

The President. I really—I appreciate that. I'm perplexed by that attitude, because Europeans have got very good leaders.

Q. But your decisions influence our lives.

The President. Well, sometimes they do, and sometimes European decisions influence American lives. But the best way to influence the world is to work together in a collaborative spirit. And I appreciate the leadership in the Netherlands. I get along very well with the leadership, and I am—my pledge is to continue to work as closely as we possibly can.

Listen, there's going to be differences of opinion. You mentioned the International Criminal Court. We're not going to join it, and there's a reason why we're not going to join it: We don't want our soldiers being brought up in front of unelected judges. But that doesn't mean

that we're not going to hold people to account, which we're doing now in America. And—nor does it mean that even though we may disagree on the Court, that we can't work for other big goals in the world.

And so, again, on my second trip to Europe since I've been the President, I'm going to continue to emphasize my desire to work with others to achieve peace.

Q. Okay, Mr. President.

The President. Welcome.

Q. Thank you again.

The President. Yes. Thanks for coming.

Q. And enjoy your stay in the Netherlands.

The President. I'm looking forward to it.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 9:48 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast.

Interview With European Print Journalists May 5, 2005

The President. I'm looking forward to this trip, second trip to Europe since my second Inauguration, second time to the Baltics since I've been President. I've been to Russia a lot of times, first time to Georgia in my life and first time to the Netherlands in my life. And I'm looking forward to the experience.

I'm going to celebrate with others the end of World War II. It's a chance to give thanks to those who sacrificed. It is a moment to understand that with each generation comes responsibilities to work to achieve peace. It will be a solemn occasion in the graveyard, but one in which I will be able to express our appreciation to the Dutch for her friendship and remind the world that we still have great duties. And one of the greatest duties of all is to spread freedom to achieve the peace.

I look forward to going to the Baltics again. When the Baltics first got into

NATO, I remember commenting to somebody sitting close to me, I said, "This is going to be a fantastic addition to NATO, because countries that have been—that really appreciate freedom are now amidst a great Alliance, reinvigorating the concept of why we exist in the first place, to defend freedom."

And I look forward to seeing the leaders from the free countries. I look forward to my speech in Latvia, which talks about democracy and the spread of democracy. But also with democracy has got certain obligations, rule of law, transparency, and the protection of minority rights—protection of minorities, upholding minority rights.

I'm looking forward to going to Russia. I'll have a private dinner with President Putin. It will be a part of an ongoing dialog I have with him as we learn to continue

to respect each other and have a frank dialog about our countries' ambitions, decisionmaking.

When you get close to a leader, as I have done with a lot of leaders around the world, it enables one to be able to really understand, learn to understand how a person makes decisions and why a person makes decisions, the philosophy on which a person makes decisions, the justification for decisions. And I look forward to continuing that dialog with President Putin. He'll want to know why I'm making decisions, and I want to know why he's making decisions.

And then we'll, of course, talk about areas of common concern. Russia is playing a very important role around the world, starting with Iran, for example. Russia is playing a very constructive role in helping to bring peace. Russia is a part of the Quartet. As we all work to achieve peace in the Middle East, Russia has an important role to play. Vladimir is going to want to know from me what's happening in Iraq, from my perspective, and I'll be glad to share it with him. And we'll, of course, discuss North Korea. After all, Russia and the United States are part of the six-party talks.

And then I'll be going to Georgia. I was asked why I picked Georgia, and I can remember the enthusiasm President Saakashvili had when he invited me to come. It was contagious. In other words, a verbal invitation, it was just incredibly contagious. He is enthusiastic about your country, and I look forward to going and witnessing the enthusiasm of a new democracy firsthand.

And so it's a chance to go back to Europe and talk about common values, common goals, and the need for us to continue to work together.

And with that, we'll start. Is there any order, or should we just start—

Q. Yes, there is.

The President. You're the first guy?

Q. I'm from Latvia, so we—

The President. We'll just go like this; we'll be even more orderly than that. [Laughter]

Kaarel.

Democracy in Belarus

Q. Okay. Sir, about 9th of May in Moscow, how you would feel in standing in the wrong line with, let's say, Aleksandr Lukashenko and General Jaruzelski and maybe—

The President. Well, I think those people know how I feel about tyrants and dictatorship; I've made my position very clear. And I view this as a celebration to end tyranny. Although, I fully recognize the Baltics ended up with a form of government they weren't happy with. It's a moment to remind people that when the world works together, we can end tyranny. And it will be an interesting observation to remind people tyrants still exist.

I look forward to Belarus working with the Baltics and other countries to insist that democracy prevail there. As you know, Condi Rice came to your neighborhood and spoke very clearly about the need for democracy to exist. When I was in Slovakia, I met with freedom fighters, freedom lovers from different countries, and a group were there from Belarus. I reminded them that we believe you should be free, and there is ways to achieve that, and we can work together to achieve that. But seeing these people will just redouble my efforts, if they're there.

Yes, sir.

President's Upcoming Visit to Latvia

Q. Mr. President, as you've said, this will be the second visit by a President of the United States to Latvia, since we regained our independence.

The President. To the Baltics. Oh, you're saying President—I beg your pardon, yes. Yes.

Q. Second to Latvia.

The President. Yes, okay.

Q. So why did you decide to go to Latvia? And how would you characterize the relations between our countries, both historically and at present?

The President. Historically, no question the United States never recognized the form of government imposed upon Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. As a matter of fact, you might recall the history of the Embassies that were here, that were treated as independent Embassies with the flags of the free countries flying above those Embassies. In other words, we never recognized what took place. That's because we believed in your freedom.

And that hasn't changed. I was proud to represent my country the day the three Baltic countries entered NATO. I remember the leaders walking in. It was a very profound moment. And I remember going to Lithuania to give a speech in the town square there, heralding the mission into NATO and reminding people that that meant that the United States and other nations would make sure that the sovereignty of the three nations remained.

Our relations are good, very good, with Latvia. And as I'm sure the press has reported—and accurately so—I'm fond of the President. I think she is a remarkable woman. She is courageous. She is forthright. She speaks her mind, which I appreciate. Some people accuse me of speaking my mind, and I do. And I appreciate her speaking hers, because I think it's the way you deal with people respectfully. You understand there is difference of opinion, but I appreciate somebody who shares—has an openness in the relationship, a frank relationship. And that's our relationship, and I'm really looking forward—I appreciate the invitation, and I'm looking forward to going.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Stasys—is that how you pronounce it?

Q. Stasys, yes. Stasys.

The President. Stasys?

Q. Yes.

The President. What does Stasys mean in English?

Q. Just a name. [Laughter]

The President. Stasys means Stasys.

Q. Yes.

The President. You're the first person I've met named Stasys.

Q. Not the first person I've met who didn't like joke, yes. [Laughter]

The President. How about George W.?

Lithuania's Role in Afghanistan

Q. First one. [Laughter] Okay.

Mr. President, one of the greatest challenges for Lithuania as a member of NATO—a NATO member for a year now, it's taking a lead in restoration of one of Afghanistan's province. Isn't this mission too hard for this small country? And will the United States help us politically, technically, and financially?

The President. Yes to the latter, to the extent that Congress is willing to appropriate money. We make requests for reimbursements to allies in various theaters. A country would not have—first of all, you're a free country, and you make decisions based upon what you think your country can handle. And the fact that Lithuania has agreed to lead one of the reconstruction teams, I think is a statement of progress and a statement of principle; progress in that Government feels like it's plenty capable of handling the responsibility; statement of principle that free countries have an obligation to work together to promote freedom for the good of mankind.

And after all, the lesson of Europe—60 years ago, leaders were sitting around, I don't think they were spending a lot of time wondering whether or not peace—Europe could be whole, free, and at peace. Imagine the trauma. But there were visionaries, visionaries in Europe, visionaries around in America and around the world that said, "If we work for freedom, we'll leave the world a more peaceful place."

And Europe is a much-changed place. Sixty years is a long time for some, but

in the scheme of things, it's not that long. And yet, 60 years after trauma and sacrifice that we'll be honoring in a graveyard in Holland, Europe is at peace, remarkably at peace. And times are changing. And Lithuania and other countries recognize that by working together today in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, we'll be able to look back at free societies and say, "Those free societies left behind a more peaceful world."

And so I'm proud of your country and proud of the decisions made. And of course, there will be help. The idea of putting out a country without the support is just not part of the coalition strategy.

Yes, ma'am.

Democracy in Georgia

Q. Mr. President, your visit to Georgia is really a historical moment for all Georgians, and I'm sure a lot of people will meet you at Freedom Square. And these people think that your visit shows America's growing interest and support—supports Georgia in its pursuit of democracy. How does the America's rising interest in this country, and what must be done by the Georgian Government, itself, to make this interest and support sustainable?

The President. Great question. American interest was obviously piqued with the success of the Rose Revolution. Interestingly enough, the Rose Revolution led to other revolutions—the Orange Revolution. The desire for people to be free is universal, and sometimes the decision by people to take peaceful actions to insist upon democracy sparks interest elsewhere, kind of lights a wildfire.

And so that's why—that's what first got the attention of the American people about what took place in Georgia. Listen, Americans love freedom. It's something that is part of our nature. And we recognize that people are going to develop government that matches their cultures and their histories, but we love the idea of people being

free. And the Rose Revolution captured our imaginations and our appreciation.

The Government of Georgia is making very difficult but important decisions, routing out corruption, for example, insisting upon rule of law and transparency, all of which will help pique American interest when it comes for investment. Nobody wants to invest in a society in which you don't get a fair shake in the courts or the rules change or you have to be corrupt in order to make your investment worthwhile.

So the Russian—I mean, the Georgian Government is making very good decisions about basic fundamental pillars of democracy, which serve as a great example for people around the world. Listen, it's hard to go from a society in which you've had a government imposed on you to a free society. It's just difficult. It's hard to go from a tyranny to liberty. And yet we live in a world where everybody expects it to happen overnight. And yet the Georgian example shows that with time, diligence by a government, that positive foundations can be laid.

And so I will praise those foundations. Again, I'll thank the Georgian people as well for not only setting an example but also willing to lend troops, for example, in Iraq, on that theory—which I believe is true, as does the Georgian leadership—that freedom will equal peace. That's what we want.

I'm really looking forward to the experience. I'm looking forward to giving a speech in Freedom Square. As a matter of fact, I'm getting ready to go over the speech here this morning. I want to make sure that when I say something, it's got meaning. And it's going to be an exciting moment for me. I thank the people of Georgia for inviting me—

Q. For many Georgians as well. Everybody is very excited.

The President. It's going to be great.

Yes, sir.

Aftermath of September 11/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, a few months ago you mentioned in Brussels the violence in the Netherlands. I presume you referred then to the murder on moviemaker van Gogh.

The President. I did.

Q. And that murder reminded the Dutch that they have a common interest with you—with the U.S. in combating terrorism. But some critics argue that tensions in Dutch society and in the world between Muslims and non-Muslims were not only a result of 9/11 but also a result of the way you responded to 9/11, especially with the Iraq war. What is your answer to those critics?

The President. My comment was—I also heard there was some criticism about the comment that maybe I was being critical of Dutch society. Of course, I wasn't. What I was saying was—and I thank you for your question, because your question recognized the gist of my comment. My comment was, "Evil can strike anywhere." Killing innocent people is an evil act. And therefore, we must work together to share information, to cut off money, to prevent people from killing innocent people in order to achieve a political gain. And that's really what I was referring to. And I was referring to the horror of the van Gogh murder.

I have a duty to protect our country, and I took necessary actions to do so. I don't want to—I can spend a lot of time, if you like, going through the desire to go through the United Nations process and getting the resolution. The world spoke with one voice. I tried every diplomatic means necessary.

But I don't buy into the theory that taking actions to defend yourself causes extremists to murder people. I think that's part of their ideology. I think it's part of their methodologies. As a matter of fact, this notion about kind of tolerating the world as it is and hope for the best didn't work. It led to an attack on our country where 3,000 people died.

Now, look, I fully understand, in Europe that was a traumatic—a dramatic moment, but it was a passing moment. For us, it was a change of philosophy and a change of attitude, and that's been part of the issue with Europe. And I will continue to reach out to explain that our national consciousness was affected deeply by that attack. That's why yesterday, when we—we've been working with the Paks, the Paks made the arrest of this guy, Abu Faraj al-Libbi, was a big deal for us because he was a plotter. But my message to Europe, and to the Dutch in particular on this one example, was that we have a lot of work to do.

The message also is, though, that in order to defeat anger, the sentiments that cause people to want to join a extremist movement that's willing to kill innocent life and a movement which has killed innocent life all over the world, is to spread freedom. But there's no freer country in Europe than the Netherlands. And I appreciate that.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, you are going to Moscow mainly to participate in the celebration of the—[inaudible]. You will say on this occasion how you like to send a positive message to Russian people, President Putin back in Moscow, so you are going to meet with the leaders of the civil society. And many of these leaders are concerned about the dangerous tendencies in Russia, like a slackening of democracy and the—[inaudible]—of horror by gunmen. Do you like to discuss this issue along with your positive public message?

The President. Well, no, that's right. Listen, I think the fact that I'm in a country where I'm allowed to meet with people from civil society is a good signal. I mean, there is a civil society, and they're allowed to speak to the American President about concerns. I have no idea what they're going to say. I'm looking forward to it. I think it's good. And I will assure them that my message that I will give in Latvia, speaking

to the world, same message I give here at home, is the message I continue profess, and that is minorities have rights in a democracy.

And listen, believe me, our country wasn't always perfect, because it couldn't be said that minorities always had rights in America. We enslaved people for 100 years in our country. And my point in saying that is that the path to an ideal democracy is hard. And I recognize it's hard. But nevertheless, it's a path we ought to stay on for the good of our respective peoples.

And again, I repeat to you—and this is an important thing for people to understand—that a respectful relationship with a leader of a great country like Russia is important to maintain. And I have a respectful relationship. I'm able to express concerns and ask questions and get responses in a civil way. And I think that's very important to make sure our relations are good. And we don't always agree with each other. Vladimir didn't agree with Iraq. A lot of people didn't agree with Iraq. But nevertheless, I was in a position where I was able to explain it to him why I made the decision I made.

But there are a lot of problems in which we have common ground and need to work together. And I cited some of them earlier in my opening comments. And I meant them. And so I'm—I view our relationship as a crucial relationship for peace. And I believe Russia's interest lay west. And we'll continue to work with President Putin to convince him to pursue those interests. I will also remind him that decisions he makes affects the capacity to attract foreign capital. I will also thank him for the speech he gave. The kernel of the speech he gave to the state of—I'm not sure what you call it, the state of the people or state of the union or address to the people or—we call it State of the Union, but whatever you call it in Russia—was that he spent a lot of time on democracy and institutions related to democracy. I read the speech, and I'll talk to him about that.

We've got time for one more round. If you can make your questions short, I'll make my answers shorter.

Freedom and Democracy

Q. Mr. President, you're often speaking about freedom and about the march to freedom and about—freedom. How do you define freedom?

The President. Freedom, democracy?

Q. Freedom as such.

The President. Well, I view freedom as where government doesn't dictate. Government is responsive to the needs of people. I was asked by a Dutch journalist earlier, was I concerned about some of the social decisions the Dutch Government made. And I said, "No, the Government reflects the will of the people." That's what freedom—government is of the people. We say "of the people, by the people, and for the people." And a free society is one if the people don't like what is going on, they can get new leaders.

And my country had a chance to do so. Fortunately, they chose not to. But nevertheless—[laughter]—but that's free society, society responsive to people.

Again, I'll repeat to you, my vision of free governments does not reflect—I recognize they're not going to reflect what America looks like. We're different. But so is each country here different. And the governments will reflect the taste, the culture, the history of the country. But all democracies will reflect the will of the people, and that's how I define it.

Aivars.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Did I get it right?

Q. It was correct.

The President. Thank you. What does Aivars mean in English?

Q. Well, it's from—it comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "aivar," meaning the god, the lord, the housekeeper.

The President. Really?

Q. Yes. [Laughter] So may I ask a question now?

The President. Yes, sir. [Laughter] These guys—I sometimes try to throw them off balance by, “I’m asking the questions.” Anyway, go ahead. Sorry.

Russia-Baltic States Relations

Q. That’s fine. You’ve said that in Moscow you will try to understand why a person makes—what and how a person makes decisions. I would like to ask, when you meet with President Putin in Moscow, what will you say to him about Russia’s relations with the Baltic States?

The President. Well, I’ve already had this discussion with him. I will remind him that democracies on Russia’s border are very positive. See, a democracy reflects the will of the people, and people don’t like war. They don’t like conflict. They want to live in—a chance to raise their families in a peaceful environment. And it is a constructive, positive development when a country has got democracies on her border. We know firsthand in America because we’ve got democracies on our border. And we’ve got issues with Canada and Mexico, of course, but they’re resolved peacefully because we’re democracies. And that’s what I’ll remind President Putin.

Stasys.

Visa Policy

Q. Correct. [Laughter] Mr. President, when Baltic State people can expect a visa-free regime with the United States, please?

The President. Yes. Thank you for bringing that up. As you know, the visa policy that affects many of the Eastern European countries and Baltic countries was established a while ago, during a different era, and it is different from parts of Western Europe. And we’re now in the process of reevaluating our visa policy, country by country, and want to work with a way forward with each country to come up with a visa policy that affects the people fairly.

This is an issue, obviously, in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia; every country in Eastern Europe, as well as the Baltics,

has the same concern. And there is a way forward, by the way. And I’m confident your Governments are working on the way forward.

Yes, ma’am.

Georgia-Russia Relations

Q. Unresolved conflict in Georgia remain main basis for uncertainty in the whole region. So this conflict hinders our ability to achieve long-term stability and security. [Inaudible]—Russia continues to support separatist leader in breakaway territory of Georgia. In its turn, the best effort of multilateral entities, such as U.N. and the OSC, is their ability to make stability in the region, so has not been so successful so far. What concrete, more aggressive steps and initiatives can your administration take to help Georgian Government achieve more tangible results in settling this conflict?

The President. As to the bases, as I understand it, the Government of Russia has made a statement that they’ll be out of the bases. And this is obviously an issue that needs to be resolved between Georgia and Russia. I spoke to the President the other day, who asked me to bring this up when I saw President Putin. I guess I’m now bringing it up via the press. But anyway, I will, as well as the territorial issue that President Saakashvili has put a way forward. Hopefully, the Russian Government will see that as a peaceful way to resolve the issue and work with the leader in the territory there to come to the table and deal with it peacefully.

The key thing is, is that all parties agree to deal with this issue peacefully—these issues peacefully. It’s—seems that’s fair to me. I’ll be able to get a better gauge when I sit down and actually speak to people about it. But this is an issue—and it’s a very important issue that the Georgian Government work peacefully with Russia, because it will serve as an example for other issues that are now beginning to rise in a neighborhood that—listen, Russia has got a lot of territory. It’s a huge country,

and it has got a lot of countries around her border. And when these issues get resolved peacefully, the world will see the fact that the Russian Government is interested in peace and that people are able to come to the table in a way that can deal with issues that have been in the making for a long period of time.

So we need to move the process forward. We can help facilitate dialog as best as we can, but this issue will be resolved by the President of Russia and the President of Georgia and the people in the territories.

Guantanamo Bay Detainees/Abu Ghraib

Q. Mr. President, you are a transformational, they call it, and promoting democracy in the world is a very ambitious goal and achieve peace, changing the world, and it's also acknowledging Europe. But such a far-reaching idealism can also easily lead to moral inconsistencies that risk to undermine your credibility. For instance, how does the way detainees at Guantanamo Bay are being handled, how does that relate to your promotion of democracy and the rule of law?

The President. I appreciate that. That and, for example, the pictures people saw about the prison—prison abuse is different from the detainees in Guantanamo. We're working our way forward so that they—and our courts, by the way, are adjudicating this. It is a clear, transparent review of the decision I made by the courts, so everybody can see it. And they're being argued in the courts as we speak. People are being treated humanely. They were illegal non-combatants, however, and I made the decision they did not pertain to the Geneva Convention. They were not—these were terrorists.

Obviously, we've looked at Iraq differently. I can understand people being concerned about prison abuse when they see the pictures out of Abu Ghraib. And it made Americans universally sick, because the actions of those folks didn't represent the heart and soul of America, didn't rep-

resent the sentiments of the American people. And I am an idealistic person, because I believe in what is possible. I believe that freedom is universal, and I believe, if given a chance, people will seize the moment. But I'm also a realistic person, and I'm realistic enough to know that images on TV have sullied our country's image at times. And we've just got to continue to spread—tell people the truth, be open about the mistakes of Abu Ghraib, hold people to account.

Q. Would you say—can I follow up?

The President. Yes, sure.

Implications of President's Policy for Autocratic Regimes

Q. You say you are a realistic person, but there's also a problem with the limits. What are the limits of your idealistic policy? Does every autocratic regime, like Iran, just fear—just to have fear of the American military power?

The President. Oh, as I said, listen, I think issues ought to be solved diplomatically. My last choice is to commit military power. It's a very difficult, hard decision to put people in harm's way. On the other hand, I do believe people ought to be free. I said in my speech—I'm going to say it again in Europe—that we ought to have a goal to end tyranny. Why should we be content when we know people are living in fear? We should have a goal to end the pandemic of AIDS as well. In other words, these are big goals. If you don't set big goals, you never achieve big things.

And I recognize it's—I didn't say, "End tyranny tomorrow"; I said, "End tyranny over time." And in my speeches that I talk about, I always say, "We need to work with friends to achieve—and I believe we can achieve those goals." But I'm also recognizing that—there's an issue, for example, in—the idealistic position was to work with the world, the United Nations, France, and the United States to get Syria out of Lebanon. But there's a consequence to that. There will be a vacuum. And now we've

got to work, if we get Syria completely out—and I say “if” because we’re able to measure troops; it’s harder to measure intelligence services. But the statement is, “All out, not halfway out, not partially out, but all out”—and meaning it when you say it, by the way.

But there’s a consequence to that, and that consequence is, is that there will be a period of time when the Government, a new Government, is going to have to try to figure out how to make sure there’s minority rights. There’s a lot of religious groups. And there the world needs to help this new democracy—I say “new democracy,” a democracy without Syrian influence that basically determined the course of action—to help that Government go forward. That’s another role we should play. But if you didn’t have an idealistic streak in you, you wouldn’t be saying, “It’s possible to achieve democracy in Lebanon.” Yet I believe a democracy will be achieved in Lebanon, and I know it will serve as an important example in a neighborhood that is desperate for democracy.

I could keep rolling, because I believe that—I think you’re seeing the beginning of great, historic change. And it’s going to be bumpy. It’s going to be rocky, and it’s not going to be easy. I just told you, we have our own Government—here we are, the proponents of democracy, and we, ourselves, were certainly not perfect for many years. And we’ve still got work to do here at home, don’t get me wrong. But I feel passionately about the freedom movement because I truly believe that etched in everybody’s soul is the desire to be free and that there is universality in freedom. And I reject the concept that certain people cannot self-govern or shouldn’t be free because of the nature of their religion or the color of their skin.

Final question.

War on Terror/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, how countries who are allies during the war, now they are partners

and allies in the war against international terrorism. Are you satisfied with the level of coordination it—

The President. Satisfied—excuse me, satisfied with?

Q. With the level of coordination on anti-terrorist struggle, don’t you think that the selling of Russian missiles to Syria and the Russians selling automatic Kalashnikovs to Venezuela could damage these relations?

The President. First of all, our relationship with Russia is broader than just cooperation on the war on terror. Listen, Russia—and the cooperation on the war on terror is good. And we were horrified with Beslan, and I know President Putin bore a heavy burden during that period of time. And we were horrified with the subway bombings and the movie theater tragedy. It just goes to show that terrorists can strike anywhere and are willing to do so. And I appreciate the cooperation we’ve had.

But we’ve got working groups on a lot of fronts, dealing with proliferation matters, energy matters, trade matters, dealing with WTO matters, dealing with institution-building matters. We’ve got a lot of relations, and that’s good. In other words, it’s not just a unilateral relationship.

We’ve made it clear that—and by the way, Vladimir Putin went to Israel and got to explain his decision on Syrian missiles, which I thought was very interesting. And we made our position very clear on the AK-47s to Venezuela, and that is, is that we’re concerned that those weapons could end up in the hands of FARC, for example, a very destabilizing force in South America.

I do appreciate the cooperation—I was asked at a press conference by a member of our press corps about Iran, and I felt like the cooperation—the question, basically, seemed like to me to suggest that the Russians were at odds with what the United States, France, Germany, and Great Britain are doing. I don’t view it that way. I view it quite in concert with, because Russia has made it clear that the Iranians

should not be in a position to enrich uranium. And what they have suggested is that the Iranians take enriched uranium from Russia, use it in a civilian nuclear powerplant to develop power, and that Russia would then pick up the spent fuel rods. To me, that's very constructive, and I thought it was a constructive suggestion. It just goes to show that Russia is a player in the world scene and was willing to make a constructive suggestion on a very difficult issue that we're all working to try to achieve in a peaceful way, through diplomatic means.

Listen, thank you all for coming. I'm looking forward to the trip. I hope you got that sense, at least, from the conversation. I'm enthusiastic about traveling to countries. I look forward to, as best as a President is able to do, getting a sense of the people. And again, I look forward to meeting the leaders. I'm really looking for-

ward to meeting—seeing Her Majesty as well. Thanks.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:23 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House and was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 10 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia; President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus; Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, former Prime Minister of Poland; President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia; movie producer Theo van Gogh, who was murdered in Amsterdam on November 2, 2004; Abu Faraj al-Libbi, senior Al Qaida associate arrested in Pakistan on April 30; and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. He also referred to FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria May 5, 2005

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and reexportation of certain goods to Syria, is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2005,

to the *Federal Register* for publication.

The actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, and with respect to Lebanon pose a continuing, unusual, and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and reexportation of certain goods to Syria, and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.