

## Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters November 13, 2002

*The President.* We just had a very productive Cabinet meeting. I want to thank all those who serve in my Cabinet for their service to the country. We talked about issues facing the country. We talked about the need to secure the homeland. We talked about our economy. We talked about making sure that we lead, particularly when it comes to being wise with the taxpayers' money.

We have a responsibility to spend people's money wisely. And so we had a little budget session here, to make sure that, as we come back to deal with the '03 budget as well as the '04 budget, we do so in a way that resists the temptation in Washington to overspend. We feel strongly that we can meet our Nation's priorities and be wise with the people's money at the same time.

I'll be glad to answer some questions. Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

### *Usama bin Laden/Radio Message*

Q. Sir, is bin Laden alive? And whether or not he is, does the recording signal the potential for an imminent terrorist attack?

*The President.* We are looking at this latest tape. Our experts are analyzing the voice content, and we'll let them speak about whether it's him or not. Nevertheless, the contents of the tape—the message is a serious message. And it reminds—should remind all of America and remind our friends and allies that there is an active enemy that continues to hate, is willing to use murder as a way to achieve their goals.

Whoever put this tape out has put the world on notice yet again that we're at war and that we need to take these messages very seriously. And we will. We'll take them seriously here at home by working with the appropriate authorities to deal with threats. And we'll take them seriously abroad by continuing our hunt. We'll chase these peo-

ple down, one at a time. It doesn't matter how long it takes, we'll find them and bring them to justice.

Q. Shouldn't we have found him sooner though, looking back on Tora Bora?

*The President.* We're making great progress in the war on terror. Slowly but surely, we are dismantling the terrorist network. We're finding their sanctuaries. We're holding people to account. Our coalition of freedom-loving nations is up to 90 now. There is an international manhunt on. I warned the American people that this is going to take time, to achieve our objective. We're in a different kind of war. It's a war that requires international cooperation. We've got to cut off their money. We've got to share intelligence. And we're on a manhunt, and we're not quitting. Slowly but surely, we're achieving our objective.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters].

### *Iraqi Response to U.N. Resolution*

Q. Sir, what happens on Friday if Iraq fails to say it will comply? Do you go back to the U.N. or immediately move into a military posture?

*The President.* I have told the United Nations we'll be glad to consult with them. But the resolution does not prevent us from doing what needs to be done, which is to hold Saddam Hussein into account. We hope that he disarms. We hope that he will listen to the world. The world has spoken. A diverse group of nations in the Security Council spoke with one voice. The United States Congress spoke with one voice. And that is, in the name of peace, he must disarm. If he chooses not to disarm, we will disarm him. That should be clear to Saddam Hussein and everybody else. And if he chooses not to disarm, we will have a coalition of the willing with us. A lot of nations understand that in

order to keep the peace, Saddam Hussein must be disarmed—decisions he makes.

There's no negotiations with Mr. Saddam Hussein. Those days are long gone. And so are the days of deceit and denial. And now it's up to him. And I want to remind you all that inspectors are there to determine whether or not Saddam Hussein is willing to disarm. It's his choice to make. And should he choose not to disarm, we will disarm him.

Dick [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Q. Mr. President, following on that, could you give us in as plain words as possible what you believe will constitute a material breach of his obligations?

*The President.* Zero tolerance—that's about as plain as I can make it. We will not tolerate any deception, denial, or deceit, period.

Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News].

Q. Sir, good morning.

*The President.* You're looking beautiful today, by the way. [Laughter]

Q. Why, thank you. So are you. [Laughter]

*The President.* You don't qualify. [Laughter]

#### *National Economy/Terrorism Insurance Legislation*

Q. Sir, Alan Greenspan said today that the economy has hit a soft patch. He also said that households have become more cautious in their purchases while business spending is not showing substantial vigor. What do you plan to do about this? Do you think this is an indictment of your tax cut, or do you take this as a call that a new round of such tax relief is necessary?

*The President.* I think that, first of all, I appreciate the wisdom of Chairman Greenspan. He uses the word "soft spot." I use the words "bumping along." Both of us understand that our economy is not nearly as strong as it's going to be. And our job here in Washington is to create the environment necessary for people to feel confident about risking capital and to

create an environment amongst our consumers where they're confident about the future.

And one way that we have addressed this problem up to now is to insist that Congress allow people to keep more of their own money. And it seemed to have worked well during the first three quarters of this year. And to the extent that we need to continue doing that, I'm willing to listen to ideas. And I want to work with Congress. I sent a signal to Congress that I believe that we need to have further discussions how to best stimulate the economy, and I'm very serious about that.

And so when the Congress comes back from the—when the new Congress comes back, we will have some ideas to discuss with them. We've always—in Washington, we've got to be constantly on alert about people not being able to find jobs. And we've got to be working together to put the environment in place so they can find jobs. Like the Chairman, I am not satisfied with the economic growth of the country. Like the Chairman, I am worried when people can't find work.

And we've been active in the past on economic vitality. We will continue to be. One way Congress can help immediately, in terms of the job picture, is to pass a terrorism insurance bill so that the hardhats can find work. People complain about the cost of a terrorism insurance bill. There is no cost if there's no terrorist attack, and if there's a terrorist attack, a terrorism insurance bill will mitigate the damage of a terrorist attack. It makes eminent sense from a—to have a terrorism insurance bill. And I hope the Congress can get it done before they go home.

Q. But what about the deficit though, in this context?

*The President.* Well, we have a deficit because tax revenues are down. Make no mistake about it, the tax relief package that we passed—that should be permanent, by the way—has helped the economy and that

the deficit would have been bigger without the tax relief package.

The deficit is caused by the fact that revenues have not come in. And there's two things we can do about it: One, stimulate the economy to create more revenues; and two, hold down spending. And today we spent time here at the Cabinet talking about how we hold down spending. And

we hope the Congress gets that message as well.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations *November 13, 2002*

*President Bush.* The Secretary-General and I are going to have some opening statements, only statements. First, I do want to welcome the Secretary-General here. I'm grateful for your leadership at the United Nations. A while ago, the United Nations Security Council made a very strong statement that we, the world, expects Saddam Hussein to disarm for the sake of peace. And the U.N. stepped up to its responsibilities, and I want to thank you for that, Mr. Secretary-General. I appreciate your leadership.

I'm looking forward to our discussion. Of course, I'll remind the Secretary-General that our war against terror is a war against individuals whose hearts are full of hate. We do not fight a religion. As a matter of fact, by far the vast majority of American citizens respect the Islamic people and the Muslim faith. After all, there are millions of peaceful, loving Muslim Americans.

Some of the comments that have been uttered about Islam do not reflect the sentiments of my Government or the sentiments of most Americans. Islam, as practiced by the vast majority of people, is a peaceful religion, a religion that respects others. Ours is a country based upon tolerance, Mr. Secretary-General, and we respect the faith, and we welcome people of all faiths in America. And we're not

going to let the war on terror or terrorists cause us to change our values.

And so, Mr. Secretary-General, I'm honored that you're here at the Oval Office. I'm proud to call you friend, and welcome.

*Secretary-General Annan.* Thank you very much, Mr. President. If I may comment on the last point you raised, I share your view entirely that every region and people of every faith have also been victims of terrorists. This is a scourge that affects all of us, regardless of region or religion. And we need to stand together to defeat terrorism.

And this is where the work of the United Nations and effective implementation of this Resolution 1373 is absolutely crucial. We need to work to deprive terrorists of the opportunities by not giving them haven, by not giving them financial and logistical support. And I think the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council is doing a good job in trying to make sure we all work together on that.

With regards to the Iraq decision, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for working with the United Nations and the Council and working through the Council. And I remember when you came to the U.N. on the 12th of September, nobody knew which way you were going to go. And in my own speech before yours, I was pleading that