

Remarks Prior to Discussions With the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Jordan,
and Saudi Arabia and an Exchange With Reporters
July 18, 2002

The President. I have a short statement here, and then I'd be glad to answer two questions; I'll call on the people. Then we need to get to our meeting.

I want to thank the Ministers for coming today. Secretary of State Powell has been working hard to work on an initiative that we believe will bring peace to the Middle East.

Our vision of peace says that there ought to be two states living side by side in peace. Our vision for peace recognizes that there must be security in the region. Our vision for peace understands that too many Palestinians suffer; they suffer from lack of food and basic services. Our vision for peace understands that all parties have got responsibilities: The United States has a responsibility; the neighborhood has responsibilities; the Israelis have a responsibility; the Palestinians have a responsibility. And we will continue to work with all parties to achieve the pathway to peace.

And I want to thank the Ministers for coming. They represent governments that are anxious to work with us, anxious to work toward achieving the vision that we all hope will happen soon. It's in the best interests of the world that we do achieve peace in the Middle East, and I'm looking forward to continuing our dialogs.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Dick Keil [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Reform of the Palestinian Authority

Q. Mr. President, would you be willing to consider a permanent Palestinian state that included Chairman Arafat in some sort of ceremonial role or as President?

The President. As I mentioned—I think it was yesterday, I think, I had a press conference. My, time flies. The issue is bigger than any single person. And our discussions will center on how to have

institutionals—institutions in place that will truly represent the will of the Palestinian people, that will give confidence to the world that we can spend money in a way that helps the Palestinians, that when we talk about security, there are security forces there aimed at protecting people from terrorist attack, as opposed to enabling people to stay in office.

You know, it's very interesting that these leaders came to our country to discuss peace, and the terrorists attacked. It's clear that a few want to damage the hopes of many. And by working to put institutions in place that will help on security and finances and government, institutions which will outlast any single leader—and so that's what we're going to discuss today.

Mark Smith [Associated Press Radio].

Middle East Security Arrangement/Timing of Terrorist Attacks

Q. Mr. President, what do you think of the idea of having troops and others from the Egyptian and Saudi and Jordanian sides help train security forces for the Palestinians? And, sir, yesterday there was another double suicide bombing just after you used the word "progress." Do you think that's a coincidence?

The President. You know, I'm beginning to think that every time we have a high-level meeting, something happens. It's not coincidental. I think the enemies of peace try to send signals, try to derail peace, and try to discourage us. And one of the things I'm going to tell the leaders today is we refuse to be discouraged. We're going to continue to work for peace, continue to push hard for peace, because we think it's a—we know it's in our vital interests.

In terms of who trains whom for security, that's part of the ongoing discussions, and that's what we want to discuss. George

Tenet has laid out a plan, and part of the plan is to work with the nations present here as to how to effect a security arrangement that will be effective and will work. That's what we want to do, and that's what we want to discuss.

Listen, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The President met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Maher of Egypt; Minister of Foreign Affairs Marwan Muasher of Jordan; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faysal al Saud of Saudi Arabia. A reporter referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks to the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York July 19, 2002

The President. Thank you all. Thank you, General, and thank you all for such a warm welcome. I'm honored to be here. I've been looking forward to coming to Fort Drum.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. It gives me a chance to come to one of our Nation's finest military bases.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. But more importantly, it gives me a chance to speak to some of the finest Americans we have, our soldiers and their families. I'm proud of you. You have a vital mission, especially in this time of war. And you do it well, and you do the mission with honor.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. The 10th Mountain Division patch stands for the skill and it stands for the power of our military, and it stands for the best values of the United States of America.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Many of you just returned from service abroad in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Others have come home from duty in Kosovo or Bosnia.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And the Sinai.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Troops from this base will be needed again in missions yet to come.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. But you have the Nation's gratitude for all you've done and the Nation's confidence in all you will do.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I want to thank General Huber for his service to our country. I want to thank Judy Hagenbeck, the wife of Major General Buster Hagenbeck, with whom I got to speak via one of these teleconferencing apparati. [Laughter]

I want to thank General Larry Ellis for his leadership. I want to thank Colonel John Kelly. I want to thank Major General Ken Lopez. I want to thank all those who wear the uniform, on behalf of a mighty nation.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I want to thank my friend Governor George Pataki of the State of New York. I appreciate you being here, Governor. I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, who is here. I appreciate members of the New York congressional delegation who have taken time out of their schedules to come, Senator Clinton, Congressman McHugh, Congressman Boehlert, Congressman Reynolds, Congressman Sweeney, and Congressman Walsh. I want to thank the State officials who are here. I want to thank the local officials who are