

opinion? And do you see any chance of that gulf ever being bridged?

The President. The way to bridge the gulf is to talk about the friendship that we have now, the respect and regard that we have now, the common interests that we have now. I did not say that to hurt anyone's feelings or to be insensitive to anyone in Japan. I know what a terrible, terrible loss of life there was, how many scarred families there were, how difficult it was. It was hard in World War II. Twenty million Russians lost their lives in World War II. No one can fail to be sensitive to the loss.

Do I wish none of it had happened? Of course, I do. But that does not mean that President Truman, in the moment of decision, made the wrong decision or that the United States can now apologize for a decision that we did not believe then and I do not believe now was

the wrong one. That has nothing to do with my feelings for the Japanese people, my profound sorrow at the suffering and the agony that they went through.

But we have recovered from that. We have gone on from that. We have one of the world's most important bilateral relationships. The thing we need to do now is to join together and look to the future. We're up to our ears in challenges today. Let's get on with dealing with them in mutual respect and support. And that's the way to get this behind us.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 93d news conference began at 9:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Tansu Ciller of Turkey

April 19, 1995

Turkey-U.S. Relations

The President. Let me say that, as always, it's good to have Prime Minister Ciller back in Washington. I welcome her here. Turkey is a valued, important ally of the United States, and our relationship will become even more important in the years ahead.

We're about to go into a meeting where we will discuss a number of issues, her programs for democratization and for economic reform, the Turkish operation in Northern Iraq, which obviously, the United States hopes will be limited in duration and scope. We'll talk about Cyprus and a number of other issues—whatever the Prime Minister wants to discuss. But I'm looking forward to the conversation, and I'm glad she's here.

Turkish Operations in Iraq

Q. Do you expect her to set a date for the evacuation from Iraq? And is Iraq supporting her drive against the Kurds?

The President. Why don't you ask her those questions?

Q. I will. Do you plan to set a date for withdrawal from Iraq? And is Iraq supporting this

drive against the Kurds? Are there good Kurds and bad Kurds?

Prime Minister Ciller. As you know, we were together in the fight against Iraq in the Gulf crisis, and then we were together again with the United States in Provide Comfort to protect the Kurdish people in Northern Iraq against Saddam's regime. And it so happened, however, that Turkey was probably the only ally which paid—who paid very high costs because we happen to have a border with Iraq. And Northern Iraq, in time, became a no-man's land.

And this was not a decision that I enjoyed taking, but it so happened that the terrorists simply settled in Northern Iraq and planned to have operations within my country passing the borders. Any Western country in my position would have to have—would take the same kind of decision that I did. And we are there only for a limited time. We have gotten hold of the bases that we wanted to do. The majority of the job is done and over with. The withdrawal will be very soon, as I have said from the beginning.

The reason that I cannot announce a date is because it would not be fair for those people

up on the mountains, 1,500 feet from the ground—meters from the ground, not feet—in the caves, in the snow, and they are approaching our borders. What they are doing is searching the caves up on the mountains for the guns and the ammunitions that would have been used to kill the innocent people in my country.

So I have to say that I'm very grateful to President Clinton for his support and for the fact that they knew about what was happening in Northern Iraq, that this became a no-man's land without authority, and it's not our making. It is not only our responsibility either. We have to think of a way to handle this. Otherwise, Turkey always ends up being the only ally to continually pay for this operation and the end result of this operation.

Q. Are you adamantly against the establishment of a state of Kurdistan? Isn't this the motive of the rebels?

Prime Minister Ciller. We are very friendly towards the Kurdish people in Northern Iraq. We have nothing against it. In fact, the Kurdish people in Northern Iraq were quite happy to see us come in because what had happened is that the Kurdish elements had been pushed towards south and had to evacuate Northern Iraq because of the terrorists. Now that the terrorists have simply run away, there is the possibility of these Kurdish elements coming back to Northern Iraq and settling.

We had, as you know, opened up our borders to the Kurdish people in Northern Iraq. Close to a million people came over after the Gulf crisis, and we sheltered them and we fed them. And last year only, we paid \$13.5 million in foodstuff to the Kurdish people living in Northern Iraq. And every year, we supply the electricity and basic needs. So this has nothing to do with the Kurdish people.

Turkey

Q. Prime Minister, today in Turkey, 21 people have been arrested on allegations of trying to assassinate you. I wondered how you felt about your own security, if you were worried about the stability of your government.

Prime Minister Ciller. Well, I am not worried about the security of my country or myself. I have a mission, and that mission is a peace mission for the area. And that's what I'm going to discuss with President Clinton. And Turkey's actual acceptance into the European Community and Customs Union, I think, is a historic kind

of a turnaround. And I have to thank again the President's administration and to President Clinton for the very historic support they have given on the issue, because had Turkey been separated from Europe, it would have meant that fundamentalism would have moved up to the borders of Europe. And Turkey, in the area, is the only stable ally from Korea to the Gulf crisis.

We are—look at where we are stationed. North of us is the Soviet Union, having disintegrated. The new countries that have emerged have their own problems. East to us is Middle East. We are very friendly towards Israel—and I was the first Prime Minister to go to Israel—and friendly to the Arab world at the same time. And we have good relations with the Caspian Sea—new nations that have emerged, such as Azerbaijan and Armenia and——

Cyprus

Q. How about Greece? Cyprus?

Prime Minister Ciller. Oh, yes. The whole problem—that's why the Customs Union is so important because once—if and when Turkey is accepted as a full member into the European Union, as Greece is and as Cyprus will, together with the Turkish and the Greek side, the problem will be resolved in a very comprehensive way because then we won't have anything to fight about, such as migration or migration of labor or some of the basic problems that had continued for almost centuries now, as far as I'm concerned.

President's News Conference

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. I thought it was good, the press conference. There were a lot of questions. There were a broad range of questions. They were interesting questions, and I gave straightforward answers, and they were brief. So I thought it was good.

Debt Limit and Budget Legislation

Q. Mr. President, one thing you didn't get to answer last night is that Speaker Gingrich has threatened to put all sorts of legislation that you oppose onto the debt ceiling bill and in effect threaten you to veto the bill and shut the Government down. Would you do that if there was legislation on there you didn't like?

The President. No President of the United States can ever be, in effect, blackmailed by

that sort of thing. I'm going to do what I think is right for the people of this country. And again—I will say again what I said last night, the only thing that's relevant to the American people in this whole process is what we do here to affect their lives, and their future, and their children's future.

I have demonstrated my commitment to working through this process. We've already signed two good bills. We're working on this line-item veto together. We can do a lot of work. We can have a lot of good ceremonies out there in the Rose Garden, or we can have the kind of conflict that could arise unless there is a real attempt to work these things out.

And I have been very, very clear and forthright about my position about these things all along and will continue to be. But a strategy to sort of put me in a box would be an error because I will still exercise the power of the Presidency in the interest of the American people.

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

The President. Nice to see you all.

Turkish Operations in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, your administration has certainly shown a certain degree of understanding of Turkey's incursion in Northern Iraq. How willing are you to cooperate in possible secret arrangements for—[inaudible]—incursion in this region?

The President. Well, we're going to discuss that in our meetings. And I don't think I should say anything about it until we have meetings. But you know, the United States has had a strong relationship with Turkey. And I think it's very important that we continue that relationship into the future. And in order to do it, we're going to have to understand each other's position, each other's problems, each other's potential to work together. And I've tried to do that, and I've had a good relationship with the Prime Minister. She has been very forceful in coming to the United States and stating the interest of the Turkish people. And this is one of many things that we will discuss. But I look forward

to continuing to make progress on all these issues.

Turkey

Q. Will human rights and democratization be on the agenda?

The President. Sure. And the Prime Minister's talked about democratization. And I think—you know, for the Europeans, as you move toward the Customs Union and other things, these issues are quite important. And they're very important to the United States. But I have tried to also view them in the context of the imperative to fight terrorism and to promote human rights. And I think you have to do both. Preserving a democracy in which people have human freedom is a delicate operation. And it requires not only a lot of sensitivity and understanding, it requires a lot of discipline and respect for other people's rights as well. And the biggest threat to human rights all over the world today, after the—in the aftermath of the cold war when people now know that dictatorial political systems don't work, that totalitarian systems don't work, the biggest threat to human rights is the reaction caused by terrorism everywhere. And that is something we have to be sensitive to, whether it's a car bomb blowing up in the Middle East or a religious fanatic taking a vial of sarin into the subway in Japan. All these things threaten the fabric of human rights. So we have to continue to push governments all over the world to be more open to human rights and combat terrorism at the same time.

Q. Do you have any solution about—[inaudible]—administration?

The President. We're going to talk about it today. You know, the United States has expressed an understanding of what Turkey did, along with the hope that civilian casualties could be strictly limited, and that the operation would be limited in time and scope. But we're going to talk about it. The Prime Minister has probably got some good ideas, and we'll discuss it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Apr. 19 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1995

Remarks on the Bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

April 19, 1995

The bombing in Oklahoma City was an attack on innocent children and defenseless citizens. It was an act of cowardice, and it was evil. The United States will not tolerate it. And I will not allow the people of this country to be intimidated by evil cowards.

I have met with our team, which we assembled to deal with this bombing. And I have determined to take the following steps to assure the strongest response to this situation:

First, I have deployed a crisis management team under the leadership of the FBI, working with the Department of Justice, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, military and local authorities. We are sending the world's finest investigators to solve these murders.

Second, I have declared an emergency in Oklahoma City. And at my direction, James Lee Witt, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is now on his way there to make sure we do everything we can to help the people of Oklahoma deal with the tragedy.

Third, we are taking every precaution to reassure and to protect people who work in or live near other Federal facilities.

Let there be no room for doubt: We will find the people who did this. When we do, justice will be swift, certain, and severe. These people are killers, and they must be treated like killers.

Finally, let me say that I ask all Americans tonight to pray—to pray for the people who have lost their lives, to pray for the families and the friends of the dead and the wounded, to pray for the people of Oklahoma City. May God's grace be with them.

Meanwhile, we will be about our work.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. The related proclamations of April 20 and April 21 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Governor Frank Keating on Disaster Assistance to Oklahoma City

April 19, 1995

Dear Governor Keating:

I have declared an emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (the Stafford Act) for the city of Oklahoma City in the State of Oklahoma due to the explosion at the Federal courthouse in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995 in the State of Oklahoma. I have authorized Federal relief and emergency assistance in the affected area.

Emergency assistance under Title V of the Stafford Act will be provided. Assistance under this emergency declaration will be provided at 100 percent Federal funding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will coordinate Federal assistance ef-

forts and designate specific areas eligible for such assistance. The Federal Coordinating Officer will be Mr. Dell Greer of FEMA. He will consult with you and assist in the execution of the FEMA-State Agreement governing the expenditure of Federal funds.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This letter was attached to a statement by Press Secretary Mike McCurry announcing disaster assistance to Oklahoma City, OK.