

Exchange With Reporters on the Resignation of Associate Attorney General Webster L. Hubbell in Boston, Massachusetts

March 14, 1994

The President. I haven't talked to him yet, and I haven't talked to him since this whole issue came up, but now I will call him as soon as I possibly can. I do think, based on what I understand the facts to be, it's the right thing. He strongly feels that he will be vindicated, but it's going to take some time for him to do it and that he shouldn't be working at a public job while he's doing that. And I think that's right.

Q. Do you think he did something wrong, Mr. President?

The President. I have no—I do not know—I have no knowledge of the facts. Based on my knowledge of him, I find that hard to believe. I mean, the most—I think if you talk to the hundreds and hundreds of people who feel they know him, they'd all have a hard time believing that. He's one of the most widely esteemed people that I've ever known. He had very few detractors. So I think that we just have to take him at his word, give him a chance to go home and deal with this, and see what happens. I think he did the right thing.

He also, I want to say, has been an enormous contributor at the Justice Department, really had an enormously positive impact there from the early days of my administration. I am very grateful to him. And he is a good personal friend of mine, as all of you know. I just—I wish him well. I hope that it works out. But I think he made the right decision because he wants to go home and really defend himself and work through this thing. And we'll just see what happens.

Q. Do you feel, Mr. President, that this is another perceived setback for your administra-

tion? It seems like you've come under a lot of deep fire lately.

The President. Well, this is something—as I've said, I have no knowledge of this. We'll just have to see what happens. But I'm not worried about that. We'll proceed with the Justice Department, and we'll go right on. This is, for me, more of a personal deal for Webb Hubbell and for his many, many friends at home and around the country. I'm hoping that it works out for him, and I think he made the right decision.

Q. Has it adversely affected operations at the Justice Department?

The President. Oh, no, not at all. Not a bit. And I feel that it won't. I can assure you nobody will let that happen.

Q. Will you invite him back?

The President. Well, as I said in my letter to him—he said he'd hoped he could return to public service, and I said in my letter that I hope he would be able to.

It is, frankly, kind of typical of him. His first concern was that nothing be done that would in any way cause any harm to the Justice Department or any difficulty for anybody else. So he just wants to get out, go home, clean this up, and he said he hoped that he would be able to come back. And I hope that it will work out so that he can, too.

Q. Do you think he was honest with you, sir?

The President. Thank you. I have no reason to believe he wasn't.

NOTE: The exchange began at 4:45 p.m. at Logan International Airport. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.