

Week Ending Friday, June 18, 2004

The President's News Conference in Savannah, Georgia

June 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. We just completed a very successful summit. The nations of the G-8 are united in our desire to help bring stability and democracy to Iraq. We came together to support reform in the broader Middle East. We pledged to work together to build a more secure, peaceful, and prosperous world.

Laura and I thank the citizens of this part of our country. This was a successful summit because the people here made it successful by being so warm and gracious. The Southern hospitality was strong. The citizens of Sea Island and Brunswick and Savannah, as well as people from around Georgia, were just really great, and we thank them. All the leaders with whom I talked asked me to express my appreciation to the people of this part of the world.

I also thank the world leaders and their staffs who traveled so far to come here. I especially want to thank the leaders for their kind words of condolence for President Ronald Reagan. Laura and I look forward to paying our respect to President Reagan tonight at the Capitol, and we look toward—forward to our visit with Nancy and the Reagan family at the Blair House tonight.

Ronald Reagan was a great man, an historic leader, and a national treasure. I'm honored to speak tomorrow at the memorial service on behalf of a grateful nation.

This year's G-8 Summit came at a crucial time. Our nations face a grave threat to our common security. We also face a moment of opportunity to undermine the appeal of terror by supporting the advance of liberty and prosperity throughout the world, especially in the broader Middle East. The momentum of freedom there is building. A free Iraq is rising in the heart of that vital region.

Across the Middle East, a consensus is emerging on the need for change. In Alexandria, Istanbul, the Dead Sea, Sona, and Aqaba, political, civil society, and business leaders have met to discuss modernization and reform and have issued stirring calls for political, economic, and social change. The nations of the G-8 recognize our special responsibility to help the people of the Middle East achieve the progress they seek. And here at Sea Island, we pledged that our nations will help further the causes of freedom and reform to help an increasing number of people join in the progress of our times.

I appreciate the support of the G-8 nations for the new United Nations Security Council resolution that expresses international support for Iraq's interim government and lays out a clear path to Iraqi democracy. The Iraqi people can know that the world stands with them in their quest for a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future. And the enemies of freedom in that nation know that they are opposed by the might and resolve of free nations.

I'm grateful to the new President of the Iraqi interim government, President al-Yawr, for making the trip to Sea Island. I had a really good visit with him. He shared his thinking on the need to improve security, to make progress toward national elections no later than January of next year.

The nations of the G-8 are committed to the success of Iraq's government, to the defeat of its enemies, and to the future of Iraq as a free and democratic state. The defeat of terror worldwide and the success of freedom in Iraq are the challenges of the moment. The spread of freedom throughout the broader Middle East is the imperative of our age.

This year, G-8 nations and Turkey have united around a common agenda to use the energies and resources of our nations to support the momentum of freedom in the nations of the Middle East and North Africa.

Working with leaders from the region, we have established the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with nations of the broader Middle East. This partnership will seek to advance the universal values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, economic opportunity, and social justice.

We've also agreed to establish a Forum for the Future, which will bring together senior government officials from the Middle East with their G-8 counterparts and also regional business and civil society leaders with corresponding leaders from G-8 nations. In the forum, leaders will discuss ideas that can help the nations of the Middle East create jobs, increase access to capital, improve literacy and education, protect human rights, and make progress toward democracy.

Reform must reflect the needs and realities of each country and be driven by the desires of the people. We have an obligation to support them in their search for a freer, more prosperous future. We will meet that obligation.

I thank the many leaders from the Middle East who came to this summit to describe their goals for their nations and who pledged their support for this project. The people of the broader Middle East yearn for democratic change, and their leaders understand and support the need for reform.

I also thank the spouses of the G-8 leaders and prominent women from the region who met to explore ways in which all of our nations can improve education and expand opportunities for women in the broader Middle East. I want to thank Laura for hosting that important meeting and for all that she has done over the past 3 years on behalf of the women and girls of the broader Middle East.

At this summit, we also agreed to take new action to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Within the recent addition—with the recent addition of Russia, all G-8 member nations now participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative, which is designed to stop the trade in deadly weapons and the means to make and deliver them.

Seven new donor nations have agreed to contribute funds to the global partnership to reduce and secure dangerous weapons and materials. We will expand the partnership's

cooperation to address proliferation threats beyond the nations of the former Soviet Union.

G-8 nations have agreed to my proposal to establish a special committee within the International Atomic Energy Agency that will focus intensively on safeguards and verification. We're calling on all nations to sign and implement the additional protocol which will expand the IAEA's ability to inspect nuclear activities and facilities. We agreed that over the next year, our nations will not initiate any new transfers of uranium enrichment and reprocessing technology to additional nations, as we work toward a permanent means to keep these materials out of the hands of outlaw nations seeking nuclear weapons.

And the G-8 agreed for the first time to take concrete steps to expand national and international capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to attacks with biological weapons.

Finally, we moved forward on our common efforts to make the world not only safer but better. We launched a new effort to train and equip 75,000 peacekeepers over the next 5 years to help bring stability and security to troubled regions, with an initial focus on the continent of Africa.

We established the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise to accelerate the efforts of scientists to defeat HIV/AIDS. We pledged to break the cycle of famine in the Horn of Africa. We met with the heads of government from six African nations to discuss their ongoing work to improve health care, institute reform, and build prosperity for their peoples, as reflected in their commitment to the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Over the long term, trade is the most certain path to lasting prosperity. Free and fair trade is the key engine of growth in the world. And as we spur growth in our own countries, we must continue to reduce the trade barriers that are an obstacle to growth in the developing world.

G-8 nations reaffirmed our commitment to the success of the Doha Round of WTO trade negotiations. We directed our trade ministers to take action to get the negotiations back on track toward a successful conclusion.

The past several days have been full and productive. We've taken up many important tasks, and now we'll translate our consensus into action. The United States looks forward to fulfilling the commitments we made at Sea Island. And the nations of the G-8 will stand together to advance the values of freedom and peace and human dignity.

Now I'll be glad to take a couple of questions. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Iraqi Security

Q. Mr. President, you emphasized earlier today that Iraq needs help. But where, specifically, do you see this help coming from? Despite a U.N. resolution and despite the harmony here at the summit, no one else has stepped forward offering more debt relief or more troops. Doesn't it appear that the American face will be on the security of Iraq for a long time to come? So where—

The President. No, it doesn't appear that way. There will be an Iraqi face on the security of Iraq. The Iraqis will secure their own country. And we are there to help them do so. And we had great discussions today about how to help Iraq.

Tom, the resolution just got passed. I know we live in a world where everything is supposed to happen yesterday, but it doesn't work that way. And we're waiting for the Iraqi government to assess the situation and make requests to the free world. We'll respond to their requests when sovereignty is fully transferred. That's the definition of full sovereignty. You see, when a government is fully sovereign, they then make requests on behalf of their people.

And the response here at the G-8 has been very encouraging. In other words, the G-8 leaders have said, "We'll wait for their requests and see if we can't help." But just let me make the point again: Most of the security in Iraq will be provided by Iraqis, and we are there to help them.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

NATO's Role in Iraq

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. President Chirac said yesterday that NATO should not intervene in Iraq. Is that what you were proposing? Is a common ground possible before the Turkey summit?

The President. I suggested to the leaders of the G-8 that we listen to the needs of the Iraqi leadership. And if they ask for more training, for example, a good organization to provide that training would be NATO. As I said, I think in your presence, as a matter of fact, I don't expect more troops from NATO to be offered up. That's an unrealistic expectation. Nobody is suggesting that. What we are suggesting is for NATO, perhaps, to help train. Now, that would come at the request of the Iraqi government. And I found a common spirit of wanting to help Iraq progress and become a peaceful country. People understand the stakes involved here. A democracy in the heart of the Middle East is going to be an important change for that region, that troubled region.

And I understand some in the world say this country can't be free and self-governing. Well, I disagree. I strongly believe it will be free and prosperous. And they need our help, and they'll have our help. And when they're free and prosperous, it will serve as a symbol, an example of that which is possible for other countries and other people.

See, I believe free societies best meet the aspirations of the people living in those societies. And we look forward to helping Iraq achieve that—the dream of being at peace and free and a country in which the people are able to express their opinions.

Sanger [David Sanger, New York Times].

Justice Department Advisory Opinion on Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Mr. President, the Justice Department issued an advisory opinion last year declaring that as Commander in Chief, you have the authority to order any kind of interrogation techniques that are necessary to pursue the war on terror. Were you aware of this advisory opinion? Do you agree with it? And did you issue any such authorization at any time?

The President. No, the authorization I issued, David, was that anything we did would conform to U.S. law and would be consistent with international treaty obligations. That's the message I gave our people.

Q. Have you seen the memos?

The President. I can't remember if I've seen the memo or not, but I gave those instructions.

John [John King, CNN], yes.

Libya

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, I wanted to ask you about this Libyan plot to assassinate Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. My understanding of it is that it came to the White House's attention in early April. The White House officials do believe that Qadhafi had some kind of involvement in it. I'm wondering if you could confirm that. Also, have you sent any kind of a message to Qadhafi about it? And what does it say about his intentions to truly renounce terrorism and rejoin the community of nations?

The President. Yes, I appreciate that question. What I can tell you is, is that we're going to make sure we fully understand the veracity of the plot line. And so we're looking into it, is the best way I can tell you. And when we find out the facts, we will deal with them accordingly.

Q. Was there any kind of message sent to him, sir?

The President. I don't talk to Colonel Qadhafi. I have sent a message to him that if he honors his commitments to resist terror and to fully disclose and disarm his weapons programs, we will begin a process of normalization, which we have done. We have begun that process. And now there's—we will make sure he honors his commitment.

John [John Dickerson, TIME].

Middle Eastern Allies/Reform in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, thank you. In the past and here at this summit, you have made crystal-clear how important this Middle East initiative is to you. And yet, key U.S. allies in the region, like Egypt, like Saudi Arabia, like Kuwait, refuse to send representatives to engage in the discussions. Do you take that as a personal slap, sir?

The President. No. [Laughter] Okay, I'll give your question more answer. [Laughter] This initiative is not important for me; it's important for the people of the region. That's what's important, for the people of the region to have a chance to live in a free society. And obviously, I believe it's possible that there will be free, self-governing countries in this vital part of the world. And so do oth-

ers, including the leaders that came and spoke to us.

And look, I fully understand—look, there was some concern when the initiative was first proposed that this was America trying to make the world look like America. It's not going to happen. I fully understand that a free society in the Middle East is going to reflect the culture and traditions of the people in that country, not America.

I also understand it takes a while to adopt the habits of a democratic society and a free society. After all, it took our own country a while. You might remember the period of the Articles of Confederation. You do remember the period of the Articles—[laughter]—it just took us a while. It's not easy work. It's hard work, but we believe it is necessary work, because free societies are peaceful societies. The best way to defeat terror is to speak to the aspirations and hopes of women and men.

And so I understand, John, that there's a certain nervousness about whether or not people can adapt the institutions of freedom. But they shouldn't be nervous. They ought to welcome reform.

And you mentioned my friend the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. He and I have discussed reform before. He understands the need to reform—it's not going to—you know, it's not going to meet the expectations of every American. But nevertheless, he understands the need to speak to the hopes and aspirations of his people.

And so it was a very positive meeting yesterday. And the statement ought to be very positive.

I had a very interesting moment when the Minister of—I think that her title is Minister of Displaced Persons in Iraq. She came with the President's delegation. And she took me aside and said, "You must understand, Mr. President, when you speak about reform in the Middle East, there are a lot of brave people who hear your words." And I shared that with my counterparts at the G-8, that people hear our words. Because, you know—and they're anxious that we honor what we say because they want to be free. They want to be free people.

Let's see here. Let's make sure we get fair—Jimmy Angle [FOX News]. Where are

you? No show. Jon [Jonathan Karl, ABC News].

Q. Mr. President—

The President. —it's very kind of me to call upon your network, even though the guy's name here, who was supposed to be here, didn't show. [Laughter] I haven't seen you in a while. Why are you covering Congress and not the White House?

Q. Well, I'm glad to be here, Mr. President.

The President. Okay, good. [Laughter]

Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Returning to the question of torture, if you knew a person was in U.S. custody and had specific information about an imminent terrorist attack that could kill hundreds or even thousands of Americans, would you authorize the use of any means necessary to get that information and to save those lives?

The President. Jonathan, what I've authorized is that we stay within U.S. law.

Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News].

Iraqi Security

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. I was struck by something you said that it's the Iraqis who are going to be primarily responsible for their own security.

The President. Correct.

Q. How is that the case when you have said repeatedly that the terrorists and the killers in Iraq understand the stakes of this particular time and that they're only going to intensify their insurgency? I mean, isn't the reality that—

The President. Yes, go ahead.

Q. Haven't you said that?

The President. I have said that. No, I wasn't—I was just kind of—I'm trying to get to where your question is leading.

Q. Well, I guess I'm challenging the notion—

The President. I should not anticipate. I'm sorry.

Q. Okay, no, what I'm trying to do is challenge the notion that it's Iraqis who are going to be primarily responsible for their security when we've come through a period where, as you've noted, many of them are running away from their posts; they're not adequately trained. Isn't the reality that the United

States is still very much alone in Iraq, going forward, even after the handover, in terms of securing the country?

The President. Well, first of all, David, there is a coalition on the ground in Iraq. If you're here to ask Prime Minister Blair a question, I would hope you wouldn't ask the question, "Do you think America is alone in Iraq." He's got a lot of troops in Iraq, and other nations have troops in Iraq, all aiming to help the Iraqi people. But the long-term solution is going to be for the Iraqi people to secure their own country, David. That's the only way this country is going to evolve into a prosperous, free society.

And I believe the full transfer of sovereignty is going to—will help the Iraqis understand the stakes. They will be responsible. It's their responsibility. We are there to help. And yes, the main security will be provided by the Iraqi citizens. It's—that's the duty of a government, is to train and equip and provide police and army to protect their people from people who are willing to kill innocent life.

Now, look, I fully concede and have publicly that I think things are still going to be tough there. The transfer of sovereignty isn't going to stop Zarqawi, an Al Qaida associate who, by the way, was in Baghdad prior to our arrival and still operates in the country. He's willing to kill innocent life. His desire is to kill anybody in his way, to try to shake the confidence of the Iraqi citizens as well as the citizens of the free world. He operates, and we're there to help the Iraqi citizens find him and bring him to justice. No question it's still going to be dangerous.

But the solution for Iraqi security is going to be provided by the Iraqis. That's what Prime Minister Alawi has said so clearly. I haven't met the Prime Minister yet, but he sounds like a very strong, courageous individual who says, "Look, we want—we want your help, but it's our responsibility to secure our country." And we're there to help.

Let's see here. I'm trying to curry favor with everybody, of course. [Laughter]

Q. —in the back.

The President. I will in a minute. Hold on for a second. Dick [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]. Yes, Dick. Sorry. I just got some—I've got some mandatories I've

got to call on here. [Laughter] See, I have to live with these people. I don't have to live with you. [Laughter]

Q. Thank you for that, Mr. President.

Q. In that case, can I ask you another one?

The President. Yes, exactly, Roberts [John Roberts, CBS News]. [Laughter]

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Given recent developments in the CIA leak case, particularly Vice President Cheney's discussions with the investigators, do you still stand by what you said several months ago, a suggestion that it might be difficult to identify anybody who leaked the agent's name?

The President. That's up to—

Q. And do you stand by your pledge to fire anyone found to have done so?

The President. Yes. And that's up to the U.S. Attorney to find the facts.

Q. My final point would be—or question would be, has Vice President Cheney assured you—

The President. It's up to the—

Q. —subsequent to his conversations with them, that nobody—

The President. I haven't talked to the Vice President about this matter, and I suggest—recently—and I suggest you talk to the U.S. Attorney about that.

Hold on for a minute. I'm kind of observing for a second. I've got to call on the Texas newspaper. Hillman [G. Robert Hillman, Dallas Morning News].

U.S. Troops in Iraq

Q. Yes, Mr. President. In the wake of the U.N. resolution this week and the discussions here at Sea Island, what can you tell the American people about when U.S. troops might be coming home from Iraq in large numbers?

The President. When the job is done.

Judy [Judy Keen, USA Today].

Honoring President Ronald Reagan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, since President Reagan's death, there seems to be new momentum behind efforts to rename the Pentagon for him or to put his image on American currency. Do you support either of those?

The President. Judy, look, I am going to Washington to pay honor to Mrs. Reagan and her family. I'll give a speech tomorrow, and then I will reflect on further ways to honor a great President.

Lakely [Jim Lakely, Washington Times].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Many in this country and around the world believe that the United Nations' involvement in Iraq is necessary because the way you've conducted the war in Iraq is illegitimate and has lowered the moral standing of the United States around the world. However, one could also argue that the United Nations has moral authority problems of its own with the oil-for-food scandal in Iraq, for instance. How do you respond to those who think that the United Nations has greater moral standing in the world than the United States? Or do you think the United States maybe is held to a higher standard than the United Nations?

The President. I think the United States is a strong, compassionate nation. And as President of a strong, compassionate nation, I'll do what it takes to defend us. We're at war. We're at war with an enemy who killed thousands of our citizens on September the 11th, 2001. And since that time, they've killed hundreds elsewhere. They're killers, and I have an obligation to defend our country.

And the war on terror is a different kind of war. It requires international cooperation to fight it, and there's excellent international cooperation in the war against terror. There's excellence—there's excellent intelligence-sharing, not only with nations in the G-8 but nations throughout the world. There's excellent law enforcement operations—joint operations. We have got special forces from Europe side by side with special forces in the United States in remote regions of Afghanistan trying to find remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaida. There's substantial cooperation.

And that's the reason I went to the United Nations, to encourage cooperation. Plus, I wanted the United Nations to be a body that had the respect of the world, and when it said something, it meant it.

And so I went and took the case of Iraq to the United Nations. We got a unanimous

United Nations Security Council resolution. It said, “Mr. Saddam Hussein, disclose your weapons programs. If you don’t, face serious consequences.” In my judgment, when a body or a person says “face serious consequences,” you better mean it. Otherwise, future words ring hollow, and it would have made it less likely that international cooperation would have been effective in the war on terror.

So that’s why I went to the United Nations. I have respect for the United Nations. I was pleased with the U.N. Security Council resolution at the United Nations. It had a positive effect on the Iraqi people to hear the world speak. It also had a practical effect on allowing world leaders to go to their parliaments and say, “The U.N. has spoken. Therefore, let us continue missions.” And I think it’s a positive development when the U.N. is able to work together, and we are working together. We’re working together a lot, on a lot of fronts, and that’s what’s going to have to continue to happen as we fight the war on terror.

Let me say it again: There’s an enemy which lurks out there that is willing to kill on a moment’s notice. They’re trying to shake the world’s confidence. They want us to retreat. They want us to surrender. They want us to say, “You win. We’ll leave regions of the country.” And so long as I’m the President of the United States, we’ll be determined and firm and committed to fighting this enemy, for the good of all free people, so people can grow up without fear.

All right, I’m going to do a little something here. Clive, BBC [Clive Myrie]. Where are you, Clive?

Q. He’s not here, but I’ll—[laughter].

The President. You qualify. [Laughter] It’s about—you’ve been to almost all my press conferences, and you’ve never asked a question.

Q. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Where is Clive?

Q. Back here, sir. [Laughter]

The President. Back where? Clive, I’m sorry.

Q. Sorry, Clive. [Laughter]

The President. There’s a surrogate Clive here. [Laughter]

Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Mr. President, I wanted to return to the question of torture. What we’ve learned from these memos this week is that the Department of Justice lawyers and the Pentagon lawyers have essentially worked out a way that U.S. officials can torture detainees without running afoul of the law. So when you say that you want the U.S. to adhere to international and U.S. laws, that’s not very comforting. This is a moral question: Is torture ever justified?

The President. Look, I’m going to say it one more time. If I—maybe I can be more clear. The instructions went out to our people to adhere to law. That ought to comfort you. We’re a nation of law. We adhere to laws. We have laws on the books. You might look at those laws, and that might provide comfort for you. And those were the instructions out of—from me to the Government.

All right, Al Hurra. Good, thank you for coming.

Saddam Hussein/President’s Meeting With Tortured Iraqis

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You do have now the personal gun of Saddam Hussein. Are you willing to give it to President al-Yawr as a symbolic gift, or are you keeping it? [Laughter]

The President. What she’s referring to is a—members of a Delta team came to see me in the Oval Office and brought with me—these were the people that found Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, hiding in a hole. And by the way, let me remind everybody about Saddam Hussein, just in case we all forget. There were mass graves under his leadership. There were torture chambers. Saddam Hussein, if you—we had seven people come to my office. Perhaps the foreign press didn’t see this story. Seven people came to my—they had their hands cut off because the Iraqi currency had devalued. And Saddam Hussein needed somebody to blame, so he blamed small merchants, and their hands were chopped off, their right hand.

Fortunately, a documentary filmmaker went to Baghdad and filmed the—filmed these seven men. And their story was picked up around the Nation, particularly in Houston, Texas, where a person named Marvin

Zindler, who runs a foundation, took great sympathy and flew them over and had new hands put on. The latest prosthesis was put on their hand—was put on their arms. And their hands worked. I remember the guy signing “God Bless America” with his new hand in the Oval Office.

So this is the person. So needless to say, our people were thrilled to have captured him. And in his lap was several weapons. One of them was a pistol. And they brought it to me. It’s now the property of the U.S. Government. And I am—it—I’m grateful for their bravery. I’m also grateful that that part of the mission was accomplished, for the good of the Iraqi people.

Deans [Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers]. This is your area, right?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes.

Q. Thank you so much.

The President. Is any local press here, at all, by the way? Any local? Okay.

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, a year ago in Evian, there was an expectation that in the ensuing months weapons such as chemical or biological weapons would be found in Iraq. I wonder if you can share with the American people your conclusions, based on what you’ve learned over the past 15 months, sir, as to whether those weapons were—existed and they were hidden; were they destroyed; were they somehow spirited out of the country; or perhaps they weren’t there before the war—and whether you had a chance to share this with your G–8 partners.

The President. Right, no—Bob, it’s a good question. I don’t know—I haven’t reached a final conclusion yet because the inspectors—inspection teams aren’t back yet. I do know that Saddam Hussein had the capacity to make weapons. I do know he’s a dangerous person. I know he used weapons against his own people and against the neighborhood. But we’ll wait until Charlie gets back with the final report, and then I’ll be glad to report.

Local man, thanks.

G–8 Summit at Sea Island

Q. Mr. President, Sonny Dixon, WTOC in Savannah. I’m a native of this region, by the way. Stating the obvious, begging the indulgence of these fine people, this has been a terrific undertaking for our region of the country. We appreciate your words regarding hospitality. But in terms of logistics, facilities, and security, your observations on this G–8 Summit.

The President. Thank you. First, I want to thank the local citizens for putting up with all the security. I was riding my bike down the road in Sea Island, and a lady was just driving along the road, very happy, and the next thing she knows, some friendly agents were heading right in her way. [Laughter] And she, of course, pulled over, and I zoomed by. I felt like stopping to tell her, “Thanks. I apologize for the inconvenience.”

I also had the honor of going by and thanking the local, State, and Federal folks who provided the security at the airport over there on St. Simons Island. The cooperation was fantastic. The local sheriffs and police chiefs need to be commended and so do their people for working so well with the State and Federal people.

It—look, this is—we made the right choice to come down here for this summit. The people were just spectacular. And I’ll tell you, I generally don’t put words in a foreign leader’s mouth, but today Jacques Chirac said the food was great. [Laughter] And so, of course, I told the chefs. And they recognize that it’s a heck of a lot better to hear the food is great from Jacques Chirac than George W. Bush. [Laughter] But it’s really good.

Thank you for asking that, because it’s been a spectacular success, primarily because the people are so wonderful down here.

Let’s see here—Andre Sitov from Itar-Tass. Andre, good to see you. How are you?

Q. Doing great.

The President. That’s good.

Jacques Chirac/Vladimir Putin

Q. G–8s are supposed to be about informal contacts between leaders, so I wanted to ask you, sir, how do policy differences that sometimes happen between you and your foreign partners, how do they affect your personal

relationship with those leaders? Thank you, sir.

The President. Yes. Well, we go to different corners of the room, and we face the wall—no. [Laughter] Look, there is—we're united by values. We're united by common values. And therefore, it's a easy place to start conversations. And it's to be expected that nations don't always agree on every issue. But we do agree in the power of free societies. We do agree in a free press. We don't necessarily agree everything the free press writes, but we agree in a free press. We agree with free religions. There's great agreement.

And so, therefore, it's—this is a—it facilitates good and healthy conversation. And look, there was obviously a disagreement over whether or not we enforced the demands of the U.N. I fully understand that, but now that's past. And I know there's great speculation about the relationship between the United States and France. Let's face it. Most people say the United States and the world differ. No, it's the United States and France. That's where the focus generally is, and as Jacques Chirac said yesterday, relations with the United States are excellent. He's right.

That doesn't mean we agree every time we speak. But nevertheless, we've got very good relations. And I appreciate my working relationship with him.

And so the meetings are very cordial. And you probably want me to say something about Vladimir Putin. Yes, well, it's because you—I've always had good relations with Vladimir, ever since the first time I met him. You remember where I met him first?

Q. Slovenia.

The President. Very good. Very good, yes. [Laughter] That's impressive. But he's a—you know, he is a person who's got opinions, and I admire his strong opinions. I like courageous leaders, people who express their opinions. It's—to me, it's hard to have a good meeting with somebody if you're always wondering what their opinion is, and you kind of leave feeling somewhat empty. That's not how you get things done, as far as I'm concerned. When you sit around the table, you say what's on your mind. You know, "Here's what I think. What do you think?" And if there's a difference, try to explain the dif-

ferences and try to find common ground to work together.

We've got too much to do in a world beset by terror, poverty, and disease to allow a policy difference to prevent us from working together. And that's why these G-8 summits are meaningful and worthwhile. And that's why I'm really glad to have been the host here in Georgia.

Putting the hook on me? Okay. Listen, we're off to Washington. I've got a—I've got the—I will be paying tribute to President Reagan here in about an hour and a half or so and then will be visiting with Mrs. Reagan at the Blair House. I appreciate your understanding for the need for us, whoever is traveling with me, to get moving so that we can be on time for a solemn night and a day of remembrance tomorrow for a magnificent world leader.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:27 p.m. at the International Media Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr, Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi, and Minister of Displacement and Migration Pascale Isho Warda of the Iraqi interim government; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; Charlie Duelfer, head of the Iraq Survey Group; President Jacques Chirac of France; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Eulogy at the National Funeral Service for President Ronald Reagan *June 11, 2004*

Mrs. Reagan, Patti, Michael, and Ron; members of the Reagan family; distinguished guests, including our Presidents and First Ladies; Reverend Danforth; fellow citizens:

We lost Ronald Reagan only days ago, but we have missed him for a long time. We have missed his kindly presence, that reassuring voice, and the happy ending we had wished for him. It has been 10 years since he said his own farewell, yet it is still very sad and hard to let him go. Ronald Reagan belongs to the ages now, but we preferred it when he belonged to us.