

Remarks on the EgyptAir Flight 990 Aircraft Tragedy and an Exchange With Reporters

October 31, 1999

The President. Like all Americans, Hillary and I are very saddened by the crash of the EgyptAir flight off the coast of Massachusetts. We are working on the recovery efforts. We know there has been an extensive loss of life, and we don't yet know what caused the accident. So I really think I can't say any more now, except—

Q. Have you talked with anyone, sir?

The President. Only our people. They've briefed me. But we don't know, we don't know what the cause of the accident is. We'll keep working until we find out.

Q. Concerns about foul play, sir?

The President. We don't know. We have no evidence of that at this time, and I think it's better if people draw no conclusions until we know something.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. outside Foundry United Methodist Church following church services. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Interview With Bryant Gumbel of CBS's "The Early Show"

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Mr. Gumbel. Mr. President, first off, thank you very much for the time. I'm grateful.

The President. You're welcome. I'm glad to see you. Congratulations on your new program.

Mr. Gumbel. Thank you very much.

The President. It's going to ruin your golf game getting up at 4 o'clock every morning.

EgyptAir Flight 990 Aircraft Tragedy

Mr. Gumbel. Well it's not bad, though; you're on the tee by noon, so it's okay. Let me turn serious for a moment.

We meet against the backdrop of the EgyptAir 990 crash. At this point in time, have you any reason to believe this was anything other than an accident?

The President. No. I don't. But I think it's important that we draw no conclusions about it and just let the investigation take its course.

Mr. Gumbel. Given history, given the volatile nature of Mideast relationships, do you see the absence of answers in any way impacting the Mideast talks in Oslo?

The President. Based on what I know now, I don't. I had a good talk with President Mubarak. I called him immediately when I got up this morning, and we talked about it a little bit. We're working together with the Egyptian

Government in every way we can on this crash. So, now, I don't. So, unless there is some question I don't know about that arises in the next day or 2, I don't think it will.

Mr. Gumbel. Would you say President Mubarak shares your view right now that there is no reason to believe this was anything other than an accident?

The President. Well, I think we agree that the evidence doesn't give us any indication that there was, now. But the evidence doesn't say anything one way or the other. We don't know. And I think the honest answer to people who ask is that they shouldn't have a prejudice about it one way or the other. We should just look and see.

Upcoming Middle East Peace Talks in Oslo, Norway

Mr. Gumbel. As you look to Oslo, what are your realistic expectations of what you can accomplish?

The President. Well, I hope that by getting together with Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat in a setting designed to honor the memory and to evoke the memory of Yitzhak Rabin, we can give some new energy to this process. They've done really quite well with