

Federal assistance is necessary, and FEMA is directed to provide such assistance.

Individual assistance can include temporary housing, grants, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover

from the effects of the disaster. Public assistance is available to eligible local governments on a cost-sharing basis for the repair or replacement of public facilities damaged by the flooding.

Additional areas may be designated at a later date, if requested and warranted.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel

March 15, 1993

Middle East Peace Talks

Q. Mr. President, what do you think are the chances of resuming the Middle East peace talks if deportees are not returned immediately?

The President. I think the Secretary of State's done a commendable job on his trip, and he's worked with the Prime Minister on that issue. And I think we've got a good chance to resume the talks. I certainly hope we will.

Q. Do you think all the parties will come back?

The President. I certainly hope so.

Q. Sir, as you prepare for the first peace talks under your guidance, what do you think the prospects are for a lasting peace in the Middle East?

The President. I think there are a lot of reasons to be hopeful. Obviously, there's difficulty, and there are those who would prefer that it not be done, but I think we have a real shot.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Q. Mr. President, do you think the United States could be helpful in bringing peace between Israel and Syria? Are you optimistic that peace between these two countries can come during this year?

The President. Well, I hope that the peace process will resume shortly. And I'm hopeful that it can produce a good result. I think there's a chance.

Q. What is your reaction to terrorist action in Israel today and the day before? If you've heard about it, what do you think about it?

The President. Yes, I've heard about it, and I'm disturbed about it. I hope it won't deter any of the parties involved from seeking a genuine long-term peace. But the larger security interests of all the nations involved still argue for trying to have a good-faith effort at the peace process.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel

March 15, 1993

The President. Good afternoon. It's a great pleasure for me to welcome Prime Minister Rabin back to Washington. Since we first met here last August, much has changed. But one thing I can say definitely will never change is the unique bond that unites the United States and Israel. It is a bond that goes back to the founding of the state of Israel and beyond, based on shared values and shared ideals.

Israel's democracy is the bedrock on which our relationship stands. It's a shining example for people around the world who are on the frontline of the struggle for democracy in their own lands. Our relationship is also based on our common interest in a more stable and peaceful Middle East, a Middle East that will

finally accord Israel the recognition and acceptance that its people have yearned for so long and have been too long denied, a Middle East that will know greater democracy for all its peoples.

I believe strongly in the benefit to American interests from strengthened relationships with Israel. Our talks today have been conducted in that context. We have begun a dialog intended to raise our relationship to a new level of strategic partnership, partners in the pursuit of peace, partners in the pursuit of security.

We focused today on our common objective of turning 1993 into a year of peacemaking in the Middle East. Prime Minister Rabin has made clear to me today that pursuing peace with security is his highest mission. I have pledged that my administration will be active in helping the parties to achieve that end. At the same time, Prime Minister Rabin and I agree that our common objective should be real, lasting, just, and comprehensive peace, based on Resolutions 242 and 338. It must involve full normalization, diplomatic relations, open borders, commerce, tourism, the human bonds that are both the fruits and the best guarantee of peace. And Israel's security must be assured. The Israeli people cannot be expected to make peace unless they feel secure, and they cannot be expected to feel secure unless they come to know real peace.

Those like Prime Minister Rabin who genuinely seek peace in the Middle East will find in me and my administration a full partner. But those who seek to subvert the peace process will find zero tolerance here for their deplorable acts of violence and terrorism.

Prime Minister Rabin has told me that he is prepared to take risks for peace. He has told his own people the same thing. I have told him that our role is to help to minimize those risks. We will do that by further reinforcing our commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge.

Another way we can strengthen Israel and the United States is to combine the skills of its people with those of our own. I am pleased to announce today the establishment of a U.S.-Israel science and technology commission, chaired on the American side by our Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown. The commission will enhance cooperation to create technology-based jobs for the 21st century in both Israel and the United States. Our economies will also ben-

efit from a lifting of the Arab boycott. And I hope that this boycott can end soon.

Prime Minister Rabin, this year will be a year of enhanced relations between our countries. It should also be a year of peace in the Middle East, as you have declared. We have an historic responsibility and an historic opportunity. We stand here together today resolved not to let that opportunity pass.

Prime Minister Rabin. President Clinton, in just a few days I will return to Israel, but I know, and will tell everyone in my country, Israel has a friend in the White House. Our home is many miles away, but Mr. President, we feel very close. We thank you for the hours we spent with you and your team, for the atmosphere of friendship and the openness and the depth of our discussions. The leadership which you have displayed in coping with America's domestic problems is inspiring and stands out like a beacon in the night.

Today we were happy to learn that at the same time you are also willing to invest efforts in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. In this effort, Mr. President, you will find us to be full partners. You are aware that no one wants peace more than us and that there is no country more resolved to defend itself when necessary. We are veterans of many wars. And today we say, no more blood and tears. We now wish to experience lasting and meaningful peace.

In our talks today, I presented to you Israel's approach to the peacemaking. And we are willing to take upon ourselves risks for peace. But we are determined to protect our security.

Peace has many enemies. Terror is used by the enemies of peace in our effort to undermine it. And we will combat it while we continue to seek a solution that will lead to peace.

Since the formation of my government, we have invested efforts in trying to advance towards peace in the framework of the Madrid formula. We introduced new ideas in the negotiation tracks with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians. Some progress has been made, but more is needed in order to come to agreement. We are ready for compromise, but compromises cannot be one-sided. We call on our partners, the Arab States, the Palestinians from the territories, to seize the moment, to return to the negotiating table so that we can use this historic opportunity. We call upon them to respond openly and willingly to our positions. Our

children and grandchildren in Jerusalem and the Arab children and grandchildren in Damascus, Beirut, Amman, and elsewhere in the Arab world will not forgive us if we all fail to act now.

We have heard today with satisfaction, Mr. President, your concept of the role of the full partner as an intermediary. We shall continue our direct talks with our Arab neighbors. But in order to expedite the dialog between the parties, we welcome your good offices and hope to rely on your role as facilitator.

President Clinton, we are deeply indebted to you and to your predecessors who helped us in hours of need. We do appreciate and greatly value the decision to maintain the current level of aid to Israel. This decision will help us to integrate new immigrants into our society and to bear the heavy burden of our security.

You know, President, that we will not be able to win the battle for peace without a qualitative edge. Therefore, I wish to thank you and your colleagues on behalf of the Israeli soldiers and their parents and the citizens of Israel for your decision to help to maintain that edge. Moreover, such a qualitative edge enables the Israeli defense forces to contribute to the overall effort to maintain stability in our stormy region. The decision made today to raise the level of strategic dialog between our two countries will open new doors of opportunity. The fact that the next months we will renew the memorandum of agreement between us for 5 more years, and that we do it as a matter of course, is a proof of the kind of mutually beneficial relationships that we enjoy. The formation of new high-level forum for strategic dialog will further upgrade this relationship.

We will also have a turn in the near future with much urgency to address the struggle against various kinds of fanaticism which give birth to murderous terror, the kind that recently landed even on these shores. We must institutionalize our dialog and include all free countries in consultations on the ways to curb the threatening extremism.

We attach much importance to the decision made today to create the high-level joint commission for the development of projects of science and technology. The investment in research and industrial applications in Israel and in America will explore new frontiers of knowledge. And they are a telling example of how

our two countries can mutually benefit from this cooperation.

President Clinton, thank you for your invitation and reception, for the warmth on a wintry day, and for your good will. I came from Jerusalem, the city of the prophets. I return to Jerusalem, the city that witnessed so many wars and wants so dearly peace because she knows that in war there are no winners and in peace no losers.

Thank you very much.

Palestinian Deportees

Q. President Clinton—[inaudible]—demands for the immediate repatriation of the Palestinian deportees, and where did you leave that subject?

The President. No, we did not discuss that. As far as I'm concerned, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister reached an agreement on that. And I think that is the framework within which we are proceeding.

Middle East Peace Talks

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Yes. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, the last peace agreement between an Arab nation and Israel was, as you know, the Egyptian Peace Agreement. In that case, the President kept a very personal part as an intermediary. To what extent are you willing to become personally involved? And Mr. Prime Minister, to what extent are you willing to see the President become personally involved in this peace negotiation?

Prime Minister Rabin. Well, as you can expect, I cannot answer in the name of the President of the United States. But I believe, as it has happened whenever agreements were reached between the Arab countries and Israel from '74 to '79, and even the creation of the Madrid peace conference, could not be achieved without the United States being involved in encouraging the parties to do so. I believe that there was, there is a need of the United States' partnership to the peacemaking process. At what level, at what time, it's not up to me to answer.

The President. The answer to your question is that I would be prepared to commit the resources, the effort and the attention of this administration, of my Secretary of State, and my personal efforts to achieve lasting agreements.

We have, on the table, the potential of very significant bilateral agreements and the potential of some regional agreements that I think ought to be pursued. I feel very strongly about it,

and I think the opportunities for progress are there. I don't want to minimize the difficulties, the obstacles, the years of frustration, but I think the fact that this Prime Minister, who became a hero as a warrior, is doing what he can and risking significantly to promote peace, is a good beginning. And I think there are other good indications in the region. And I'm prepared to personally do what I can to facilitate that.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

West Bank and Gaza Strip

Q. Do you support the transitional—[inaudible]—policy of self-determination for the people on the West Bank and Gaza who have been living for years under military occupation? Mr. Prime Minister, do you think that during your regime there will be any measure of self-rule for the Palestinians while you are a leader?

Prime Minister Rabin. I don't want to give you a lengthy answer, but allow me to say, in 1967 we did not want war. It's more than that. Even when we found ourselves in a clash with the Egyptians, we offered to the Jordanians, stay out of the war and we'll keep your line with us without any change.

If you'll follow the history, we were always for compromise. U.N. decision, partition of Palestine to two states: We accepted; they rejected. They went to war to destroy us. It's bad luck to the Arabs. Whenever they go to war, they lose. We offer them this time, to the Palestinians in the territories, what no one offered them when the Arab countries were in occupation, Jordan of the West Bank, Egypt of the Gaza Strip, self-rule—run your own life by yourself—as an interim agreement for a transition period of not more than 5 years. Not later than the third year, we are ready to enter negotiations with them about a permanent solution based on Resolution 242 and 338.

What else can we do? By violence and terror no one will make us run. The solution should be around the negotiation table, by talks, not by weapons.

The President. The answer is the United States position has not changed. As I said in my statement, we support a solution based on the governing United Nations resolutions. But the important thing is that everything we say or do today sends a clear message, particularly to the other parties in the Middle East, that

the time has come to negotiate peace. And the United States is prepared to be involved all the way through the process.

Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network].

Syria

Q. [Inaudible]—both of you have addressed the question of bilateral arrangements between Israel and Syria. It seems that the Prime Minister in recent statements has backed away from some earlier statements that Israel would never go down from the Golan Heights. Is there a change? Would Israel be prepared to accept a complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for complete peace with Syria, along the lines of the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement? And would the United States welcome that kind of separate Israeli-Syrian agreement even in advance of a Palestinian agreement?

Prime Minister Rabin. Well, first, we are serious in our negotiations with every one of the Arab partners for the peace negotiations. We are ready to negotiate and reach agreement with every one of the partners that sit around the negotiation table with us.

Second, peace has to be negotiated not between me, as the Prime Minister of Israel, and you. After all, you don't represent Syria. We made it clear that we accept the principle of withdrawal of the armed forces of Israel on the Golan Heights, to secure the recognized boundaries, but we'll not enter negotiations on the dimension of the withdrawal without knowing what kind of peace Syria offers us. Is it a fully fledged peace, open boundaries for movement of people and goods, diplomatic relations including embassies, normalization of relations? Will they let that peace treaty stand on its own two feet, will not be influenced by what happens or doesn't happen in the negotiations with the other Arab partners?

Before we know that, why would I have to say how much we will withdraw once it is an issue to be agreed on between Syria and ourselves, with the assistance of the United States?

The President. The answer to your question, from my point of view, is that the United States believes that the full peace process should resume. We hope very much that the Palestinians will come to the table. We would like to see all the bilaterals go forward. But if the parties could reach an agreement consistent with security interests and the governing United Nations resolutions that was their genuine agreement,

would I welcome that and be prepared to support it? Yes, I would.

The Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, the Arabs think that you favor Israel against them. What are you doing to balance this situation? We know that Secretary Christopher has gone there, but what specifically has been offered to them, and how would you see a confederation of Jordan with the Palestinians? And also I would like to ask the response to that from Prime Minister Rabin.

The President. Secretary Christopher went to the Middle East, and I can assure you, one of the things that he did was to say the same thing to everybody in every capital that he visited, to say that the United States wanted to be a partner in this process, but that we recognize we had to be a mediator, and that, in the end, the only thing that would make peace possible was the assurance of security that would come to the parties afterward.

I believe that the other nations involved know that the United States has had an historic relationship of friendship with Israel, but also know that we can be counted upon to keep our word and to do what we can to support the security of all the parties if an agreement can be reached.

Do you want to answer that?

Prime Minister Rabin. I can speak only as an Israeli, and in the name of Israel. I believe that the government that I serve as its Prime Minister is the first government that accepted the principle or the Resolutions 242 and 338 as applicable to the achievement of peace. No government in the past did so, which shows that we understand that in peace, compromises have to be made by both sides.

Security Issues

Q. Mr. President, Prime Minister Rabin today spoke about raising the level of strategic dialog; you spoke about strategic dialog. I was wondering if you could elaborate what that means more, and does this mean greater coordination between the two countries in terms of what approaches to take to peace, and then bringing that to the table? Are we talking about a whole new approach here?

The President. No, we're not talking about a whole new approach. Our two governments have some very gifted people who work on a continuous basis on security issues between us

and facing the region. Looking ahead 10 years down the road, we know that we have to pay greater attention to missile defenses; we know that we have to pay greater attention to the possibility of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; we know that in order for any agreement in the Middle East to have lasting impact, there will be significant, and must be, significant security implications flowing out of any kind of arrangements which might be made. And we just want to make sure that beginning now we give those matters the most careful attention at the appropriate level.

This will not supplant anything that is now being done. We're very well satisfied with the work being done by our people now. But these three things, it seems to us, will shape a lot of our deliberations for a decade to come.

Russia

Q. Mr. President, can you clarify your administration's views on the situation in Russia today? In particular, do you believe that the Russian Parliament is a democratically elected institution? And if it is not a democratically elected institution, why would you object to its dissolution by Mr. Yeltsin—the rewriting of a new Russian Constitution—would that not be helpful?

The President. Mr. Friedman [Tom Friedman, New York Times], those are great questions. But I think any answer I'd give to them might only complicate the decisions I might have to make in the days ahead.

Q. It would be a great story. [Laughter]

The President. It will be a wonderful story, and I must say those are questions I have, we have all posed to ourselves. But let me say this: I hope that everybody in America, I hope everybody in Israel, is pulling for the triumph of freedom and market reform in Russia. Democracy is an uncertain process. The Prime Minister and I have been in and out of office. We know that. And I don't pretend to know everything that's going to happen in Russia in the days and weeks ahead, and I don't want to say anything now which might constrict my field of decision in ways that would not be in the interest of the United States or of freedom and market reform in Russia.

So I wish I could say more, but I can't. All I can tell you is I'm working like crazy to get ready for that meeting with President Yeltsin. I'm going to do what I can and mobilize what forces I can, public and private, in the United

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States to support the march of progress in Russia. And I'm going to hope and pray that all those who want the same thing will be in there pushing with us.

Last question.

North Korea

Q. Can you give us any more insight into what the situation is in North Korea, whether you believe they do have nuclear capability? If so, where did they get it from, and what leverage the United States might have in addressing this issue?

The President. I cannot answer your exact question. I can tell you that I, personally, and speaking for the Government, the United States is very concerned and very disappointed that North Korea has at least for the time being chosen to eject the IAEA inspectors and to withdraw from the international regime of which they are part.

The board of directors of the IAEA is meeting on Wednesday. They will make a statement at that time, and I will make a response. There are 3 months still to go, and as you know, any country that wants to withdraw is bound for

3 months. I hope that North Korea will reconsider its decision. I think there is a genuine impulse among the peoples of North Korea and South Korea, among the peoples to see a reduction in tensions and an increase in commerce and communication and contact. And I'm very disturbed by this turn of events. But I'm hoping that it will not be a permanent thing. There are several weeks ahead when North Korea might reverse its decision. I hope they will do so, because we simply cannot back up on the determination to have the IAEA inspections proceed there.

The answers to your questions could only be found in complete and thorough and ongoing investigations by the IAEA, either in North Korea or any other country where these questions are asked. And I'm hoping very, very much that they will reconsider their decision and permit the inspectors to come again.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's sixth news conference began at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Nomination for Posts at the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Veterans Affairs

March 15, 1993

The President announced today his intention to nominate Sally Katzen to be Administrator of the OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, and James Allen, Yvonne Santa Anna, and Victor Raymond to be Assistant Secretaries of Veterans Affairs for Human Resources and Administration, Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Policy and Planning, respectively.

"Each of the individuals I am calling on today has had a distinguished career in which they have proven themselves in both private and public enterprises," said the President. "I am proud that they are joining me in the Federal Government."

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

March 16, 1993

Q. Mr. President, do you think you can really afford to cut the defense budget with what's happening in Russia? Cut it as much as you want to?

The President. Well, I think we're going to have hearings about it. We're going to have to