Le Bang, Mr. Khoan; my good friend Representative Snyder and the other Members of Congress and our American delegation. I want to say most of all how much I appreciate the work that all of you who are engaged in demining are doing.

I thank the Vietnamese people who are doing this, the members of the NGO's. And I'd also like to especially thank the American veterans who have been involved in this endeavor.

The problem of landmines is a global tragedy, and 90 percent of the victims of war are civilians, mostly because of landmines. In all probability, landmines kill more children than soldiers, and they keep killing long after wars are over. This is the tragedy of war for which peace provides no answer.

Vietnam has about 3.5 million mines in its soil and about 300,000 tons of unexploded ordnance. Each year some 2,000 Vietnamese are killed or injured as they go about their daily lives. This year, at Vietnam's request, we began providing assistance to the humanitarian demining efforts. Since June, we provided over \$3 million to purchase equipment and help survey the countryside.

I am happy to announce that we will also be working with Vietnam to develop a computer system and a database to help pinpoint the location of mines and ordnance used here during the war. We have also worked for some years with NGO's such as the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation to fund rehabilitation services for victims of landmines, an effort that owes so much to the leadership of Senator Pat Leahy. Today our Defense Department is donating more than \$700,000 in hospital supplies to Quang Tri Province for the same purpose.

Finally, we support efforts by organizations such as PeaceTrees and Catholic Relief Services to educate local communities on how to avoid landmines. The children's paintings we saw over here are part of that effort, and again I'd like to thank those four beautiful young boys for being here and for

having the courage to help all the rest of us deal with this problem.

Since I became President, the United States has spent about \$350 million around the world to pull the hidden killers out of the earth, the landmines, to deal with the unexploded ordnance. We usually spend slightly more than half of all the money spent in the world on this every year. But I think we should do more.

I am thankful for all the work the organizations are doing here. I am grateful for the request that the Government of Vietnam gave, that gave us the opportunity to be involved here. But I hope we will all remember these children who had the courage to come here and share their artwork and who want to give the rest of the children of Vietnam and the world a better future.

There are millions of these bombs in the ground in Africa, millions more in the Balkans. They are the curse of innocent children all over the world. I hope that tomorrow all over the world, people will see these children and their drawings, and it will enable us to get even more support for the work you were doing in Vietnam and the work that must be done like this in other countries. You will have America's support until you have found every landmine and every piece of unexploded ordnance.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at the International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Pete Peterson; Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S. Le Van Bang; and Minister of Trade Vu Khoan of Vietnam. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address

November 18, 2000

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Hanoi, Vietnam, where I'm working to fulfill America's commitment to the families of those still missing from the war and opening a hopeful new chapter in our relationship with Vietnam and its people. Today I want to talk to you, however, about the new steps we're taking at home to strengthen our working families.

It may be hard to remember, but just 8 years ago many Americans were out of work, and Washington was out of ideas. Our economy was stagnant, burdened by a crushing debt and rising unemployment. I said I would work hard to turn the country around, to create a situation where everybody who was willing to work and take responsibility has the opportunity to live the American dream.

Since then we've worked hard to restore the value of work, increasing the minimum wage, expanding the earned-income tax credit, helping more than 15 million Americans work their way out of poverty toward the middle class. Congress passed the family and medical leave law, which has given over 20 million Americans the chance to take time off from work to care for a newborn child or a sick loved one. And we passed welfare reform, ending welfare as we knew it, cutting the welfare rolls in half, to their lowest levels in 32 years, and helping millions of parents move into the work force.

We were able to do this while protecting health care and nutrition for children, investing more in child care, transportation, and housing, to help parents go to work and to succeed at home and at work.

By rewarding work and promoting responsibility, we've helped put the American family back on top again, with 22 million new jobs, the lowest poverty in 20 years, the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment ever recorded, and the highest homeownership in history. While we have made great progress, no one who works hard every day should have trouble putting food on the table at night. And the fact is there are still too many hard-pressed families struggling to get ahead and to make the often difficult transition from welfare to work.

Every day 17 million of our fellow Americans rely on food stamps for proper nourishment. These food stamps allow parents to give their children the necessities while getting their own feet on the ground. But as they return to work and struggle to make ends meet, many don't realize they're still eligible for food stamps. And in some States, parents who do sign up for food stamps have to fill out paperwork as often as once a