

Iranians, “We speak with common voice, and we share suspicions because of your past behavior. And the best way to ensure that you do not develop a nuclear weapon is for you to have no enrichment of plutonium—have no highly enriched uranium program or plutonium program that could lead to a weapon.” That’s what we’ve said.

And we’ve just started the process. We just had the discussion. How long ago was I in Europe? Maybe 10 days or so, 2 weeks? About 2 weeks? I mean, it takes a while for things to happen in the world, David. I mean, I know there’s a certain impatience with a never-ending news cycle. But things don’t happen on—necessarily overnight the way some would like them, you know. They just—solve this issue, and we go to the next issue. There’s a certain patience required in order to achieve a diplomatic objective. And our diplomatic objective is to continue working with our friends to make it clear to Iran we speak with a single voice.

Listen, whoever thought about modernizing this room deserves a lot of credit. [Laughter] It’s like there’s very little oxygen in here anymore. [Laughter] And so for the sake of a healthy press corps and a healthy President, I’m going to end the

press conference. But I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and visit. I wish you all—genuinely wish you all a happy Easter holiday with you and your family.

Thank you.

Q. Can I get that followup now?

The President. What?

Q. Can I get that followup now? [Laughter]

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 10:15 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada; President Vicente Fox of Mexico; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; Robert C. Pozen, chairman, MFS Investment Management; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Paula, Catherine, Donna, Claire, and Gemma McCartney, and Bridgeen Hagans, sisters and fiancée of Robert McCartney, who was murdered in Belfast, Ireland, on January 30; and authors Joseph J. Ellis and David McCullough. A reporter referred to Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams.

Remarks Following Discussions With Maronite Patriarch of Antioch Nasrallah Boutros Cardinal Sfeir of Lebanon

March 16, 2005

President Bush. Your Eminence, welcome. It is my honor to welcome you and your distinguished delegation to the Oval Office. We’re—thank you for your conversation.

His Eminence and I discussed, of course, Lebanon and our deep desire for Lebanon to be a truly free country—free where people can worship the way they choose to, free where people can speak their mind, free where political parties can flourish, a

country based upon free elections. And I assured His Eminence that United States policy is to work with friends and allies to insist that Syria completely leave Lebanon, Syria take all her troops out of Lebanon, Syria take her intelligence services out of Lebanon, so that the election process will be free and fair.

His Eminence is a man of God. He brings great prestige of the church to the Oval Office. And I’m proud you’re here,

Your Eminence, and thank you for your time.

Now His Eminence would like to say a few words.

Cardinal Sfeir. Thank you very much, Mr. President. We come to the White House in response to the invitation of His Excellency, President George W. Bush, and we thank him for his cordial and warm reception. I would also like to express my deep gratitude for his sincere interest in Lebanon, the freedom of its people, and in peace in Lebanon and the world.

This was a good opportunity to exchange views on the situation in Lebanon and the questions of freedom and democracy in our region. We profited from this occasion to convey to President Bush the views and aspirations of all the Lebanese.

The Lebanese, above conviction, are alarmed by the continued migration of Christian and Muslim youths due to the lack of job opportunities and the suffocating political conditions at home. We look for-

ward to see these conditions reversed because the future of Lebanon requires the talents and energy of all her children.

It is important to recall that Lebanon was the first democracy—democratic country in the region. Maybe it was not a perfect democracy, but Lebanon remains the role and the point of departure for the spread of democracy in the region. This why His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, stated that Lebanon is an ideal for freedom and democracy for the East and West, and this is what we have repeated here.

We are hopeful that the Lebanese, with the support of their friends around the world, will be able to build a better future in a free, independent, pluralistic, and sovereign Lebanon.

Thank you.

President Bush. Your Eminence, thank you, sir. Proud you're here, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation Funding the War on Terror

March 16, 2005

I applaud the House of Representatives for its strong bipartisan support for our troops and for our strategy to win the war on terror. The people of Iraq and Afghanistan are building new democracies and defying the terrorists, and America is standing with them. Both countries are assuming greater responsibility for their own security,

which will help our troops return home as quickly as possible with the honor they have earned.

I thank the House for its quick action and look forward to working with the Senate so that all of my top priorities are included in the final legislation.