

Kazakhstan, whom I will be welcoming to Washington in February, and Chairman Shushkevich of Belarus, whom I will meet in Minsk later this week, as well as to the people and Parliaments of those two countries.

My administration has been working with the Governments of Ukraine and Russia to address Ukraine's security concerns so that it could follow suit. The trilateral accord we will sign will lead to the complete removal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine.

I want to congratulate both President Yeltsin and President Kravchuk of Ukraine for their statesmanship in negotiating this accord with us. I want to commend President Kravchuk and to thank him for his leadership. I look forward to consulting with him personally during the brief stop at Borispol Airport in Kiev on Wednesday evening. President Kravchuk will later join President Yeltsin and me in Moscow on Friday to finalize the agreement in a trilateral meeting.

This agreement opens a new era in our relationship with Ukraine, an important country at the center of Europe, a country, I might add, which was mentioned frequently during our meetings today. We expect to expand our cooperation with Ukraine, especially in the economic area. We look forward to Ukraine's playing an important role in efforts to move toward the integration of a broader Europe.

Today I spent the day at NATO Headquarters, one of the pillars of our security in the post-World War II era. Throughout that era, our security was defined by the stability of Europe's division. But with the two breakthroughs for peace announced today, we can begin to imagine as well as to define a new security for the post-cold-war era founded not on Europe's division but instead on its integration. Throughout the 20th century, now drawing to a close, Europe has seen far too much bloodshed based on these divisions. But with strong democracies, strong market economies, strong bonds of defense cooperation, and this strong step to combat nuclear weapons proliferation, we can make the next century far more secure for all of our people by building a united Europe.

Andrea [Andrea Mitchell, NBC News]?

#### *Russia*

Q. Mr. President, there are some who have suggested that even this Partnership For Peace is going to be too much of an exacerbation to

the nationalist tendencies in Russia. And today Mr. Zhirinovsky said that if NATO troops are ever stationed near the borders of Russia, it's a mistake, it's finished for NATO and/or other forces who have supported this organization, it's the beginning of a third world war if the NATO or other forces are along those borders. How do you respond to that and to the concerns that there are people in Russia who will not even take this step kindly?

*The President.* My response to that is that his, thank goodness, is not the governing voice in Russia and that we have offered to the Russians, to all the states of the former Soviet Union, and to all the Eastern European countries which were in the Warsaw Pact the opportunity to participate in this Partnership For Peace.

The reason I wanted the Partnership For Peace rather than nothing, which perhaps Mr. Zhirinovsky would have preferred, or immediate membership, which others would have preferred, is that I thought it gave us the best chance, first, to develop substantive military and defense cooperation for these countries; second, to give nations who wish to be members, full members, of NATO the chance to develop the capacity to assume their responsibilities; and third, to give us the chance, most importantly of all, to create a Europe that really is integrated, that is based on unity and not some dividing line that at least is further east than the cold war dividing line was.

So I simply—I disagree with the position that he's taken, but that is not the position that governs Russia, thank goodness.

Q. Do you think, just to follow, that Russia would be joining the Partnership For Peace?

*The President.* They're certainly welcome to do so. We've issued—

Q. Could that happen in the next few days?

*The President.* I think that all the nations to whom the welcome mat has been put out may want to take some—some may want to take more time than others to think about it. But we certainly expect to have some sort of continuing defense cooperation with Russia, and they are certainly welcome to be a part of this.

Go ahead, Rita [Rita Braver, CBS News].

#### *Bosnia*

Q. On the subject of Bosnia, earlier today you said that NATO would be reasserting its warning against the strangulation of Sarajevo.