

The nuclear policy, obviously, makes it difficult for us to have a military alliance, but we're friends with the New Zealanders. We respect the New Zealand people. But Australia is farther along the road when it comes to trade discussions. Prime Minister Howard and I discussed trade at my ranch in Crawford. We hope to get it done by the end of this year. The people of New Zealand shouldn't read anything into it other than, we just haven't gotten started. And I respect the people of New Zealand. I respect that great country.

Mr. Brown. I'm going to have to call it a day. That's all.

The President. I think you did a fine job.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:30 p.m. in the Library at the White House, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 18. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; and Prime Minister John Howard of Australia. Mr. Brown referred to Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Rosianna Silalahi of Indonesia's SCTV

October 14, 2003

Indonesia's Role in the War on Terror

Ms. Silalahi. Mr. President, thank you for your time. What specifically do you want to do by Megawati—President Megawati—in fighting terrorism? What—[inaudible]—some assistance to your country?

The President. First of all, President Megawati has responded to the war on terror, and I appreciate that. She's responded in a way that I think the people of her country ought to be proud—your country ought to be proud. Terrorism is such—it's such a stain. It's a horrible thing that people have to live with. The terrorists want to create fear. That's what they want to do. They want to kill innocent life to create fear.

And the Bali bombing was a terrible moment for Indonesia and obviously those who lost life. But President Megawati refuses to stand in fear of the terrorists. What I want

her to do is to continue to work closely with the United States and others, to share intelligence, find money as it floats around, and to bring people to justice.

Information Sharing on Hambali

Ms. Silalahi. How do you expect President Megawati or Indonesia to cooperate with the United States if we don't have a chance to question Hambali one on one?

The President. I think the thing on Hambali is—first of all, the good news is he's not a problem anymore. He's not a threat. And as I explained to the President that we will share any information with her. But right now, the key is to find out as much as we possibly can, and when we get information, we will share it with her.

Ms. Silalahi. Well, the problem is that Indonesia needs a chance that—the Indonesian police to question Hambali directly, not just to share information.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Silalahi. When are you going to give us this chance?

The President. Right now, we're going to get as much information as we possibly can.

Ms. Silalahi. So there's no way that Indonesia will have their chance to question Hambali?

The President. I wouldn't say, "No way." You said, "No way." I didn't say, "No way." I said, "Right now, we're going to get as much information as we can to make sure America is secure and Indonesia's secure. And any information we get, we'll be glad to share with the President." I've explained this to her, and she understands.

Situation in the Middle East/Terrorism

Ms. Silalahi. Sir, Indonesia is a moderate and—[inaudible]—Muslim society. But the way U.S. handle terrorism issues and by the way U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is distancing society. Aren't you concerned that this moderate society could be militant eventually?

The President. Well, first of all, terrorism—the Bali bombers decided to kill innocent people based upon their own ideology of hatred. And our foreign policy in the Middle East is based on the same principles that I just discussed with you on the war on terror.

In order for there to be a peaceful Palestinian state, people have got to fight terror. A few people are trying to destroy the hopes of a lot of people in the Palestinian territory.

And so I gave a speech—first of all, I'm the first President ever to articulate a Palestinian state and to support a Palestinian state. But to get there, it's very important for people to assume responsibilities, and one of the key responsibilities is for the Palestinian leadership to stand up and fight terror. And we've got a good man getting ready to do that. As you know, we had the meeting in Aqaba, Jordan, and we were making progress. And then he got eased out, pushed aside by the old guard, which has failed the Palestinian people. And so they're not assuming their responsibilities.

But I wouldn't—I think you can make all kinds of excuses for terror, but terrorists are interested in one thing, creating fear in free societies. That's what they want to do. The only way to deal with them is to bring them to justice. And you can do that and protect your civil liberties.

Indonesia-U.S. Relations

Ms. Silalahi. How do you propose to change anti-American sentiment in Indonesia?

The President. Explain what we're all about, explain that we're a compassionate country, that we love freedom and human rights and human dignity, that we care when people suffer. We've got a great—very compassionate foreign policy. One of the things I hope to do is, when I go to your country, explain that just like I'm explaining to you now.

And one of the big scourges of the world is AIDS, and the United States of America is leading the fight against AIDS, particularly on the continent of Africa. We believe in decency and human rights. We've always been a leader on human rights. And we speak out for human rights, because we believe in the dignity of each person.

Situation in Papua and Aceh

Ms. Silalahi. Speaking about human rights, Papua and Aceh are struggling to be independent because the human rights has

become a critical issue. What is your standpoint about this?

The President. Our standpoint is that we don't think that—in Aceh, for example, that the issue should be solved and can be solved militarily. It ought to be solved through peaceful negotiations.

Ms. Silalahi. And how about Papua?

The President. Same, peaceful negotiations.

Ms. Silalahi. How about American citizens that got killed in Papua?

The President. We're not happy about that, of course, and I appreciate the Government's full cooperation with our Federal Bureau of Investigation that is now seeking out the evidence to determine who the killers were.

Ms. Silalahi. Does it change your military policy towards Indonesia?

The President. No, as a matter of fact, we're going to discuss mil-to-mil relations between Indonesia. And for a while, the Congress put restrictions on it. But now the Congress has changed their attitude, and I think we can go forward with a package of mil-to-mil cooperation because of the cooperation of the Government on the killings of two U.S. citizens.

Ms. Silalahi. Thank you, Mr. President. So many questions, but—

The President. So little time?

Ms. Silalahi. So little time.

The President. Well, give your mother my best.

Ms. Silalahi. I thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:37 p.m. in the Library at the White House, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 18. In his remarks, the President referred to President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia; Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin (known as Hambali), Al Qaida's chief operational planner in Southeast Asia; former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Edwin Burgon and Rick Spier, American citizens killed in an ambush in Indonesia's Papua province on August 31, 2002. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Laurence Oakes of Australia's Channel 9 TV

October 14, 2003

President's Upcoming Visit to Australia

Mr. Oakes. Mr. President, thanks for speaking to us. What's the main purpose of your trip to Australia? Are you hoping for greater Australian contribution to the stabilization and rebuilding of Iraq?

The President. No, the main purpose is to thank the people of Australia and thank my friend John Howard for being strong in the face of terror and being understanding that we have a historic opportunity to bring peace and freedom to parts of the world that need peace and freedom. It really is the main purpose. Australia is a great country. I would define our relationship as a unique relationship. And I'm looking forward to it. I've been there. They tell me it's kind of like Texas, which is another reason I want to go.

Mr. Oakes. I think that's right. But not everyone agrees—in Australia, agrees with you on the war. Some members of the opposition are talking about possibly protesting when you address the Parliament by wearing white armbands or turning their backs. Would that concern you?

The President. Not at all. No, it means that democracy is alive and well. It's a—I don't expect everybody to agree with us, but one thing is for certain, the Prime Minister was strong. And the Australian military performed brilliantly; I mean brilliantly. And I've talked to a lot of our generals and commanders about how the Australians participated, and they were just—A-plus was the rating. And I think a lot of people would like to hear that from the American President, and I'm going to tell them. And if somebody feels like they want to express discontent, that's okay. That's democracy.

Iraq

Mr. Oakes. Well, what about the suggestion from your critics that while you won the war, the peace is being bungled?

The President. They're wrong. We're making great progress in Iraq. We've got a pretty steep hill to climb. After all, one, we're facing a bunch of terrorists who can't stand freedom. These thugs were in power for a

while, and now they're not going to be in power anymore, and they don't like it. And they're willing to kill innocent people. Their terrorist activities—we'd rather fight them there than here.

And secondly, that life is pretty darn good compared to what it was under Saddam Hussein. People aren't going to be tortured. They're not going to be raped. They're not going to be mutilated. There are not going to be mass graves. And plus, that the infrastructure is improving. I talked to our Secretary of Commerce today. His exact—he's in Baghdad. He said, "Look," he said, "Mr. President," he said, "You're not going to believe the world here is a lot different than some in America think it is. There's a burgeoning marketplace." He met with women businessowners. I mean, there's excitement there about a free society emerging, and it's in our interests that this society be free.

Australian Detainees in Guantanamo Bay

Mr. Oakes. Sir, there are two Australian citizens being held in Guantanamo Bay.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Oakes. What's going to happen to them? And what do you say to people in Australia who think they should be either charged or released?

The President. Well, we would be glad to work with the Government on the issue. And if John wants to discuss it, I'm more than happy to discuss it. We're working with a variety of countries that have got people in Guantanamo Bay. These are people picked up on the battlefield. We're trying to learn more about them to make sure we fully understand—

Mr. Oakes. Are they being tortured?

The President. No, of course. We don't torture people in America. And people who make that claim just don't know anything about our country.

Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Oakes. Another issue between the two countries is the—possibly the free trade agreement.

The President. Yes, sir.

Mr. Oakes. Do you think you will get it, and will you be using this to push it along?