AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO



## Interview With WGEM Radio, Quincy, Illinois

*July 17, 1993*

### *Disaster Assistance*

***Q.*** Good morning, Mr. President.

***The President.*** Good morning.

***Q.*** How are you, sir?

***The President.*** I'm fine. As you know, I'm now on Air Force One, on my way to St. Louis to a meeting with the Governors of all the affected States and a number of Cabinet-level officials. I think we have about seven or eight going down today, as well as a number of Members of Congress who have jurisdiction over the committees that are writing the relief legislation.

I wanted to call you, because your radio station has done such a remarkable job of kind of coordinating the information and keeping people in touch and keeping them up in the middle of this. I really respect what you've done, and I appreciate it very much.

***Q.*** Mr. President, this is Steve Cramblit. The people that have really done the work are the people who have been at the levees slinging the sandbags on the Mississippi River water out of their homes and out of their agricultural lands. They're really the heroes in all of this.

***The President.*** Yes, I've seen a lot of them working, as you know, on my two previous trips. It's been an amazing effort. And of course we're not out of the woods yet. I know you lost a dam there last night, and a lot of people on the other side of the river had to evacuate. And then the county down from that, Pike County, I think the name of it is, is really concerned. So we've got a few anxious days left to go.

***Q.*** Mr. President, this is Jeff Dorsey with you now, and I was down in the Pike County area yesterday. Are there any words that you can give them, something to pick up their spirits at this point after 3 weeks of fighting the Mississippi off? Can you tell them anything? They're all listening out there to you right now, sir.

***The President.*** Well, first of all, let me say that I think, you know, we may have a few more days of this, but I think in a few days it will be over. And as tough as things are, we are doing everything we can to make sure that we've got in place emergency relief help and that we are planning for the long run to stay with this process, the long run, to help people get back on their feet and go on with their lives. I've seen an awful lot of brave people in the Midwest in the last 2½ weeks, and I just would urge the folks to hang in there and not expect the worst but to prepare for it, and then we'll deal with whatever comes.

***Q.*** Mr. President, this is Bob Turek. You have already asked for $2.5 billion, and we understand that Senator Paul Simon and some of the others are saying that damage might be a lot higher. Are you going to try and seek—allow for emergency relief?

***The President.*** Yes. As the evidence comes in to support it, we decided that we really needed to get a bill up to the Congress and start moving it through. Now can you hear me? We decided we needed to get a bill up to the Congress and start moving it through. But as we get new damage estimates, we'll be giving them to the congressional committees, and the bill can be amended in the House and in the Senate to reflect the new damage estimates. And then if something comes in later, we can take new legislation up there.

But we felt very strongly that we needed to start getting the help out there just as quickly as possible and that we ought not to wait another month or so to present a bill. So that's why we're doing what we're doing. And I think it's the right thing to do. But it's not the end of the road. The bill we presented will be modified, I think, in the Congress, if the evidence comes in to support

the need for more aid. And I think we'll fulfill our responsibilities. We just want to be quick about it so that we can really give people help, and they don't get caught in the bureaucratic delay.

***Q.*** Mr. President, this is Rich Cain. We've had a number of listeners who are very concerned over the National Guard troops who have been in the area for quite some time now who are becoming somewhat fatigued and have been, in battling this fight, as well as a number of volunteers. The question is, Mr. President, is there any consideration towards possible activation of troops on the Federal level?

***The President.*** That's one of the issues that I want to talk to the Governors about today. I'm concerned that in some of the States involved, they have used all their available Guardspeople and they may be exhausted. Some of them have been working virtually around the clock. And I think that we need to look at either bringing in Guard folks from other States or maybe activating some Federal troops if, in fact, all of the State resources have been exhausted. And I'm going to take that up with the Governors today.

I know you're going to carry the meeting live on your radio station, which is something I very much appreciate, and so we'll get some answers from them and then I'll give an appropriate response. But I appreciate your bringing that up and I will check into it—in particular, in your area.

***Q.*** Mr. President, we appreciate taking your valuable time, and I know that you are preparing for that meeting today. We thank you very much. And would you give us one final word to the people of this area from the President of the United States?

***The President.*** I just want you to know that we're thinking of you, we're praying for you, we're pulling for you, and we're working. All of us are working as hard as we can with your Governors and your local representatives to try to make this crisis pass as quickly as possible. We're not in control of this situation entirely, because Mother Nature is having its way with us, as periodically happens. But I do believe that we're going to be able to get our way through this, and the courage and the good humor of the people of the Midwest has been the key element, if we can keep people thinking positively, looking toward the future, preparing for whatever might happen. We'll do our best to be there as your partners. And the rest of the country is thinking about you and really is determined, I think, to have the National Government do what it takes to help you put your lives back together and get back on track here.

Thank you so much. Goodbye.

[*The telephone interview ended, and reporters on Air Force One asked the President questions.*]

***Q.*** What are the chances of Federal troops?

***The President.*** I need to ask. It's something I thought about in Iowa the other day, where the Guardsmen there obviously have been working around the clock. What we need to do—of course the folks there, we have no way of knowing whether they are—have they mobilized the entire State Guard, can they send other Guardsmen there? You know, I need to ask about the facts, but I will, because they brought it up and because they also brought it up in Des Moines last week. We will raise that with the Governors today in the meeting. But I don't think it's appropriate for me to make that decision. They may have a lot of other Guard troops within the States that can be mobilized.

***Q.*** What's the—[*inaudible*]—decisions?

***The President.*** I have nothing to add to what's been said or speculated about. I think the Attorney General—I would refer you to her on that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. from Air Force One en route to St. Louis, MO. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

## The President's Radio Address

*July 17, 1993*

Good morning. These past 2 weeks as I've traveled across our Nation and our world, I've been reminded that Americans can rise to any challenge. The Vice President and I