

with the Department of State, it appears to the Secretary of Transportation that such insurance adequate for the needs of the waterborne commerce of the United States cannot be obtained on reasonable terms and conditions from companies authorized to do an insurance business in a State of the United States. This approval is effective for 6 months. I hereby delegate to the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of State, the authority vested in me by section 1202 of the Act, to approve

the provision of insurance or reinsurance for these purposes after the expiration of 6 months.

The Secretary of Transportation is directed to bring this approval to the immediate attention of all operators and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 14. It was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat of Thailand and an Exchange With Reporters *December 14, 2001*

The President. I want to welcome the Prime Minister of our longtime friend Thailand to the Oval Office. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you so much for being here.

Prime Minister Thaksin. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. This is not the first time I've had a chance to have a meaningful discussion with the Prime Minister. We sat next to each other in Shanghai, and we had a couple of hours worth of very substantive discussions about our relationships, about our mutual concerns, about our desire to work closely together on a variety of fronts. The Prime Minister has assured me—and this visit is further confirmation—that our longtime friend will be a steady ally in the fight against terror. Mr. Prime Minister, I thank you for that.

And secondly, today our Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of his government are going to work on a framework for economic cooperation which will be completed. And it's further evidence that this relationship is a strong, strong relationship.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, I'm so thrilled you are here, and welcome to the Oval Office.

Prime Minister Thaksin. Thank you, Mr. President. Thailand and the U.S. has been treaty allies since 1833. This is very right for me to visit and giving full support to U.S., which is our very long ally. And it's very right for me to discuss war against terrorism and also economic issues that we should further enhance the cooperation among our two countries.

The President. Thank you.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters]—what we're going to do is two questions from the American press, two questions from our visitors, if there are any. Steve.

Usama bin Laden

Q. Sir, what do you expect Americans to get out of the bin Laden tape? And what do you say to some of the Islamic world who contend it's a farce or a fake?

The President. Well, for those who contend it's a farce or a fake are hoping for the best about an evil man. I mean, this

is bin Laden unedited. This is bin Laden—the bin Laden who has murdered people. This is the man who sent innocent people to their death by—this is a man who is so devious and so coldhearted that he laughs about the suicide—so-called suicide bombers that lost their lives.

It is preposterous for anybody to think that this tape is doctored. That's just a feeble excuse to provide weak support for an incredibly evil man.

And you know, I had mixed emotions about this tape because there's a lot of people who suffered as a result of his evil. And I was hesitant to allow there to be a vivid reminder of their loss and tragedy displayed on our TVs. On the other hand, I knew that it would be—that the tape would be a devastating declaration of guilt for this evil person.

Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

Q. Sir, two things. Is Usama bin Laden cornered? And when you weigh the pros and cons of either option, would you rather take him alive so you can question him or dead so you don't have to deal with him?

The President. I don't care. Dead or alive, either way. I mean, I—it doesn't matter to me.

Secondly, I don't know whether we're going to get him tomorrow, or a month from now, or a year from now. I really don't know. But we're going to get him. And I—the American people must understand that I have no timetable in mind. There's no—I don't have a calendar that I say, "Well, gosh, if he's not gotten by this certain moment, then I'll be disappointed," because I am pleased with the progress that we're making in Afghanistan. I mean, there is no such thing as a Taliban. We have liberated, literally liberated village after village from incredible barbaric behavior toward women and children. I think one of the joyous parts of this war, if there is such a thing as a joyous part of a war, is to see the—is to see what it means for our country and our alliance to free people.

We're achieving a lot of our objectives, but we're chasing a person, obviously, who is willing to send suicide bombers, on the one hand, and hide in a cave; somebody who is—encourages young people to go kill themselves, and he, himself, refuses to stand and fight. And so he may hide for a while, but we'll get him.

Anybody care to talk to the Prime Minister?

Situation in the Middle East

Q. I'll ask one. Mr. President, do you see any signs of hope or progress in stopping the killing in the Middle East? And do you believe that Israel has been justified in its retaliatory actions against the Palestinian leadership and in the Prime Minister's decision to cut off contacts with Chairman Arafat?

The President. First, let me talk about Chairman Arafat. Chairman Arafat has said that he intends to fight terror and to bring those to justice who are killing—murderers—in the Middle East, and now is his time to perform. The world expects Chairman Arafat to lead, and so do I. And I will continue to work with our friends and allies to make it—to talk to Mr. Arafat in very blunt terms.

And that is, if you want to achieve the Mitchell—if you want to get in the Mitchell process, if you want there to be a peace, you must do everything in your power; you must use your security forces to bring to justice those who murder to keep peace from happening.

The world has now seen that there are killers and murderers around the world and in the Middle East that are not interested in peace. Our Government strongly desires peace. We have sent emissaries throughout my administration to work to get a secure enough environment to get into the Mitchell process. We still have a man in place, General Zinni, working to get there to be some kind of security arrangements so we could possibly get into Mitchell. But so long as there's killers and people who

would derail the peace process by murdering others, it's going to be very difficult to do.

I will continue to make peace in the Middle East a priority, and it starts with routing out terror wherever it exists.

Listen, thank you all very much. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign

Affairs Surakiat Sathianthai of Thailand; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.). The President also referred to the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, chaired by former Senator George J. Mitchell, issued April 30. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand

December 14, 2001

President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra today reaffirmed the strength and vitality of the alliance between the United States and Thailand, celebrating a mature partnership that spans many fields of endeavor, based on a shared commitment to democracy, open markets with free and fair trade, human rights, and ethnic and religious tolerance. Noting U.S.-Thai cooperation in conflicts from World War II to the war on terrorism, the President and the Prime Minister expressed the conviction that the alliance has been a pillar of stability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The two leaders agreed that the scourges of terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and other transnational threats demonstrate the continued need for a robust alliance into the 21st century. Highlighting their vibrant program of joint military exercises and training, including co-hosting the largest multilateral military exercise in Asia every year, the two leaders emphasized their determination to strengthen and revitalize the alliance, while working with partners throughout the region to combat common threats. The two leaders agreed on the importance of a strong and united ASEAN, and President

Bush offered all appropriate assistance to support capacity-building within ASEAN. The two leaders pledged to continue cooperation in promoting regional peace and stability through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

President Bush expressed appreciation for the Thai Government's support for the campaign against terrorism, including efforts to identify terrorist assets and money flows, reinforce money-laundering legislation, and pass new anti-terrorism measures. The two leaders pledged continued collaboration on money laundering in the Asia-Pacific Group and the Egmont Group, and expressed determination to expand counterterrorism cooperation further through new programs such as the Terrorist Interdiction Program. President Bush welcomed Prime Minister Thaksin's commitment to sign all counterterrorism conventions as soon as possible in accordance with the constitutional process in Thailand and praised the Prime Minister's leadership in signing and implementing UNSCR 1373. President Bush further welcomed the Prime Minister's offer to participate in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, noting Thailand's successful leadership of peacekeeping