

divide the United States or Europe or Russia and Europe or Russia and the United States on the subject. There needs to be—and I said this the other day—I said, “We’ve got to go speak with a common voice.” And that’s important for the ayatollahs to hear, a common voice, in order to achieve the objective we all want.

I’m looking forward to it.

Q. Sir——

The President. Yes. Andrei, is this a followup?

Q. Yes, a followup, a very brief followup. You mentioned May and Moscow——

The President. Yes.

World War II Memorial

Q. Only a year ago, you dedicated the national memorial here in Washington to veterans. Does it mean they had not been recognized before? Your father was a veteran in that war.

The President. Oh, no, no, they’ve all been recognized. I mean, listen, Americans love—there have been books; the “Greatest Generation,” they were called. And this is a generation of Americans that are completely revered and loved. And I hope

there’s the same sense of veneration and love in Russia toward guys my dad’s age.

Q. There sure is.

The President. But no, you should not—that’s an interesting point you make. Just because it took a while to get the site, the money raised, the architecture done, does not—should not reflect the great appreciation that our Nation has for those who fought in World War II.

Okay, guys, thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 9:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, and the transcript was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 11:59 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda of Slovakia. He also referred to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), a component of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force operating in Afghanistan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With TV3-France February 18, 2005

France-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much to welcome Francois. You and President Chirac want to improve your relationship after bitter divisions on Iraq. How do you plan, yourself, to take concrete steps with France, with the allies, and restore credible cooperation on the hardest issues, like Middle East for instance?

The President. Sure. No, I think that’s a great question because inherent in your question is the understanding that there—we share a lot of values. Both our nations value human rights and human dignity and

rule of law and transparency. And we value our friendship from years gone by. And I look forward to working with President Chirac. We’ve have our differences, and now is the time to set those aside and focus on peace in the Middle East. I’ll work with the French on—to help the Lebanese have a free and fair election and a burgeoning democracy. And I’ll work with the French to continue to help with the Middle Eastern peace process. There’s a lot of areas where we need to work together. And we need to continue to work together on HIV/AIDS in Africa and hunger around the

world. And I'm looking forward to the meeting.

Syria

Q. You and President Chirac keep telling the Syrians that they have to withdraw immediately their troops.

The President. Yes.

Q. What will you do if they refuse—

The President. Well, that's—

Q. —in the coming weeks?

The President. That's a—my attitude is, is that when we speak together and convince others to speak with us, that the Syrians will get the message. And I'm a hopeful person. I'm hopeful that the President of Syria will hear the world speak. And the French have got a lot of influence in Syria, and we've got some influence as well. And the fact that we're talking together should send a clear signal to President Asad that we're very serious about this.

Iran

Q. Let's come to Iran—

The President. Sure.

Q. —which is backing terrorism and all that. If Iran refuses to stop its nuclear program, or the kind of same question, what will you do, Mr. President, with the allies or whatever?

The President. Well, I think the key is there for the Iraqis [Iranians]* to hear Europe and the United States speak with one voice. And I appreciate President Chirac and his Government and as well as the Germans and the Brits working together to say to the Iranians, "We don't want you to have a weapon." In other words, we—the—we share a goal, and that is for the Iranians not to develop a nuclear weapon. And we want to work with our friends to not only speak with one voice, clearly with one voice, but also to help others realize—like Russia realize. And I think President Putin understands that the Iranians shouldn't have weapon. I'm convinced,

again, if the Iranians hear us loud and clear, without any wavering, that they will make the rational decision.

Q. But do you trust the Iranians, this regime?

The President. Well, it's hard to trust a regime that doesn't trust their own people. And so part of our belief is that the Iranians ought to listen to the reformers in their country, those who believe in democracy and then—and give them a say in government. After all, the French model and the U.S. model believes in—people ought to be able to express themselves in a free society.

Q. Two quick last questions, Mr. President.

The President. Sure.

Iraq

Q. Iraq is having explosions, terrorist attacks every day. Do you fear about not having a national reconciliation? There might be a civil war. Do you fear also that the Shiite leaders might decide to build up the sort of theocracy like in Iran?

The President. Yes. No, of course, I'm heartened by the fact that the leadership of the Shi'a election parties, the political parties that took their message to the people, campaigned on the notion of minority rights and a unified country. There are still terrorists there. But the terrorists suffered a major defeat when over 8 million people went to the polls and said, "You will not intimidate us. You can't stop us from expressing our desire." I'm very optimistic and very encouraged about a free Iraq becoming a stable partner in peace, an ally in the war on terror, and a clear example to others in the greater Middle East that freedom is possible.

Palestinian Authority/Israel

Q. Last question, Mr. President. Near East, don't you fear that if sooner than later, Mahmoud Abbas and Ariel Sharon don't reach a global peace agreement based on land for peace, that all this bunch of

* White House correction.

Islamic group terrorists, Hamas, Jihad, Hizballah, might try to get rid of Mahmoud Abbas and get in total war with Israel?

The President. No, that's a concern, of course. And I'm impressed by President Abbas' leadership. We want to support him as he moves forward to develop a Palestinian state based upon democratic institutions. And I think we're making great progress. The good news is, is that Europe and Russia and the United Nations, the United States all understands that we've got to make progress to head off these terrorists so that they don't—so they can't capture the imaginations of the Palestinian people anymore. In other words, terrorism is not the path to peace and security and freedom and hope, and that's democracy. And we're making great progress.

And I look forward to talking to President Chirac about the progress we're making and remind him, as well as the people

of France, that we'll stay engaged. The United States of America sees a settlement within reach, like I said in my State of the Union, and therefore, if you can see it in reach, it means all the more reason to stay fully engaged in the peace process.

Q. I wish you all the very best, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, sir. Looking forward to it. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:34 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. The interviewer referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With VRT Belgian Public Broadcasting February 18, 2005

Europe-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, it's your first international trip in your second term. Does it mean that transatlantic relations are a top priority now for you? And how are you going to restore the European confidence in the American politics?

The President. Yes. No, the transatlantic relations have always been a top priority, because of all the nations in the world, we share common values—America is more likely to share common values of peace and freedom and human rights and human dignity. And we've had our differences, obviously. But that's okay. The key is to move past differences and to focus on how we can leave behind a legacy of peace and freedom for our children and grandchildren.

And so I'm looking forward to it. I want to thank the Belgian Government and the Belgian people for hosting the meetings, the NATO meetings and the EU meetings. And Laura and I are anxious to come. It's—we've got very fond memories of our first trip to Belgium. This is a chance to reconfirm a vital relationship and to say there's so much we can do, whether it be in the Middle East or joining together to fight disease and poverty and terror. There's a lot we can do.

Iraq

Q. Iraq is a big issue, of course. During your trip, Belgium—NATO joined in for the training program. Belgium, well, they only are contributing financially. Are you going to insist on more support from a country as Belgium and from Europe?