

*May 11 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001*

Remarks Following Discussions With President Olusegun Obasanjo of  
Nigeria  
*May 11, 2001*

*President Bush.* We just concluded a series of discussions, and a good lunch, with the delegation from Nigeria. The President and I also had some private time to visit about issues of mutual concern. I am—we discussed issues such as trade, the environment. Obviously, we discussed health issues that relate to the continent of Africa.

We are very supportive of the President's initiatives to provide peacekeepers in troubled countries on the African Continent. As many Americans may know, that we are in the process of helping provide technical assistance to Nigerian troops so that they are better able to keep those peace missions. We talked about the program. We've completed two phases of the training. We're in the process of completing the third phase of an agreed-upon training program.

The short of it is that Nigeria is a friend of America, and the President is a friend of mine. It has been my honor to welcome him here. I look forward to working with him in the future.

Mr. President.

*President Obasanjo.* Thank you very much, sir. I want to take this opportunity to thank President Bush for the invitation to visit the United States of America at this particular time and to be able to establish our relationship and, at the same time, be able to cover the important area, ground—of important areas of bilateral relations, of areas of concern in our subregion of west Africa, areas of concern in Africa, particularly areas of—that are ravaged by war and conflict, such as Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and so on. And what we are doing in these areas, we briefed the President. And of course, we have the support of the Government of the United States in our peace-

keeping and conflict resolution efforts in Africa.

We discussed other issues that are of importance to us. We discussed the MAP, the Millennium African Plan, which initially was originated by President Thabo Mbeki, President Bouteflika, and myself, and which now has been extended to take on Egypt—President Mubarak, and President Wade of Senegal.

We also look at issues that have been on the table before and that we are working together on, for instance, how do we prepare our troops for these increasing peacekeeping roles in Africa, and the assistance that we have got in the past from the U.S. Government, for which we are very grateful and which we believe will continue to really make our troops to be able to perform adequately in peacekeeping roles.

We, of course, reiterate the friendship and the cordiality between Nigeria and the United States. And of course, I am happy to be able to make a friend of President Bush, just as you heard that President Bush had made a friend of me. I now can feel that if there is any need to call on President Bush, he knows what I look like. *[Laughter]* I am not a no-person to him. He knows how I smile. He may even be feeling how I look on telephone. *[Laughter]*

And that is one important thing, that we made contact. We established a relationship, and we are friends.

Thank you very much.

*President Bush.* Mr. President, thank you very much. It's an honor for you to be here.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:01 p.m. at the South Portico at the White House. President Obasanjo referred to President Thabo

Mbeki of South Africa; President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal.

## The President's News Conference *May 11, 2001*

*The President.* Good afternoon. First, let me begin by talking about how pleased I am that a budget has been agreed upon. And it's now time for the Congress to act quickly. It's time for the Congress to pass meaningful, real tax reform, and I urge them to do so before Memorial Day. Tax relief will be good for our economy, but tax relief is also a very important way to help deal with high energy prices. And so the Congress needs to act. I'm confident if they have the will to do so, that they can, that they can get this done before Memorial Day.

And secondly, I believe strongly that the Attorney General made the right decision today. Any time we're preparing to carry out the death penalty, we have a solemn obligation to make sure that the case has been handled in full accordance with all the guarantees of our Constitution. The very foundations of our democracy depend on our ability to assure our citizens that in all criminal cases, and especially in the death penalty, defendants have been treated fairly. This decision is going to create some frustration amongst people whose lives were destroyed and turned upside-down by Mr. McVeigh. But it is very important for our country to make sure that in death penalty cases, people are treated fairly.

I'll be glad to answer some questions, starting with Mr. Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

### *Timothy McVeigh*

Q. Mr. President, thank you, sir. Attorney General Ashcroft, on the topic you were just talking about, said, "There is no

doubt in my mind, or anyone's mind, about the death of Timothy McVeigh." First, as someone who signed 152 death warrants in Texas, do you agree that there is no doubt that McVeigh is guilty? And secondly, did Louis Freeh know about these documents when he tendered his resignation?

*The President.* Mr. Freeh, Director Freeh never brought this up to me. I found out about this last evening. My conversation with Mr. Freeh, when he came and said he was leaving—the subject never came up.

Secondly, Mr. McVeigh himself has admitted to the crime. Mr. McVeigh, as I recall, said he did it, and I take him for his word.

Q. Mr. President?

*The President.* Actually, I've been given an order. You're second, Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

### *Gasoline Prices*

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much, sir. A lot of families are struggling to pay for gasoline at record prices. What can you do to help them in the short term? Will your energy report address that? And do you agree with your Energy Secretary that OPEC bears some responsibility for these prices?

*The President.* The price of crude oil has got something to do with the price of gasoline, but not nearly as much as the fact that we haven't built a refinery in years. What this Nation needs to do is to build more refining capacity. And we're prepared to work with the industry to encourage capital development, capital to be deployed to develop more refining capacity. And that