

Oct. 14 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

to make America great. God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped on September 24 at approximately 3 p.m. in the Library at the White House, for later transmission to a meeting

of the House of Delegates of the American Society of Anesthesiologists in New Orleans, LA. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 14. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters on Returning From Camp David, Maryland *October 14, 2001*

Taliban

Q. Mr. President, there's a new offer from the Taliban to turn over bin Laden. What's your response to that, sir?

The President. Turn him over. Turn him over; turn his cohorts over; turn any hostages they hold over; destroy all the terrorist camps. There's no need to negotiate. There's no discussions. I told them exactly what they need to do. And there's no need to discuss innocence or guilt. We know he's guilty. Turn him over. If they want us to stop our military operations, they've just got to meet my conditions. Now, when I said no negotiation, I meant no negotiation.

Q. You reject his offer?

The President. I don't know what the offer is. All they've got to do is turn him over, and his colleagues and the stocks he hides, as well as destroy his camps, and the innocent people being held hostage in Afghanistan.

Q. They want you to stop the bombing and see evidence.

The President. There's no negotiation—they must have not heard—there's no negotiation. This is nonnegotiable. These people, if they're interested in us stopping our military operations—we will do so if they meet the conditions that I outlined in my speech to the United States Congress. It's as simple as that. There's nothing to negotiate about. They're harboring a terrorist, and they need to turn him over—and not only turn him over, turn the Al Qaida organization over, destroy all the terrorist camps—actually, we're doing a pretty good job of that right now—and release the hostages they hold. That's all they've got to do, but there is no negotiation, period.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately noon on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy and an Exchange With Reporters *October 15, 2001*

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the leader of one of our Nation's best friends, the Prime Minister of a coun-

try that has had so much to do with our Nation and its development. I'm also pleased to be able to give him a lunch.

After all, I had one of the best lunches I've had at his—since I've been the President, because of the Prime Minister.

We had a long discussion about our mutual desire to rout out terrorism where it might exist. He understands as well as I understand that the war on terrorism will be waged on many fronts, and I'm so pleased with the efforts of his Government to join with us in disrupting the financial networks of terrorist organizations. I'm pleased that we're sharing intelligence. I'm pleased that the Prime Minister understands that Al Qaida has cells all around the world, and he's more than willing to work with us to disrupt those cells, to bring people to justice. We're making progress. One reason we're making progress is because we've got good, strong friends such as the Italians and the Italian Government.

So Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. It's my honor to have you here.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Thank you, Mr. President. I am here, first of all, to express our great pain and sadness for the attack on September the 11th and to say to you that if the same attack had been—had occurred on an Italian city, we would have felt the same pain as you are.

And also I'm here to express to you our desire to be as close as possible and to provide both moral and material support. As I mentioned earlier this morning, this attack was an attack not only against citizens but also against freedom and liberty. The U.S. is the defensor of liberty all over the world, and that's what this attack was about.

President Bush. We'll answer a couple of questions.

Anthrax

Q. These anthrax attacks, sir, do you believe that there is any connection to bin Laden's organization? Your Vice President, on Friday, seemed to indicate there may be some possible link.

President Bush. There may be some possible link. We have no hard data yet, but

it's clear that Mr. bin Laden is a man who is an evil man. He and his spokesmen are openly bragging about how they hope to inflict more pain on our country. So we're watching every piece of evidence. We're making sure that we connect any dots that we have to find out who's doing this. I wouldn't put it past him, but we don't have hard evidence, yet.

Yes, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

Q. Do you have anything that points towards bin Laden, besides your gut? And has there been any other reports of anthrax-tainted mail being received by U.S. businesses or Government offices today?

President Bush. There has been today. I just talked to Leader Daschle. His office received a letter, and it had anthrax in it. The letter was field tested. The staffers that have been exposed are being treated. The powder that had been field tested is now, obviously, going to the CDC lab.

Beyond that, I don't know more about it. I spoke to the leader. He is, obviously, concerned, as am I. The key thing for the American people is to be cautious about letters that come from somebody you may not know, unmarked letters, letters that have got—that look suspicious, and give those letters and packages to local law authorities.

Again, the process is working, but today the Senate majority leader—his office did receive a letter.

Q. Was it definitely anthrax, or just a preliminary test, do you know?

President Bush. The field test shows it to be anthrax. Ron, there's more tests being conducted as we speak. The leader believes it is anthrax, but we'll find out more as time goes on.

They've got the letter. As he said, it was a letter that had been wrapped a lot and that the powder was within the confines of the—within the envelope. It wasn't on the outside of the envelope; it was within the envelope. And a staffer opened the letter. They obviously became suspicious of

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the material within the letter and immediately called in for a field test. The field test was done, shows it to be anthrax, and then all people are being treated.

India and Pakistan

Q. India says it opened fire on Pakistani positions in the Kashmir region today, this just an hour or two after Secretary Powell landed in Pakistan. How helpful is something like that?

President Bush. I haven't see a report yet, John [John King, Cable News Network]. And I think it is very important that India and Pakistan stand down during our activities in Afghanistan—down, for that matter, forever.

But I am—I need to find out more about the report; I will find out more about the report. As you noted, our Secretary of State is in the region. One reason he's there is to talk to both sides about making sure that there is no—that if there are tensions—and obviously, there are—that they be reduced, that we are mindful that activities around Kashmir could create issues in that part of the region, particularly as we're conducting our operations in Afghanistan.

Yes, sir.

National Economy/Italian Cooperation

Q. Mr. President, you have mentioned that you would—the other evening in your press conference, that you would like to see more action from the allies, and you mentioned what the U.K. is doing. What would you say about what Italy has done? And what was the subject of your conversation? Would you like to see something more done by Italy? And also from Europe, would you like to see more economic action from the European side to help the U.S. economy? Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you. First of all, we're taking measures here at home to get our economy started. There is some optimism, as some numbers recently have shown that consumer confidence is getting stronger, that people are beginning to get on the airways more, that people are traveling. So there are some positive signs.

I hope to work with—I am working with Congress and hope to get a stimulus package that will dovetail nicely with the tax cuts we had this summer, coupled with some of the spending measures we've taken since September the 11th.

First of all, I'm very pleased with the cooperation and support of Italy. They have been very strong from the beginning. The Prime Minister has been very—not only supportive but has asked how to help in significant ways to fight terrorism.

Again, I repeat to you, this is a war that's going to be fought on a variety of fronts. One such front will be to disrupt financial—the finances of the terrorist organizations. And he was discussing with me some Executive orders that had been taken recently that showed Italy's desire to be very firm about disrupting finances. There is a sharing of information that goes on.

I'm confident that if we put out the word that we needed more help from Italy, they would be more than willing to help. Each of us has a role to play. And the Italian Government, under this good man's leadership, is playing a very significant role.

We're going to go eat lunch. Thank you.
Prime Minister Berlusconi. Grazie.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:11 p.m. on the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. The Prime Minister spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.