

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Balkan Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters in Paris, France

December 14, 1995

Balkan Peace Process

The President. As you know, we will be having formal ceremonies later today, and more remarks will be made then. I just want to say very briefly, because we want to get on to our meeting, that I applaud these leaders for making the decision to turn from war to peace that they will formalize today. And tomorrow they will begin the hard work of making that peace real.

I am pleased that they have asked the United States, our NATO allies, and a number of other countries, to help them secure this peace. And I am pleased that we will be going forward to do it. I'm convinced that working together in good faith, this effort can be successful.

Q. Are you concerned that there may be some reluctance in parts of the Balkans to implement a peace?

The President. All I can tell you is the ceasefire has been in place for a couple of months. It has basically held. There have been many things that have happened in the last 3 years. I'm sure many people have different feelings, but we believe these leaders have acted in good faith and will continue to do so. And if they do, we think we'll be successful.

Q. Do you think the Congress has given you a whole-hearted vote of support on this, or how do you—how do you rate—

The President. I'll tell you how I read the vote. I think Congress—first of all, both Houses decided not to cut off funds and to support the troops. And the Senate, in what could only be characterized as an overwhelming bipartisan vote, gave its support to the mission subject to conditions with which the administration agrees. So I was quite pleased with where the Congress came out yesterday compared to where they were just a month ago. And again, I think that is in part due to the fact that these leaders have been willing to meet with the Members of the Congress who have traveled to the area in the last couple of weeks. And I think they have seen the people and their desire for peace. And they have heard from these leaders about their desire for peace and their determination. And I feel that we made a lot of progress. And I think now that the time for debate is over; the time for decision is at hand. And I believe the United States and the United States Congress will rally behind our troops in this mission.

Q. Are you satisfied with the pace of the deployment, Mr. President? Are you satisfied that the deployment is proceeding as fast as it can at this point?

The President. Yes, you know, it's the winter; we have snow. We have first one thing, then another, but I think we're going forward in good faith and in an appropriate way.