

Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohammed of Malaysia; and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of

Italy. A reporter referred to King Abdullah II of Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

## Statement on Senate Passage of Partial-Birth Abortion Legislation *October 22, 2003*

I applaud the Senate for joining the House in passing the ban on partial-birth abortion. This is very important legislation

that will end an abhorrent practice and continue to build a culture of life in America. I look forward to signing it into law.

## Statement on the Death of Don Luis Ferre *October 22, 2003*

Don Luis Ferre was a distinguished statesman and a great American, who dedicated himself to his family and the economic and cultural growth of Puerto Rico. As a member of Puerto Rico's House of Representatives, president of the senate, and Governor, he was an effective advocate for the political empowerment of the people of Puerto Rico. He was widely recog-

nized as a strong leader in his community. In 1991, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his years of distinguished service to America. He was a good friend of my family, and I valued his advice and counsel.

Laura joins me in sending our condolences to the Ferre family and to the people of Puerto Rico.

## Exchange With Reporters Following Discussions With Prime Minister John Howard of Australia in Canberra, Australia *October 23, 2003*

*President Bush.* Can't get any better than that. [*Laughter*]

### *Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

*Q.* Mr. Bush, did you discuss the free trade agreement? And how are you committed to keeping agriculture in the free trade agreement if it goes ahead?

*President Bush.* What I'm committed to is seeing that we can get this free trade agreement done by the end of December. That's what John and I talked about in Crawford. I think a free trade agreement

with Australia would be good for America, good for American workers. I also believe that it would be good for Australia.

*Prime Minister Howard.* Very good.

*President Bush.* And the commitment we talked about was to make sure our negotiators push forward with a deal. Obviously, agriculture is an important issue; intellectual property is an important issue. There's a lot of important issues that we've got to work through if—and I think we can.

*Prime Minister Howard.* Thank you, American?

*President Bush.* Yes, Tom.

*War on Terror*

*Q.* Mr. President, the Defense Secretary has written a memorandum saying there have been mixed results in the war on terror, that it's going to be a long, hard slog, and no bold steps have been taken yet. Do you agree with that characterization?

*President Bush.* What I agree with is that the war on terror is going to be tough work, and it's going to take a while. And we're making great progress. We're dismantling the Al Qaida network. They hide in hills, in caves, and you know, they hide in free societies. And it takes a while to find them, which is why John Howard and I talked a lot about sharing intelligence and finding these killers before they kill again, people like Hambali, who was routed out of society. The Australians and the Prime Minister were very helpful, as was our intelligence service. But the success went to the Thai authority.

*Prime Minister Howard.* Yes, I met the general that handcuffed him.

*President Bush.* Yes, he's a good fellow. Anyway, we've got work to do. This is a long war on terror. And removing Saddam Hussein from power was an important part of winning the war on terror. Ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban was an important part of winning the war on terror.

I haven't seen the Secretary's comments, but somebody told me they thought he said we need to make sure our military's intelligence services are focused on the war on terror. And I couldn't agree more with you. That's exactly what we're doing.

*Australian Detainees in Guantanamo Bay/  
Iraq*

*Q.* Mr. President, on the war on terror, and in light of the Rumsfeld memo, are you inclined now to ask Australia for more assistance in Iraq? And how long do you intend to hold the two Australians detained in Guantanamo Bay without charge or trial?

And have you discussed that with the Prime Minister?

*President Bush.* I did discuss it with the Prime Minister. There's a process, ongoing process to deal with these two people that were picked up off of a battlefield of war. And I think one of the—somebody in the Australian media, when they were in America, asked me about torture or some—it's alleged allegations of torture. It's ridiculous, utterly ridiculous. And we will deal with them in a—in a way that conforms to our standards.

John—the Prime Minister—I keep calling him John; we're close friends. The Prime Minister and I have talked about the procedures, and I assured him these people will be taken care of in a way that conforms with our rules and regulations.

The first question was—oh, Iraq. Listen, Australia has made a tremendous contribution in Iraq. Their troops were fantastic. They laid it on the line, and every military person I talked to about the contribution of the Australians was—had high praise for the skill and the strength and spirit of the Aussie troops.

In my judgment, Australia has made a significant contribution to peace and freedom, and the people of Iraq who suffered in the hands of a brutal tyrant are very thankful for the contributions of the Australians.

Adam.

*Australia-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, you called Australia a "sheriff." Does that mean Australia should flex its military might more in Asia? And Mr. Howard, how do you see the job of a sheriff?

*President Bush.* Yes, Adam—can I put it in context?

*Q.* Please.

*President Bush.* I was asked the question, is Australia America's deputy sheriff; that was the question. It was a very careful, clever question. I don't think you were—I don't think you asked it, Adam. And my

answer was, “No, we’re equal. We’re equal partners on the war on terror. We’re equal partners working for a world that’s more free.”

And today in my speech to the Parliament, I will praise Australia’s work in this part of the world. I’ll note the fact that Australia led in East Timor. And Australia’s—Australia is carrying a heavy load, for which we are grateful. And I appreciate you, Mr. Prime Minister.

I said Mr. Prime Minister—somebody told me that they made fun of me for calling—or they made fun of the Prime Minister, when they call him “the man of steel.” I’m going to repeat the words. That’s a high compliment. That means in the face of criticism, he’s staying strong, that he does what he think is right. And the world is better for the leader—leaders like Prime Minister John Howard.

*Prime Minister Howard.* You asked me, did the President put in correct and proper Texan—we were in Crawford. And so the language of sheriff and deputy sort of rolls easily off any tongue, particularly an American tongue.

Look, our role in the region is—I’ve categorized it as that of *helpem fren*. That is—for the benefit of the Americans, that is pidgin English used by the Pacific Islanders. It means helping a friend. And I see Australia’s role in the region as helping friends. And that’s what we’re doing in the Solomons. It’s what we did in East Timor. It’s what we may have to do again in other parts of that region. But when necessity arises, we help people. We don’t see ourselves as having any kind of enforcement role, but we’re always good to our allies, particularly the United States, to defend values that are important to both our societies.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:46 a.m. at the Australian Parliament House. In his remarks, he referred to Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin (known as Hambali), Al Qaida’s chief operational planner in Southeast Asia; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A reporter referred to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks to the Australian Parliament in Canberra October 23, 2003

*President Bush.* Governor-General Michael Jeffery, Prime Minister John Howard, Speaker of the House, Leader of the Senate, Leader of the Opposition Simon Crean, distinguished Members of the House and the Senate, Premiers, members of the diplomatic corps, ladies and gentlemen: Laura and I are honored to be in the Commonwealth of Australia. I want to thank the Prime Minister for his invitation. I want to thank the Members and Senators for convening this session of the Parliament. I want to thank the people of Australia for a gracious welcome.

Five months ago, your Prime Minister was a distinguished visitor of ours in Crawford, Texas, at our ranch. You might remember that I called him a “man of steel.” [Laughter] That’s Texan for “fair dinkum.” [Laughter] Prime Minister John Howard is a leader of exceptional courage who exemplifies the finest qualities of one of the world’s great democracies. I’m proud to call him friend.

Americans know Australia as a land of independent and enterprising and good-hearted people. We see something familiar here, something we like. Australians are