

Exchange With Reporters in Rocky Mountain National Park August 14, 2001

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, I've got a Mideast question for you. The Israeli tanks moved into a Palestinian city, the furthest incursion yet. Any new reaction to that?

The President. I have no new reaction. My only point is—and I'm going to continue to make the point and so is my administration—that the cycle of violence has got to end in order for the peace process, or any peace process, to begin.

And therefore, Mr. Arafat must clamp down on the suicide bombers and on the violence. And the Israelis must show restraint. We've got to break the cycle. In order for there to be any discussions about world peace, it requires a willingness of both sides to come to the table. And my administration continues to talk to both sides, and we will continue to work to try to bring a sense of—a desire, a sense of purpose on the partners there in the Middle East to sit down and, one, reject the violence and start meaningful discussions

about how to reach an accord. It's essential that the violence stops.

Q. Sounds like a strongly held feeling.

The President. Well, I feel very strongly about it because I'm worried about the cycle of violence continuing to escalate. And it's not good for our—it's not good for that part of the world, nor is it good for the rest of the world, that the Middle East be a place of violence.

We've been making good progress in Macedonia, it looks like, so that part of the world is beginning to calm down a little bit.

The Middle East is a cauldron of violence, and we've got to—and we will continue to be very much involved in insisting that both parties break the cycle.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:05 p.m. in the lunch line at a YMCA picnic. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a YMCA Picnic in Rocky Mountain National Park August 14, 2001

Thank you all very much. Tessa, thanks—a pretty tough act to follow. [*Laughter*]

First, I want to thank the Marich family for their patience working me through the food line. I'd worked up quite an appetite up top of the mountain, and I'm glad I got a little of that barbecue.

Thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank the directors of the Y for welcoming me to this little slice of heaven. You know, when I was growing up in Texas, a lot of people say, "You know, I spent my summer in Estes Park," and now I

know why. It's a beautiful spot, and thanks for having me.

I'm traveling with some folks that you might want to at least say hello to. I picked somebody from—to head the Department of the Interior who would understand the thinking of the West, who would understand that we can have good, sound environmental policy, that conservation is important. And so when I named Gale Norton from the State of Colorado to be the head of the Department of Interior, a lot of folks came to realize this is an administration