AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia, former chairman, Republican National Committee. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik of Norway and an Exchange With Reporters

December 5, 2001

President Bush. I'm going to make a statement; the Prime Minister will make a statement. We'll be glad to answer a couple of questions apiece.

First, I want to welcome our friend to the White House. The Prime Minister has been a strong supporter in the war against terror, and for that, Mr. Prime Minister, we are very grateful.

Early on in this war, Norway stood strong against terror. I don't know if many Americans understand, but one of the key parts of the war against terror is to cut off the financing to the terrorists. And Norway, thanks to the Prime Minister and his team, shut down Al Barakaat, which we did shortly thereafter. Thanks to the information we received from you, we made a major strike against cutting off funding for Al Qaida and the murderers.

And Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for that. I'm so glad you're here. I look forward to a really good discussion about how we can combine together.

I want to say a couple of other things. First, I, along with all the rest of America, grieve for the loss of life in Afghanistan. Three of our soldiers were killed by an inadvertent bomb, and our prayers and sympathies go to the families. And I want the families to know that they died for a noble and just cause, that the fight against terror is noble and it's just, and they defend freedom. And for that, we're grateful.

On a more encouraging note, there has been great progress in Bonn. Our Government is pleased with the progress being made, that the interim government is being formed—to include women. It's a major change for that part of the world and a positive change. It's encouraging to show, Mr. Prime Minister, that not only making progress on the military front, we're making progress on the political front, as well. This interim government, as well, has pledged to fight terror, and for that, we're grateful.

And finally, next Tuesday our Nation will play the national anthem at 8:34 a.m. eastern standard time. We will do so, and we're encouraging other nations to play their anthems and/or appropriate tunes at about the same time or an appropriate time, to send this clear signal to the terrorists. They want us to be silent. They want us to shirk from our duties. They want us to forget what took place on September the 11th. We will not do so. The United States will not do so, and our friends and allies will not do so. We won't forget what took place.

And we will bring them to justice. We'll bring them to justice in Afghanistan, and we'll bring them to justice wherever they try to hide. Civilization is at stake. And the Prime Minister of Norway and the President of the United States stand united in protecting freedom and civilization.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the Oval Office.

Prime Minister Bondevik. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to express my—how grateful I am that you received me here, so few weeks after I once more took office as Prime Minister of Norway. And I also want to express my condolences to the soldiers you lost in Afghanistan. And I want to express my sympathy and solidarity with the American people. We stand firmly by you in fighting terrorism. And as you are aware of, we have also contributed—we have offered contributions to the military operations in Afghanistan, and we will talk more about that. And I think it's also so important to discuss the more long-term fight against terrorism.

I also will welcome the positive outcome of the meeting in Bonn, which I think we've paved the way for a political solution for Afghanistan, hopefully also for the women in the country, and also for reconstruction assistance and humanitarian aid. For Norway also will play a key role as the chair of the Afghanistan Support Group, from the 1st of January next year.

So I want to end up by saying that the United States is the most important ally for Norway.

President Bush. Thank you.

Prime Minister Bondevik. We share many common fundamental values. And now we will stand together, fighting terrorism for humanity.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Bondevik. Thank you.

President Bush. We'll take a couple of questions.

Q. Mr. President, has the PLO, sir——

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. I'll go with Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], and then Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News].

Q. Excuse me?

President Bush. You're first.

Q. Thank you, sir.

President Bush. Unless it's a tough question, in which case you won't go at all. [*Laughter*]

Q. Oh, then let's go to Mr. Plante, then. [*Laughter*] No. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Go ahead.

Palestine Liberation Organization

Q. Has the PLO been harboring terrorists? If so, should they be treated like the Taliban?

President Bush. The PLO, Ron, needs to stand up and rout out those killers, those murderers who are preventing us from getting a peace process in place. My Nation is committed to peace in the Middle East. Norway is committed to peace in the Middle East. But there are obviously folks who want to use the weapon of terror to derail peace. And Mr. Arafat must show leadership and bring those to justice who would use murder as a weapon to derail peace and to destroy innocent life. He must show leadership. Now is his time. And other nations around the world that are interested in peace must encourage Mr. Arafat, must insist that Mr. Arafat use everything in his power to prevent further terrorist attacks in Israel.

Q. And if not?

Q. Mr. President, may I? From Norwegian Broadcasting.

President Bush. Please, yes.

Military Tribunals

Q. A lot of people in Europe and also in Norway, sir, are very worried about the military tribunals that you're proposing. Many people are saying that when you want to save democracy, then this might be part of the way undermining democracy itself.

President Bush. Well, I appreciate that question, and I want the people of the world to understand that our great Nation will never forgo the values that have made us unique; that we believe in democracy and rule of law and the Constitution.

But we're under attack. Every morning I wake up and read the threat assessments. The evil ones still intend to harm America. And if it's in our national security interests to bring people to justice, I will use a military tribunal. And I may give you one example of why I would use one. We haven't used one yet; it's simply an option.

If we capture an Al Qaida representative, if we capture a murderer, and in order to convict that murderer it would require us giving means of how we knew he was guilty that would jeopardize the security of the United States, he'll be tried in a military tribunal. In other words, this is an ongoing conflict. There are still real threats. And I, in order to get a conviction of a murderer, will not jeopardize the people of the United States. I will not show our secrets. I will not tip our hand. I will not let the world at large, particularly our enemy, understand how we put a case together if it's going to jeopardize and compromise national security secrets of the United States of America.

My job is to protect the United States people from further attack. And that's exactly what I'm going to do and, at the same time, bring Al Qaida to justice.

Future Action Against Terrorists

Q. Mr. President, you said yesterday that you might use U.S. troops elsewhere. Where, and under what circumstances?

President Bush. Bill, I am going to work with our friends and allies to rout terror wherever it exists. But one of the things I will not do is signal to the enemy where we might strike next. I will not tip our hand in any way, shape, or form.

But I will tell you this: Those who want to commit terror against the United States or our friends and allies must beware that they will be hunted down. And those nations which harbor a terrorist or feed a terrorist or hide a terrorist or clothe a terrorist better be aware of the United States and our friends, because they will be brought to justice. Now is a time for the free world to stand up and defend the freedoms that these evil ones hate.

Norway's Role in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, what kind of role do you see for Norway in the Middle East?

President Bush. Well, that's going to be up to the Prime Minister. And we haven't had this discussion yet. I do know he's committed to peace, and for that I am most grateful. I look forward to getting his advice and counsel.

I think he would share with me the same sentiment, that it's going to be very difficult to have any kind of peace in the Middle East so long as terror runs loose, so long as there are people—individuals who feel like they can kill and murder to prevent us from getting to any kind of peace process. There is a plan in place, called the Mitchell process. But evidently, there are terrorists who can't stand the thought of peace, and they must be brought to justice.

Prime Minister Bondevik. Yes, let me add, I fully agree with the President. And I will also inform him now, during our talk, that I today had a telephone conversation with Chairman Arafat and with Prime Minister Sharon before I came here. So I have fresh messages to the President from them. And I urged Arafat to do his utmost to stop the terror, to arrest the people behind the terror. It's time for him now to show leadership. I also urged Prime Minister Sharon to avoid further escalation of violence, because I am afraid that this will bring us into a terrible situation which can end up in a war.

Now they have stopped the bombing of Palestinian targets for the last 26 hours. I hope that this ceasefire will continue and that there will be a possibility after some time to again establish contacts between the parties in the Middle East, because the alternative is so bad, to all of us.

September 11 Commemoration

President Bush. Let me make one correction, if you don't mind. The anthem will be played at 8:46 a.m., here on the White House grounds. And we're asking other nations to play their anthems or respective tunes. I wanted to correct the time, so that as we prepare this reminder about the evil and as we stand fast against terror, that we've got the correct time that we're going to do so.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. The President also referred to the Mitchell report, the Report of the Sharm al-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30. Prime Minister Bondevik referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Executive Order 13238—Closing of Federal Government Executive Departments and Agencies on Monday, December 24, 2001

December 5, 2001

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. All executive branch departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall be closed and their employees excused from duty on Monday, December 24, 2001, the day before Christmas Day, except as provided in section 2 below.

Sec. 2. The heads of executive branch departments and agencies may determine that certain offices and installations of their organizations, or parts thereof, must remain open and that certain employees must report for duty on December 24, 2001, for reasons of national security or defense or other public reasons.

Sec. 3. Monday, December 24, 2001, shall be considered as falling within the scope of Executive Order 11582 of February 11, 1971, and of 5 U.S.C. 5546 and 6103(b) and other similar statutes insofar as they relate to the