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Draft 4/22/00 9:40 am
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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
STATEMENT ON THE REUNIFICATION OF ELIAN GONZALEZ WITH HIS
FATHER, JAUN MIGUEL GONZALEZ
THE WHITE HOUSE
April 22, 2000**

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The Department of Justice, under the leadership of Attorney General Reno, went to great lengths to negotiate a voluntary transfer. The Attorney General showed great restraint, patience and compassion throughout this process. But when all efforts failed, we were left with no alternative but to enforce the decision of the INS and a federal court -- that Juan Miguel Gonzalez should have custody of his son. This was the right thing to do. Today, the rule of law has been upheld.

This has not been an easy time for any of the parties involved. But let's remember -- this is about a little boy who lost his mother, and has not seen his father in more than five months. I am confident that with time and support, Elian and his father will have the opportunity to be a family again.

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This has not been an easy time for any of the parties involved. But let's remember – this is about a little boy who lost his mother, and has not seen his father in more than five months. [As the U.S. Marshall said to young Elian, “This may seem scary right now, but it will soon be better. We’re taking you to see your papa.”]

I am confident that things will now get better. And that with time and support, Elian and his father will have the opportunity to be a family again.

Thank you.

Final 4/22/00 10:15am

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Subj: Clinton: Reunite Elian, His Dad
Date: Fri, 21 Apr 2000 7:38:07 AM Eastern Daylight Time
From: AOL News
BCC: Gottheim

Clinton: Reunite Elian, His Dad

.c The Associated Press

By GEORGE GEDDA

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton said a court ruling has stripped E Gonzalez's Miami relatives of all arguments against transferring tempo custody of the boy to his father. ``That is the law,' ' Clinton said am reports that the government was preparing to forcibly take the 6-year-boy.

Clinton commented Thursday, a day after a three-judge panel of the fed appeals court in Atlanta said Elian must remain in the United States u the court decides whether he should get an asylum hearing. A hearing w for May 11.

The ruling was viewed by the Miami relatives and their allies as a vic but Clinton said it reinforced the administration's case for Elian to reunited with his father.

The Washington Post reported today that Attorney General Janet Reno ha decided to remove Elian from his great-uncle's home in Miami and has instructed federal law enforcement officials to determine the best tim so. The report quoted unidentified government officials as saying they expected to move by the middle of next week.

Asked about the report, Justice Department spokeswoman Carole Florman Reno remained open to a voluntary settlement, but declined to discuss she has made any decision about forcibly removing the boy. She said, ` obvious reasons, we've always said we wouldn't discuss a law enforceme action in advance.' '

The New York Times, quoting government officials it did not name, said that law enforcement action is now all but certain and would be carrie by immigration agents and federal marshals who have been quietly arriv Miami in recent days.

A lawyer for the Miami relatives indicated today that the great-uncle, Lazaro Gonzalez, who has control of Elian, and other family members wi assist federal agents' attempt to take the boy.

``So he's not going to cooperate?'' attorney Jose Garcia-Pedrosa was a on CBS' ``The Early Show.''

``Without a psychological evaluation that says that that is in the best interest of the boy in the opinion of a professional, not a lawyer or immigration official, that's correct,' ' Garcia-Pedrosa replied.

Clinton, making his strongest statement to date on the case, said he knew ``no conceivable argument'' against the custody transfer.

``I think he (the father) should be reunited with his son,' ' the president said. ``That is the law. And the main argument of the family in Miami doing so has now been removed.

``Their main argument was if we let him go back to his father before the court rules, he might go back to Cuba. The court has now said he should go back to Cuba. The Justice Department agrees with that.''

Clinton generally has been standing back and leaving the decisions in the Elian case to Reno, who last week ordered the Miami relatives to turn the boy. The family refused.

``The attorney general is leading the effort,' ' presidential spokesman Lockhart said Thursday. ``The president has been briefed and has had input. Is she making the decisions here? Yes.''

Less than two hours before Clinton spoke, Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, asked Americans to write to Clinton and Reno, urging them to decisively to end the five-month father-son separation.

``Don't let them continue to abuse my son,' ' the elder Gonzalez said, referring to the Miami relatives who have been caring for Elian since he was found clinging to an inner tube off the Florida coast on Thanksgiving. Elian and two others survived, but his mother and 10 others fleeing Cuba drowned when their boat sank.

``I was promised that I was going to be reunited with my son,' ' he said, speaking in Spanish near his temporary home in suburban Maryland. ``Two years have gone by and it hasn't happened. I have always understood, I have thought, that the United States is a country which abided by its laws.

He asked Americans ``to send message and write to the president ... to the attorney general of this country so they should act immediately (to) reunite me with my son,' ' he said, speaking through a translator.

Thursday evening, Elian spoke on a cordless telephone in the yard outside his Miami relatives' home and blew kisses into the phone. Family spokesman Armando Gutierrez said the boy was talking to his father.

Lazaro Gonzalez offered to bring the boy to a meeting with his father, being assured by the court ruling that the boy could stay in the country. The attorney for the family, Linda Osberg-Braun, said Wednesday. But that

seemed clouded by today's statement from another lawyer, Garcia-Pedros. Previously, the Miami relatives had said they would meet the father on it was without the boy. Juan Miguel Gonzalez's lawyer, Gregory Craig, Thursday that discussions between his client and other family members take place only after the father regains custody of Elian.

In Fort Lee, N.J., Vice President Al Gore urged Elian's feuding relatives get together ``without government officials or lawyers'' to try to end impasse. Earlier he had split with the administration by supporting permanent resident status for Elian, his father and other relatives in Cuba.

AP-NY-04-21-00 0737EDT

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STATEMENT ON THE REUNIFICATION OF ELIAN GONZALEZ WITH HIS
FATHER, JAUN MIGUEL GONZALEZ
THE WHITE HOUSE
April 22, 2000**

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This has not been an easy time for any of the parties involved. But let's remember -- this is about a little boy who lost his mother, and has not seen his father in more than five months. I am confident that with time and support, Elian and his father will have the opportunity to be a family again.

Thank you.

Draft 4/22/00 9:40 am
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As we learned earlier this morning from the Attorney General, six-year-old Elian Gonzalez is now being reunited with his father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez. I support the actions she has taken. When our persistent attempts to negotiate with the family in Miami failed, Attorney General Reno had no alternative but to enforce the decision of the INS and a Federal Court, that the father should have custody of young Elian. I want to commend the Attorney General for the restraint and patience she has shown throughout the many weeks of this ordeal. Only when it was apparent that a voluntary transfer of the child was not possible, did she act. This was the right thing to do. Today, the rule of law has been upheld. And the best interest of the child has prevailed.

This has not been an easy time for any of the parties involved. But let's remember – this is about a little boy who lost his mother, and has not seen his father in more than five months. I am confident that with time and support, reason will replace emotion, Elian will have a chance to have a normal, healthy life, and a father and son will have the opportunity to be a family again.

Thank you.

Draft 4/22/00 10am

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THE WHITE HOUSE

April 22, 2000



ELIAN-TAKING-RENO-BRFG, 5th Add, f5698,0612

Janet Reno Holds News Conference On The Retrieval Of Elian Gonzalez From The Home Of Lazaro Gonzalez

xfdr ELIAN-TAKING-RENO-BRFG 5thadd XXX address that specifically. MEISSNER: The child has been our paramount concern in this operation. We structured the operation around the child's safety as the first, most important priority. We had Spanish-speaking female agents--agent responsible for bringing the child from the home. We had worked out with our team of experts in advance the kind of conversation that the agent responsible for the child could and should use, in order to be reassuring. That was carefully worked out as between the experts and the people on the scene. The airplane includes--the flight has Elian accompanied by a child psychiatrist and a flight surgeon, both of whom are bilingual. There is a play pack on the airplane of Play-Dough (ph), other things, food, to amuse him. One of the things that we learned from our experts was that the squeezing of Play-Dough (ph) is the best thing that you can do for a child who might be experiencing stress.

I must say, though, that all of our reports so far are that the child has been very calm, has not been anxious, has not been thrashing, has not been crying. And the basic feedback that we have from a series of people now who have been directly with him, is that he's a real terrific, tough kid.

QUESTION: Did you consult with psychiatrists beforehand to discuss the possibility of the impact of using weapons during the incident, how that might affect the child?

MEISSNER: We discussed the nature of a law enforcement operation, and we knew, of course, that it could be traumatic, and so we were very, very concerned to set it up in a way that would minimize that kind of fearfulness.

QUESTION: Did Elian have the opportunity to speak to his father before leaving? Or maybe from the plane?

MEISSNER: He is actually speaking to his father right now. QUESTION: He is? MEISSNER: Yes, he is.

QUESTION: Who notified Juan Miguel of the decision? Was it before or after it was carried out? What can you tell us about his reaction?

MEISSNER: Juan Miguel was notified after--as the--after the operation began. The operation was very, very quick, so it was simultaneous.

QUESTION: Was the father able to speak to Elian at any point during the operation? I know that was a concern, the cell phone...

MEISSNER: No. The operation took, really, only three to four minutes from seeing the child to having him in the van, to being on the way to the helicopter. And the safety and operational concerns overrode anything at that point.

As I say, he has now been able to have a conversation, father and son.

(CROSSTALK) QUESTION: ... about the conversation that the agent was--you said there was a conversation that the agent was told would be good for the boy as he was being removed from the house.

MEISSNER: The conversation goes along the lines of, "This may seem very scary right now, but it will soon be better. We're taking you to see your papa." He calls him papa. "You will not be going back to Cuba. You will not be on a boat. You are around people who care for you. We are going to take care of you. Please don't be frightened." That kind of a conversation.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, can you tell us a bit about concern about letting the boy or his father on Cuban soil? (OFF-MIKE)

RENO: The Marshal service is taking all appropriate precautions, and we do not foresee those that you describe.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, what kind of information did you have about weapons in the house?

MORE APNP-04-22-00 0851EDT

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Final 4/22/00 10am
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Exit AOL Mail

221 of 242

Subj: Clinton: Reunite Elian, His Dad
Date: Fri, 21 Apr 2000 7:38:07 AM Eastern Daylight Time
From: AOL News
BCC: Gottheim

Clinton: Reunite Elian, His Dad

.c The Associated Press

·By GEORGE GEDDA

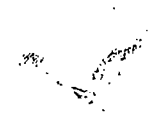
WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton said a court ruling has stripped Elian Gonzalez's Miami relatives of all arguments against transferring temporary custody of the boy to his father. "That is the law," Clinton said amid reports that the government was preparing to forcibly take the 6-year-old boy.

Clinton commented Thursday, a day after a three-judge panel of the federal appeals court in Atlanta said Elian must remain in the United States until the court decides whether he should get an asylum hearing. A hearing was set for May 11.

The ruling was viewed by the Miami relatives and their allies as a victory, but Clinton said it reinforced the administration's case for Elian to be reunited with his father.

The Washington Post reported today that Attorney General Janet Reno has decided to remove Elian from his great-uncle's home in Miami and has instructed federal law enforcement officials to determine the best time to do so. The report quoted unidentified government officials as saying they expected to move by the middle of next week.

Asked about the report, Justice Department spokeswoman Carole Florman said Reno remained open to a voluntary settlement, but declined to discuss whether she has made any decision about forcibly removing the boy. She said, "For obvious reasons, we've always said we wouldn't discuss a law enforcement action in advance."



The New York Times, quoting government officials it did not name, said today that law enforcement action is now all but certain and would be carried out by immigration agents and federal marshals who have been quietly arriving in Miami in recent days.

A lawyer for the Miami relatives indicated today that the great-uncle, Lazaro Gonzalez, who has control of Elian, and other family members will not assist federal agents' attempt to take the boy.

"So he's not going to cooperate?" attorney Jose Garcia-Pedrosa was asked on CBS' "The Early Show."

"Without a psychological evaluation that says that that is in the best interest of the boy in the opinion of a professional, not a lawyer or an immigration official, that's correct," Garcia-Pedrosa replied.

Clinton, making his strongest statement to date on the case, said he knew of "no conceivable argument" against the custody transfer.

"I think he (the father) should be reunited with his son," the president said. "That is the law. And the main argument of the family in Miami for not doing so has now been removed.

"Their main argument was if we let him go back to his father before the court rules, he might go back to Cuba. The court has now said he shouldn't go back to Cuba. The Justice Department agrees with that."

Clinton generally has been standing back and leaving the decisions in the Elian case to Reno, who last week ordered the Miami relatives to turn over the boy. The family refused.

"The attorney general is leading the effort," presidential spokesman Joe Lockhart said Thursday. "The president has been briefed and has had input. Is she making the decisions here? Yes."

Less than two hours before Clinton spoke, Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, asked Americans to write to Clinton and Reno, urging them to act decisively to end the five-month father-son separation.

"Don't let them continue to abuse my son," the elder Gonzalez said, referring to the Miami relatives who have been caring for Elian since he was found clinging to an inner tube off the Florida coast on Thanksgiving Day. Elian and two others survived, but his mother and 10 others fleeing Cuba drowned when their boat sank.

"I was promised that I was going to be reunited with my son," he said, speaking in Spanish near his temporary home in suburban Maryland. "Two weeks have gone by and it hasn't happened. I have always understood, I have always thought, that the United States is a country which abided by its laws."

He asked Americans "to send message and write to the president ... to the attorney general of this country so they should act immediately (to) reunite me with my son," he said, speaking through a translator.

Thursday evening, Elian spoke on a cordless telephone in the yard outside his Miami relatives' home and blew kisses into the phone. Family spokesman Armando Gutierrez said the boy was talking to his father.

Lazaro Gonzalez offered to bring the boy to a meeting with his father after being assured by the court ruling that the boy could stay in the country, an attorney for the family, Linda Osberg-Braun, said Wednesday. But that promise seemed clouded by today's statement from another lawyer, Garcia-Pedrosa.

Previously, the Miami relatives had said they would meet the father only if it was without the boy. Juan Miguel Gonzalez's lawyer, Gregory Craig, said Thursday that discussions between his client and other family members can take place only after the father regains custody of Elian.

In Fort Lee, N.J., Vice President Al Gore urged Elian's feuding relatives to get together "without government officials or lawyers" to try to end the impasse. Earlier he had split with the administration by supporting permanent resident status for Elian, his father and other relatives in Cuba.

AP-NY-04-21-00 0737EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 20, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN PHOTO OPPORTUNITY
WITH CHAIRMAN YASSER ARAFAT OF PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY
The Rose Garden
5:54 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, everyone. Let me just briefly say that I am very, very glad to have Chairman Arafat back here at the White House. And I'm looking forward to our talks. We've reached a very serious time in the peace process. He and Prime Minister Barak have set for themselves an ambitious time table to reach a framework agreement as soon as they can, and then a final agreement by the middle of September. So we're working hard on it and I think we'll get some things done today. Q Mr. President, a short time ago, Juan Miguel Gonzalez came out and called on the American people to help him urge you and your Attorney General to reunite him with his son. Do you have a message for Juan Miguel Gonzalez? And, also, what steps is your administration prepared to take if the boy's Miami relatives won't turn him --

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I think he should be reunited with his son. That is the law. And the main argument of the family in Miami for not doing so has now been removed. I mean, their main argument was, if we let him go back to his father before the court rules, he might go back to Cuba. The court has now said he shouldn't go back to Cuba, the Justice Department agrees with that, and he has agreed to that. So there is now no conceivable argument for his not being able to be reunited with his son. And that is what the lawful process has said. The immigration law is clear and the determination of the INS and a federal court are clear. So I think he should be united in as prompt and orderly way as possible.

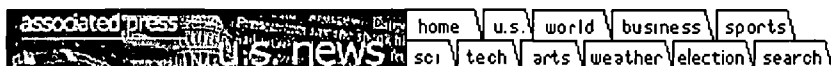
Q Well, what about the appeals court suggestion that a six year old maybe has some rights to say where he wants to live and apply for asylum on his own behalf? THE PRESIDENT: Well, even if the appeals court were to say that --which would be a rather dramatic departure from the law -- then there would have to be some set up at a trial level for determining that. And in the meanwhile, while all this legal process plays out, as a matter of law the INS determined, and a federal court affirmed, that the father should have custody. So, clearly, he should be reunited. And the argument that he might go back to Cuba before this thing can be finally resolved in the courts is no longer there. That's not an argument anymore.

. * * * * * Q Mr. President, what did you tell Janet Reno about the Gonzalez case?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we just had a conversation about where it is. We reviewed where the legal case was and what her plans were. I just told her that I strongly supported her efforts and that we clearly had to uphold the rule of law.

Q Do you want to see this brought to a swift end?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we have to let the court cases be decided. But I think the main thing is - I hope that all the people there who say they came to the United States because we have freedom and the rule of law will observe the rule of law. When this thing finally plays out, in the end, the law has to be obeyed. And that's basically what we talked about. We talked a little about the details and -- she was the prosecutor there for 12 years, so she knows it very well and she's down there working hard on it and I think she'll handle it in as sensitive, but firm a way as possible. That's basically what we talked about -- just what's likely to happen over the next couple of days. But the main thing -- my message is simple; she has to deal with the day-to-day details. But the thing that we've got to do is to make sure that our laws are upheld and enforced. And in the end, I'm quite confident they will be.



APRIL 20, 07:24 EDT

Text of Reno's Comments

By The Associated Press

Text of Attorney General Janet Reno's comments after the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals decision in the Elian Gonzalez case:

Good afternoon. For the past four months the case of Elian Gonzalez has touched the hearts of virtually every American. It is a case about a 6-year-old boy and the sacred bond that exists between he and his father. It is that simple: Juan Miguel, his father, is in this country and wants his son back.

I believe Elian should be reunited with his father and I've said that all along. The order today from the Court of Appeals says that Elian should not be removed from the country, and we're going to abide by that court order.

But it does not disagree with my determination, it does not say that the boy cannot be reunited with his father in this country, and in fact the court said we need not decide where or in whose custody the plaintiff should remain while this appeal is pending.

There are two issues here that must be kept separate. One is whether an asylum application can be brought by distant relatives over the objection of a father who is the sole surviving parent. The other issue is who cares for the child while he is in the United States.

The appeal addresses only the asylum issue, not the care issue. The court's order does not preclude me from placing Elian in his father's care while he is in the United States.

The immigration laws clearly call for a child to be placed in the care of a parent in preference to a more distant relative while the child's immigration status is being resolved. The 11th Circuit's order, as I say, prevents him from leaving the country while the appeal is pending. We will abide by that.

We are still reviewing the court's decision, for I have just had the chance to look at it as I have come off the plane. We are going to take and consider all our options and take the course of action that we deem appropriate under the circumstances.

Thank you.



TOP
STORIES

♦ **Elian Seized From Relatives' Home**

♦ **Reno Led All-Night Elian Session**

♦ **Father Urged To Speak For Elian**

♦ **Free Speech Notion in Elian Case**

♦ **Secret Service Sued For Cuba Protest**

♦ **Kids Wanting Asylum Face Hurdles**

♦ **On the Front Line in Little Havana**

♦ **Young Have Different**

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News

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

INS grabs Elian from Miami home

Armed agents fire tear gas into crowd as they leave

Elian Gonzalez, center, is carried by a government official as he's taken from his Miami relatives' home Saturday morning.



Wilfredo Lee / AP

MSNBC STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

MIAMI, April 22 — Armed federal agents seized Elian Gonzalez from the home of his Miami relatives before dawn Saturday, firing tear gas into an angry crowd as they left the scene with the weeping 6-year-old boy. More than 20 agents arrived at the home shortly after 5 a.m. and used rams on the chain-link fence and on the front door.

[COMPLETE STORY](#)

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4/22/2000



Live Vote

Do you support the
Justice Department
using force to take
Elian from his Miami
relatives?

Yes

No

VOTE

MSNBC INTERACTIVE

Vote to see results

A SHORT TIME LATER, a woman and man brought Elian out of the home and put him in a white van that drove away.

"Assassins," yelled some of the approximately 100 protesters, some of whom climbed over the barricades in an attempt to stop the agents. The agents, wearing Immigration and Naturalization Service shirts, were armed with automatic weapons.

"The world is watching!" yelled Delfin Gonzalez, the brother of the little boy's caretaker and great-uncle, Lazaro Gonzalez.

"They were animals," said Jess Garcia, a bystander. "They gassed women and children to take a defenseless child out of here. We were assaulted with no provocation"

Within an hour of the raid, the crowd in Little Havana quickly swelled to about 300.

The raid came amid reports of progress early Saturday to immediately transfer custody of the boy from his Miami relatives to his Cuban father. Attorney General Janet Reno was at her office early this morning engaged in an extraordinary, long-distance negotiation that began Friday afternoon.

The settlement was first proposed by civic leaders in Miami serving as intermediaries.

Fight over Elian

- Latest news
- Opinion: Other Elians
- WP: In Cuba, a sense of bewilderment
- WP: Elian a hero of revolution in Havana
- Opinions: Begala, North
- Most Cubans loyal
- NBC: Life for Juan Miguel
- U.S. fears Cuban terrorists
- How kids handle loss
- WTVJ in Miami
- Katz: Legal analysis

Proposals and counterproposals flew through the night by telephone and facsimile machine between the Miami house, the Justice Department and the Washington office of the father's lawyer.

All of that ended early Saturday.

Carlos Gonzalez said he and several others tried to form a human chain in front of the door but were

forced back at gunpoint.

The government and the boy's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, insisted that any deal contain an immediate transfer of custody of Elian to him, but the Miami relatives have defied Reno's order switching custody.

These relatives



- **MSNBC Cable coverage**
Watch MSNBC Cable for coverage of this and other stories

have cared for him since he was found clinging to an inner tube in the Atlantic after a boat carrying his mother and other Cubans capsized,

killing her and 10 others. They and the Cuban exiles in the street do not want the boy returned to a Cuba ruled by Fidel Castro, whom they fled.

The deal under discussion called for Juan Miguel Gonzalez and Elian, Lazaro and his daughter, Marisleyxis, to move to one of two foundation-owned conference centers near Washington-either Wye Plantation, a center on Maryland's Eastern shore that has been used for Mideast peace conferences, or Airlie House near Warrenton, Va., according to a government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The plan called for formal custody to transfer immediately from the Miami relatives to the boy's Cuban father, but it was not clear that the relatives had accepted that, the official said.

Another sticking point was the length of the joint occupation of the compound. The intermediaries proposed that all family members stay until a court appeal is completed, in late May at the earliest. But Juan Miguel Gonzalez faxed a counterproposal back in late evening that called for a much shorter joint stay, the official said.

Reno, Immigration Commissioner Doris Meissner and other officials waited in Reno's Justice Department office past midnight for the relatives' reply to the counterproposal.

The Miami relatives lost a U.S. District Court battle to get a political asylum hearing for Elian. An appeals court has ordered Elian to stay in this country until it hears that case, but did not bar Reno from switching custody.

Reno met for 15 minutes Friday at the Justice Department with Juan Miguel Gonzalez. During the emotional session, the father said he had a very good 25-minute telephone conversation with his son on Thursday, the government official said. He also asked Reno to give him a date certain when he would get his son back.

But afterward, Reno said she told him "that I could not commit to a particular course of action or timetable."



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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
STATEMENT ON THE REUNIFICATION OF ELIAN GONZALEZ WITH HIS
FATHER, JAUN MIGUEL GONZALEZ
THE WHITE HOUSE
April 22, 2000**

As we learned earlier this morning from the Attorney General, six-year-old Elian Gonzalez is now being reunited with his father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez. I support the action she ~~has taken~~. When our persistent attempts to negotiate with the family in Miami failed, Attorney General Reno had no alternative but to enforce the decision of the INS and a Federal Court, that the father should have custody of young Elian. I want to commend the Attorney General for the restraint and patience she has shown throughout the many weeks of this ordeal. Only when it was apparent that a voluntary transfer of the child was not possible, did she act. This was the right thing to do. Today, the rule of law has been upheld. And the best interest of the child has prevailed.

This has not been an easy time for any of the parties involved. But let's remember – this is about a little boy who lost his mother, and has not seen his father in more than five months. I am confident that with time and support, ~~reason will replace emotion~~, Elian will have a chance to have a normal, healthy life, and a father and son will have the opportunity to be a family again.

Thank you.