

closely with our allies to counter the threat of proliferation of nuclear explosives. Not only would a disruption of nuclear cooperation with EURATOM eliminate any chance of progress in our talks with that organization related to our agreements, it would also cause serious problems in our overall relationships. Accordingly, I have determined that failure to continue peaceful nuclear cooperation with EURATOM would be seriously prejudicial to the achievement of U.S. non-proliferation objectives and would jeopardize the common defense and security of the United States. I therefore

intend to sign an Executive order to extend the waiver of the application of the relevant export criterion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act for an additional 12 months from March 10, 1991.

Sincerely,

GEORGE BUSH

*Note: Identical letters were sent to Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Dan Quayle, President of the Senate. The Executive order is listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.*

## Interview With Middle Eastern Journalists

March 8, 1991

*The President.* I wanted to just say a word of welcome to you all, and be glad to thank you for coming all this way. I think the best thing is just to go ahead and start, though I might say at the beginning that the coalition that was put together to stand up against the aggression has been, in my view, historic. There were a lot of predictions early on that one or another country would pull away or that it would fracture in some—and you come to me on a day when I have great gratitude in my heart to the leaders of the coalition countries. Well, I guess all the countries from which you've come having had forces there—Morocco, of course, in a special role, not a part of the coalition per se but nevertheless in the defense of Saudi Arabia, having some soldiers on the ground. That's a distinction that I wanted to say to you, sir, we understand and respect.

But in any event, those forces that did end up in the battle did very well. There were predictions that some might not want to engage in the battle, and they did, and so we are very grateful. And I keep saying two things: One, this is not a U.S. effort by itself. And secondly, our argument was never with the people of Iraq; it was with Saddam Hussein.

I make this point because the Iraqis tried to make it them—I mean “them” including

all Arabs—against the United States. And I will resist that until time immemorial, because there's a feeling of gratitude and affection to the Arab world because so many there stood with us against this evil.

But now, look, I came to answer your questions, and I'll try to do so. Who wants to go first?

### *Security in the Persian Gulf*

*Q.* Sir, my colleagues have elected that I speak first. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you personally, the administration and this great country and people, for what you have done. I believe this is an historical stand. And as our Ambassador has said, you will go into history as a great leader and a great man.

Sir, my first question is, the coalition has won the war, and I believe we have a great battle ahead of us, that is, to win the peace. What kind of arrangement do you foresee the United States, the coalition, and the Gulf States and, of course, the Arabs would have for security arrangements within the Gulf States and the Arab States?

*The President.* I think this is a time, as Abraham Lincoln once said in our history, to think anew. And we are starting to think anew by dispatching our Secretary of State to the region. There will not be a United States plan to bring peace to Lebanon, to

the Gulf, or to the Israeli-Palestine question. There will not be a single, sole U.S. plan. We want to be an instrumental part of it. We think, given what's happened in the Gulf, perhaps we have more credibility to be a part of it. When I spoke at our meeting to the joint session of Congress the other day, I spoke about our interest in being a catalyst for peace. And that's what Baker is out there to do.

I would love to think that the day would come when the Israeli-Arab world hostility could end. And that's going to take compromise on both sides. We are very open-minded as to how that should be brought about. When I talked about territory for peace, that wasn't exactly a new statement. We have been proponents of Resolutions 242 and 338 for a long time, and so have other countries, many other countries. I'd say most every country, but then some have pulled away from them. So, we're going to push, after consultation, in trying to get common ground with our coalition partners and then with Israel and others, to push on all three fronts.

Obviously, the security in the Gulf is quite different. I will repeat—I don't want to lecture here, but I will repeat that we are not interested in a longterm ground troop presence. The Iranians, for example, are accusing us, or not accusing us but are very much concerned about that. So are others. And we would be playing right into the hands of our critics if we sent a signal that we wanted to leave a sizable U.S. force on the ground out there. We don't. Our families want them home.

But on the other hand, I spelled out the other day some security requirements for the Gulf and what we think might be new arrangements that will provide for a more stable and more secure Gulf. Lebanon, again, and the Israeli question—these will be evolved after the Baker consultations.

*Q.* Mr. President, President Mubarak has called once again for a Middle East, including Israel, free of weapons of mass destruction. Do you agree with this initiative and other proposals for the limitation of arms shipments to the region, including Israel?

*The President.* You heard me speak on proliferation. I don't think you're going to disarm Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait,

Syria—anybody. I think that's idealistic. I'm not implying that that—what my dear friend Hosni Mubarak is saying. But I would like to think that out of all this we could have a vastly reduced flow of arms to this troubled corner of the world.

We have been very much concerned about these shipments. In some places we've been involved in them, to many of the countries right here in which your papers are located and Israel. But when I made this pitch for nonproliferation the other day, it is something that again we want to talk about within this whole concept of security and stability, not of just the Gulf region but of the other parts of the Middle East as well.

So, I'm not certain how we'll come down, what the final arrangements will be, but we are very openminded about talking and then doing what we say after we talk, in terms of fewer weapons going into the area.

*Q.* Mr. President, do you foresee any future role for Iraq and Iran in the security arrangement?

*The President.* Roles for Iraq and Iran? Well, in the first place, we never have felt that it was in the interest of the Gulf or certainly of the United States to create a vacuum in Iraq. And we have not wanted an unstable Iraq. Iraq has a job to do of reconstruction. And what they ought to do is have a government that will signal to the rest of the world that they want to live within their own borders, that they are renouncing aggression. And indeed, they did renounce the annexation of what they used to arrogantly refer to as Province 19.

So, they've got to send the signal to the world that they want to live within what we call the family of peace-loving nations. That is difficult, very candidly, for us. And one of the things Baker will talk about with our partners is whether it's difficult for them if Saddam Hussein remains in power. So, Iraq we want to see stable, living within its own borders with respect for its neighbors, renouncing its so-called claim to Kuwait, and yes, being an important part of the area.

Iraq can be a very well-to-do country if they'd spend their money on helping their own people and not on arms and bullying

the neighborhood, which they tried to do until they got into the war with Iran. Then the man changed his spots momentarily. Then when that war was over, he showed his arrogance and bullying again by going after Kuwait.

So, the best answer, as we see it—and again, with respect for our partners, I want to know exactly what they think but—is for Iraq to live in its borders, and then it can regain the respect that they deserve. They've got a proud history. They've got culture. They've got religious traditions and all. So, we're open to that. But it's going to be difficult under the status quo.

On Iran, we've had very strained relations with Iran. I have publicly said, and I'll repeat it—this is a unique chance to repeat it here—we want better relations with Iran. We have no animosity. There's a lot of feeling in our country about our hostages and about the Embassy, and there's feelings in Iran about the shooting down, which was pure accident, of the airbus and all of this. But sometimes when you have deep divisions it takes a little more time. So, we're not pressing Iran on bilateral relations.

But Iran is a big country. I don't think they should be treated forever as enemies by all the countries out in the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] countries or others. And I don't think, as I listen carefully to our friends in the Gulf—I think there's an evolution process here towards Iran. And as Iran moves to what I hope will be a more moderate or a less radical role, I think that the other countries in the area will welcome them back.

But they're an important country and they've got a self-respect. And so, we'd like to find ways to recognize that—of self-respect and their own sovereignty, of course. But we've got some bilateral problems.

So, I think both of them, being of their size, of their economic potential, of their historic standing, have key roles to play in a secure and stable Gulf. But again, it's got to evolve—how that will work, I mean, what mechanics are worked out. Will there be an Arab peacekeeping force there, and can that be presented to all the countries as no threat to them, but as a guarantee of the security of other countries?

So, we want this—remember in the early

days of all this, talk about “Arab solution”—King Hussein kept talking about, “We want an Arab solution.” And they had meetings and others saying “Arab,” and we understood that. We don't want a Yankee solution to the Middle East. *[Laughter]* I mean, that's not what we want.

So, here's a chance now for our friends in the Arab world—and there are many, and I hope there are more than when all this started—to say, look, here's where we should carry the ball; here's the place we should have the lead. And then we stand there with our, I would say, conviction backed up by perhaps a naval presence that I mentioned coming up and down the Gulf. It has helped with stability. And I see it as that kind of partnership in the future, but with no rancor in my heart about Iran, no rancor about the people of Iraq.

So, when I get up and say that here, I'm not just making it up. Because we hurt, we ache when we see a child that doesn't have enough food, or water that's contaminated, or something of that nature. And I think people in Saudi, Kuwait, Morocco—they feel the same thing when they see an Iraqi child.

So, we've got to approach it in a magnanimous, compassionate way. But let our Arab friends stand out there and say: Here's what we recommend. Here's what we're prepared to do. And then have us willing to put our military and whatever they want behind this effort.

So, that one is easier, it seems to me, the Gulf security including Iran and Iraq, than perhaps Lebanon and the Palestine question as it relates to Israel.

I'm going on too long, but I want to make a point that we've been very disappointed in the PLO here. I mean, the PLO was anointed at Rabat years ago as the sole spokesmen in all of this, and they've been disappointing. They've moved way over too far in support of Saddam Hussein. They took a bet—they bet this coalition wouldn't hold, and they bet the United States would not do what we did. And the guy bet wrong.

Here was a man that, in spite of the recent terrorist acts, had some standing in this country. I don't know how it is in the

rest of the world, but he's lost that standing here. And that isn't to mean that we say to everybody that was sympathetic to the PLO, hey, you're bad guys; that's not it. But they've been diminished by this.

So, their role in the security, at least for now, in my view, has been diminished because they bet on the wrong horse for the wrong reasons, the wrong motives. I mean, they did not stand up and condemn that aggression. And I think it has hurt some of the Palestinians in Kuwait who had been treated very well there. And then when the Kuwait thing happens, a lot of the Palestinians sided with the Iraqi invaders. Well, this didn't help their image around the United States. I can only speak for our country.

#### *Palestinians*

*Q.* What do you mean by political rights to Palestinian people in your speech?

*The President.* About political rights? Listen, there will not be peace until the whole question of where the Palestinians have a right to be is taken care of. And some say "state." It's not been our position in favor of the state, and there we differ with many of our Arab friends. But the question is, get the Palestine question resolved. And obviously, the framework has got to be the action taken by the United Nations. Or at least, that doesn't have to be the only answer, but that's some common ground there. That's something that Israel agreed to, that's something that Arab States agreed to, and is subject to a lot of interpretation problems. But there is a common place to start from. But there's got to be discussions. We can't have state of war forever and ever. I mean, we're in kind of a healing mode now. I'd like to heal some wounds. I'd like to be a catalyst that can help overcome old enmities.

Now, maybe that's too idealistic, but even if he can't do that, there has got to be a resolution of the Palestine question. And we know it, and we feel strongly about it, and we're prepared to play a useful role. But as I say, people are going to have to move on all sides of this question. The status quo ain't going to get the job done.

*Q.* You had a talk with the PLO; are you willing to resume the talks?

*The President.* I wouldn't say right now.

They're coming at us at the wrong time. I don't think they've requested that. They were broken off because, as you recall, some terrorists—what we call terrorism. They were calling it something else. But I think I would be very—and I'm one who wanted to keep those talks going and did as long as we could. But to me, they've lost credibility. They've lost credibility with this office right here. And the reason they have is because they behaved very badly to those of their own fundamental faith.

That's not all PLO people; I'm sure there are some good people there. But their leadership betrayed their friends and got in with the wrong side. And it's going to take some time. So, I'm not in any rush to do that at all.

#### *Environmental Damage*

*Q.* Sir, excuse me. I have two points. The first is the immediate problems we are facing, and the other one is a medium-term. The first one is the environment. Now we have oil spillage and this fire.

The second one, sir, I am speaking—I think the medium-range sort of problems in our region, to my mind, is democracy and development. What's your—

*The President.* Okay. First, the environment. I have been surprised that in this country there has not been more of a highlighted moral outrage. I feel a moral outrage here. I feel that what he has done, laying waste to the assets of Kuwait, is brutal environmental terrorism. There is no excuse for it. There is no rationale for it. It is simply what we call the scorched earth policy, as he left. That is unacceptable.

I think world judgment is going to take a while to mature in this regard. People here hate it, but there isn't that visceral feeling about what this man has done. As time goes by and the shooting has stopped, thank God, and people come back into Kuwait as they are, thank heavens, I think people are more and more going to be outraged by it.

One of the reasons that we insisted on accountability and on one of the U.N. resolutions that called for compensation was because we felt so strongly about the environmental degradation. And Kuwait is entitled to compensation for this kind of environ-

mental terrorism. And so are others who might be affected by that spill.

So, one, we're very much concerned about it, and I think it's going to be a focal point. It hasn't yet been as much as I thought it would be—a focal point for indignation against this laying to waste, reckless laying to waste, of another country.

What was your second point?

#### *Democracy and Regional Development*

*Q.* Democracy and development.

*The President.* Of course, the United States, you know, we're for democracy. Obviously, the more democratic processes that are put into effect in whatever country, we rejoice in that. That's been the history of our country. We're not trying to dictate to some country how to do its internal affairs. But the more compatible the values, the better it is for the future. We urge as much democratic process as possible in the area and in all areas.

So, we just stand as a beacon, we think, for democracy, and we will continue to try to do it. As you know, halfway around the world I was criticized for not standing stronger for democracy in China. I thought I stood very strongly for it. But there's a balance here between expressing your own convictions about your own values and having respect for problems that others have.

So, on development, I think the resources are there. And if those resources can be turned to peaceful means, so not only a country that has valued peace—take Kuwait—but it has had to worry about whether it would be aggressed against or whether its neighbors were going to do something.

But if we can get this new order out there, then I think the means are there for the development of the entire region. But it isn't going to be done with the barrel of the gun. And you can't say to Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait, "Hey, trust me, all is well, throw down your arms," as long as you have a situation in the Gulf that's unstable.

*Q.* Well, Mr. President, one of the main reasons of instability in the region, originally in the Mideast, is the big gap between the rich and the poor countries. And recently, after the Gulf war, there have been many ideas proposed to tackle this problem. And I think Secretary Baker—he once men-

tioned a sort of new international development bank for the Middle East or something like that. What are your ideas, Mr. President, I mean the U.S. ideas to deal with this problem?

*The President.* I don't want to try to preempt the Baker trip. He's going out there to discuss economic development. And there are a lot of resources in the area. People look at the United States and say, hey, there's a lot of resources in the United States, too. And there are. But when we tried to assist Egypt with its rather substantial debt to the United States, you know I came under great attack here: Hey, wait a minute, what the hell are you doing worrying about Egypt's debt? What about Iowa and Kansas and Texas and other places in our own country? What about our budget deficit of hundreds of billions of dollars?

So, we are not in a great position to be putting ourselves up as the wealthy guy that can solve all the problems in other areas. But there are discrepancies in wealth in the area, just as there are in my own country. There are a lot of people here in poverty. Some people live very well. The same thing is true in the entire Middle East. But I think the way to work it out is through consultation and through planning and through regional answers to it. We can't dictate. We can't say to a wealthy country out there: Hey, you've got to spend *x* dollars to help your guy next door. I don't think that's the way. I mean, that would be really resented in that part of the world. Just as I would resent it if some wealthy countries in other parts, or Europe, for example, started telling me how to take care of poverty in the United States.

So, again I want to fall back on the Baker consultations, which will have this economic ingredient, this development ingredient as part of it. Having said that, I think all of us as human beings have to be concerned when there's a lot of inequity. And I feel it here. I don't get given any credit in this country for feeling it, but I do. I worry about it. And I certainly worry about it in other parts.

But to try to justify aggression on the

basis of the haves versus the have nots is unacceptable. And I don't think we can ever permit that kind of demagogic rationalization to justify the takeover of one country by another. And I, to be honest with you on that point, I had never considered Iraq a have-not country. I've considered them a country that has tremendous resources that they splurged on trying to buy support with Mercedes-Benzes and arming themselves to the teeth so that they could bully the neighborhood. Well, those days are over and I'm damn proud that we had a part, working with our partners, in putting an end to it. I say they're over. They better be over, or Iraq will not have normalized relations with this country. I can speak for the U.S.

*Q.* No, what I mean, it's not just to give. To help in development, because through development, this will have a solution for these problems.

*The President.* It would be a fantastic thing to do. No, excuse me, I wasn't lecturing you on the fact that we don't need development. I'm simply saying it is something that is going to have to be addressed, but that we can't use—we can't permit one neighbor to take over another because he's doing it in the name of have or versus have not. But I think there's a wonderful chance now for economic development where one country will want to help another.

The United States has always been in that mode, and we'll want to try to help. All I'm saying is we're going to need—we're not going to pull back into some sphere of isolation as a result of all this. But once again, it's with respect that I say, hey, we need some regional answers out here. We need some Arab solutions. And let us be a part of it but not try to dictate it, is all I'm saying on development and on how we handle the inequities of wealth versus nonwealth.

#### *Iraq*

*Q.* Mr. President, you talked about Iraq recently, and you said you are not going to pay any penny for rebuilding Iraq. What about if there is a new government of Iraq?

*The President.* What we're willing to do is immediately help in a humanitarian way. If there's a hungry child, if there's a sick

family, we'll go there today; yesterday we'll be there. We've always done that. But as you look at the overall reconstruction of Iraq, what they need to do is come up with a plan where they use their wealth for their own reconstruction, and then be able to have a good life for their people from there on. They can do it. They've got enormous wealth.

And if they had a new government that had a broad futuristic view, that contained the willingness to live at peace with their neighbors, throw down these excessive arms—what they've got left, keep what they need for their own internal security—guarantee their neighbors they have nothing to fear from them, then of course we'd be willing, in a broad sense through these international agencies and others, to be helpful in terms of reconstruction.

But it is not the case where we are going to turn around as Uncle Sucker, not Uncle Sam but Uncle Sucker, and turn around and start sending taxpayers' money that are going to rebuild the arrogance that has led to this instability in the first place. And I'll tell you, the American people feel strongly about it. And there's 265 million of us, and nobody feels more strongly about it than the guy sitting right here.

We're not inhumane, but let's see the new government develop. Let's see them give the assurances to their neighbors they want to live at peace. Let's see them show the concern for their own people that they should have. And that means not spending it all on rifles from the Soviet Union or tanks, but it's on trying to help—turn on those oil wells, get those going again, and help their people.

That's my point. That's what I was trying to say the other night. But everything takes time, too. This situation needs time. But the best thing that could happen is if the kind of government you asked about emerges; then you'd see whole new attitudes emerge in Europe and the United States and everywhere else.

*Q.* What kind of government do you think that ought to be?

*The President.* One that is compassionate and concerned about his own people and drops all this arrogance about the neighborhood. That would be a good place to start.

And I have known—before the Iran-Iraq war I used to wrestle with these problems when I was at the United Nations. And these guys from other Arab countries have come up and told me this man's a bully. He'll walk into a room with other Arab leaders and swagger in with his—bullying the neighbors. And he had muscle. He had arms, when some of them hadn't gone to the arms route. He had an arrogant swagger that tried to intimidate his Arab neighbors.

Then he got into the Iran-Iraq war and that changed, because he needed help. So, he turned to those against whom he'd been arrogant and showed a different side momentarily. Then that war ended. And what does he do? He brutalizes Kuwait. So, he can't have that kind of an attitude if he wants reasonable relations with us. And that's what I'm saying. We tried with Iraq. We tried just before the end of the Iran-Iraq war to have better relations and to see a different side. And what happens? He takes over Kuwait, and that was it right there. Bang—that's enough for us.

And again, we're not the ones that are trying to dictate to that corner of the world. I've been out there. I have respect for the countries and their cultures and their traditions and for their sovereignty. And in this office, as long as I'm here, whether we have a big country or a small country, we are going to respect that. But I don't respect the bullying attitude that resulted now in the aggression against Kuwait.

#### *Relations With Persian Gulf Nations*

*Q.* Sir, while we are on the point, do you envisage more sort of cooperation with the GCC themselves on—

*The President.* Yes, I think as much as possible. And I think as more of a security arrangements as can be arranged for and taken over by the GCC, the better it is. It's their neighborhood. We've got a stake in it for a lot of reasons—economic reasons and historic reasons—but absolutely. And the more vital the GCC is, the more it can say here's what's best for the Gulf area, in my view, so much the better. And I'll keep using this thing here, the telephone, and talking to these leaders out there. And we're going to keep up good bilateral relations with as many countries as possible.

But the needs are regional; it's crying out for a regional answer to it.

The complex problems that you ask about are a little different. It's not strictly regional. It's more global in a sense because it's been so intractable.

*Q.* Well, Mr. President—

*Mr. Fitzwater.* We're going to have to break, gentlemen.

*Q.* The last question.

*The President.* Let me—and then I'll try not to lecture you so much. I get all—I'm very enthusiastic about this. I remember being back as Ambassador at the United Nations. And I didn't know as much about diplomacy then, but I became very close to the Ambassadors from the Arab world. The day I left, they gave a beautiful going-away party, in spite of the fact that we had stood against them—or at least they thought, against them—on some of the Israel questions. I'll never forget it.

And Bishara, who is the head of the GCC—he was the Kuwait Ambassador at that time. Through not only contact with him but remember the guy Baroody—really Lebanese—and they became close friends, and they taught me a lot about the individual traditions of the countries. Abdel Meguid was my colleague at the U.N. So when I sit down and talk to Mubarak, I've been conditioned and sensitized by these friends of mine in that area. And I want to reflect my feeling about these countries through how we conduct ourselves.

One of the things that made it easier for us to commit an enormous amount of treasure and risk a lot of human life was that we feel this area and its importance more than, I think, perhaps some of my predecessors. That doesn't mean we're not going to have fights with representatives from the various countries represented here. But we don't want to do it out of neglect or out of failing to understand the intense pride of the region.

Now, what was the question?

*Q.* Sir, I do think that everybody in Kuwait and a lot of people in the GCC and their countries look to Mr. George Bush as a great man. And this is the first time in history I have seen so many articles about the

United States, about Mr. George Bush being published, not clandestinely like you were before, but now everything is open. What kind of relations do you envisage between this country and the Gulf GCC?

*The President.* Well, again, I think it has to be one of mutual respect. I think it has to be one who fiercely recognizes and is willing to defend the territorial integrity of the country. I think it has to be one where we're forward-leaning on the peace process as it relates to Israel and Palestine. Because in these countries, no matter how good our bilateral relations, there's this feeling—hey, you ought to be doing more about that question.

I see it as one where we will be tested by whether I am willing to do what we've said, be a catalyst for peace not just in the Gulf but up into Lebanon and down into the Israeli-Palestine question.

But what I hope will happen is that because of the commitment we made, after great consultation—in your country's case, the Amir; the case of the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia], with King Fahd himself; a close relationship with Mubarak—I hope that the United States will—and I think it is true in Morocco, although we had a little different standing for Morocco in this—I hope that there will be a recognition that we're credible friends. And this is an important point, that we have credibility. When we say we'll do something, we'll do it; we mean it.

And that is an important point as to how the U.S. interacts with the Middle East from now on, it seems to me. If they say they're going to do what they say they'll do, I think that is important. I think a lot of lip service was given to that point, but for various reasons, including global reasons, Vietnam. People would—"Look, hey, do they really mean this? Are they really going to follow through?" And I think that our credibility should be such in the area that we can work closely now as credible allies, credible friends.

#### *New World Order*

Q. Mr. President, the Gulf war is the first of its kind to take place in the context of the new world order. How did the new world order influence the way the world

dealt with this crisis? And what is the main lesson learned from the Gulf war?

*The President.* The new world order said that a lot of countries, disparate backgrounds, with differences, can come together standing for a common principle. And that principle is: You don't take over another country by force. So, the new world order, to the degree it's emerged so far, has been enhanced by this single concept that we're going to unite, no matter what other differences we may have had, what the bilateral problems may have been, and we're going to stand up against aggression.

It was enhanced by a more viable United Nations, a United Nations where the big powers didn't automatically go against each other. In the cold war days, we'd say, "This is black," and the Soviets would say, "Hey, that's white." And you'd have a veto, and nothing would happen. And the peace-keeping dreams of the founders of the U.N. were dashed.

So, part of this new world order has been moved forward by a United Nations that functioned. We might have still been able to stand up and come to the assistance of Kuwait—the United States. I might have said, "To hell with them. It's right and wrong. It's good and evil. He's evil; our cause is right," and, without the United Nations, sent a considerable force to help. But it was an enhanced—it is far better to have this collective action where the world, not just the Security Council but the whole General Assembly, stood up and condemned it.

So, part of it is these more viable international organizations. And that is where we are now. Then how we build on it is the questions that will be coming up, trying to give our share of the answers when Jim Baker comes back from these consultations.

Q. And what is the lesson which we learned from this crisis?

*The President.* Well, the one key lesson is: Aggression will not stand. You don't bully your neighbor. You don't swagger around the neighborhood with an arrogance and back it up by overwhelming force without paying a price. Same thing you learned in the school yard when you were over there in Egypt. One guy came out and tried to beat the hell out of you when you're in the



third grade, and you'd wait for a while, and then somebody would hit him and he'd go back into his shell and he wouldn't do it again. And that is what happened in this case. Same thing.

*Q.* Mr. President, I am too greedy. I want to make two questions.

*The President.* You've got it. [Laughter] They have another way of doing it over here, saying "and a followup," you know. They'll ask you something unrelated and call it a followup so they can get two.

#### *Syria-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* You made a step toward Syria and a good—relationship with them. How do you see now the relation between the United States and Syria regarding Lebanon, especially?

*The President.* We've had some differences with Syria that we have spoken very frankly about regarding terrorism and other things. I think that because we were able to work together with Syria here and we did this—there was a lot of advice coming from other coalition partners that encouraged me to take additional steps toward Syria. Because of that I think we have a much better chance to work with them toward peace in Lebanon.

Syria has interests there. We're not saying they have no interests there. But these Taif accords are still valid, and the steps that the Arab leaders took there in terms of getting all forces out and democratization or better representation in the government inside Lebanon, those are good things.

But I think the key point to your question is, because we worked together on this one problem over here, the Gulf, and some doubts about each other were kind of laid to rest, we have a chance now to work toward the solution of other problems. And you know, they are very—we have said very intractable on the Israeli question, and they have said we have been overly one-sided. At least we're talking. And at least they did what they said they'd do, and we did what we said we'd do.

And so, I think in terms of Lebanon, we've got a window—we've got a big door we can walk in, not a window but a door, where we can openly discuss things in a much better way. I know I feel that way

about relations there. I think our Secretary of State does. And still, I don't want to suggest we have no problems with Syria or any other country. But we can talk about them more frankly without the door being slammed. And that can help Lebanon, that can help it.

#### *Arab-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* How do you see, Mr. President, your relation with so-called Arabic-solution states?

*The President.* Good, and better. It depends who you mean. Morocco was an Arab-solution state, and I feel very respectful of and friendship toward His Majesty the King [Hassan II]. I mean, that wasn't strained by this. You've got a problem if you're referring to Jordan.

*Q.* The Amman incident.

*The President.* Yes, Amman. Let it cool down here, calm, take a little time. A little hurt feelings out there, disappointment in the United States still there; but a recognition that a stable Jordan is in everybody's interests. And I don't want to—I mean, a lot of what happened in the Jordan situation was aimed not just against the United States but some of the other neighbors in the area.

And when that happens, I'd like to know how they feel. I'd like to know how King Fahd or Hosni Mubarak feels or how the Kuwaitis' Amir feels about Jordan—and we can help. I mean, we've had a good relationship with the Hashemite King [Hussein I]. But I've expressed my public disappointment because I think Jordan has swung way over on this question. And I'm not saying it was all his fault because there were some people out there in the streets. And they're still out there yelling about me, personally, and the whole United States. Obviously I'm just this target for that.

But my view is, hey, we've all got to live together in peace, so let's take a little time now and sort this one out. We don't want to see a radicalized Jordan, and yet I must confess to a certain disappointment in terms of how that Jordanian question will—I'm disappointed with some of the Jordan press, frankly, that did nothing but blame everything on the United States. They know better than that. And yet they did it.

But I've learned in life—maybe it's because I'm 66 now—take a little time, let it simmer, and then let's try to put together a more peaceful Middle East.

So, I have no rancor or bitterness. But, again, there is an area—let the Arabs work their magic out here. You're talking about an Arab solution. Let them come to me and say, all of them, including Jordan: Here's the way we ought to work together. And not us try to dictate, to say to King Fahd, hey, you've got to do this. He wouldn't do it anyway. He's a strong-willed person, knows the area.

So, my answer: disappointment. Determination to think that one day we'll have a better relationship with a country with whom we've always had a good relationship, try to recognize their problems. But it's going to take time. There is some hurt here, some hurt in the neighborhood; there is some damage to a bilateral relationship.

Q. Mr. President, what is your message to the Arab people?

*The President.* A positive signal to the Arab people and that our argument has never been with the Arab people, per se. And I hope that our participation in this coalition and, if I could move one step forward, our leadership of the coalition was not aimed against an Arab of any kind. It was aimed in favor of a principle. And that principle, again: You don't take over your neighbor by force.

So, I see some demonstrations in various countries against my country, and I have a hurt about that. I guess every American loves to be loved, you know, around the world. But it doesn't work that way. And yet, I think some of the accusations by fundamentalists against us are very untrue, and I will stand up against them.

But I think the message, it shouldn't be one of recrimination: "Hey, we remember what you said; we're going to get even." It ought to be: "Look, we tried to stand for what we think was decent and right. We tried to stand with respect for principles in the Arab world. We tried in the targeting of Iraq to be respectful of their culture, archeological, religious, whatever." And our argument isn't with Islam; our argument isn't with Arabs. And I will stand up against any discrimination against Arabs in this

country publicly, openly—we've had groups in here—and say, "Damn it, we hurt when you hurt." But what we stood for was something positive. And I want to keep trying in every way possible to get that message across. And it was a positive point about which many Arabs can rally.

And I'm not a student of religion, but I don't find anything in what the principal teachings of Islam that put us in contradiction at all. In fact, the principles are the same as what—we have a diverse religious culture. But it's kindness, it's be good to your neighbor, it's love, and it's take care of children. It's all these things that—so there's no anti-Islam. There is no anti-Arab. Our role is trying to be positive. And when it's said to me, "The Arab world will turn against you," I never believed it for a minute. And I don't have any rancor when I see some. But if they assign motives to my country that are not correct, then I'm going to fight, stand up, and say, wait a minute, you're wrong. And we've got some healing to do, but we also have some convincing to do.

Q. By the way, Mr. President, one of the relatives of the Egyptian soldiers was a Christian, and he arrived in Kuwait.

*The President.* Yes.

Q. And President Mubarak ordered a special flight to get him because all the Moslems were buried in Saudi Arabia. But he's a Christian, he was buried in Egypt, and President Mubarak sent up a private flight to get him back home.

#### *Events Prior to the Conflict*

Q. Mr. President, what's the most difficult moment you've been through since the crisis?

*The President.* Well, we had some difficult ones internally here. And one of them was our press was saying I had not convinced the American people that what we were doing as an administration was right. And Marlin was in on that, General Scowcroft, Bob Gates—we were all in that together.

*Mr. Scowcroft.* And the Congress.

*The President.* And then I'd say the Congress. It was argued I can't go to war without the Congress. And I was saying, I have

the authority to do this. We had lawyers. But once Congress acted affirmatively, it became much clearer to the American people. And so, that moment as we were getting down to a congressional vote was a very big one.

I don't think we ever had any real fundamental differences with the Arab world once we started—I mean, with the coalition.

I'm probably forgetting something, but I can't remember exactly.

Q. How about the Soviets?

*The President.* The uncertainty of August. Well, the Soviets stayed with us at the U.N. And so, at the end, when they started saying here's a peace plan, we knew what we had to do. And I did not assign to them the motives that many of our countrymen did, that Gorbachev was playing mischief because he was being left out. I really think he wanted to stop short of more killing—well, I'm going to feel that way. Others disagree with me here. But I don't think it was ever a crisis because we knew what we had to do.

Q. I see.

*The President.* Now, if he'd have stood up and said, if you do that we're going to blast you, and we're going to lead the Third World in opposition—he could have done that.

Q. Right.

*The President.* And he didn't do that. So, it could have been a problem, but he conducted himself in that case very well. He tried for peace, what he thought was a fair peace, a peace within keeping of the U.N. resolution. I was telling him: "No, it is not, President Gorbachev, it is not. Stops short; there are conditions. And we've come a long way; we can't accept conditions."

But it never got to be—I wouldn't say that one got to be—it had a potential of a stumbling block, but it didn't really get there. And then I guess the major, not bump in the road but decision on our part was, what happens when you commit your young people to war? How many are going to be killed? There was a picture in Life

magazine, 50,000 graves dug. Argument in this country used against me, of us, was body bags. That's a horrible image to people across our country. You're going to put my son in a body bag to fight for a country halfway around the world? So, the actual commitment of force, whether it was first the air, then the ground, from the U.S. standpoint was an important decision.

Again, we knew we had to do this. We've committed to do this. But the timing presented a problem and all of that. But on balance, though, it went, I think, fairly smoothly.

Q. It's over.

*The President.* It's over, thank God.

*Note: The interview began at 10:18 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The following journalists were participated: Nadir Yata of Al-Bayan, Morocco; Said Sonbol of Al-Akhbar, Egypt; Mohammed Rumaihi of Sawt Al-Kuwait, Kuwait; and Othman Al-Omeir of Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, Saudi Arabia.*

*In the interview, the following persons were referred to: President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Hussein I of Jordan; Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization; Abdullah Yacoub Bishara, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council; Jamil Murad Baroody, former Saudi Ambassador to the United Nations; Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid of Egypt; Amir Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait; King Fahd bin 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia; King Hassan II of Morocco; Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary to the President; Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; and Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs.*

*The interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 10. A tape was not available for verification of the content of the interview.*