

Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit of Turkey
and an Exchange With Reporters
January 16, 2002

President Bush. I'm going to have an opening statement welcoming our friend to the Oval Office. The Prime Minister is going to say a few remarks. Both of us have agreed to take some questions. I would like those traveling with the Turkish press to have a chance to ask some questions today as well. We'll both take two questions apiece.

Thank you for coming, Mr. Prime Minister. I'm proud to welcome you as a friend. You have been steadfast in your support in the war against terror, and for that, my Nation is very grateful.

We appreciate your leadership when it comes to foreign policy, and we appreciate your leadership when it comes to economic policy. You and your administration have made some very tough decisions, and the economy is improving as a result of your leadership. And we look forward to having a good discussion about how we can increase trade.

And today I'm informing the Prime Minister that we're lifting the travel ban on Turkey so that our citizens can feel comfortable going to that wonderful country to visit and to enjoy the rich history of one of our valued allies and friends.

So welcome, Mr. Prime Minister. It's a delight to welcome you, and thank you for coming.

Prime Minister Ecevit. Thank you very much for your kind invitation, Mr. President. It is a great honor for us. We deeply appreciate the support that you have extended, since you have taken over, to relations with Turkey. We had always good relations with the United States in your—

during your time of office. And you have totally enhanced this cooperation and friendship.

We have some very good, concrete good news now, as you have referred to it, Mr. President. The State Department has today issued a statement expressing the will of the United States that we will be able to form an economic partnership—

President Bush. Right.

Prime Minister Ecevit. —in addition to our political partnership. We attach great importance to that—our cooperation with you against terrorism is a great service not only for our own people but for the whole world. The American determination to get rid of terrorism in the world is of great importance, of historic importance, and we are glad—we are very happy that we have the chance to cooperate with you to that effect. And Turkish and American cooperation, partnership now together with economic partnership will be beneficial for both—peoples of both our countries.

We had very fruitful discussions during the brief period here. We still have other items on our agenda, and we shall go to New York also to visit the place of terrorism. Thank you very much for sharing this time, for showing this generosity and friendship to us.

President Bush. Well, you're welcome, sir.

Prime Minister Ecevit. Thank you.

President Bush. Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters] and then Sonya [Sonya Ross, Associated Press].

Cyprus

Q. Sir, what do both of you see as the chances of a negotiated settlement with Cyprus—

President Bush. I'll let the Prime Minister speak. Of course, we're very encouraged that there is a dialog now taking place. And I want to thank the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister for encouraging that dialog. You can't solve a problem unless the parties are willing to talk.

And Mr. Prime Minister, would you like to speak about the Cyprus situation?

Prime Minister Ecevit. Yes. We attach great importance to our dialog with you with regard to Cyprus. It's good news that the leaders of the two communities are now having face-to-face dialog. They may not attain concrete results immediately, but the very fact, the very process of dialog may lead to satisfactory agreements between the two communities.

President Bush. Well, I appreciate that very much. Anybody from the Turkish press?

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, to make your Iraqi policy more efficient, in your efforts to make the Iraqi policy more efficient—

President Bush. Iraqi policy?

Q. Yes, your policy towards Iraq. What are your expectations from the Turkish Government?

President Bush. Well, I'm going to have a discussion with the Prime Minister about Iraq. And my expectations, most importantly, are not from Turkey—are from Iraq. I expect Saddam Hussein to let inspectors back into the country. We want to know whether he's developing weapons of mass destruction. He claims he's not; let the world in to see. And if he doesn't, we'll have to deal with that at the appropriate time.

My discussions with the Prime Minister are going to be not only regional in nature but global in nature. And I will assure him that we will consult closely with Turkey

on any decisions that I make. Turkey is an ally and a friend, and no decisions have been made beyond the first theater. And the first theater is Afghanistan, and I do appreciate very much the Turkish support for our efforts in Afghanistan.

Q. What if Saddam Hussein doesn't let the—[inaudible]—inspectors?

President Bush. If he doesn't let them in? He'll find out.

Afghanistan

Q. On the question of Afghanistan, do you support the Turkish idea of leading the peacekeeping operation there? And if the United States essentially made the peace there, why not involve U.S. troops in keeping the peace?

President Bush. Well, first of all, there's been a lot of international interest in providing troops to help keep the peace. And we welcome that support. As you know, the Brits have now taken the lead in the first round. There are some discussions as to whether or not Turkey will take the lead in the second round, and I appreciate their consideration of this very important matter.

I believe there is plenty of troops from other nations that are willing to help, and after all, I've made it clear that our troops will be used to fight and win war, and that's exactly what they've done. We've sent them over to fight a war, and we're winning the war.

And on the other hand, we're more than willing to help with the reconstruction efforts. We're—make serious contributions to the interim government of Afghanistan so they can help rebuild themselves. We look forward to the conference in Tokyo. We'll have representatives there.

Just today, Richard Armitage, our Deputy Secretary of State, met with the Finance Minister of the interim government of Afghanistan, and I've been told they had a very good discussion about how to get cash starting to move into the coffers.

But I think there is ample support from around the world to provide troops to help

stabilize Afghanistan so the Government can eventually take over its own defense.

Q. Yes, but are you going to channel more funds to support Turkey in its role in Afghanistan?

President Bush. Channel more funds to support Turkey in its role in Afghanistan? You mean, if and when they provide troops? That's what you're talking about?

Q. Yes.

President Bush. Well, we haven't had that discussion yet. And one thing for certain is that we're providing a lot of funds now in the Afghan theater. After all, we're proudly leading the efforts to destroy the Taliban and rout out the Al Qaida. As to reimbursements, that's a discussion we'll have at a later date. Turkey hasn't made up her mind yet as to whether or not she is going to lead the coalition forces. We're just in discussion phases. So I think the budgetary phase—the budgetary discussions should take place after a commitment has been made.

Taxes

Q. [*Inaudible*—generous—*inaudible*]—Senator Kennedy called for—

President Bush. Oh, let me comment. I appreciate that very much.

Q. I thought you might want to. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Well, Mr. Prime Minister, we put a significant tax relief package in place right at the right time. Our econ-

omy was beginning to slow down in March of 2001. Fortunately, I was able to work with both Democrats and Republicans in our Congress to get a good tax relief package out. And when the economy slows down, it makes sense to cut taxes, and that's exactly what's happened. And those who want to revoke the tax cut, basically raise taxes, are those who just don't share my view.

I think raising taxes in the midst of a recession is wrong economic policy. It would be a huge mistake. It's bad for American workers. It hurt when it comes to creating jobs. And so I strongly disagree with those who want to raise taxes here in Washington, DC. I'm confident that the American people agree with me, as well.

And if Members of the House and the Senate listened to their constituents and listened to those who want to find work, they will understand the wisdom of our ways.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem of Turkey; and Hedayat Amin Arsala, Vice Chair and Minister of Finance, Interim Authority of Afghanistan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Investor and Capital Markets Fee Relief Act January 16, 2002

Today I signed into law H.R. 1088, the Investor and Capital Markets Fee Relief Act. This legislation will provide fee relief to the growing number of Americans who have invested in stocks and bonds to save for their retirements, their children's education, and other needs. This legislation will

relieve the 50 percent of American households that now own stock, either directly or in pension or mutual funds, from the burden of these fees, while ensuring that the SEC has sufficient funding to continue