

Exchange With Reporters in Portland, Maine January 25, 2002

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, are you consider cutting off ties to Yasser Arafat, sir?

The President. I am disappointed in Yasser Arafat. He must make a full effort to rout out terror in the Middle East. In order for there to be peace, we've got to rout out terror. And ordering up weapons that were intercepted on a boat headed toward—headed for that part of the world is not part of fighting terror; that's enhancing terror. And obviously, we're very disappointed.

Q. We're told that you thought his explanation was insulting, sir.

The President. I never said that.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:25 p.m. while touring the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Tahoma* at the International Marine Terminal. 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 Southern Maine Technical College in Portland January 25, 2002

Thank you all very much for coming. It's nice to be back in, I guess, my second home. I was telling your fine Governor, Angus King—and thank you for being here, Angus. I'm so honored you're here. He said, "Are you going to come back next summer?" I said, "I knew I should have made my bed last time I was here." [Laughter] I'm not so sure my mother is going to invite me back, but I hope she does. [Laughter] Maine's a fabulous State, and as the Governor knows, it's full of such decent people. And thank you for coming out for such a warm greeting. I've got some things on my mind, and I want to share them with the good people of Maine.

First, I want to tell you, I've got a great Cabinet. I'm so proud of the way our team has responded. A leader is only good as his team. I brought two members of my Cabinet with me: Secretary Mineta, and when I picked him out of the ranks, he was a—he served the previous administration as the Commerce Secretary. He's a proud Democrat, but he showed America

really what he is: He's a proud American, and he's done a fabulous job. And I knew I needed somebody who knew something about local government to run the Homeland Security Office, somebody who had been an administrator, a chief executive officer, and somebody who could organize a massive task. And I picked the right man when it came to the former Governor of Pennsylvania, my very close friend Tom Ridge.

And one thing the world is learning, something I already knew, we've got a fabulous military run by fine people. Admiral Loy, thank you for your leadership. I appreciate it.

I was supposed to bring two other folks with me today. I think you've heard of them: Snowe and Collins. They missed the flight—[laughter]—for good reason. They were working on behalf of the people of Maine. They had some votes to cast. But I will tell you, these two fine ladies are good to work with, strong for the support of the State of Maine, and great patriots.