

and taking the disciplined measures to which he is committed, as it is written in the letter that he signed and sent to me.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:41 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel *November 12, 1993*

*The President.* Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It's a great pleasure for me once again to have the opportunity to host my friend Prime Minister Rabin. I first welcomed him to the White House last March. At that time, he stated with great conviction that he felt the time had come to make peace and that he was ready to make the necessary steps and to take the necessary risks for peace. I told him that if that were to be the case, it was the job of the United States to minimize those risks. We both committed to make 1993 a year of breakthrough for peace in the Middle East.

On September 13, that commitment was transformed into history through the simple handshake on the South Lawn of the White House. Israel's historic effort with the Palestinians was due, in large measure, to the courageous statesmanship of Prime Minister Rabin.

Shortly thereafter, the United States convened a donors' conference to help provide the funds necessary to speed and facilitate the reconciliation. Yet there is still much work to be done to turn the promise of September 13th into a comprehensive and lasting peace. The Prime Minister and I have agreed it must be a peace that secures Israel's existence and one that endures for generations. We agreed on the need for prompt and effective implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli accord. We must not allow the opponents of that agreement to derail the new progress that this year has brought. And leaders who seek peace must speak out in a loud and clear voice against those who would destroy those aspirations for peace.

The Prime Minister and I discussed the next step toward our common objectives. We agreed that peace between Israel and Syria is essential to achieving that objective of comprehensive peace. I told the Prime Minister that I have been delighted by the progress Israel has made

with Jordan following the historic meeting between Crown Prince Hassan and Foreign Minister Peres, which I hosted a few weeks ago. We discussed how the United States and Israel, working together, can achieve a peace agreement with Jordan and Israel in the near future. Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia, and other Arab and Muslim states have also taken encouraging steps to respond to Israel's peace commitments.

I told the Prime Minister that I believe even more needs to be done to reinforce the progress already made by the PLO and Jordan. In particular, I think the time has come to end the Arab boycott of Israel, a relic of past animosity that simply has no place in the architecture of peaceful relations we are all working to build in the Middle East.

During our talks we discussed what the United States can do to enhance Israel's security as it comes to grips with the very real risks it is taking to achieve this peace.

I reaffirmed my commitment to work with the Congress, to maintain our present levels of assistance, and to consult with Congress to consider how we can use loan guarantees and other forms of assistance to Israel to help Israel defray the cost of peace.

We also discussed ways the United States can help Israel defend itself from its adversaries and long-term threats to its security. And I renewed America's unshakable pledge to maintain and enhance Israel's qualitative security edge.

Mr. Prime Minister, as you go home, I hope you will tell your people that as they turn their energies and talents to the hard and daring work of building that comprehensive peace, the American people will stand by them.

*Prime Minister Rabin.* Mr. President, the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, ladies and gentlemen. A few weeks ago we took part in the historical moment of signing

of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO.

Mr. President, we appreciate and are thankful for the role that you have played in bringing the Declaration of Principles to its conclusion. We hoped and we continue to hope that this significant step will bring an end to 100 years of terrorism and bloodshed.

Today we are in the midst of negotiations to implement the Declaration of Principles signed here on the lawn of the White House on September 13th. I told you, Mr. President, that these are complicated negotiations, and in the process of reaching an agreement there will be ups and downs. But I am quite sure that we and the Palestinians have passed the point of no return in our efforts to implement the agreement.

This is why the PLO must condemn vigorously, openly, and immediately any action that is in flagrant violation of the commitment to renounce terrorism. The basis for our advance and progress in the implementation of the agreement is that each side must keep its commitments.

The signing of the DOP has created a new hope and opened many opportunities in our negotiations with other Arab parties to the Washington negotiations for peace. We hope and expect that with your assistance, Mr. President, that these talks will be continued as soon as possible.

We have found that direct and quiet contacts between Israel and its partners in the effort to achieve a comprehensive peace is the best way to overcome prejudices of the past. The less the talks are exposed to the limelight of the media, the better are the chances to achieve agreements.

We believe that you, Mr. President, and the Secretary of State can assist in facilitating this particular mode of negotiations. We are therefore ready to continue with your assistance the negotiation with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. We believe that the substantial common agenda concluded with Jordan and further efforts made since can serve as a basis towards a major development on the road to the treaty of peace.

We also look forward to achieve results in the negotiation with Syria and Lebanon, recognizing the importance of making progress in these areas. The positive conclusion of negotiations with the Arab neighbors will bring about a real comprehensive peace and will open the

road to stability and prosperity for all the peoples and states in the region.

Mr. President, in a letter that I wrote to you at the beginning of this year, I expressed Israel's readiness to take risks for the sake of peace. I was more than thankful, Mr. President, for your statement in which you declared your readiness to minimize the risk that Israel is willing to take for peace. Indeed, Mr. President, you have taken effective steps in this spirit.

In our talks today, we discussed the ways and the methods by which we should proceed in the peace negotiations and also to find additional means to strengthen Israel in view of the threats to the security of the state and to provide safety to its population. Mr. President, peace and stability in the Middle East are threatened daily by yet another danger, the offensive mounted by the forces of radicalism and extremism. The offensive is twofold, against any Arab moderate, pragmatic regimes as such, and against the peace process. Our discussions today also dwelt on this issue, and we agreed to initiate an ongoing dialog between us as well as with the other concerned parties.

Mr. President, we all appreciate the firm position that you have taken against the Arab boycott. The boycott can never be accepted and certainly not when the peace process is being advanced. For the people of Israel to support the government's peace policy, they must feel that the attitudes and the atmosphere have actually changed after September 13th. We feel that our goodwill is yet to be matched.

On the plane that brought me to the United States, there came two parents, the Katz family, whose son, Yehuda, has been missing in action since 1982. We are investing serious efforts to bring back Yehuda and all the other MIA's and prisoners. Your government and other friendly nations have helped in this humanitarian mission. We trust that you will continue in this sacred task.

Today, you have gracefully told me and all the Israelis of your decision to strengthen the security of Israel. More specifically, your decision to continue the level of security assistance, to maintain our qualitative edge through the supply of advanced aircraft, the lifting of technological barriers, especially in the field of computers, and your decision to beef up our capacity to defend ourselves against missiles is most significant.

Mr. President, I return home stronger in

many aspects, more confident in our ability to reach peace, and reassured that thousands of miles away from Israel, we have a true friend in the White House that we can rely on.

On this occasion I would like in very simple words to say to you and to you, to the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, your administration, and the American people, thank you, and God bless you.

*Middle East Peace Process*

Q. Mr. President, you said the peace between Israel and Syria is essential for reaching a comprehensive peace in the region. What does the administration intend to do to advance peace talks between Israel and Syria? And did you hear anything from the Prime Minister that would encourage you to either send Secretary Christopher back to the region or facilitate some sort of back-channel, behind-the-scenes talks to get those talks moving?

*The President.* You can see by the question, Mr. Prime Minister, it's hard for the United States to facilitate talks out of the press. [Laughs]

We discussed the whole question of the relationship between Israel and Syria, what the United States could do. The Prime Minister reaffirmed his belief that peace in the Middle East would require progress on all the tracks, including the tracks with Syria and Lebanon. And we discussed some specific things that we will be exploring, the United States, over the next several weeks. Beyond that, I think I shouldn't go. But I feel confident that we'll be able to continue to pursue this.

Yes, ma'am?

*PLO Terrorism*

Q. Mr. President, we heard Mr. Rabin condemn the PLO for the recent attack on a Jewish settler 2 weeks ago. Do you share the view that it's a violation of the PLO-Israeli agreement? And were you just urging Chairman Arafat to renounce it?

*The President.* I agree with what the Prime Minister said. I think that Chairman Arafat now, under the terms of the agreement, is duty-bound at a minimum to condemn it. I think we all recognize that he may not have total control over everyone who acts in the name of Fatah, but he is now bound by the terms, the clear terms of the agreement, to condemn it.

Is anyone here from the Israeli press we could acknowledge?

*Jonathan Pollard*

Q. Mr. President, are you considering the release of Jonathan Pollard? And Mr. Prime Minister, did you raise this issue with the President?

*The President.* Perhaps I could answer both questions. The Prime Minister did raise the issue with me. We discussed it, and I explained that under our procedures here, I cannot make a decision on the Pollard case until the Justice Department makes a recommendation to me. Under the United States Constitution, I do not have to follow the recommendation of the Justice Department, but under our procedures I have to get one. And when I get one—it won't be too long in the future—I will then review it and make a decision.

Rita [Rita Braver, CBS News].

*Technological Support to Israel*

Q. Mr. President, from Prime Minister Rabin's remarks it sounded like you have decided to sell Israel or make available to Israel, the F-15E fighter jet. Is that true? And can you tell us a little bit more about the technological and weaponry support that you're going to give the Israelis?

*The President.* Well, we are working on an agreement to make available a number of planes to the Israelis. The Prime Minister is going to meet with Secretary Aspin on Monday, and they are going to try to work through the details. And I think I should wait until they have done that, and we'll be able to make an announcement I think shortly after that. But there will be a number of planes being made available to Israel as part of this ongoing effort between us.

Someone else from the Israeli press.

*Israel-Jordan Relations*

Q. Mr. President, can we expect a new three-way handshake, I mean, this time with maybe King Hussein within the duration of the Prime Minister's visit in America?

*The President.* Not on this visit. But nothing would please me more than to have another visit where that would occur. But I think not on this visit.

*NAFTA and Health Care Reform*

Q. Mr. President, on the subject of NAFTA,

a number of Congressmen from tobacco States, such as Congressman Steve Neal, have suggested that if the tobacco tax that has been proposed for health care were reduced from 75 cents to 40 cents, that they might bring along 6 or 10 votes. Is that something that you would consider if you were short of votes, or is that something that you would completely, categorically rule out?

*The President.* That issue has not been brought up to me, but I can tell you this: There were a lot of people who urged that we ought to have a \$2-a-pack tobacco tax, if you remember. I asked for the 75 cents because that's what our searching effort, our agonizing effort to determine what the cost of this program would be turned up as what is needed. And therefore, I cannot foresee circumstances under which I would be willing to change that position, because it would imperil the whole health care program. So there has been no—I didn't want to raise any money from anybody to do anything other than to pay for the health care program, although I think that higher tobacco taxes discourage use, and that's a good thing. But that wasn't what was behind it. So—

*Q.* —votes at the end of the game?

*The President.* I have no reason to believe that that will ever come into play. If it changes, I'll be glad to tell you, but I have no reason to believe that that will happen.

Someone from the Israeli press?

#### *Middle East Peace Process*

*Q.* Mr. President, I have two questions actually. Are you going to send Secretary Christopher to the Middle East to activate the Syrian-Israeli track and to mount active support for the Palestinian agreement, or do you prefer to wait until Mr. Rabin gives you the green light to express desire to deal with Syria?

The second one for Rabin. Mr. Rabin, are you ready to go for the—are you going to fight as—are you going to fight—

*Prime Minister Rabin.* We are talking about peace, not the resumption of fighting.

*Q.* No, I mean, in a domestic battle. Are you going to fight a domestic battle for an agreement with Syria right now, or do you still think that the Israeli public is not ready for it yet?

*The President.* The answer to the first question is that we have not made a specific decision about when the Secretary will return to the

Middle East. But we have ongoing contacts with Syria. You may know that I received the Foreign Minister of Syria here in the White House not very long ago. I have conversations from time to time with President Asad, and we will continue our dialog with them in working toward peace.

*Prime Minister Rabin.* Israel has a long tradition of keeping its commitments. Whatever we take upon ourselves, every agreement that we sign, we will carry out. We expect those who sign with us agreements to keep, to fully keep, their commitments as we do. There is no need to fight. It's true, in Israel there is an opposition to the position that the government has taken, to the agreement that has been signed, to the ways to carry it out. But we are a democratic country and once the decision is taken, it is carried out.

*Q.* Mr. President, both you and the Prime Minister mentioned the Arab boycott of Israel. You suggested in the past that should now be lifted. But so far, a number of America's closest friends in the Arab world have refused to take that step. Have you received any indications from the Saudis perhaps or from other Arab states that have been close to America that they're now prepared to take that step? And what can you do to try to get them to do that?

*The President.* Let me answer you in this way: I have received some indications that the enforcement of the boycott is not as vigorous as it once was, but that some of the countries involved are reluctant to explicitly lift it. I wanted to raise the issue again today publicly because I believe that a big key toward achieving peace is maintaining support within the State of Israel for the peace process and for the risks that it entails.

Perhaps the most important benefit of the ceremony here on September 13th, even though it thrilled billions of people around the world, is that it clearly enhanced the willingness of the people of Israel to support the peace process.

So I intend to continue to work on that. And I have some ideas about how I should do it, but I would rather wait until we have achieved more concrete results before talking about it.

Someone else from Israel?

*Q.* If Arafat doesn't condemn terror, should Israel suspend the talks with the PLO?

*The President.* That will be a decision for Israel to make.

Q. Could the Prime Minister—

*Prime Minister Rabin.* I believe that we have to stick to our commitments. I expect another side to keep its commitment. I will not answer on a hypothetical situation.

*The President.* Mr. Friedman [Thomas L. Friedman, New York Times].

Q. Arafat has been rather slow in getting the PLO organized to fulfill these negotiations. We've seen that on both the political and security front. I wondered if you could elaborate on (a) are you satisfied with the PLO's performance up to now in the negotiations, and (b) what will you do if the PLO does not condemn these actions?

*The President.* On the second question, I don't think I can give a better answer than the Prime Minister did. I used to give that response. I should return to it more often, I think. But let me go back to the first question, which I think is quite important.

I wish that the pace had been more rapid. But I think it is important to recognize that the PLO itself, by its very nature, by the nature of its organization and its activities over the last many, many years has never had the responsibility of going through the mechanics that have to be discussed in this agreement: How do the lights get turned on in the morning; how is the food distributed; how are the houses built? How are these things done? So I think, in fairness, I would be quite concerned if I thought that the fact that we're a little bit slow in the pace here was the result of some sort of deliberate desire to undermine an accord they had just signed off on.

At the present moment, I really believe it is more a function of the whole organization not being organized for or experienced in the work in which they must now engage. And so the Prime Minister and I talked about this quite a bit, and we still have high hopes that if the timetable is not met, at least it can be nearly met for the conclusion of these specific and concrete things. I think it is more a function of this is sort of an alien role for them, and I think they're working into it. But I'm hopeful now that there is a level of engagement which will permit us to push it through to success.

*Press Secretary Myers.* Last question.

Q. I would like to ask you a question concerning the agreement, the peace agreements. There was a discussion that what was needed was economic development. There were a num-

ber of projects on the Gaza concerning water, canals, energy resources, et cetera. I'd like to ask, what is your estimate of the magnitude of funding needed in order to get these projects into motion? And also, what are the consequences if these projects are not realized within a certain amount of time in the Gaza? And perhaps the Prime Minister would like to answer that question, too.

*Prime Minister Rabin.* As of today, Israel supplies all the electricity needs of the Gaza and the West Bank. There is no shortage of electricity there. The question, what will be the projects that will be built there, how much the consumption of energy and other items including water—we continue also to add to the water supplies of Gaza by a pipeline that supplies them water. We need to negotiate all this before we negotiate to tall figures. It will not be a serious statement.

*The President.* But let me respond, though, to that. When we had the donors' conference here, working both individually and multilaterally, we have commitments over the next few years for several billion dollars and a few hundred million dollars right off the bat. We think that's enough to make a big difference.

I have asked our people to identify some specific high return, quick investment infrastructure projects that could be instituted and effected quickly that would have a significant economic benefit to the people in the affected areas that we could proceed with just as quickly as the agreements make that possible. So I think there's money there to do what needs to be done in the near term once there is a system which guarantees that the investments, whether they be in infrastructure or new economic development, will have the result that we want.

Brit [Brit Hume, ABC News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask the Prime Minister, if I could, something about what you said to Mr. Clinton today about the Pollard case and why the matter continues to be such a priority with you, sir.

*Prime Minister Rabin.* I don't believe it would be advisable to me to add on this issue to what the President said.

*The President.* One last question from the Israeli press.

Q. I'd like to ask you, in the near future will you send a new ambassador to Tel Aviv? When do you think the time will come to move your Embassy to Jerusalem?

*The President.* I think from the question you ask you know what my long-standing position on that issue has been. But I have to resort to the position that I have taken on this ever since these talks began, and that is that the United States should not at this time make any statement which in any way injects the United States into a peace process that must be carried out by the parties themselves. And for me to say anything about that one way or the other at this moment in my judgment would run the

risk of throwing the process out of kilter. There will be time to discuss that and to make statements about that later on down the road at a more ripe occasion.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 33d news conference began at 12:11 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jonathan Pollard, U.S. Navy employee convicted of selling national security information to Israel.

## Media Roundtable Interview on NAFTA

November 12, 1993

*The President.* We're having a good couple of days. Yesterday we had 10 or 11 Members endorse NAFTA.

Q. Could you speak up a little bit, sir?

*The President.* Yesterday we had 10 or 11 people endorse the treaty, both Republicans and Democrats, including three Members from Ohio, a Rust Belt State where we hadn't had any endorsements before; two from Michigan. Today we have five or six—we have six confirmed, and we have five who've already announced their endorsement today for NAFTA, all Democrats, all six of them. So we're making some progress.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing that has happened today is something I just saw. The president of the Massachusetts Building Trades Council endorsed NAFTA with this letter. It's a real profile in courage. He said—this quote—he said, "No longer can nations afford to build invisible walls at their borders because there are no national borders to free trade." And he basically said at the end of his letter that "President Clinton is trying to improve on the status quo. His opponents, perhaps without knowing it, are defending the status quo." Leo Purcell, a pretty brave guy. I hope he's still got his job tomorrow.

Q. Can we get a copy of that letter?

*The President.* Oh, sure.

Q. I have one question that sort of follows up on what you just said. In Springfield, Zenith moved its television manufacturing plant to Mexico a couple of years ago. How do you address blue-collar concerns from people who have

seen that happen and they hear Perot and they just naturally fear that the same thing's going to happen?

*The President.* Well, first of all, let me make this statement at the outset. One of the things that our administration has never denied is the fears of middle class Americans about the loss of their jobs or the loss of their incomes. About 60 percent of our work force has suffered from stagnant wages or worse for almost two decades. So my answer to them is not that their fears are unfounded—they have legitimate fears and experience to base that on—but that this agreement will improve their conditions, not make it worse. And let me explain why.

I think this is at the nub of at least the negative side of the argument. First, let me say by way of background that I was the Governor of a State for 12 years that had plants close and move to Mexico. And I worked very, very hard to try to restructure my State's economy, to maintain a manufacturing base, and to rebuild from the hard, hard years we had in the early eighties. And my State did not have an unemployment rate below the national average in any year I was Governor until last year, when we ranked first or second in the country in job growth. But it was a long, painful process of rebuilding. I know a lot about this. We lost jobs to Mexico.

Now, the point I want to make about this is, number one, Mexico had a very small role in the decline of manufacturing jobs in America in the last 15 years. They declined because of foreign competition from rich countries as well