

Remarks Following Discussions With President Hassan Gouled Aptidon of Djibouti and an Exchange With Reporters *April 24, 1991*

President Bush. There comes a time when nations must decide whether to allow aggression to go unchallenged. And the decision is never easy for any country, large or small. But today I want to thank one small nation which took up a very large challenge in the Persian Gulf war—the Republic of Djibouti.

Tiny in size, lacking in resources, and vulnerable to retaliation, Djibouti saw Saddam Hussein's aggression as an intolerable precedent for small nations everywhere. And so Djibouti joined the chorus of condemnation, voting with the Arab League and the United Nations. It joined the coalition of forces against Saddam Hussein. By opening its airfields, its seaports, its territorial waters to allies, Djibouti aided allied forces to liberate Kuwait quickly and efficiently.

President Gouled, your personal support was invaluable. Djibouti's response to the Gulf crisis, however, came as no surprise to us. Djibouti has long been a model of stability and moderation in a region which is no stranger to violence and extremism. This deep and abiding desire for peace and willingness to act with others to resist aggression are the chief characteristics of what I call the new world order. It is the responsibility imposed by our successes. It refers to new ways of working with nations like yours to deter aggression, and to achieve stability, to achieve prosperity, and above all, to achieve peace.

Together, we look forward to the day when the nations of the world, large and small, cooperate peacefully to settle disputes and to deter aggression.

We are glad to have the opportunity to express our hopes directly to President Gouled, and we anticipate many long years ahead in our relationship.

I want to thank you again, Your Excellency, for the warm welcome which Djibouti has always extended to our Navy, and your support of the United States soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast-guardsmen was indeed essential to our coa-

lition success. We thank you, and we wish you well.

President Gouled Aptidon. Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for me to be here in this wonderful country at your kind invitation. I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you in an atmosphere of genuine friendship and mutual understanding.

I wish to commend you, Mr. President, for your strong leadership during the recent Gulf crisis which culminated in the liberation of Kuwait and the restoration of its legitimate government. As a small country, the Republic of Djibouti has an interest in the recognition and maintenance of the territorial integrity of other nations around the world.

We discussed a wide range of issues of common concerns, Mr. President, including matters related to our bilateral relationship, Djibouti's strategic importance in general, and its vital role in the Gulf crisis in particular.

The plight of the destitute peoples of the Horn of Africa deserve urgent international action to alleviate the misery and endless suffering as a result of the prolonged civil strife and ethnic conflicts. The misfortunes in the neighboring countries have had a calamitous impact on the political, social, and economic survival of Djibouti. However, we shall persevere in our strenuous mission of reconciliation and stability.

Mr. President, I call on the United States Government to take a leading role in seeking an end to the armed conflicts in the Horn of Africa, which have resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands and unnecessarily threatened the lives of tens of millions of impoverished people.

We found ourselves in agreement on the goals for post-Gulf peace and security. The aftermath of the Gulf war provides a unique opportunity to adopt constructive policies that will guarantee peace and security in the region in the Middle East and that will ensure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

President Bush and I also had the opportunity to review important elements of our bilateral relationship. We have discussed ideas designed to assist Djibouti in meeting its development needs which improve the living standards for Djibouti's population.

Again, I enjoyed meeting my friend, President Bush. I leave Washington with a deep appreciation for the assistance the U.S. has provided to Djibouti and optimism over closer U.S.-Djibouti ties that have been established during this visit.

Thank you. I was a bit more lengthy.

President Bush. Tres bien. Tres bien. Thank you, and welcome again.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, should there be a deadline for all Iraqis to withdraw from——

President Bush. We're working on the problem. I'll have a little more to say about it later. There are serious problems, but I think we're getting it under control.

Administration Travel Policy

Q. Mr. President, what about Governor Sununu? Have you asked him to review his travel policy?

Q. Do you think he's getting a bum rap?

President Bush. I know that he's complied with these—the policy. He's gone for full disclosure. So, I'm not saying what the rap is, but as one who's vowed to stay above even the appearance of impropriety, perhaps it is appropriate to review the policy. But I think he has complied with it. He has not—there was total disclosure. And I don't know more what one could ask of a person. And he has my full confidence.

But in terms of reviewing the policy, I'll take a look at that. We'll get our best people to review it in the light of practice and see whether it should be altered in any way. But the point is here, he complied with the existing directives, and I think he should be given credit for that. He made what I think is full disclosure. And if people say it's not full, we'll ask for whatever else

it is. But I don't know what the rap is. He's complied.

Q. Do you think there was an abuse, Mr. President?

President Bush. Well, I think he complied with the existing policy, and that's—so how can it be abuse? But I think it is appropriate to take another look at the policy because I want our administration to be above even the perception of impropriety. If that policy leads to a perception problem, then I'll take a look at it. And that's exactly what I'm going to do. We'll get Boyden Gray and others to take a look. But I don't like this jumping all over Governor Sununu when he has complied with the policy and has made full disclosure. What more can you ask of a man?

Q. But was it excessive use, sir? Was there excessive use?

President Bush. You make that judgment.

Q. —there is no 48-hour deadline?

Q. Well, do you have an opinion, sir?

President Bush. I've got an opinion on a lot of things, John [John Cochran, NBC News].

Q. Did he go to the woodshed, Mr. President?

Q. Do you think you could share it with us?

President Bush. —got an opinion on a lot of things.

Note: President Bush spoke at 1:10 p.m. at the South Portico of the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President; and C. Boyden Gray, Counsel to the President. President Gouled spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Prior to their remarks, the two Presidents met privately in the Oval Office and with U.S. and Djibouti officials in the Cabinet Room, and then attended a luncheon in the Old Family Dining Room.