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across America. We have neighborhood healers who are performing miracles on a daily basis by helping people change their hearts and their lives. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all, and may God bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:01 p.m. in the Presidential Ballroom at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Betsy DeVos, chairman, Michigan Republican Party, who introduced the President; and Michael Kojaian, Michigan State finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

Remarks at the Korean War Memorial

July 25, 2003

I'm here to honor those who served in Korea. There is a very profound statement here at this moving memorial. It says, ''Freedom is not free.'' And today we honor those—this weekend we honor those who served in the cause of freedom in the Korean war.

This memorial is—and those who served in Korea also remind us of the challenges we face today, and it gives us a chance to reflect on the sacrifices that are being made on behalf of freedom today. And our Nation will be eternally grateful for the men and women who serve today, as we are for those who have served in the past.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:10 a.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

July 25, 2003

President Bush. Good day. I'm honored to welcome Prime Minister Abbas to the White House. It is such an honor to have you here, sir.

Prime Minister Abbas. Thank you.

President Bush. To break through old hatreds and barriers to peace, the Middle East needs leaders of vision and courage and a determination to serve the interest of their people. Mr. Abbas is the first Palestinian Prime Minister, and he is proving to be such a leader.

We had a good meeting today about the way forward on the roadmap to Middle Eastern peace. Prime Minister Abbas and I share a common goal, peace in the Holy Land between two free and secure states, Palestine and Israel.

Reaching this goal will require all sides to meet their responsibilities. We made a good progress last month at the Red Sea Summit in Aqaba. The Government of Israel recognized that Israel's own interests would be served when the Palestinians govern themselves in their own state, a peaceful, democratic state where the forces of terror have been replaced by the rule of law.

Prime Minister Abbas committed to a complete end to violence and terrorism, and he recognized that terror against Israelis, wherever they might be, is a dangerous obstacle to the achievement of a Palestinian state.

I committed to both sides that the United States will strive to see that promises are kept and monitor the parties' progress on this difficult journey.

To meet the goal we have set, we must improve the daily lives of ordinary Palestinians. For just this purpose, I recently approved a grant of $20 million directly to the Palestinian Authority. Today I'm also pleased to announce that the United States and Palestinian Authority will establish a joint Palestine Economic Development Group. This group of American and Palestinian officials will meet regularly and be charged with finding practical ways to bring jobs and growth and investment to the Palestinian economy.

In addition, I'm sending Treasury Secretary John Snow and Commerce Secretary Don Evans to the region early this fall. I'll ask them to report back to me on the steps we need to take to build a solid economic foundation for a free and sovereign Palestinian state.

In our talks this morning, Prime Minister Abbas and I covered a range of issues. We discussed the impact on the Palestinian people of the limits on their freedom of movement and the need to reduce the network of checkpoints and barriers. Prime Minister Abbas shared his concerns about Israeli settlements, confiscation of land, and the building of a security fence. He also expressed his strong desire to see the release of many more Palestinian prisoners.

We will continue to address these issues. We will address them carefully and seriously with Palestinian and Israeli officials. We will work to seek solutions.

We've seen important progress towards peace over the last 13 months, and we see even more progress today, here in Washington and in the region as well. Today the Government of Israel announced that it will be taking down more of the checkpoints that are making it difficult for Palestinians to travel to their jobs and schools. In addition, Israel will consider ways to reduce the impact of the security fence on the lives of the Palestinian people.

And Israel has helped—has also pledged to transfer to the Palestinian Authority security responsibility for two additional cities in the West Bank and to make further progress in removing settlement outposts. Like Prime Minister Abbas, Prime Minister Sharon is demonstrating that he's a partner committed to reaching a peace settlement.

I welcome these announcements from Israel, and I look forward to seeing Prime Minister Sharon on his visit to Washington next week. Together, these leaders can bring a bright future to both their people.

This is the time of possibility in the Middle East. And the people of the region are counting on the leaders to seize opportunities for peace and progress. Too many years and lives have been squandered by resentment and violence. The Palestinian people, like people everywhere, deserve freedom. They deserve an honest government, and they deserve peace.

I thank Prime Minister Abbas for his hard work. I thank him for his service to his people and for carrying their cause here to Washington, DC.

Welcome, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Abbas. Thank you. Thank you very much. Mr. President, allow me to start by thanking you to your invitation and for the fruitful meeting we have just had and for the bilateral support we have received from you. We are particularly grateful for the $20 million of direct assistance to Palestinian Authority. And we hope that this assistance increases and is, in turn, in legislation.

Allow me to also express my appreciation to you for your relentless efforts in pursuit of peace and your intensive engagement in resolving the conflict between us and the Israelis.

Mr. President, we remain committed to the roadmap, and we are implementing our security and reform obligations. Security for all Palestinians and Israelis is an essential element in progress, and we will achieve security based on the rule of law. We have succeeded significantly where Israel, with its military might, has failed in reducing violence, and we will continue.

Reform and institution-building are an internal Palestinian priority. We do not merely seek a state, but we seek for a state that is built on the solid foundations of the modern constitution, democracy, transparency, the rule of law, and the market economy.

We continue to negotiate with Israel on the implementation of its obligations. Some progress has been made, but movement

needs to be made in terms of freeing prisoners, lifting the siege on President Arafat, Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian areas, and easing up freedom of movement to Palestinians.

A transformation in the human conditions on the ground must occur. As you have said many times, Mr. President, attacks on the dignity of the Palestinians must end. Palestinians must be able to move, go to their jobs and schools, and conduct a normal life. Palestinians must not be afraid for their lives, property, or livelihood. Some steps have been taken by Israel so far, but these steps remain hesitant. The new era of peace requires the courageous logic of peace, not the suspicious logic of conflict.

The outcome must correspond with your vision, Mr. President, achieving a peace that will end the occupation that started in 1967; the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and a just, agreed solution of the refugee question on the basis of the U.N. Resolution 194.

This vision cannot be realized if Israel continues to grab Palestinian land. If the settlement activities in Palestinian land and construction of the so-called ''separation wall'' on confiscated Palestinian land continue, we might soon find ourselves at a situation where the foundation of peace, a free Palestine state living side by side in peace and security in Israel, is a factual impossibility. Nothing less than a full settlement freeze will do, because nothing less than a full settlement freeze will work. For the sake of peace, and for the sake of future Palestinian and Israeli generations, all settlement activities must be stopped now, and the wall must come down.

Mr. President, in conclusion, allow me to thank you again for all your efforts, to reiterate our commitment to peace and security for all, and to express my hope for a solid, fruitful relations between our Governments and our peoples. Thank you.

President Bush. Good job, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Abbas. Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Hold on for a second, please. We'll have two questions a side, alternating, starting first with Barry of AP [Barry Schweid, Associated Press].

Liberia

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On Liberia, if I may.

President Bush. Liberia, yes.

Q. How many U.S. troops will be going in? What is their role? How long might they stay?

President Bush. As the statement says that we put out, that U.S. troops will be there to help ECOWAS go in and serve as peacekeepers, necessary to create the conditions so that humanitarian aid can go in and help the people in Liberia. We're deeply concerned that the condition of the Liberian people is getting worse and worse and worse. Aid can't get to the people. We're worried about the outbreak of disease. And so our commitment is to enable ECOWAS to go in, and the Pentagon will make it clear over time what that means.

Secondly, it is very important for Charles Taylor to leave the country.

Third, we want to—in order to expedite aid and help, in order to make the conditions such that NGOs can do what they want to do, which is to help people from suffering, that the cease-fire must be in place.

And finally, we're working very closely with the United Nations. They will be responsible for developing a political solution, and they will be responsible for relieving the U.S. troops in short order. And so we're working all these pieces right now. But today I did order for our military in limited numbers to head into the area, to help prepare ECOWAS's arrival to relieve human suffering.

Palestinian Prisoners/Settlements/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, how do you perceive the settlements as obstacle to your vision, to implementation of your vision? Thank you.

President Bush. Yes——

Q. And to the Prime Minister——

President Bush. Okay, good, yes. This is the old two-question trick. It's an international trick, I see. [*Laughter*] Very good

job, yes. You learned from the guy to your left. Both of them from your left are pros at that, too, I might add. [*Laughter*]

Q. Various officials in the administration yesterday indicated that they are having difficulties understanding the Palestinian situation when it comes to the issue of prisoners. In your meeting today with the President, did you discuss that, and did any progress happen on the U.S. understanding?

Prime Minister Abbas. We always raise this issue, that it is basically an important and sensitive issue for us. This is the issue of prisoners. We look at the prisoners as the true constituency for peace. And we have raised this issue. We believe that they will support the peace process. Today we did discuss this issue, and we see understanding coming from the administration about this humanitarian and fair issue.

President Bush. As to the settlements, I've constantly spoken out for the need to end the settlements. I—and we'll continue to work with both sides on this very sensitive issue.

Let me make something—let me say this—this is necessary. It is necessary for this good man to continue to fight off the terrorist activity that creates the conditions of insecurity for not only Israel but for the peaceful Palestinian people. In order for us to be able to make progress on a lot of difficult issues, there has to be a firm and continued commitment to fight terror.

One reason I'm willing to stand with the Prime Minister is because I believe that he has that commitment. He understands what I understand, that terrorists, every time, every place, will thwart the desires of those who want peace and freedom. And the commitment to fight terror and the results in fighting terror will make it a lot easier to deal with difficult issues, including the settlement issue.

Steve [Steve Holland]. That would be Steve of Reuters.

Palestinian Prisoners/West Bank Wall

Q. Would you like to see Israel release the political prisoners, and would you like to see them stop building this barrier wall?

President Bush. I think—first of all, on the wall. Let me talk about the wall. I think the wall is a problem, and I discussed this with Ariel Sharon. It is very difficult to develop confidence between the Palestinians and the Israel—Israel—with a wall snaking through the West Bank. And I will continue to discuss this issue very clearly with the Prime Minister. As I said in my statement today, he has issued a statement saying he is willing to come and discuss that with us. And I appreciate the—willing to discuss it.

On the prisoners, I think it's very important to have a frank discussion on the prisoners. We ought to look at the prisoner issue on a case-by-case basis. Surely nobody wants to let a coldblooded killer out of prison that would help derail the process. I mean, after all, it doesn't make any sense if you've got somebody who is bent upon destroying lives and killing people in prison to—if you were to let him out, it would make it harder to achieve the peace we all want. And so I think it's very important to analyze the prisoner situation on a case-by-case basis.

I fully understand the Prime Minister's desire. I fully understand his request. And I have—and therefore, we'll talk to—continue to talk to both sides on this issue. But I would never ask anybody in any society to let a prisoner out who would then commit terrorist actions. And I think that's logical and clear.

And so—but these are all difficult issues. By the way, we're discussing them now in a frank way, which is progress unto itself. These are issues where there had been no discussion before. And now we're putting them on the table, and we're making progress. And as people get more confidence—listen, I'm gaining confidence in the Palestinian Prime Minister and in his great cabinet.

I had the Finance Minister in to discuss issues with me. He told me he would put the budget of the Palestinian Authority on the web page. And he did, which means he's a man of his word. The Security Chief, Dahlan, and I have had some discussions. He's a good, solid leader. And so I gain confidence in them, because they're people who do what they say. And the more confidence we gain, the more easy it's going to be to tackle these very difficult issues.

Final question from the Palestinians.

Terrorism and Resolution of Issues

Q. Mr. President, Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, Mr. President——

President Bush. Wait, wait, wait. It's best if we only have one question at a time.

Q. Mr. President, do you think that——

Q. Do you think that——

President Bush. Ladies first.

Prime Minister Abbas. Ladies first, okay. [*Laughter*]

Q. When you speak to Palestinians, they're saying that the biggest problems they have now are the 160 Israel checkpoints that are suffocating the Palestinian community. Did you get any guarantees from Mr. President that he will pressure Israel in removing these checkpoints?

And Mr. President, you said the settlements are an obstacle for peace. Will you pressure Israel to stop the settlement activity? When and how?

President Bush. Well, let me start, and then you can end.

Prime Minister Abbas. Please.

President Bush. We'll let my guest end. I just told you that we brought this issue up. I've constantly spoken out about the end of settlements. I have done so consistently. It's very important for us to continue to earn the confidence of each other. And I'm going to tell you pointblank that we must make sure that any terrorist activity is rooted out in order for us to be able to deal with these big issues.

Nobody is going to accept a situation in which they become less secure, whether it be the Palestinian people or the Israeli people. Security is the essential roadblock to achieving the roadmap to peace. And the reason I'm confident that we can achieve substantial progress and achieve the vision of two states living by side by side in peace is because I believe that the Prime Minister and his team is interested in routing out terror.

And so to answer your question, the more progress there's made on terror, the more progress there will be made on difficult issues.

Prime Minister Abbas. The issue of the checkpoints between various Palestinian towns and villages was one of the issues that basically was discussed with the President. As he mentioned, we discussed a wide variety of issues. We discussed issues of settlements, the issue of the wall, the issue of prisoners, and others, including the checkpoints. We feel that the President is paying attention to all these issues, and we believe that he will raise those issues with the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Sharon.

President Bush. Thank you all very much.

Q. We need three questions—we're making a news conference.

President Bush. Thank you very much. That's Bill Plante of CBS, an old veteran, constantly willing to express his opinion.

Thank you for your opinion.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:05 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President Charles Taylor of Liberia; and Finance Minister Salam Fayyad and Minister of State for Security Affairs Mohammed Dahlan of the Palestinian Authority. During the question-and-answer session, some reporters asked their questions in Arabic, and Prime Minister Abbas responded in Arabic, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of Colin McMillan

July 25, 2003

Laura and I are saddened by the death of our good friend Colin McMillan. Colin was a public servant and patriot who served his country and State as a marine, State legislator, Assistant Secretary of Defense, community leader, and successful businessman. We send our condolences and prayers to his wife, children, and friends.

Proclamation 7693—Parents' Day, 2003

July 25, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Children are a daily reminder of the blessings and responsibilities of life and a source of joy, pride, and fulfillment. Parents, stepparents, adoptive parents, and foster parents