

The President's News Conference With President Carlos Saul Menem of Argentina

June 29, 1993

President Clinton. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Today I have the great honor of welcoming President Carlos Menem of Argentina to the White House, the first leader of a Latin American state to visit here since I took office.

Under President Menem's administration, Argentina has become an international leader on the great issues of the post-cold-war era, a leader in this hemisphere in defense of democracy and human rights, a trusted and valued partner and friend of the United States. Together we are constructing a Western Hemisphere community of democracies, interpreted by common political values and growing economic ties. We deeply appreciate President Menem's visit today. He represents a new generation of Latin American Presidents committed to expanding freedom, strengthening democracy, and creating prosperity. His leadership has been bold and his accomplishments truly impressive.

We talked today about Argentina's democratic reforms and the role Argentina has assumed as an international leader. Today, Argentine troops serve with the United Nations peacekeepers in Croatia, in Kuwait, in Mozambique, and in other troubled lands. In the Organization of American States, Argentina consistently takes a strong stand in favor of collective defenses of democracy. With Argentina's support, the OAS has worked to defend democratic institutions in Peru, reverse the coup in Guatemala. And I am confident, together we can restore democracy in Haiti, a subject we discussed at great length today.

Argentina has also confronted crises of recession and hyperinflation and has overcome both. Argentina slashed its tariffs and opened its economy to world markets. It ended its fiscal deficit and created a stable currency. It sold state enterprises and attracted new investment. And as a result, last year Argentina's economy grew 9 percent. I asked him for a few of those points for America today. That was one of the unresolved parts of our discussion. *[Laughter]*

Once Congress successfully ratifies the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and with Canada, we will want to reduce trade

barriers with other countries in this hemisphere. Freer trade promotes the kind of economic and democratic reforms we see in Argentina. It clearly benefits our economy as well as that of our neighbors. As I said earlier today, in the last 4 years our trade with Argentina has tripled, accounting for 40,000 jobs in the United States.

Our meeting covered some other areas as well. Argentina's Government has been an important voice in calling for a successful conclusion of the Uruguay round to open the world trading system. Argentina stands among the nations leading the effort to confront the overriding challenge of stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. President Menem himself ended a dangerous ballistic missile program, signed important nuclear nonproliferation agreements, placed strong controls on the export of sensitive weapons-related materials and technology, and helped to lead the successful international effort to negotiate the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Argentina has been in the forefront of initiatives to increase the dialog on security issues in its region. Its progress and support for democracy are two reasons why this hemisphere today is more secure and more prosperous today than it was in the past and why it will show the way to a better world tomorrow.

Again, let me say it is an honor for me to welcome the President, whom I admire, whose accomplishments we respect, and whose country will be a great partner for the United States in the years ahead.

Mr. President.

President Menem. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to tell you of my gratitude that is sincere and loyal in the name of my country and of my government for your words. They are the result of a complete knowledge of what is happening in Argentina, in this continent, and in the world.

You may be absolutely sure that Argentina will continue along this road. There is absolutely no possibility of any change in Argentine policies in the field of economics and in the social fields. I always say this is a road that we cannot walk backwards on, and these are the results we are

obtaining. If I would have to explain here the achievements obtained, I would have to repeat the same words that you have used, Mr. President, and this would not perhaps be very much in order. But we have talked in an environment of cordiality and affection. We have discussed our relations that are now at their best level ever. We are prepared to improve on them, and I have told the President of the United States that in Argentina he will find a firm and determined ally. And we consider the United States a great ally for Argentina.

Within this framework we have discussed subjects that are related to the consolidation of democracy and freedom, not only within this continent, the issues related to Guatemala, Haiti, Cuba and Peru, but we have also discussed the absolute need for democracy, freedom, the respect of human rights, and all issues related to the environment should become reality in all of this world. We would like to see disappear wherever possible that terrible scourge of war, of any kind of discrimination, international terrorism, drug trafficking. We have not restricted our conversations to a preestablished agenda. We have extended our talks even further.

It is always good to come to the United States of America. I believe it is also good to go to Argentina, and that is why I have invited the President to visit us, because valuable experiences are awaiting in Argentina and this will allow us to make our links even stronger, the links that are joining Argentina to the United States.

Mr. President, once again, thank you very much. Thank you for your gift. He gave me as a gift a basketball signed by all the members of the Chicago Bulls. So, thank you.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you about the bombing. Could the assassination plot against former President Bush have moved forward without the approval of Saddam Hussein? And why did the United States not try to hit closer to home for Saddam Hussein, perhaps his headquarters?

President Clinton. We believe the evidence clearly indicates that the bombing operation was authorized by the Iraqi Government. And it is highly unusual, in the experience of our people—let me recast that—our analysts have no experience of such an operation of that magnitude being authorized other than at the high-

est levels. However, it was thought that under international law and based on the facts of this particular case, that the best possible target was the target of the intelligence headquarters where in all probability the operation itself was planned and that to damage that headquarters significantly would send the appropriate message, given the facts of this case.

Q. But in your mind—[inaudible]—did you think Saddam Hussein signed off on this?

President Clinton. I have given you the only answer I think it's appropriate for me to give you.

Q. Mr. President, what do you think you accomplished with the bombing of Iraq and the loss of innocent lives, the destruction?

President Clinton. First of all, we damaged their major intelligence facility quite severely. Secondly, we made it absolutely clear that we will not tolerate acts of terrorism or other illegal and dangerous acts. I think it sent a very important message.

Q. We understand there's been an incident over the no-fly zone in southern Iraq today. A U.S. F-4G Wild Weasel launched a HARM missile against an Iraqi radar installation. What can you tell us about that incident, and secondly, what does it suggest to you that it comes at a time when the Iraqis are still threatening retaliation for the weekend bombing?

President Clinton. The standard rules of engagement for flights in that region are that if radar locks onto our airplanes, our airplanes are authorized to take action against those installations. So this has happened a number of times, and based on the facts that I now have, I wouldn't read too much into it. It's part of the standard rules of engagement.

Q. You said during the transition that you could conceive of a situation where we could have normal relations with Iraq with Saddam Hussein still in power. Given what's occurred, how would you now frame your position on this issue?

President Clinton. What I said or at least tried to say in the transition was that I thought we ought to judge every country based on its conduct. And based on its conduct, I think that the possibility of normal relations is very difficult to conceive, not just in this instance but also in the stubborn refusal of Iraq to comply with the United Nations resolutions.

Q. Mr. President, just now you said that the strike had damaged the intelligence facility. Yes-

terday you said it had crippled the intelligence facility.

President Clinton. I think it did cripple the intelligence facility. At least the reports that I received from the intelligence services was that 15 of the missiles had hit within just a few feet of where they were exactly programmed, and based on what they knew of the potential for destruction of those missiles, that the facility had been crippled. Those were the exact words I got from the people who briefed me about it.

Q. Was it possible that you were not briefed correctly, because Pentagon officials were saying that Saddam has multiple intelligence facilities and that this was one of three or four and that, in fact, he would be operational without this facility, and especially because he relies so heavily on human intelligence and none of the people were involved—

President Clinton. Well, I didn't mean that they wouldn't have any more intelligence. But I do think the building and whatever resources are in that building, which is plainly the main building, was severely damaged, and that's what our intelligence people told me.

Is there anyone here from Argentina? Yes, a little equal opportunity here.

Terrorism

Q. President Clinton, did President Menem offer you a specific help to combat terrorism? And do you think you have to put more guards on President Menem because there was going to be a plot or something like that from the Arabs?

President Clinton. Well, we try to always provide appropriate security to world leaders who come here. President Menem—perhaps I should let him speak to this—but he was very supportive of the action we took in Iraq and very determined that we ought to stand together with other civilized nations against terrorism everywhere.

President Menem. With more security I would have felt uncomfortable in the United States. I have a very special philosophy in life: Nobody will die the day before his preestablished date. And I rely and trust fully in God. He brought us to this world, and He is to decide the day we leave this world. With a great amount of security around a head of state in general, any terrorist activity may be successful. That is why terrorism has to be fought back without any

kind of compassion. They lack absolutely any kind of compassion since, when they place a bomb, they are prepared to destroy the lives of old people and children. Terrorism is now one of the worst scourges of humanity.

Disarmament and Military Action

Q. Mr. President, the United States speaks constantly of disarmament and world peace, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Your Government, through the Embassy in Buenos Aires, has insisted on this policy of peace and disarmament. Don't you believe that the United States has not given an example to follow this course when bombarding Baghdad as a result of this intelligence information?

President Clinton. No, I disagree. As a matter of fact, the United States has been a leader in disarmament. We have signed significant agreements with first the Soviet Union and now with Russia trying to reduce our nuclear arsenals. We are working very hard to reduce the spread of weapons of mass destruction. And I think what we did last weekend with regard to Iraq is a clear signal that people ought not to use weapons in illegal ways. I would remind you that the action I took was in response to an operation that involved a bomb that, had it exploded in downtown Kuwait City, had a 400-yard radius of lethal destruction. So, I think it was the appropriate thing to do.

Latin America-U.S. Trade Agreements

Q. I have a question for you, Mr. Clinton, and another for Mr. Menem.

First, assuming that NAFTA is approved by Congress, when do you foresee Argentina, or Chile, for that matter, negotiating an agreement with the United States? I'm kind of interested in a timetable. And for Mr. Menem, I would like to get more details on that offer you made yesterday to negotiate between the United States and Cuba to improve relations between the two countries.

President Clinton. I would be prepared to discuss immediately with Argentina, with Chile, with other appropriate nations the possibility of expanded trade relations along the NAFTA model. I have long thought that NAFTA should be a model for embracing all of Latin America's democracies and free market economies. I have no timetable. I think perhaps President Menem would have a better view of that, but my attitude is we ought to get on with it. We ought

to try to increase the volume and the variety of trade with the appropriate countries just as quickly as possible.

President Menem. On this issue, we had already discussed this with the President, and I have told him that as a priority so as to be able to start formal talks on the access of Argentina or any other country in the region to NAFTA, it would be fundamental to finish the NAFTA agreement, that on the basis of due legislation this process should come to its end. If NAFTA has been passed and enacted during the first months of the next year or the 1st of January, only then can we start discussing the incorporation of Argentina in NAFTA.

And at the same time, we must remember that we are going through another process of integration within MerCoSur, and we have a commitment with the United States in the four-plus-one agreement as to the possibility of having a free trade area between these four countries of MerCoSur and the United States. This, in the case of coming to understanding, will make it possible not only to Argentina joining NAFTA but also MerCoSur. As the result of the NAFTA agreement coming to its enactment, then the MerCoSur countries could perhaps also be joining NAFTA. This is something that should be discussed between the three other countries that are members of NAFTA.

Cuba

Q. Reuters Agency said yesterday that you were proposing to act as a mediator between the United States and Cuba.

President Menem. As a reply to a question by a journalist when he asked if I would be prepared in participating in any kind of negotiations between the United States and Cuba, I answered: President Bush asked me when we met in Costa Rica for the 100th anniversary of democracy, he asked me to stop over in Nicaragua to ask Daniel Ortega to respect the results of the elections that were to be held a short time after in that country, since doubts existed as to the decision that the people of Daniel Ortega's team would take on this issue. I spent more than 2 hours discussing the subject with Commander Ortega, and he was convinced he would be winning the elections. And finally after 2 hours of discussion he said, "If Mrs. Violeta Chamorro wins the elections, I will give her the government." And if the United States requests it, I am prepared to discuss the issue

with Fidel Castro or with whoever it is necessary. I would like to see Cuba living in democracy as soon as possible.

Patent Protection and Farm Subsidies

Q. This is a question for both of you. Have you discussed pharmaceutical patents and subsidies in agriculture? President Menem first and then President Clinton, please.

President Menem. We have discussed this, and I have told President Clinton what I told Mr. Kantor yesterday. This draft law on patents has been introduced through the Senate to the Argentine Parliament, and we are expecting that it will be passed soon. But the executive power of Argentina has sent this draft law to Parliament.

And on subsidies, this is a subject we discuss constantly not only with the President of the United States but also with the Presidents of the European Community countries since they have taken the more difficult stand on this issue when they are subsidizing agriculture, damaging countries such as Argentina. You must not forget that the amount of subsidies is now exceeding \$300 billion. It becomes difficult to compete under these circumstances. And I always tell the people in the United States, the U.S. President, and the Europeans they were the masters in free trade and economic freedom. It is not understandable that they should insist on these attitudes that go against the teachings that they sent to the world at large.

President Clinton. The answer to your question is, just as President Menem said, we discussed the patent protection legislation, and I expressed the hope of the United States that it would pass soon by the legislative body in Argentina.

I also, with regard to agricultural subsidies, pointed out that the United States had reduced agricultural subsidies unilaterally in 1990, that our budget reduces them again this year, and that we strongly support the Blair House accords which were reached last year to reduce agricultural subsidies in the Uruguay round of GATT, and that we are with Argentina on that. Also, having grown up in a farming area, I expressed enormous admiration for the fact that Argentina has the deepest topsoil anywhere in the world. So, if I were in his position, I would be taking exactly the same position. With 20 feet of topsoil he can grow anything and do well.

Yes, one last question, and then we've got

to go.

Iraq

Q. Despite what General Powell said, I don't understand why the United States went after the facility at night, rather than going after the intelligence facility during the daytime when the top people were there. And will you take action if the Iraqis go after the Kurds or the Shiites?

President Clinton. I think we've made it clear to them what our position is on the second question you asked. The reason we went at night was quite simply that we wanted to make a strong point. We wanted to do as much damage to the facility as we could. We wanted to mini-

mize the loss of human life because of the nature of what actually happened. I think everyone knows what our military is capable of doing. What we needed to show them was that we were fully possessed of the will to do it under these circumstances. And I think we picked the appropriate target, and I think we did it at the appropriate time under these circumstances.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 18th news conference began at 1:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. President Menem spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for Detection

June 29, 1993

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection with Technical Annex, done at Montreal on March 1, 1991. The report of the Department of State is also enclosed for the information of the Senate.

The terrorist bombing of Pan Am 103 in December 1988 with the resultant deaths of 270 (including 189 Americans), and the terrorist bombing of UTA flight 772 in September 1989 with the resultant deaths of 171 (including 7 Americans), dramatically demonstrate the threat posed by virtually undetectable plastic explosives in the hands of those nations and groups that engage in terrorist savagery.

This Convention is aimed at precluding such incidents from recurring, as well as others where plastic explosives are utilized, by requiring States that produce plastic explosives to mark them at the time of manufacture with a substance to enhance their detectability by commercially available mechanical or canine detectors. States

are also required to ensure that controls are implemented over the sale, use, and disposition of marked and unmarked plastic explosives.

Work on the Convention began in January 1990 under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on the basis of an initial draft prepared by a special subcommittee of the ICAO Legal Committee. That work was completed, and the Convention was adopted by consensus, at an international conference in Montreal in March 1991. The United States and 50 other States signed the Convention. Early ratification by the United States should encourage other nations to become party to the Convention.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and give its advice and consent to ratification, subject to the declaration described in the accompanying report of the Secretary of State.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 29, 1993.