

That's why our Government believes in the expansion of NATO. We believe NATO is the core of a free and peaceful Europe. And as Lord Robertson will tell you, ever since he came to my office in Washington at the Oval Office, I have been a loyal supporter of NATO and its mission.

A unilateralist is one that doesn't understand the role of NATO and one that won't fully support NATO, like my Government is going to do.

Secretary General Lord Robertson. It's worth making the point, I think, that all of the heads of state and government today very much welcome the fact that the United States, and the President in particular, was willing to share the thinking process on these key issues before any decision was taken.

I would say that the statement that the President made, underlining what Secretary Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld have said about the Balkans, also was a clear signal of the inclusiveness that the American administration has in view for NATO.

"We went in together, we will come out together." There will be no unilateral decisions taken by this Ally or by any other Allies. We have common missions. And there was a warm welcome today for the fact that the thinking process on this whole new landscape of such urgency was to be the subject of detailed consultations, not just around this table today but in detail and among experts, as well. That was a very good signal, and it was widely welcomed.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Troop Reductions in the Balkans

Q. You campaigned on a pledge to reduce the troop presence in the Balkans. Do you now see that as politically impossible to do at this point?

President Bush. Actually, the troop presence in the Balkans has been reduced since I have become the President. It's been reduced on a reasonable timetable, one set with the United States and in consultation with Allies. It's a timetable that was embraced by NATO.

I said today in my talk that it's important for our nations to work together to put civil institutions in place that ultimately can be-

come the framework for the reduction and, ultimately, the removal of NATO troops. But we recognize it's going to take a while. And so, what I said was, "We came in together, and we'll leave together." And that's important for our Allies to hear.

Secretary General Lord Robertson. And in the meantime, we'll get the job done together.

Thank you very much. I think that's it; we need to go.

President Bush. See you next stop.

NOTE: The President's eighth news conference began at 3:35 p.m. at NATO headquarters. In his remarks, President Bush referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and President Boris Trajkovski of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. President Bush also referred to KFOR, the NATO-led security force in Kosovo.

Exchange With Reporters in Brussels

June 13, 2001

President's Visit to Europe

Q. Sir, how would you sum up the trip so far?

The President. Great. Very happy with it and pleased with the progress made on key issues. Pleased that we had the opportunity to spend some quality time with fellow leaders. One thing is for certain, European leaders now know that our administration is committed to a strong NATO and a free Europe. And that was important for them to hear, and I'm real pleased.

Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation

Q. I understand, sir, that Charles Norwood has signed on to the McCain-Kennedy bill.

The President. Yes. I haven't had a chance to talk, but I'm confident we'll get a bill that I can live with if we don't. I made a speech in Florida that laid out the principles. And if those principles are not met, I meant what I said—I said, I can't live with the bill. And so—

Q. Does that mean you'd veto it?

The President. Can't living with the bill means it won't become law. And I'm hopeful we can work out our differences. We're working hard to do so, and I believe we can. I believe we can have a good Patients' Bill

of Rights. I support a Patients' Bill of Rights. I just don't support one that will encourage lawsuits, that will hurt consumers, and hurt people trying to find quality health care.

Q. So your red line is the ability to sue in State court, sir?

The President. No, my red lines are what I laid out in the speech. And as you remember—I'm sure you remember the speech. [Laughter] I'll get you a copy of it. [Laughter]

Chocolate

Assistant Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe. We'll let the President and First Lady buy some chocolate now.

The President. I'm not having much of a selection here. I am willing to share the chocolate, however, with whoever—of the stories. [Laughter] So who would like some?

Q. Backpedaling already? [Laughter]

The President. That's right, changing positions. It didn't take me long. [Laughter] I want you to note this was made by the proprietor—the castle—here on location, who is right here. Here's the artist. It's amazing; he looks so skinny. Must not eat his own product, I guess. [Laughter]

Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. All right, you all, we're going to step outside.

The President. I will fulfill my promise, for those of you who would like a piece of chocolate.

First Lady's Visit to Europe

Q. Are you enjoying your trip?

The First Lady. I'm enjoying my trip a lot. I've had a really great time. I've loved it. I've loved having an opportunity to meet my counterparts here, which I have. Today I had lunch with all the NATO—the spouses of NATO Ambassadors.

The President. The First Lady is holding a press conference, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]. You're missing it.

The First Lady. And that was it. [Laughter]

The President. Just as she was getting to EU expansion. [Laughter] I told you to leave the missiles secret. [Laughter]

The First Lady. Ron, actually, I was talking about meeting my counterparts here in Europe.

The President. Here's what they want—an action shot. [Laughter] I like a man with a Houston Astros hat, though. I picked him out.

[At this point, the President and First Lady continued on their way back to the motorcade.]

Meeting With NATO Leaders

Q. Mr. President, you seemed pretty pumped up at the press conference. Did it go better than you expected, the meeting?

The President. I was very pleased. I was. I was—as you know, part of the kind of the code is not to name names. But the folks I quoted were true quotes, and I was very pleased with the reception.

Q. It sounds like your strongest support came from Eastern Europe or former Soviet bloc.

The President. As I said, I'm not going to break the code, and you're fishing for the code. But it was widespread support. It was not confined to one area of Europe. It was a good meeting, very positive meeting that gave us a chance to have a good exchange. I was very pleased with the reception and the willingness for countries to think differently and to listen to different points of view.

President's Visit to Europe

Q. How does it feel for you—we just asked the First Lady—but this is your first—I know you've been to Mexico and Canada, but this is—

The President. Well, this is a trip that was a very important trip because of the—the Alliance is very important. And as I said the other day, a prosperous and peaceful NATO and Europe—a prosperous Europe because of NATO is important for America. And there were some people—there was a lot of talk about unilateralism and the U.S. going it alone, and it was just very important for me to dispel those notions. And the leaders here now know that we are committed to NATO; we're committed to NATO enlargement. And tomorrow I'll have an opportunity to talk about the EU, and we'll have—after the—at the press conference you can ask me questions about how it goes there.

But there will be, you know, the tendency for, obviously, in your business to focus on where we differ. The truth of the matter is, the meeting today, the focus was on where we agree. And that was the very thing that encouraged me about it.

So I felt great walking into the press conference because I felt great after the meeting.

President's Upcoming Visit to Poland

Q. Sir, what's the big theme you're going to hit on Friday in Warsaw?

The President. Europe—whole, free, expanded.

Q. Bring up your father—

The President. No. Well, I mean, when they say, "President Bush," it will be brought up. But—[laughter].

Q. I'm just thinking about his Europe policy.

The President. No, that's right. No, it's a—kind of same values. The values haven't changed. The issues are different, but the goal of a free and united Europe is not. I'm looking forward to giving this speech because it will be given on the soil of a country that has really emerged as a result of its NATO membership and its adherence to free markets. And I'm not going to tell you any more about it because I want you to listen.

Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. We've got to get in the vans.

The President. I can only have one press conference a day. It's unbelievable how accessible I am these days. [Laughter]

President's European Friends

Q. Every President has European friends. Who are your European friends?

The President. Tony Blair, clearly a friend. But by not naming somebody, they'll assume that they're not a friend. They're all friends, to begin with. Jose Maria Aznar and I get along great. We had a wonderful visit yesterday. He's a very interesting man. If there were, kind of, objective observers, they would have said the body language was very strong between us. Prime Minister Blair and I get along well.

I will get along with every leader. I haven't had a chance to nurture a relationship beyond some casual conversations with some

of the leaders, but I suspect we'll have very close relations with all the leaders, but those two initially are people that I feel very comfortable in singling out. Havel is a very interesting guy whom I admire a lot. I've read some of his writings, and he's a legend in many ways in Eastern Europe. And I have a great relationship with him.

Q. Is he one of your strongest allies on missile defense?

The President. Well, as I said, there's kind of a code of silence. But I appreciate his friendship.

Okay, get out of here. [Laughter] We've got to pay for this.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:24 p.m. at Mary Chocolatier. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; and President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to the Plenary Session of the United States-European Union Summit in Göteborg, Sweden

June 14, 2001

U.S.-EU Summit

Q. Mr. President, can you share with us your message for the European leaders?

The President. See, Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press] asked you to ask that. [Laughter] I haven't made up my mind who I'm calling on at the press conference yet, so if you don't behave, you may not get called.

Q. And chances keep diminishing. Right, sir? [Laughter]

The President. Did you put him up to that, Ron?

Q. I'm not that smart, sir. [Laughter]

The President. Let me just say this. I'm honored to be the first United States President to come to Sweden, and I appreciate so very much the hospitality that we've received, and I'm so looking forward to these discussions. What the people of Sweden and Europe will realize is that mine is an administration that is deeply committed to a prosperous Europe and a whole Europe and a