

were: Leo Wieland, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung; Patrick Jarreau, Le Monde; Gabriel Volk, Argomenti i Fakti; and Alberto Flores-

D'Arcais, La Repubblica. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Christian Malar of TF-3 French Television May 21, 2002

Terrorist Alerts

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, thank you very much. Could you be more specific on the prospects of new attack against the United States? It's a source of concern for all of us, of course. And do you think it's a—concerns also, for instance, the French, who have been severely targeted—struck recently by the terrorist networks in Pakistan?

The President. Yes, it's a good question. First, I'm concerned about all people who love freedom. The French love freedom; Americans love freedom. And Al Qaida hates freedom, and they can't stand people who embrace freedom.

I have no specific threat to America and Americans or to the French. If I had a specific threat, something that would hurt the French, I can assure you we would have shared that information immediately with our friends in the French Government. If I have a specific threat relating to America, we would deal with that specific threat. We would use our assets to harden whatever the target might be. You probably wouldn't know about it.

What you're hearing is—you're hearing—the people of my administration are concerned about a group of people who continue to plot and plan on ways to hurt us. And the best way to prevent further attacks is to find them and hunt them down, to chase them one by one, and to bring them to justice. And that's what my country and our coalition will continue to do.

Iran and Iraq

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, you spoke a lot about the evil axis. Are you still planning to attack Iraq? And what about Iran, which, according to our understanding of various sources, might have been harboring bin Laden for the last few months?

The President. Oh, really? Well, I certainly hope that's not the case, for Iran's sake, that they be harboring bin Laden. We don't know about Mr. bin Laden. He might be dead; he might be alive. All I can tell you is, I heard—I haven't heard much from him in a long period of time.

I do believe there is an axis of evil. These are countries that are not transparent; they're dictatorial; they've got designs for weapons of mass destruction, if they don't have them already. They hate—they preach a gospel of hate. And we'll deal with each of them differently. Obviously, the military is an option. I have no plans on my desk right now, but whatever I decide and whatever we decide, of course, we'll consult closely with the French, our allies, and our friends.

But we must deal with this threat, the threat of countries such as Iraq using a weapons of mass destruction to affect a balance of power or to affect our willingness and ability to go defend ourselves. And this is a dangerous problem that we've got to deal with.

Situation in the Middle East

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, concerning the peace process in the Middle East, it seems there is no peace solution in sight right now. Arafat doesn't want—cannot control

the Islamic terrorist acts against Israel. Mr. Sharon doesn't want him anymore as a partner for peace. What can you do? The United States is the only country to be able to impose a solution. What can you do concretely, Mr. President, to put peace back on track for good?

The President. Yes, thank you. I'm not so sure you can ever impose a solution on people. In other words, the first job is to convince people the need for peace, to give people a chance to work toward a vision. And I've laid out a vision. And the vision is two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace. That's something we will work toward.

I believe we're making some progress. It starts with convincing all parties in the region they have a responsibility toward peace. The Israelis have got a responsibility; I've made that clear to Prime Minister Sharon. The Palestinians have a responsibility, particularly to denounce and to fight against terror, to stop these killers from derailing peace. And the Arab world has the responsibility to be a party to not only discussions but a party to providing hope for the Palestinians.

And we are—we've got a dialog going on. One of the first things we need to do is put the institutions in place that will help provide a stable society in the Palestinian territory. That means a security force that actually works, one that functions properly, one in which authority and responsibility are aligned.

You need to know I'm an optimistic man. I believe we can achieve peace. It's going to take a lot of hard work. I have started this the first day of my administration, and I will continue during the last day of my administration.

Mr. Malar. Two quick last questions.

The President. Sure.

Europe-U.S. Relationship

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, what do you answer to the Europeans, and especially the French, who are very fussy sometimes and

considers—the reproach of America's unilateralism? What do you answer to them? They even fear today, among Europeans, that the new American-Russian axis which would prevail over the rest of Europe.

The President. Well, listen, my trip into Europe will let people know me a little better. I'm a person who knows that—first of all, I know what I believe. And the thing I believe—I believe strongly in the common values that we share. And I believe strongly in freedom. I mean, I believe we ought to do everything in our power to encourage freedom all around the world. And that's important. I also know we can't win a war on terror alone, that we've got to work with our allies and friends. I'll confirm the importance of the NATO Alliance for all of us.

So I look forward to the trip. I'm confident there are some there that have got an opinion about me that I might not like, but that's the good thing about democracy. I welcome people—people's opinions. And I'll be honored to represent our country overseas, and to reconfirm our friendship.

I'm going to Normandy, and—

President's Memorial Day Visit to Normandy

Mr. Malar. You are going to Normandy, so I imagine you are going to spend Memorial Day on the beaches of Normandy. And I'm sure, Mr. President, it means a lot to you when we are in the world where a lot of people try to fight for freedom and security.

The President. Yes. Well, it's going to be an emotional moment, to think of all the sacrifice that went so that you and I can speak here in freedom. I'm the son of a World War II veteran. I'm a product of what they call the Greatest Generation. And I just—my friends who have been there tell me that it's an amazingly emotional place. Memorial Day is a great holiday here in America, where we honor those who have sacrificed. And so I'll give a

speech that will talk about sacrifice and will call people to the memory of those who have come before us and lay out the sacrifices that we're going to need to do in the future if we expect the world to be free.

And I can't wait to go. It's going to be one of the best parts of the trip. It's going to be a memorable trip, and I'm confident that the trip to Normandy will be one of the great highlights of the trip.

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, I want to thank you very much. I wish you all the best.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Malar. And God bless you.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped on May 21 at 1:24 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 22. In his remarks, the President referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. Mr. Malar referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Departure for Berlin, Germany May 22, 2002

I'm looking forward to my trip to Europe. I'm going to take a couple of messages.

One, of course, I appreciate the friendship with the European people, our strong alliance, and that our alliance must remain tough in the war against global terror, that even though we've had some initial successes, there's still danger for countries which embrace freedom, countries such as ours or Germany, France, Russia, or Italy. And as an alliance, we must continue to fight against global terror. We've got to be tough.

Secondly, friends benefit through free trade. I will reaffirm our commitment to trade. I hope the United States Senate finishes debate on the trade promotion authority and passes the bill. It's going to be important for our friends around the world to see this commitment to trade.

Trade is in the interests of our workers. Trade is in the interest of job creation, and trade is in the interest of developing nations as well as developed nations. And so I want to thank those in the United States Senate, both Republicans and Democrats, who have worked hard on this bill. I hope they finish the debate and pass this important legislation. It'll be a strong positive message.

I'm looking forward to the trip. I'm honored to represent the greatest nation on the face of the Earth in capitals around Europe. And I look forward to reporting back to the American people upon my return.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.