

Statement on the Situation in the Middle East  
*March 29, 2001*

I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence in the Middle East. It is claiming the lives of innocent civilians on both sides. The tragic cycle of incitement, provocation, and violence has gone on far too long.

Both sides must take important steps to calm the situation now. The Palestinian Authority should speak out publicly and forcefully in the language of the Palestinian people to condemn violence and terrorism. It should arrest the perpetrators of terrorist acts, and it should resume security cooperation with Israel.

The Government of Israel, for its part, should exercise restraint in its military response. It should take steps to restore normalcy to the lives of the Palestinian people by easing closures and removing checkpoints. Last week Prime Minister Sharon assured me that his government wants to move in this direction, and I urge Israel to do so.

I will be meeting with Egypt's President Mubarak next Monday and Jordan's King Abdullah the week after to seek their help

in defusing the tensions. Egypt and Jordan are two of our most important partners in the region, and their role is crucial. I have asked Secretary Powell to call Chairman Arafat and contact other leaders to urge them to stand against violence. Our diplomats in the region are fully engaged in this effort.

Our goal is to encourage a series of reciprocal and parallel steps by both sides that will halt the escalation of violence, provide safety and security for civilians on both sides, and restore normalcy to the lives of everyone in the region. A lasting peace in the region will come only when the parties agree directly on its terms.

This week I vetoed an unbalanced U.N. resolution because it tried to force the adoption of a mechanism on which both parties did not agree. My approach will be to facilitate the parties' work in finding their own solution for peace. We seek to build a stable foundation for restoring confidence, rebuilding security cooperation, and resuming a political dialog between the parties.

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner  
*March 29, 2001*

Thank you all very much. Well, Lew, thank you very much. Laura and I are thrilled to be here.

I appreciate the members of the press. I think you serve a very useful purpose, especially tonight. As you know, we're studying safe levels for arsenic in drinking water. [Laughter] To base our decision on sound science, the scientists told us we needed to test the water glasses of about 3,000 people. [Laughter] Thank you for participating. [Laughter]

It's good to see so many Members of the Congress here, my fellow Texan Tom DeLay here at the head table. Lew asked me a little earlier if Tom ever smiled. I said, "I don't know. I've only known him 9 years." [Laughter]

Senator Lieberman is here. We all know Joe is an Orthodox Jew, so he does no work from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. This has so impressed me, I myself am thinking of converting—[laughter]—so I don't have nothing to do from

sundown Saturday to sundown Friday. [Laughter]

Most of you probably didn't know that I have a new book out. Some guy put together a collection of my wit and wisdom or, as he calls it, my accidental wit and wisdom. [Laughter] But I'm kind of proud that my words are already in book form. So like other authors, I thought I'd read from it tonight. [Laughter] It's like the thoughts of Chairman Mao, only with laughs and not in Chinese. [Laughter]

Here's one from the book—and I actually said this. [Laughter] "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully." [Laughter] Now, that makes you stop and think. [Laughter] Anyone can give you a coherent sentence, but something like this takes you into an entirely new dimension. [Laughter]

Here's another: "I understand small-business growth; I was one." [Laughter] You know, I love great literature. [Laughter]

I actually said this in New Hampshire: "I appreciate preservation. It's what you do when you run for President. You've got to preserve." [Laughter] I don't have the slightest idea what I was saying there. [Laughter]

Or how about this one: "More and more of our imports come from overseas." [Laughter]

Now, most people would say, in speaking of the economy, we ought to make the pie bigger. I, however, am on record saying, "We ought to make the pie higher." [Laughter] It is a very complicated economic point I was making there. [Laughter] But believe me, what this country needs is taller pie. [Laughter]

And how about this for foreign policy vision: "When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and we knew exactly who the 'they' were. It was 'us' versus 'them,' and it was clear who the 'them' was." [Laughter] "Today, we're not so sure who the 'they' are, but we know they're there." [Laughter]

John Ashcroft, by the way, attributes the way I talk to my religious fervor. In fact, the first time we met, he thought I was talking in tongues. [Laughter]

Then there is my most famous statement: "Rarely is the question asked, is our children learning?" [Laughter] Let us analyze that sentence for a moment. [Laughter] If you're a stickler, you probably think the singular verb "is" should have been the plural "are." But if you read it closely, you'll see I'm using the intransitive plural subjunctive tense. [Laughter] So the word "is" are correct. [Laughter]

Finally, let's see you wordsmiths out there diagram this sentence: I said—this may sound a little west Texan to you—"but when I'm talking about myself and when he's talking about myself, all of us are talking about me." [Laughter]

Now, ladies and gentlemen, you have to admit, in my sentences, I go where no man has gone before. [Laughter]

But in closing, the way I see it is, I am a boon to the English language. I've coined new words, like "misunderstanding" and "Hispanically." [Laughter] I've expanded the definition of words themselves, using "vulcanized" when I meant "polarized," "Grecians" when I meant "Greeks," "inebriating" when I meant "exhilarating"—[laughter]—and instead of "barriers and tariffs," I said "terriers and bariffs." [Laughter]

And you know what? Life goes on. [Laughter] My wife and my daughters still love me. [Laughter] Our military still protects our shores. [Laughter] Americans still get up and go to work. [Laughter] People still go out and have fun, as we're doing tonight.

I don't think it's healthy to take yourself too seriously. But what I do take seriously is my responsibility as President to all the American people and to the office I hold. And that is what I came tonight to tell you.

Thank you for inviting me, and thank you for your "horspitality." [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. in the National Ballroom at the Hilton Washington and Towers. In his remarks, he re-

ferred to Lew Ketcham, chairman, Radio and Television Correspondents Association.

## Remarks Honoring Members of the Baseball Hall of Fame March 30, 2001

*The President.* Well, thank you very much. Laura and I are delighted to welcome you all to the people's house. The Vice President is delighted to welcome you to the people's house, too. [Laughter] This is an exciting day for my administration and all the baseball fans that live here in Washington.

I first want to thank the commissioner for coming. Mr. Commissioner, it's good to see you again, sir. You're doing a great job in shepherding our national pastime through some pretty tough times. And I appreciate your leadership, and I appreciate your friendship.

Speaking about Wisconsin, I'm glad to see my Cabinet Secretary is here. [Laughter] Thank you for coming, Tommy; and Mel Martinez, as well. I appreciate you all being here.

We've got some huge fans, baseball fans here. Billy Crystal, I'm honored you're here. I appreciate the movie you're making. I'm looking forward to maybe getting to see it here in the White House. If you would let us do that, it would be such an honor.

I don't know if Costas is here yet.

*Bob Costas.* Here, Mr. President. [Laughter]

*The President.* Where is he? [Laughter]

*Mr. Costas.* Sometimes it's hard to see me, Mr. President. [Laughter]

*The President.* Representing all the traditionalists in America. [Laughter]

Secretary Abraham, I'm sorry—a fine Detroit Tiger fan. Congressman Boehlert, whose district is the Hall of Fame.

I also want to thank Jane. It's good to see you again. I remember coming up to the induction ceremony when my friend Nolan Ryan got inducted. So your hospitality is great. And Dale, thank you for thinking of this.

One of the great things about living here is, you don't have to sign up for a baseball fantasy camp—[laughter]—to meet your heroes. It turns out, they come here. [Laughter] I want to thank the players, the former players, the managers, and the wives who are here. I think we're going to have a great day.

There are some familiar faces here, but none more beloved than Yogi Berra. Yogi's been an inspiration to me—[laughter]—not only because of his baseball skills but, of course, for the enduring mark he left on the English language. [Laughter] Some in the press corps here even think he might be my speechwriter. [Laughter] I don't know if you know, Yogi, but I quoted you when I went to the Congress the other day to deliver my budget address: "Relieved you made it. We were afraid you might have taken the wrong fork."

And of course, Big Texas here, and Ruth, thank you all for coming—friends of ours who remind us of glorious days we had in baseball. The reason I like to keep Nolan around is, he is a reminder that when we got done with the Sammy Sosa trade, there was still some talent left on the Rangers. [Laughter]

But along with Nolan, we've got people like Sandy Koufax and Bunning and Ford and Gibson and Marichal, some of the greatest arms in the history of the game.