

Congress will do what is right—both for our prosperity and our security.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel

April 11, 2000

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, why did you call Mr. Barak so urgently to come to Washington? What was the urgency in the matter?

President Clinton. Well, we wanted to talk to each other. It was as much his idea as mine. I think that he wants to continue to energize the peace process, move forward with the Palestinians and with his withdrawal from Lebanon, and I strongly support that, and we're going to talk about it.

Q. Mr. President, what is the United States going to do to prevent an outburst of violence in Lebanon when Israel pulls out in only 3 months?

President Clinton. Well, if Israel pulls out in accordance with the United Nations resolution, what justification will anyone have for violence? They've been asking for this for years—years and years and years.

Q. Justification or not, there is a warning that there could be a real violent—

Q. That doesn't stop Hezbollah from doing its—

President Clinton. We'll talk about that.

Q. Is there anything the U.S. can do for Israel to make the withdrawal serene, to make it peaceful?

President Clinton. Well, "serene" is a word not normally used in the context of the Middle East these days, but we'll do what we can to help, and we're going to talk about it.

Q. Mr. President, are things as bleak on the Syrian track as it seems to us?

President Clinton. Excuse me?

Q. Are things as bleak as they seem to us, on the Syrian track?

President Clinton. Well, I got an answer back from President Asad to several of the points that I raised when I met with him in Switzerland. And there are still differences, if that's what—but that's no bleaker than it was before we met. And so I think what we've

got to do is figure out where we go from there. But I think there's a lot of hope for more rapid movement on the Palestinian front, and that's what we're going to talk about.

Q. Is the door still open? Is the door still open on Syrian track? Is the door still open?

President Clinton. You should be asking him, but I think so. But there's got to be a willingness. So we've got to bridge some of these divides, and so we need to make progress where we can.

Q. Are you going to discuss a new proposal on the Syrian front?

President Clinton. Today we're going to discuss, I think, mostly the Palestinian track and Lebanon.

Q. Are you satisfied with the pace of Israel's withdrawal on the Palestinian track?

President Clinton. I think you should wait and see what happens in the next few weeks before we talk about that.

Q. Well, the—

President Clinton. We're going to talk about what's going to happen from here on in.

Israeli Weapons Sales to China

Q. [*Inaudible*—Israel's view of China? Can you talk about that issue, when you come back from the Prime Minister, Israel sell of weaponry to China? Is that going to affect things?

President Clinton. We're going to talk about that. I'm concerned about it; you know I am, and we'll talk about it.

Q. [*Inaudible*—on the Palestinian track today?

Prime Minister Barak. We have a variety of ideas to discuss about how to move to give new momentum and energy to the Palestinian track in order to live up to the timeline that we have set together with Chairman Arafat.

Q. And what are you going to tell the President about China, selling arms to China?

Prime Minister Barak. We'll discuss it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:33 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria. Prime Minister Barak referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Gun Safety Rally in Denver, Colorado

April 12, 2000

The President. Thank you. Thank you so very much for making me feel welcome. And I thank you for reminding me again what this is all about. I want to thank my long-time friend Wellington Webb for his leadership in this fight and his leadership of Denver. I thank Tom Mauser for having the courage not to be broken by his loss but to give his son the legacy he deserves.

I thank John Head and Arnie Grossman for reminding us that this is not about party politics; it's about saving people's lives. And I also want to thank my longtime friend, your former Governor, Dick Lamm, who's here, and former Governor John Love, who's not here, for also reminding us this is not about party politics. I thank Attorney General Ken Salazar and Governor Bill Owens, who is also not here, but I want to thank them both for what they tried to do in the legislature and for what they're trying to do to help you pass this referendum.

I want to thank the other SAFE board members who are here on stage. And I want to acknowledge—it's already been mentioned by Arnie, but I want to tell you that I had the privilege of meeting with the SAFE students—David Winkler, Ben Gelt, and their other colleagues in Washington. They told me today, David and Ben, that they've now been to 30 States, and they have 10,000 young people across America enlisted in this cause. So I want to thank them. I think we ought to give them a big hand. *[Applause]*

Finally, I will say more about this in a moment, but as you know, I'm trying to pass some legislation on this subject in Washington, and there are three people I want to acknowledge. First of all, a former Congressman from Maryland, Mike Barnes, who's the president of Handgun Control, who came with me, and he's up here today. Mike, thank you for coming. Secondly, Representative Diana DeGette from Colorado, who is supporting our legislation in Washington. Thank you, Diana, for what you're

doing. Thank you. Thank you. And someone who's not on the platform, I don't think, today, but who came all the way from Washington with me because he believes so strongly in this, and he wanted to express his solidarity with you, the Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, Dick Gephardt from Missouri, came all the way from Washington to be here today. And I want to thank him for doing that.

Let me say that not only Denver but the whole State of Colorado is a mile high in the eyes of your fellow Americans today. You come from all backgrounds, different communities, and surely different political parties, to speak with a single voice for common sense and safety and the future of our children. I want to tell you, first, you are not alone; and second, America is listening.

All across America, people like you are speaking up: here, where you're taking the lead, working to close the gun show loophole because the legislature wouldn't do it for you, in spite of the leadership of Governor Owens and Attorney General Salazar; in Maryland, another State with a lot of hunters and sports shooters, which yesterday became the first State to require built-in safety locks for all new handguns; in California, which banned junk guns, a new generation of assault weapons, and limited handgun sales to one a month; in Massachusetts, now enforcing consumer product safety rules for guns, banning junk guns, requiring child trigger locks and other devices to prevent children from firing guns. All these steps have helped to protect more of our children. But every child in America deserves these protections. Reducing gun violence is a national challenge.

I came here, first, to say I support what you're doing. And in spite of all the attempts to put roadblocks in your way, you must not be deterred. Your leaders told me you need 62,000 signatures to put this initiative on the ballot. The purpose of all these delaying tactics is to put off the day when you can start gathering the signatures. I want every one of you who is here today to sign up with these folks when you leave, because you ought to be able to get 62,000 signatures in 2 hours if everybody who is for this will sign up and go get the signatures.