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IRC [POTUS Videotaped Remarks for (International Rescue Committee), November 10, 1999]

Staff Office-Individual:
Speechwriting-Widmer, Edward

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# NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

## BOX INVENTORY

**OFFICE:** Speech Writing  
**STAFF OFFICER:** Widmer  
**PREPARED BY:** Widmer  
**DATE:** 6/15/00

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**BOX NUMBER** 2190
PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED REMARKS FOR INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE
TO BE SHOWN NOVEMBER 10, 1999

On behalf of all Americans, I want to thank the International Rescue Committee for its remarkable dedication and service to humanity. The IRC has been helping the victims of conflict and persecution since 1933, when Albert Einstein saw the need for an organization that would help the refugees who were beginning to flee Nazi Germany. Near the end of the century, humanity has taken great strides. Yet year after year, millions are still driven from their homes, because of what they believe, or simply who they are. More than ever, the world needs organizations like yours that take action, going where comforts are few and dangers are many, to bring help and hope to people in distress.

Tonight, I want to thank the IRC for what you did, at great risk, to help the people of Kosovo. Mr. Milosevic's campaign of ethnic cleansing forced virtually an entire people to abandon their homes. As NATO fought to stop the terror, we worked with the IRC and other agencies to aid the refugees who found safety in neighboring countries. But it was no less urgent to provide assistance to those people who remained inside Kosovo, with barely any food or water, too terrified to come out of hiding.

Neither NATO's armed forces nor most relief agencies were in a position to do that. But the IRC heroically volunteered for the job. In partnership with your colleagues at USAID, you launched a series of airdrops deep inside Kosovo. It was extremely dangerous, and there was no
guarantee that hostile Serb forces would allow the flights to perform their humanitarian mission.

But the IRC never wavered in its determination. For that, the world owes you its thanks.

More than 60,000 rations were delivered in the two weeks preceding the peace accord. To the suffering Kosovars in the hills wondering what had happened to civilization, those airdrops provided more than physical sustenance — they served notice that the rest of the world had not forgotten them. I know they will never forget what you did. Neither will we.

Enjoy the rest of the Freedom Award dinner. And good luck with the year ahead.

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The IRC web site is: www.intrescom.org

If you need detailed background on IRC’s history, call Sheppie Abromowitz at 822-0043. The dinner will be held at the Plaza Hotel in NY at 7:30 pm on Nov. 10. Holbrooke is the featured speaker. Steve Schwarzman, President & CEO of the Blackstone Group, is the chairman (George Soros is honorary chairman). Awards will be given to Mike Bloomberg, CEO and Founder of Bloomberg LP for “Corporate Responsibility”, Gerald Levin and Richard Parsons, Chairman and President of Time Warner Inc for “Corporate Emergency Response”. Tom Brokaw is the MC.

FYI - IRC gets lots of U.S. funding (through both the State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugee and Migration and USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) for its programs in Asia, Africa and the Balkans.

If you have any more questions about the air drops as you are writing, call me, not Sheppie. I know more about the drops than she will.
On behalf of all Americans, I want to thank the International Rescue Committee for its another year of remarkable dedication and service to humanity. The IRC has been helping the victims of conflict and persecution since 1933, when Albert Einstein saw the need for an organization that would help the refugees who were beginning to flee Nazi Germany. Over sixty years have passed. Near the end of the century, humanity has taken enormous strides. Yet year after year, millions are still driven from their homes, because of what they believe, or simply who they are. As much as ever, the world needs you more than ever. We need an organization that takes actions, going where comforts are few and dangers are many, to bring help and hope to people in distress.

I know how much the IRC does every year, in places ranging from East Timor to Rwanda, from Bosnia to Azerbaijan. But this year, at this time, I wanted to single out and thank the IRC for what it did, at great risk, to help the people of Kosovo.

Mr. Milosevic’s cruel campaign of ethnic cleansing forced virtually an entire people to abandon their homes. As NATO fought to stop the terror, we worked with IRC and other agencies to aid the refugees who found safety in neighboring countries. But it was no less urgent to provide assistance to those people who remained inside Kosovo, with barely any food or water, but too terrified to come out of hiding.

Neither NATO’s armed forces nor most relief agencies were in a position to do that. But the IRC heroically volunteered for the job. In partnership with your colleagues at USAID, you launched a series of airdrops deep inside Kosovo. It was extremely dangerous, and there was no guarantee that hostile Serb forces would allow the flights to perform their humanitarian mission. But the IRC never wavered in its determination. For that, the world owes you its thanks.

More than 60,000 rations were delivered in the two weeks preceding the peace accord. To the starving Kosovars in the hills wondering what had happened to civilization, those airdrops provided more than physical sustenance – they served notice that the rest of the world had not forgotten them. I know they will never forget what you did. Neither will we.

Enjoy the rest of the Freedom Award dinner. And good luck with the year ahead.
On behalf of all Americans, I want to thank the International Rescue Committee for another year of remarkable dedication and service to humanity. The IRC has been helping the victims of conflict and persecution—refugees since 1933, when Albert Einstein saw the need for an organization that would help Jewish people escape from Nazi Germany in large numbers. Near the end of the century, humanity has taken enormous strides. Yet year after year, millions of people are still driven from their homes, because of what they believe, or simply because of who they are. The world needs you more than ever. We need an organization that takes action, going where comforts are few and dangers are many to bring help and hope to people in distress—but for all our progress, there are still large numbers of people who are forced from their homes and their countries every year. At present there are more than 35 million people in the world who have been forced from their homes. Roughly 16 million of them are refugees. [This raises the artificial distinction between refugees and displaced persons, which we don’t need to have here].

I know how much the IRC does every year, East Timor to Rwanda, from Bosnia to the borders of Burma. But this year, I wanted to single out and thank you for how much you did, under great adversity, at great risk, to help the people of Kosovo.

1999 saw no shortage of refugees. [It was the humanitarian crisis in forced expulsion of over a million ethnic Albanians in Kosovo that led to our military campaign this spring] (while there were certainly some refugee flows before military campaign can’t say that forced expulsion led to campaign since millions were forced out after NATO campaign began)—many. Over 850,000 left their homes and of those forced from their homes made it to Macedonia and Albania. Many others simply hid in the hills of Kosovo, with barely any food or water, but too terrified to come out of hiding.

Mr. Milosevic’s cruel campaign of ethnic cleansing forced virtually an entire people to abandon their homes. As NATO fought to stop the terror, we worked with IRC and a number of other relief agencies to aid provide relief to the refugees who found safety across the border in neighboring countries. But we also wanted desperately to provide assistance to those people who remained inside Kosovo, with barely any food or water, but too terrified to come out of hiding.

—But neither NATO’s armed forces nor most relief agencies were in a position to do that deliver food inside Kosovo. But the IRC heroically volunteered for the job. In partnership with your colleagues at USAID, you launched a series of airdrops deep inside Kosovo. It was extremely dangerous, and there was no guarantee that hostile Serb forces would allow the flights to perform their mission. But the IRC never wavered in its determination. For that, many people owe you their lives. And the rest of the world owes you its thanks.
More than 60,000 rations were delivered in the two weeks preceding the peace accord. Those rations provided physical sustenance and more. To the starving Kosovars in the hills wondering what had happened to civilization, those airdrops served notice that the rest of the world had not forgotten them. I know they will never forget what you did. And nor shall we. I know how much the IRC does every year, in places ranging from East Timor to Rwanda, from Bosnia to Azerbaijan. But this year, I wanted to single out and thank you for how much you did, under great adversity, at great risk, to help the people of Kosovo.

Enjoy the rest of the Freedom Award dinner. And good luck with the year ahead.
On behalf of all Americans, I want to thank the International Rescue Committee for another year of remarkable dedication and service to humanity. The IRC has been helping refugees since 1933, when Albert Einstein saw that Jewish people needed help as they began to flee Nazi Germany in large numbers. Near the end of the century, we have taken enormous strides – but for all our progress, there are still large numbers of people who are forced from their homes and their countries every year. At present there are more than 43 million people in the world who have been forced from their homes. Roughly 16 million are refugees.

1999 saw no shortage of refugees. It was the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo that led to our military campaign this spring. Over 850,000 of those forced from their homes made it to Macedonia and Albania. Many others simply hid in the hills of Kosovo, with barely any food or water, but too terrified to come out of hiding.

We worked with the IRC and a number of other relief agencies to help the refugees that found safety across the border. But it was no less urgent to seek to provide assistance to those people who remained inside Kosovo. Neither NATO’s armed forces nor most relief agencies were in a position to deliver food to them. That’s when the IRC heroically volunteered for the job. In partnership with your colleagues at USAID, you launched a series of airdrops deep inside Kosovo. It was extremely dangerous, and there was no guarantee that hostile Serb forces would allow the flights to perform their humanitarian mission. But the IRC never wavered in its determination. For that, many people owe you their lives. And the rest of the world owes you its thanks.

More than 60,000 rations were delivered in the two weeks preceding the peace accord. Those rations provided physical sustenance and more. To the starving, suffering Kosovars in the hills wondering what had happened to civilization, those airdrops provided more than physical sustenance – they served notice that the rest of the world had not forgotten them. I know how much the IRC does every year, in places ranging from East Timor to Rwanda, from Bosnia to Azerbaijan. But this year, I wanted to single out and thank you for how much you did, at great risk, to help the people of Kosovo.

Enjoy the rest of the Freedom Award dinner. And good luck with the year ahead.
Project Purpose

July 1997

To provide emergency relief supplies, mental health programs and medicines for refugees and vulnerable groups in the Federated Republic of Yugoslavia.

Project Beneficiaries - 50,000

Project Activities

• Distribution of firewood, coal, blankets, warm clothing, food
• Distribution of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment
• Support for pediatric programs
• Self-reliance programs
• Community development and social programs

Background

Since 1992,IRC has provided pharmaceuticals to medical institutions in Serbia and Montenegro. Military operations in the Krajina (Croatia) and North West Bosnia in August 1995, and the 'exchange of territories' that took place after the Dayton Agreement, have displaced approximately 500,000 people. Operating out of Belgrade, IRC distributes relief supplies, food, firewood, coal, blankets, and warm clothes in Serbia proper. IRC also administers a micro enterprise and psycho-social program to refugees in Voevodina, and focuses on pediatric and community development projects in Kosovo.

Contacts

Harold Northrup, Program Officer
Internet: harold@intrescom.org
Ismail Balla, Program Assistant
Internet: ismail@intrescom.org

Employment Opportunities in Serbia


International Rescue Committee
What is the International Rescue Committee?

IRC staff and volunteers work in Africa, Asia, Europe, the former Soviet Union and the United States. A unique ability to respond quickly to refugee emergencies has marked the International Rescue Committee's history since it was founded in 1933, at the request of Albert Einstein, to assist anti-nazis fleeing Hitler's terror. Over the past six years, IRC has tripled in size and is the largest nonsectarian voluntary agency serving refugees worldwide. IRC helps victims of racial, religious, ethnic, and political persecution, as well as people uprooted by war and violence. Populations displaced by conflict within their own borders, refugees repatriating and those resettled in third countries are also assisted. There are now more than 43.1 million people in the world who have been forced from their homes. Approximately 16.1 million of them are refugees.

Who is IRC Helping today?

The International Rescue Committee, the first U.S. organization on the ground in the former Yugoslavia, has been helping victims of the fighting since December, 1991. In addition to providing lifesaving medical supplies, food, and shelter, International Rescue Committee has delivered food to municipalities to maintain essential utilities, and has repaired water and gas lines in Sarajevo. More than 750 renovation projects have been carried out, including collective centers, schools, hospitals, and private homes. Small factories have been revitalized to produce urgently needed relief items while adding stimulus to local economies.

To compensate for unreliable food sources and help people achieve nutritional self-sufficiency, close to 25,000 metric tons of vegetable and wheat seeds yielding over 400,000 metric tons of food have been delivered. To revive agricultural production, cultivation of fruit orchards and mushroom farms are being supported, as well as fisheries and small animal farming.

In Bosnia, nearly four years of brutal ethnic cleansing have left more than 200,000 people dead and 2.5 million displaced. It is estimated that 1.4 million people in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are in need of psychological assistance because of traumatic war experiences. Rape victims are receiving counseling, and programs are being developed to build sustainable systems to help meet psychological assistance needs.

Many of those injured in the conflict have suffered permanent physical impairment through amputation, nerve injury, or paralysis. There has been an increase in stroke victims and children of epilepsy. To enhance the delivery of physical rehabilitation, International Rescue Committee provides training, education, and some basic equipment and supplies to treatment centers in Tuzla, Bosnia. A special medical program serves war-injured children.

http://www.intrescom.org/fact.html

11/1/99
In light of the 1995 peace accord, International Rescue Committee is moving from emergency operations toward an expanded role in reconstruction and rehabilitation. Knitting Bosnia back together will be a long and difficult process. Industrial output is down 75 percent since 1990; 35 percent of roads and 40 percent of bridges need rebuilding; 50 percent of primary schools have been destroyed. Close to 80 percent of the population is dependent on outside food assistance.

One of the biggest challenges is resettling thousands of refugees and completing their economic and social reintegration, which is critical to averting future strife among Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Special emphasis is being placed on assisting the elderly, orphans, widows, handicapped people, and people "ethnically cleansed" from their homes.

In Rwanda, International Rescue Committee has concentrated on reestablishing basic infrastructure, relief services, and economic activities. Health centers have been repaired and equipped, health workers trained and paid, and immunization campaigns and supplementary nutrition programs carried out. International Rescue Committee has also restored and extended rural and town water systems and trained local people to maintain them. Through self-reliance programs more than 450 co-ops and micro-enterprises have received loans or been given training, technical support, or materials assistance. Seeds and tools have been distributed so that people could plant gardens and small farm crops. To help rehabilitate the Rwandan justice system, court buildings have been repaired. In January, 1996, the Washington Post quoted International Rescue Committee's country director in Rwanda, "They need to have some kind of (justice) system in place before the Refugees in the camps will decide to return." International Rescue Committee is also setting up and managing transit centers to temporarily shelter returning refugees.

Although some Rwandan refugees have returned home, there are still at least 400,000 in Tanzania. International Rescue Committee has supported repatriation by building a center outside the boundaries of the Ngara camps, so that refugees who register to return to Rwanda do not have to go back into the camps where they could be harassed or intimidated. International Rescue Committee continues to operate public health and sanitation programs in Lumasi camp, and a sanitation program at Kitali Hill. A home health-care program for AIDS patients and a tuberculosis tracing and treatment program, are being conducted in the four large camps near Ngara. International Rescue Committee also continues to provide health, self-reliance, and other services for Burundian refugees in southern Tanzania.

Assistance is being provided in three newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union-Georgia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. In Georgia International Rescue Committee's work is focused on improving water supply and sanitation facilities, winterizing buildings and housing, and initiating income-generating projects to promote self-sufficiency. The work is benefitting both displaced people and the host communities. Similar programs have been implemented in Azerbaijan, where nearly one million ethnic Azeris have fled their homes in war-torn Nagorno-Karabakh.

The outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in may 1992 uprooted 400,000
people. Approximately 70,000 sought refuge in Afghanistan. Most have returned and are eager to rebuild their country and resume their lives. International Rescue Committee is assisting them in restoring water systems, rehabilitating destroyed homes and initiating income-generation projects like small-scale soap production and poultry farms in order to increase their self-reliance.

International Rescue Committee continues to assist Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Burmese and Laotians in Thailand, Liberian refugees in Guinea and the Cote d'Ivoire, and internally displaced people in Sudan. Training the refugees to achieve self-sufficiency is a vital component of the work. In Afghanistan, International Rescue Committee's efforts are focused on education, public health, irrigation, water supply and sanitation and agriculture restoration, despite continued fighting which has slowed repatriation.

The repatriation from Thailand to Cambodia is complete and refugees from Mozambique have returned home from Malawi. Many of the children are going to homelands they have only heard about. International Rescue Committee, having worked for years with the refugees in exile, is now helping with the difficult transition.

Refugees who cannot return home and must be resettled in other countries are provided with counseling and resettlement assistance by International Rescue Committee offices in Bangkok, Zagreb, Rome, Vienna, and Madrid.

What Kind of Help Does International Rescue Committee Provide?

In refugee emergencies, International Rescue Committee's priority is to deliver critical medical services, food and shelter, as well as essential public health and sanitation assistance. Once a crisis is stabilized, International Rescue Committee establishes programs that enable refugees to cope with life in exile. Through training, education, income-generating and self-reliance programs, International Rescue Committee ensures that refugees have opportunities to learn and develop skills, leading to a durable solution to their plight.

For those who cannot safely return to their countries, International Rescue Committee assists in their permanent resettlement in the United States. This work is carried out by a national network of 17 domestic resettlement offices. The goal of resettlement is to enable each refugee to achieve self-sufficiency and to build a new life in freedom. In recent years, International Rescue Committee has had the resettlement responsibility for 10,000 to 12,000 refugees each year. This work has been a basic part of International Rescue Committee's mission since 1933.

Who Supports International Rescue Committee?

The work of the International Rescue Committee is supported by individuals, foundations, unions, and the business community, as well as civic, education and human rights groups in the United States and abroad. The cooperation and financial support of government and intergovernmental agencies are also vital for International Rescue
International Rescue Committee is governed by a board of directors who serve without compensation. This spirit of volunteerism is rooted in the American tradition of helping victims of oppression and violence. Many other volunteers participate in International Rescue Committee's mission on behalf of uprooted people.

Since 1980, nearly 94 cents of every dollar contributed has gone directly for lifesaving assistance to refugees. In its December 4, 1995 issue, U.S. News and World Report singled out International Rescue Committee as one of only five "Standout Good Guys." International Rescue Committee was selected by its peers and other experts for being "uniquely effective, innovative or valuable" and is the only international charity to make the list.
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I'm pleased to be part of the International Rescue Committee's 1999 Freedom Award dinner -- if not in person, then at least on videotape.

I'd like to send a special greetings to two of the people in the room with you.

First, to the chairman of the board of the IRC, former Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead.

And to your featured speaker this evening, my ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke.

Tonight's event gives me the welcome opportunity to publicly salute the IRC, something I've wanted to do since last spring.
I'd like you all to know how proud I am of the job you've done – and are doing – for the people of Kosovo.

In particular, I'm delighted to acknowledge the crucial role the IRC played last May and June in air-dropping food to thousands of ethnic Albanians who had fled Serbian attackers and taken refuge in the countryside.

Picture this. You have been driven from your home and forced to flee for your life, hiding in remote mountainous areas or forests deep inside Kosovo.

Now, 7 or 8 weeks later, your food has just about run out. You are on the verge of starvation. But you are fearful of returning to settled areas. You have heard too many stories of what had happened to your fellow Kosovars – accounts of torture, rape and even mass killings.

Better to risk starvation than suffer such a fate.

Fortunately, Kosovars who knew of your plight had managed to make their way into Albania and Macedonia and had reported it to the outside world. Outfits like the IRC began to recognize your dire condition.
For more reasons than one, NATO and its constituent armed forces were not themselves in a position to deliver food inside Kosovo.

But the same constraints did not apply to the IRC.

And so, in partnership with your humanitarian-aid colleagues at the U.S. Agency for International Development, you launched a series of airdrops deep inside Kosovo.

It was risky. It was dangerous. And not everyone thought it would work.
But in the end, the airdrops delivered more than 60,000 lifesaving rations to the starving Kosovars in need during the two weeks preceding the peace accord. Imagine how thrilled those people were – not only to get food at last, but to know that the outside world had not forgotten them.

As President of the United States, I am pleased to use this occasion to salute the men and women of the IRC for all the fine work you do around the world, from East Timor to Rwanda, from Azerbaijan to Sierra Leone. But I congratulate you especially for the Kosovo airdrops. It is an episode in your distinguished history of which you should be very proud.

Thank you, and have a wonderful evening.
On behalf of all Americans, I want to thank the International Rescue Committee for another year of remarkable dedication and service to humanity. The IRC has been helping refugees since 1933, when Albert Einstein saw that Jewish people needed help as they began to flee Nazi Germany in large numbers. Near the end of the century, we have taken enormous strides— but for all our progress, there are still large numbers of people who are forced from their homes and their countries every year. At present there are more than 43 million people in the world who have been forced from their homes. Roughly 16 million of them are refugees.

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Enjoy the rest of the Freedom Award dinner. And good luck with the year ahead.