

The President. Well, we've already said publicly that we want to see a resumption of the cross-state dialog as soon as the election is over. But the election in Taiwan is for the Taiwanese people, and I don't think I should comment on it until they have all their votes in. And they'll elect a new President, and then we'll go from there.

Northern Ireland/South Asia

Q. Mr. President, from a foreign policy standpoint, what is your best hope for this series of meetings this afternoon with Irish leaders, and what is your best hope on your upcoming trip to India and Pakistan?

The President. First of all, the good news about Ireland is that even though the institutions have been taken down over the difference between the parties on decommissioning, no one wants to go back to the way it was or give up the peace process. The voters in Northern Ireland in both communities have overwhelmingly voted for it. And I think there's no sense that I got yesterday, in my first round of encounters with the leaders, that there's any desire to go back to the way it was.

I think what we've got to do is to find a formula by which the institutions can be restored, the people can get back to governing. They actually found out they were quite good at working together, and they were getting a lot done. And we need to restore that process, and we need to restore a process that will eventually lead to all the requirements of the Good Friday accord being observed. And we'll just keep working on it until we find that answer.

And on South Asia, obviously what I hope to do first is to rekindle the relationship between the United States and India. It's the world's largest democracy. No President has been there in 22 years. We have a lot of things

that we can do together, a lot of mutual interests. I want to do what I can to reduce tensions on the Indian subcontinent to reduce the likelihood of weapons proliferation and the likelihood of conflict. And I want to do what I can to support the restoration of democratic rule in Pakistan and to continue our cooperation with them against terrorism and in many other ways that we have both profited from over many decades. I also will be going to Bangladesh, and I'm looking forward to that. I have seen a lot of the initiatives taken in Bangladesh, particularly for the empowerment of poor people, that I think are important there and throughout the world.

And if you look at the size and the potential of the Indian subcontinent, if they could find a way to manage their difficulties, there's probably no other place in the world with the capacity for growth and modernization over the next two decades that you will find there. If you look at the success of Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis in the United States, that's clear evidence of that. So I'm going to do the best I can.

Syria

Q. Do you have a meeting coming up with the Syrian President?

The President. I don't have anything else to say about my foreign policy agenda today. But I will, in the next several days, continue to talk to you about all this stuff. And I thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to city attorneys John A. Misci, Jr., of Camden, NJ, Manuela Albuquerque of Berkeley, CA, and Dee Joyce-Hayes of St. Louis, MO; King Fahd of Saudi Arabia; and President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria.

Teleconference Remarks With Mayors on the Gun Safety Agreement With Smith & Wesson

March 17, 2000

The President. Hello.

Participant. Hello, Mr. President.

Participant. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you all for joining us. I'd like to start by asking everyone here on the phone to say their names and the city and the State they represent.

We have with us here, in the Oval Office, Attorney General Spitzer of New York, Attorney General Blumenthal of Connecticut, Mayor Penelas of Miami. And Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta was here; he just walked out. So we're all here. But why don't we—everybody else who is on the phone say something about it, who you are.

[At this point, the teleconference participants introduced themselves.]

The President. We're delighted to have you on the phone call. And I want to say on behalf of not only the White House but Attorney General Reno and Deputy Attorney General Holder, Secretary Summers and Deputy Secretary Eizenstat, and Secretary Cuomo, we very much appreciate what you've done, and we congratulate you. I think that this agreement will fundamentally change the way the gun industry does business, and all of you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your leadership and involvement have helped to make all American communities safer. We couldn't be here without you, and I thank you.

Now, we've got to build on what we've accomplished today and continue to reduce gun violence. The long roster of leaders with us here today is proof that the whole Nation supports what we're doing, and we just need you to go out there and keep working with responsible members of the gun industry to keep this momentum going. And I hope we can get some other manufacturers to join us.

I wonder if anybody who is here wants to say anything and anybody on the phone would like to say anything now.

[The participants made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you very much. If I could just echo two of the points that were made. First of all, I agree with the last point Mayor Penelas made. This proves, this agreement, that nobody was in it for the money. Everybody said all along, the States, the municipalities, and the Federal Government, nobody wanted any money damages; we just wanted a change in the way America lives to make it a safer place.

The second thing I'd like to say—to echo what Mayor Archer and Attorney General Spitzer said—is Smith & Wesson stuck their neck out here, and I think that all of us, including the Federal Government, in our procurement policies, if we really are serious about making America safer, ought to send a clear signal that we appreciate what they did. I think that that will accelerate the day in which the other manufacturers will follow suit.

I thank you all very much. This is a happy day, and I'm glad to talk to you all. And thanks for joining the phone call, and thanks for agreeing with the settlement.

Thank you all. Goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Alexander Penelas of Metro-Dade, FL; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; Eliot Spitzer, New York attorney general; and Richard Blumenthal, Connecticut attorney general. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the participating city officials.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you, *Taoiseach*, for your words and your leadership, for the shamrocks and the beautiful Irish crystal. Upstairs in our Residence, there is so much Irish crystal now that sometimes I have guests from other countries that ask me if I've ever been anywhere but Ireland. [Laughter] But I will treasure this always.

I don't suppose the saints in Heaven spend time boasting about their earthly achievements, but if they do, I imagine the other saints can bear no more bragging from Saint Patrick, for no nation has ever lived up more fully to the virtues of its patron saint than has Ireland. Saint Patrick has been described as one of the great saints of the downtrodden and the excluded.