

Just to show you we don't hold a grudge, we've invited Members of the U.S. Congress here. And you're welcome, and thank you all for coming. [Laughter]

I also am really looking forward to starting the Easter egg roll. I want everybody to have a great time here. It is our honor

to host you all. And I'd like to end by this simple—this simple statement: May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Governor George E. Pataki and Mayor Michael Bloomberg and an Exchange With Reporters *April 1, 2002*

Governor's Island Transfer

The President. I have just informed the Governor and the mayor, the Governor of New York and the mayor of New York City, that the Federal Government will transfer Governor's Island to the people of New York. I'll never forget choppering over Governor's Island with George and Rudy Giuliani, Mike Bloomberg's predecessor, and the two leaders talking about what good use Governor's Island could be put to.

Since that time, I've studied the statements of Mayor Bloomberg, who extensively talked about Governor's Island and how to improve Governor's Island and how to make it a center of educational excellence, something dear to George Pataki's heart. I looked at the law, looked at the circumstances, and decided this morning that this was the right thing for the U.S. Government, and it's the right thing for the people of New York.

I appreciate so very much the vision of these two leaders, and I appreciate their heartfelt concern for the citizens of New York City and the region. And so I want to welcome to the Oval Office with this piece of news.

George, why don't you say a few words?
[At this point, Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg made brief remarks.]

The President. I know you will. Thanks.

I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority

Q. Mr. President, what specifically would you like for Chairman Arafat to do, what specific action you'd like him to take in the Middle East? And in light of the current situation in Israel, does the Bush doctrine on terrorism not apply in this case?

The President. Well, first of all, there will never be peace so long as there's terror. And all of us must fight off—fight terror. And you asked about Chairman Arafat. I'd like to see Chairman Arafat denounce the terrorist activities that are taking place, the constant attacks.

We've got a plan that will lead to peace, the security plan called Tenet; there's a political plan called Mitchell. Both sides have agreed to this plan, and we urge the parties to accept the Tenet plan so that we can bring some—a peaceful resolution to an issue that's affecting the lives of Palestinians and Israelis alike. There's a lot of innocent people who hurt in the region because of the senseless violence and senseless murder.

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to follow up on Sonya's [Sonya Ross, Associated Press] question. Under your doctrine, a terrorist or someone who aids a terrorist is the equivalent of a terrorist. So what's keeping

Chairman Arafat—what’s keeping you from labeling Chairman Arafat a terrorist?

The President. Chairman Arafat has agreed to a peace process. He’s agreed to the Tenet plan. He’s agreed to the Mitchell plan. He has negotiated with parties as to how to achieve peace. And of course, our hope is that he accepts the Tenet plan. That’s what General Zinni is in the Middle East doing, working to get this Tenet agreement in place, which is a series of concrete steps to reduce the violence in the Middle East.

President’s Involvement in Middle East

Q. There were various calls on the Sunday talk shows for you to become more actively involved in this process, sir. Is there any way you would do that?

The President. You know, they must have not been with me in Crawford when I was on the phone all morning long, talking to world leaders. We’ve just come from a National Security Council meeting where Colin Powell was recounting his phone conversations. We’ve got General Zinni in the region. We’ve got a Tenet plan, a Mitchell plan, a roadmap to what will be a peaceful resolution to this issue.

I hope that the world community will continue to condemn terror, and if they haven’t condemned terror yet, start condemning terror. It’s essential for the peace of the region and the world that we rout out terrorist activities, that we condemn those activities. Suicide bombers in the name of religion is simple terror. And the free world, the civilized world must band together to stop this kind of activity if we expect there to be peace and resolution in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel

Q. You’ve made clear, sir, that you believe that Chairman Arafat needs to do much more. Do you believe that Prime Minister Sharon is doing all he can to foster peace in the region?

The President. I think it’s very important for the Prime Minister to keep a pathway to peace open, to understand that on the one hand, Israel should protect herself, and on the other hand, there ought to be a pathway, the capacity to achieve a peaceful resolution to this issue. It’s important for Israel to understand that. They’ve signed on to the Tenet agreement, and they signed on to the Mitchell plan, and that is the pathway to peace. And I believe Prime Minister Sharon still accepts Tenet and still accepts Mitchell as the way to achieve a peaceful resolution.

I was very heartened a couple of weeks ago by the Saudi Arabia Crown Prince, when he talked about the need for the Arab world to recognize Israel’s right to exist. It was a positive development. There were some positive things that were taking place in the region, until the terrorist suicide bombers start killing innocent people.

Governor’s Island Transfer

Q. Mr. President, why give the island now? Can you tell us what—

The President. Why now, right this second?

Q. Well, why did you make the announcement today, and what persuaded you to transfer the island to the city? And also, was this in any way to help Governor Pataki in his reelection?

The President. Well, listen, he doesn’t need my help to get reelected, for starters. He’s got a great record. The people of New York are discerning voters. Well, most of the time they’re discerning voters—[laughter]—if you know what I mean. [Laughter]

Q. No, what do you mean? [Laughter]

The President. Well, you’re a smart guy; read between the lines. No, George Pataki has been a great Governor for New York. I made the announcement today because I had finished the necessary study of the issue, to make sure that we could transfer this property without congressional action. And I believe I can do that. It took a while to take a look at it.

It also requires—I wanted to make sure that the Governor and mayor would be using this property for education purposes. That’s what the mayor said he would do; the Governor said he wanted to do that. They took a look at it and decided this is what they wanted to do. And it makes a lot of sense to me, and using it for education purposes will make it easier for me to facilitate the transfer, by the way.

Q. Mr. President, the previous administration didn’t want—I was just wondering, what specifically persuaded you?

The President. Well, I took a look at it. I mean, it’s a good question. I took a look at it. I listened to what George said. He’s my friend; I trust his judgment. I’ve known him for a long time, and Rudy Giuliani as well—both of them were passionate in their appeal for us to consider transferring Governor’s Island. And I knew Mike was very interested in enhancing the quality of education in New York City.

And I took a look at it. I came back—obviously, things didn’t happen quickly after September the 15th trip, because we had a lot on our mind. But it took a while to work it through the White House staff, and it arrived on my desk sometime last

week. And the recommendation was that we could transfer this property, if that’s what I wanted to do. And it’s something I want to do, because I think it’s going to make the life of a city that has been tragically affected by killers and murderers better. And I think it will enhance the quality of education for the people of New York. And to me, that is a worthwhile and noble cause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.); and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The President also referred to the Tenet plan, the Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire and security plan of June 13, 2001, negotiated by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet; and the Mitchell report, the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30, 2001. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring the 2002 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots *April 2, 2002*

The President. I’m honored to welcome the Super Bowl champ Patriots to the Rose Garden. I want to thank their owner, Bob Kraft, for his leadership. And of course, I want to thank their coach. Coach Bill has brought a lot of organization and clarity of purpose to this organization. I can remember when they were down on you a little bit—I know how you feel. [*Laughter*]

As a matter of fact, the Patriots learned an interesting lesson. I remember watching all the experts talk about the Super Bowl. No one thought they’d win. They learned

what I learned, that in politics and sports, the experts are often wrong.

I was really impressed by the character of this team. Most of all—I obviously watched the game—I was amazed at the play and how they won. For a guy growing up in Texas, that snow game looked pretty rough. [*Laughter*] But I know all the Patriot fans were thrilled with that game and the Super Bowl. I know you’ve got some great fans here.