

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee
of India and an Exchange With Reporters
November 9, 2001

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the United States. It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of India to the White House for a series of discussions. My administration is committed to developing a fundamentally different relationship with India, one based upon trust, one based upon mutual values. After all, the Prime Minister leads a nation that is the largest democratic nation in the world.

I look forward to working to foster ties that will help both our economies. Trade with India is going to be an important part of our growth in the future. India has got a fantastic ability to grow because her greatest export is intelligence and brainpower, as our country has learned over the last decades.

We lifted sanctions on India so that our relationship can prosper. We will fight terrorism together. Our initial discussions focused on the battle against terror, and the Prime Minister understands that we have no option but to win. And he understands that there is a commitment—there needs to be a commitment by all of us to do more than just talk. It's to achieve certain objectives: to cut off the finances; to put diplomatic pressure on the terrorists; in some cases, to help militarily; but, in any case, stand firm in the face of terror.

We also talked about the need to make sure humanitarian aid reaches those who hurt in Afghanistan. And we discussed a post-Taliban Afghanistan that enables the country to survive and move forward and one that represents all the interests of the people of Afghanistan.

Over lunch, I look forward to talking about a new joint cyberterrorism initiative and a civilian space cooperation program, as well as discussing our mutual concerns about energy and the ability to conserve

it, as well as to have plentiful supplies as we go into the future.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, I am extremely optimistic about our relationship. It's an important relationship for our country. And I welcome you to the United States. Thank you for coming.

Prime Minister Vajpayee. Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words. It is a pleasure to be here to continue the practice of regular dialog that India and the USA have established in recent years.

I was happy to be able to personally reiterate our sympathy, solidarity, and support for the American people in the aftermath of terrible events of September 11th.

We admire the decisive leadership of President Bush in the international coalition against terrorism. We also applaud the resilience and resolve of the American people in this hour of trial. This terrible tragedy has created the opportunity to fashion a determined global response to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever it exists and under whatever name. I assured President Bush of India's complete support in this.

At the same time, as material leaders, pluralist democracies, we should clearly spread the message that the war against terrorism is not against any religion but against terrorists whose propaganda misuses religion.

President Bush and I had a very good conversation, which we will continue over lunch. In the last few months, there has been an intensive interaction between our two countries on a wide range of bilateral subjects. We have moved forward on the dialog architecture and on defense cooperation. A resumption of the bilateral defense policy group should promote technical cooperation in defense and security.

The Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism has made good progress, and we have agreed to launch a joint cyberterrorism initiative. Economic and commercial relations are expanding. We have agreed to broaden the bilateral economic dialog to include new areas of co-operation. Both of us agree that the synergies and complementarities between our two countries should be more fully exploited.

We discussed the urgent need for a political order in Afghanistan which would be broad-based, representative, and friendly with all countries in its neighborhood. Equally important is sustained international assistance for rehabilitation and reconstruction work in that country. We agreed that India and the USA, in partnership with other countries, would work towards these goals.

Today the President and I continued, face to face, the dialog which we have been conducting over the last 10 months on the phone and through letters. It has been an extremely rewarding experience. To sustain the momentum of the dialog, I have reiterated to President Bush my invitation to visit India. I look forward to receiving him in New Delhi.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Hold on for a minute, please. The Prime Minister has agreed to take a couple of questions, and so have I. I think I will start, Mr. Prime Minister, with Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], Associated Press man.

War on Terrorism

Q. Thank you, sir. Before meeting with you today, the Prime Minister told the Washington Post that the U.S. was not prepared for the war in Afghanistan, which he said was “less than satisfactory” and “slackening.” The Saudi Foreign Minister, who you are meeting with later today, told the New York Times that you can’t be an

honest broker in the Middle East peace process until you meet with Arafat. Is it helpful that your coalition members are airing their gripes in public? And what will you say to them about these charges, face to face?

President Bush. Well, the Prime Minister and I had a very good discussion about the progress we’re making on this particular part of the war against terror. He understands what I understand, that we’re just only beginning to fight terrorism in Afghanistan.

I assured him exactly what I’ve been assuring the American people, that I’ve got the patience necessary to achieve our objective in the Afghan theater, and the objective is to bring the Al Qaida to justice and to make sure that Afghanistan has got a stable form of government after we leave. I also told the Prime Minister that we’re achieving our military objectives.

This is a different kind of war. It’s a war that matches high-technology weapons with people on horseback. It’s a war in which the enemy thinks they can hide in caves and we’ll forget about them. It is a war that’s going to take a deliberate, systematic effort to achieve our objectives. And our Nation has not only got the patience to achieve that objective, we’ve got the determination to achieve the objective. And we will achieve it.

I appreciate the candid discussions we have with our coalition partners. I think it’s important that we have these discussions. And the Prime Minister and I had such a discussion, and I was glad to be able to make the case as to why we’re going to be successful.

Having said all the newspaper stories and all that business, I will tell you, our coalition has never been stronger.

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Excuse me for a minute, please. The coalition has never been stronger. I’ll make the case tomorrow at the United Nations that the time of sympathy is over. We appreciate the condolences.

Now is the time for action. Now is the time for coalition members to respond in their own way. And the Prime Minister of India understands that, and he is responding. And the Saudi Arabian Government understands that, and they are responding as well.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Q. This is a question for President Bush. Sir, why are there two laws in this world, one for America and one for the rest of us?

President Bush. Why is there—excuse me, two?

Q. Two laws in this world—one for America and one for the rest of us? When terrorism hits America, you go halfway across the world and make war in Afghanistan. But when we suffer terrorism, you ask us to be restrained. Is an Indian life less precious than an American life?

President Bush. I think there is one universal law, and that's: Terrorism is evil, and all of us must work to reject evil. Murder is evil, and we must reject murder.

When the terrorist attacks took place on October the 1st, I strongly condemned them, and I will continue to condemn them. And that's—excuse me. Our coalition is strong because leaders such as the Prime Minister fully understand that we must reject terrorism in all its forms and murder in all its causes in order for the world to be peaceful.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Can we get a reaction from the Indian Prime Minister to that?

President Bush. Excuse me, please, sir.

Aviation Security

Q. Sir, with the aviation security bill still languishing on the Hill, why won't you agree to make the baggage screeners Federal employees? What's the holdup here?

President Bush. Steve, I think that I've asked for the Senate and the House to come up with a plan that will work, that will not only make sure that as we transition to a new system that there is security

for the American people, that in the long run there is security for the American people. And I believe progress is being made.

Like yourself, or like your question implies, it would be nice to have had the bill done yesterday. But sometimes democracy doesn't work quite that fast. But the negotiators are working hard to come up with a bill that I can sign, and I believe they will come up with a bill that I can sign.

The House had a version; the Senate had a version; and now they're reconciling their differences. I don't believe they're that far apart, nor did I believe they were that far apart when the process began. And I think that, from what I'm told, progress is being made. And for that, I'm grateful.

Mr. Prime Minister.

War on Terrorism

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, was India's concerns of cross-border terrorism specifically reflected in your endorsement of the American President? And have you achieved some headway in convincing him that countries that are part of the problem cannot be part of the solution today?

Prime Minister Vajpayee. This question of cross-border terrorism has been getting our attention in both the countries. Recently, a bomb attack was made on the Legislative Assembly of the Jammu and Kashmir. Even Pakistan realized that it was a case of terrorism.

We have to fight terrorism in all its forms. We have to win this battle against terrorism. There is no other option.

President Bush. That's the two-question limit. Thank you all for coming.

Q. Mr. President—

President Bush. Our food is getting cold. The Prime Minister is hungry, and so am I.

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you.

Prime Minister Vajpayee. And the dividing line between hunger and anger—

Visit to India

Q. When are you going to India?

President Bush. As soon as possible, I am going to India.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. A reporter referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faysal al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of India

November 9, 2001

Since September 11, the people of the United States and India have been united as never before in the fight against terrorism. In so doing, they have together reaffirmed the enduring ties between both nations, and the importance of further transforming the U.S.-India relationship. In their meeting, President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee discussed ways to accelerate progress towards these goals.

They noted that both countries are targets of terrorism, as seen in the barbaric attacks on September 11 in the United States and on October 1 in Kashmir. They agreed that terrorism threatens not only the security of the United States and India, but also our efforts to build freedom, democracy and international security and stability around the world. As leaders of the two largest multi-cultural democracies, they emphasized that those who equate terrorism with any religion are as wrong as those who invoke religion to commit, support or justify terrorist acts.

The two leaders remembered the victims of the many nationalities in the terrorist attacks on September 11 and agreed that all appropriate steps should be taken to bring the perpetrators to justice, while protecting the lives and welfare of the people affected by these efforts. They noted that both countries are providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

They affirmed the current campaign against the Al-Qaida network and the

Taliban in Afghanistan is an important step in a global war against terrorism and its sponsors everywhere in the world. They recognized that the international community will have to wage a long and multifaceted struggle against terrorism, with patience, determination and unwavering focus. They emphasized that there is only one choice and only one outcome: terrorism must be fought and it shall be defeated.

President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee agreed that success in this endeavor would depend heavily on building international cooperation and securing the unambiguous commitment of all nations to share information and intelligence on terrorists and deny them support, sustenance and safe havens. The two leaders agreed to consult regularly on the future of Afghanistan. They welcomed the measures outlined in the UNSCR 1373 and called on all nations to ratify and implement existing UN Conventions on counter-terrorism. They expressed support for India's draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and urged the resolution of outstanding issues to enable its adoption by the UNGA.

The leaders of the two countries expressed satisfaction with the progress made in India-U.S. cooperation on counter-terrorism, including the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism established in January 2000. They reaffirmed their personal