

into a building; it was hijacking of airplanes in order to free somebody that was being held as a prisoner in the United States.

Okay, thank you all. Happy Easter to everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Crawford, Texas

April 12, 2004

President Bush. Thank you all for coming. I'm pleased to welcome my friend Hosni Mubarak to my home. Welcome. I always look forward to visiting with him, and I look forward to hearing his wise counsel. I appreciate his frank views on many challenges that face our two nations and that face the greater Middle East.

Our nations have a relationship that is strong and warm. Our people share the bonds of friendship, a commitment to prosperity and peace and regional stability. Egypt is a strategic partner of the United States, and we value President Mubarak's years of effort on behalf of the peace and stability of the Middle East.

The meetings we have just had focused on these goals and on ways to make the Middle East safer and more secure. We recognize that the starting point for a prosperous and peaceful Middle East must be the rejection of terror. Egypt has taken a firm stand against terror by working to disrupt the activities and capabilities of the region's terrorist organizations. These are the policies of a nation and a statesman that understand the threat that terrorism poses to all of us, to my Nation, to his, to all the Arab states, to Israel, and to the future of any Palestinian state. Terrorism must be opposed, and it must be defeated. And I'm grateful for President Mubarak's support in the global war against terror.

Our objective in the Middle East must be true peace, not just a pause between wars, which can only happen within a framework of democracy and stability. I'm pleased that Egypt has engaged its neighbor Israel on closer trade ties that will help the Egyptian people find jobs and improve their lives. President Mubarak and I discussed the possible Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and our shared view that creation of a democratic, peaceful Palestinian state is a necessary goal on the road to peace.

We also believe that the future of the Middle East and the future of Iraq are closely linked, and I am grateful for President Mubarak's support for Iraq as it transitions to democracy and stability. The people of the greater Middle East have a right to be safe, secure, prosperous, and free.

President Mubarak and I spoke about the future of the region and of Egypt. Just as Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, it will set the standard in the region for democracy by strengthening democratic institutions and political participation.

I'm encouraged by the ongoing debate on reform in Egypt, including the excellent discussions involving civil society representatives from the Arab world who met at the Alexandria Library in March. And President Mubarak can be confident in my friendship and America's partnership as he moves forward to realize the hopes of his people.

I welcome my good friend Hosni to my home. Our countries have three decades of solid, beneficial relations behind us, and the United States will continue to work with Egypt and the Arab world in a spirit of common purpose and mutual respect.

Thank you for coming, sir.

President Mubarak. I would like to thank President Bush for inviting me to his ranch in Crawford and for the friendly atmosphere and the gracious hospitality that prevailed throughout our meeting today. I had constructive, candid, and friendly discussions with President Bush and with members of his administration on a wide range of issues of mutual concern.

Our strategic relationship, which has matured over the past 30 years, has constituted

a force for stability, both regionally and globally. The statement issued today, on the 30th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and the United States, gives a clear reflection of our strong commitment to advance our special relationship and deepen our cooperation.

Together we have faced the challenges of peace, fighting terror and defeating aggression. In cooperation with the United States, many of Egypt's reform and development objectives have been achieved over the years. Our partnership is based on trust, mutual respect, and the increasing political will on both sides to continue to assume the responsibilities of leadership. These same principles will guide us into the future as we face a new set of challenges on the world stage and as we enter a new phase of reform on our domestic front.

Egypt has moved with vigor and determination over the past years to shoulder its increasing responsibilities in the Middle East. At the same time, we've confronted domestic challenges through an ambition and irreversible program of reform. Our reform efforts have and will continue to emanate from my Government's desire to further widen the scope of democracy, freedom, and political participation in a vibrant and dynamic civil society.

Egypt's political reform program constitutes a core component of our comprehensive effort to improve the quality of life of our people. Our efforts continue to focus on opening up new opportunities for our citizens to improve their livelihood within a competitive global environment. In this, we seek to build on our numerous achievements in the areas of good governance, sustainable economic growth, education, and health care within a caring society in which social policies are central to our development goals. We continue to move forward within a process of debate and interaction between Government, civil society, and different political parties in Egypt.

We have also expanded the debate to include participation from the Arab world through a process of interaction among the civil society representatives in the region, which was launched at the Library of Alexan-

dria last March. Your support, Mr. President, for our steps in that endeavor is appreciated.

On regional issues, we discussed our respective responsibilities regarding the peace process in the Middle East. The United States has always assumed a leading role in the search for peace in our region. I expressed my strong desire to see that leading role continue with ever greater vigor and determination to realize our vision of a two-state solution as early as possible in the context of a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I expressed to the President the centrality of the conflict to the people of the region. It is our conviction that reviving the hopes of peace through our determined efforts to put the peace process back on track is central to enhancing the prospects of reform and the prosperity in the region. Egypt has pioneered the path of peace in the region for over 25 years and will continue to assume its responsibilities for peace today. I reaffirmed to President Bush Egypt's steadfast commitment to do whatever it takes to revive the hopes for a comprehensive settlement and to bring the parties back to the path of dialog and negotiations.

On Iraq, I conveyed to the President our serious concerns about the current state of affairs, particularly in the security and the humanitarian areas. I further stressed the importance of restoring Iraq's sovereignty as soon as possible within a context that preserves its territorial integrity and unites all Iraqis toward a common future. The recent efforts to increase the role of the U.N. in that process is an important step that should be further encouraged.

We discussed our joint effort to fight terror. We agreed to intensify our extensive cooperation in this regard, to include finding solutions to the political and economic problems that represent the underlying causes of terrorism.

We discussed also various aspects of our bilateral relations, including the importance of deepening our economic and cultural ties. In the economic field, I briefed the President on our economic reform program and said the importance of free trade with the United States in attaining our economic objectives. I also stressed the importance of promoting

cultural exchange and furthering the links between civil society in both our nations. This is certain to enhance mutual understanding between our two peoples and between the United States and the Arab world at large.

I am confident, Mr. President, after your talks today, that through our strategic partnership, we will continue to confront the challenge before us with greater determination and resolute leadership.

Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Good job.

We'll answer two questions a side. We'll start with the American side here with Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

President's Daily Briefing

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to take you back to August 6, 2001, if I could, ask you about your personal response when you received the PDB. Do you recall whether you called Bob Mueller, asked him about what the FBI was doing, asked about these 70 field investigations? And also, did your mind go back to the PDB when September 11th hit?

President Bush. Bob Mueller wasn't the Director of the FBI at the time.

Q. Did you call the Director?

President Bush. I don't think there was a Director. But no, here's my recollection. First, I asked for the PDB. In other words, I said to the intelligence agency, "Bring me up to date. What do you know? Give me an assessment," I guess is the best way to put it. And I read it and, obviously, was discomforted by the fact that Usama bin Laden hated America. But as I mentioned yesterday, we already knew that, and the fundamental question is, what was—was there any actionable intelligence. And by that I mean, was there anything that the agency could tell me that would then cause me to have to do something to make a decision to protect America.

There was nothing in there that said, you know, "There's an imminent attack." There was nothing in this report to me that said, "Oh, by the way, we've got intelligence that says something is about to happen in America." That wasn't what this report said. The report was kind of a history of Usama's inten-

tions, I guess is the best way to put it, kind of a history of what the agency had known.

And you're right, there was included—they included the fact that the FBI was conducting field investigations, which comforted me. You see, it meant the FBI was doing its job. The FBI was running down any lead. And I will tell you this, Scott, that had they found something, I'm confident they would have reported back to me. That's the way the system works. And whoever was the Acting FBI Director, had they found something, would have said, "Mr. President, we have found something that you need to be concerned about in your duties to protect America." That didn't happen.

Q. Are you satisfied with their performance, then, today?

President Bush. I'm confident that had they found something that was a direct threat to America, they would have brought it to my attention.

Now, the 9/11 Commission hearings are going to analyze that which went on and, hopefully, bring recommendations forward to help this administration and future administrations do our solemn duty to protect the American people. And that's why I think the hearings are good things, particularly when they address any weaknesses in the system.

And Condi mentioned the other day something very interesting, and that is that now may be a time to revamp and reform our intelligence services. And we look forward to hearing recommendations. We're thinking about that, ourselves, and we look forward to working with the Commission.

Q. What's on the table in the way of reform—

President Bush. Hold on a second, please. Lindlaw, I don't want to lecture you here, but you were given one question and President Mubarak is going to wonder, is the press corps totally out of control here in America. So I'm going to have to cut you off at this point in time.

Mr. President, why don't you call on somebody?

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Welcome.

Situation in Iraq

Q. President Bush, in recent days, we've seen a significant deterioration in the security situation in Iraq. Do you see a serious risk in that such events and the American military response to them would lead to a wider popular resistance to the American presence in Iraq, and would that complicate the process of transferring sovereignty to the Iraqi people? Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, and welcome. We will transfer sovereignty. And as a matter of fact, the United Nations representative, Brahimi, is in Baghdad as we speak, working with different parties to help devise the system to which we transfer sovereignty, and we look forward to that.

Secondly, the situation in Iraq has improved. But you're right, it was a tough week, because of—there was lawlessness and gangs that were trying to take the law in their own hands. These were people that were trying to make a statement prior to the transfer of sovereignty that they would get to decide the fate of Iraq, through violence. A civil society, a peaceful society can't grow with people who are willing to kill in order to stop progress. And our job is to provide security for the Iraqi people so that a transition can take place, and that's what you were seeing.

And our job also is to protect American lives. If our soldiers are at risk, they will defend themselves. And I'm proud of the fact that our soldiers did so, mindful that there are innocent Iraqis oftentimes in between them and an enemy that is shooting at them. We're a compassionate country that cares about the loss of innocent life, and it grieves us when we see innocent life lost. However, we will defend ourselves.

I believe—strongly believe that by far the vast majority of Iraqis want there to be a peaceful country and a free country. And so the Iraq people are on the side of the transition to a peaceful country. We just can't let a few people—and I say “a few”—listen, there was enough to cause harm, but a few, relative to the rest of the people. You just can't let a small percentage of the Iraqi people decide the fate of everybody, and that's what you're seeing.

Thank you.

Excuse me for a second, please. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Israeli Withdrawal From Gaza

Q. Thank you, sir. If I could ask both of you—are both of you prepared to endorse the Israeli withdrawal plan?

President Bush. Steve, I welcome—first of all, let's not prejudge what Prime Minister Sharon is going to tell me. So I don't want to put words in his mouth until he actually comes to America on Wednesday. We discussed the rumors of such a withdrawal, and we discussed it in the context of the two-state solution and the roadmap.

In other words, we both are in agreement that if Israel makes the decision to withdraw, it doesn't replace the roadmap; it is a part of the roadmap, so that we can continue progress toward the two-state solution. And I really welcomed my friend's advice. He is—he knows the area well, and he's been in touch with the parties, and he has got good judgment on this matter. Let's wait until the Prime Minister comes. But if he were to decide to withdraw from the Gaza, it would be a positive development.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. He wanted to know your—just a second, excuse me. He wanted to have your reaction to a possible withdrawal, if you'd like to share that. You don't have to, if you don't want to. He's a kind fellow—

President Mubarak. I have discussed this with the President, the withdrawal from Gaza. I think any withdrawal from the occupied territory is very highly appreciated. But I would like the withdrawal to coincide with the roadmap, which is very important, because withdrawing from Gaza alone, without connecting it with the roadmap, we never know it will be Gaza alone. It will be very difficult. It will not be accepted by the public opinion in the area. So the withdrawal from Gaza, if it is a part from the roadmap, I think it will be very highly appreciated.

President Bush. Yes, the point is that the decision doesn't replace the path toward the establishment of a Palestinian state that will provide hope for the Palestinian people and provide continuity and put the institutions in

place necessary for a state to evolve. I'm confident there will be ample willingness of people in Europe or the United States Government to enact economic—to take economic measures necessary to provide a hopeful future. And we're in accord on this issue, and I look forward to meeting with the Prime Minister and hear what he has to say.

Final question, if you'd like to call on somebody.

Q. Thank you very much. My question is for you, Mr. Excellency Bush and Mr. Excellency Mubarak. But let me first tell you, happy Easter, before asking about the peace process. [Laughter]

President Bush. Thank you. We had a great Easter. I'm sorry it's so chilly here. It's usually warmer.

Two-State Solution for the Middle East

Q. Thank you very much. Sir, you announced your vision of a two-state solution almost 2 years ago—

President Bush. Yes.

Q. Do you think this vision can be realized in spite of the Israeli policy of expanding settlements and establishment of the separate wall, which violates the green line?

And for you, Mr. President Mubarak, how can Egypt help the Palestinians to take their responsibilities after the Israeli withdrawal?

President Bush. Great question. Yes, I think we can achieve a two-state solution. You're right, I think I made the speech at the United Nations in 2001, if I'm not mistaken—September of 2001—the first American President to do so, to make that public declaration a policy. And the reason I did is because I believe it's in the Palestinians' interest to have their own state, and I believe it's in Israel's interest that the Palestinians develop a peaceful state.

The reason why—we've made some progress, by the way. There is what they call the roadmap, a strategy to achieve that, which is good. The problem is, is that there's terrorists who will kill people in order to stop the process, and that's why it is essential that we work together to stop terrorist killing. There will never be a Palestinian state, in my judgment, if terrorists are willing to kill. And so the first step we've all got to do is to work on the mutual security concerns of

the region. And we can't let people blow up a process, but that's what's happened, as you might recall. And there's been suiciders and killers, and you know—and it's essential that we work together to stop that kind of terror.

It will be much easier for the Palestinians to assume their responsibilities—and there are responsibilities for the Palestinians, particularly when it comes to developing a state that is a peaceful state—it will make it a lot easier if we can continue to keep the pressure on the terrorists, make it a lot easier for them to assume their responsibilities.

President Mubarak. The problem of the Middle East has stayed nearly about—about to be 50 years now. It's a very complicated problem, and if we keep it, more and more, it will be much more complicated than ever before. It could have been solved several years ago, but now it's very difficult. But in this context, I really thank President Bush, the first President of the United States who could say that, "I'm ready to agree on establishing two states beside each other, independent states, Palestinian state and the Israeli state." This is the first time we could hear it. We have to build on it.

Concerning Gaza, I think we could help a lot in Gaza by training the police, by giving them advice, by sending them some groups to make plans for them how to work. And in that regard, we are ready to do. We have contacts with them, we have contact with the different factions which could create problems now and then. And you remember, they convened in Cairo several times. We are ready to invite them again so as to help stability in Gaza for a continuation for more withdrawal.

Thank you.

April 13 News Conference

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

By the way, tomorrow night I'm interested in answering more questions for you all. So if you pick out a red or blue tie—

Q. A news conference?

President Bush. Why not. See you at the East Room.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:52 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; National Security

Adviser Condoleezza Rice; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt

April 12, 2004

Thirty Years of American-Egyptian Relations: A Partnership for Peace and Development

For thirty years, Egypt and the United States have enjoyed a partnership dedicated to peace, stability, prosperity, and freedom in the Middle East.

Secretary Powell and Foreign Minister Maher plan soon to conduct a session of our bilateral strategic dialogue in Washington, reaffirming the determination of our two countries to strengthen our partnership.

In our meetings today, we reiterated our resolve to continue working, along with our partners in the region, in Europe, and around the world, to promote peace in the Middle East, maintain regional stability, fight terrorism, and bolster the region's efforts toward economic, political, and social development and modernization.

Our two nations have nurtured a vision of peace that is anchored by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. This first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab country has been a model for subsequent endeavors to achieve a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region.

Our two nations' unwavering commitment to this process led to the universal acceptance of the necessity and inevitability of a negotiated settlement. We envisage two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. We will continue our determined efforts in the forthcoming months to achieve these objectives. We believe that an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank can, under the right conditions, and if it is within the context of the implementation of the Roadmap and President Bush's vision, be a significant step forward. It is our firm conviction that resolving the Arab Israeli conflict will be a major con-

tribution to stability and progress in the region, removing a major source of tension.

Egypt and the United States also recognize the need for political and economic reform in the region. The United States has followed the steps taken by Egypt over the past few years, as well as the ongoing debate on reform in different sectors of Egyptian society. This ongoing debate, including the call for reform produced at the meeting of Arab civil society held at the Library of Alexandria last March, as well as the speech given by President Mubarak in the opening of that meeting reaffirming his commitment for a continuing reform process, provide for a constructive foundation for further efforts toward democracy and development.

Egyptian-American cooperation will also continue to encompass many other areas. Iraq faces a critical moment in its history, with wide implications across the region. We are committed to helping the Iraqi people realize their aspirations to build a sovereign, prosperous, stable, unified, and peaceful modern nation.

We intend to maintain our close cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Our two nations are among those who have suffered the most from the scourge and have no intention to relent in this fight. The United States expresses its appreciation for Egypt's invaluable help and its readiness to continue its contributions towards combating and eliminating terrorism.

Since the 1970s, the United States has been Egypt's leading partner in economic, political, and social reform efforts, providing highly appreciated material and moral support. The two nations look forward to strengthening their partnership in this respect for the benefit of the people of both countries and region as a whole.

The Egyptian-American partnership has promoted peace and stability, while supporting positive change in the Middle East, for thirty years. We are confident that it is equally capable of meeting the challenges of the next thirty years and beyond. We look forward to an intensified dialogue about Egyptian-American cooperation and partnership in the 21st century.