

Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Bethesda, Maryland March 27, 1991

President's Physical Examination

Q. How did it go? Any problems?

The President. Perfect go.

Q. Is that right?

The President. Yes.

Q. What took so long?

The President. Ask Burt. Do you want an official statement? We'll give you Burt Lee.

Q. Want to know how you feel.

The President. Feel good. Look, I'm not going to go into any details. I'll leave this to—

Q. We want to know all the details.

The President. You do not. No, it's fine. It's very good.

Q. Was it a complete physical?

The President. Yes, total, everything.

Q. It was fun?

The President. I didn't say fun. [Laughter] Just had a nice lunch out here.

Q. What did you eat?

The President. I hate to tell you because you'll think I'm an elitist. [Laughter] Lobster. No, it went very well, very well.

Q. What did they say about your glaucoma?

The President. Better. Burt, the eyes are better than last year, right?

Dr. Lee. Yes, the same if not better.

The President. The same if not better.

Q. Are you taking—

The President. It's all right, under control.

Q. What took so long, Mr. President? It seemed like it took longer—

The President. Eyeballs. Eyeballs.

Dr. Lee. And an excellent lunch.

The President. Nice lunch. And lack of a desire to go back to work. [Laughter]

Q. Why is that?

The President. Because I enjoy it—he's so darn nice—the admiral and his troops are wonderful. No, it went very well. So did Barbara. Barbara got a good, clean bill of health yesterday. Well, she has her Graves' problem, but it's much better than would have been expected. So, anyway—

Q. Lobster is not good for the cholesterol.

The President. Well, I don't have a chole-

sterol problem.

Dr. Lee. Absolutely none.

The President. I'm lucky, really.

Q. What test results are you still waiting for? Do you have any?

Dr. Lee. Well, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International], the consultants will be coming back to us within the next 2 weeks, and you'll be informed.

Q. On what?

Q. —anything like that?

Dr. Lee. No. Everything is perfectly normal.

The President. When you were sick I didn't inquire this much into your health. [Laughter]

Iraq

Q. Well, moving on to something else, Mr. President—

The President. Yes.

Q. —the internal situation in Iraq looks like that Saddam is—well, what do you—do you think Saddam is going to be able to hold on, and do you think that—

The President. No, I've said all along that—well, I've said that we won't have normalized relations as long as he's there. There's enough dissent and disorder that it appears that Iraqi citizens are trying to do something about this. So, we'll wait and see how it plays out. But I think you'd have to put him down as fairly doubtful at this point.

Q. You wouldn't consider intervening in any way to help this along, in particular, the use of the helicopters?

The President. We were there under the United Nations resolutions. We're now trying to finalize the cease-fire, and that will take care of the U.S. role. Of course, we'll have an interest in seeing that those U.N.—the new U.N. provisos are complied with. It's a fairly—fairly stringent requirements, not too stringent because of what he's done. But there are some things that he'll have to do to comply. And that we'll be watching.

But I want to get our forces back home as soon as I can, and I want to get them out of

Iraq as soon as I can. And I think you'll see that they'll come out very fast when we get this cease-fire.

Q. You can do a permanent cease-fire even if he's using the helicopters for combat?

The President. There will be a cease-fire. That was not a requirement of the United Nations. It's not in the resolutions.

Q. So, have you ruled out something against the helicopters?

The President. I haven't ruled out anything. I'm just saying what's in the cease-fire.

Q. Are you satisfied with the U.N. resolution?

General Schwarzkopf

Q. Sir, did General Schwarzkopf suggest that you keep the war going longer?

The President. No. I understand that Dick Cheney—Secretary Cheney—put out a statement, having talked to Schwarzkopf, and I don't think there's any difference between any of us—me, Cheney, Powell, or Schwarzkopf. So, I think there was a comment—

Q. Did you see his comments?

The President. I saw it in the paper.

Q. I mean, he suggested that history would have to judge whether you stopped the war too soon.

The President. Well, I'm prepared for that. But I have full confidence in General Schwarzkopf, but all I know is that there was total agreement in terms of when this war should end. And it's total, and there's—not even questionable. And I think Schwarzkopf will be the first—

Q. Why did he say that then?

The President. I'd go ask him.

Q. He said he recommended going longer.

The President. Go ask him. Go ask him. He didn't say that—

Q. Have you called him on that?

The President. He didn't say that. Be careful.

Q. He said he recommended to you not to stop the war yet.

The President. No, I don't think he said that.

Q. —to go for total annihilation.

The President. If he did say that, that's

not correct, but he didn't say it. That's not what he said.

Q. Well, did it come as news to you, this interview where he did make—

The President. I have such high regard for General Schwarzkopf that I'll let him explain what he said. All I'm talking about is the facts. And Secretary Cheney put the facts out very clearly. I just read the statement. So, I would refer you to that. It is totally accurate and there's no—I don't think you'll find anybody that disagrees with it.

Iraq

Q. Have any rebel groups asked for help?

The President. Not that I know of.

Q. Of the U.S.?

The President. No, I don't believe that they have. If they have, it hasn't come to me.

Q. Are you satisfied now with the wording of the permanent cease-fire resolution?

The President. Well, I haven't seen any changes that might have been suggested today, but I am satisfied with the draft we sent up there. There have been a few modifications, but basically it's on track, Helen.

Q. Did you say before that you don't expect Saddam to last much longer?

The President. Well, I didn't say "much longer," but he will not—put it this way: with this much turmoil, it seems to me unlikely he can survive. People are fed up with him. They see him for the brutal dictator he is. They see him as one who tortured his own people. They see him as one that took his country into a war that was devastating for them. And this turmoil is not simply just historic unrest; it's historic unrest plus great dissatisfaction with Saddam Hussein.

So, you can figure out what that means in time. I don't know. I don't know how long it will take.

Q. Are you—[inaudible]—at this war?

The President. No. I think we did something that will stand in history as correct. We said that aggression would not stand, and it didn't. And the whole world came together in that. So, there's no hornets' nest open, simply exposing a dictator for what he is and worse. That's what's coming out of

it.
Listen, I've got to run. Any more physical questions? [Laughter] Would you like some pictures?

President's Physical Examination

Q. What was your favorite test? [Laughter]

The President. We're thinking of releasing some beauties here.

Q. Did they recommend anything for you to do?

The President. I refer all this to my doctor in whom I have total confidence, Dr. Burton Lee.

Q. ———slow down?

Q. Did he suggest to cut down on travel?

Q. More power walks?

The President. Yes. Yes, everything.

Note: The exchange began at 1:45 p.m. on the grounds of Bethesda Naval Hospital. During the exchange, President Bush referred to Burton J. Lee III, Physician to the President; Rear Adm. Donald Hagen, commander of the National Naval Medical Center; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf; Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney; and Gen. Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Physical Examination

March 27, 1991

President Bush today completed a routine physical examination at Bethesda Naval Hospital and is in excellent health. The President's examination lasted approximately 5 hours. The physical was conducted under the direction of Dr. Burton Lee, the President's personal physician.

"The President continues in excellent health," Dr. Lee said. "There were no surprises at the physical exam. He remains an extraordinarily vigorous man who continues to thrive on a great deal of physical activity and a rigorous, demanding work schedule."

Ophthalmologists continue to test the President for any progression of his glaucoma, but his condition remains stable. No

treatment appears to be indicated at the present time.

Among his other test results are: chest x-ray, normal; x-rays of hips and neck, mild degenerative osteoarthritis; electrocardiogram (EKG) and stress test, normal; urinalysis, no abnormalities; normal urologic exam; colonoscopy within normal limits; blood tests completely normal, including cholesterol, triglyceride, and lipoprotein levels; dermatology, no significant problem or change; and his allergy problems remain minimal and unchanged.

Note: The statement referred to Burton J. Lee III, Physician to the President.

Remarks to State Department Employees

March 27, 1991

The President. Thank you all very much for that warm reception. I really wanted to come over here, and I really wanted to say thank you. And I wanted to address our foreign policy professionals and all those

who support them. You are, indeed, the men and women on the front lines of American interests, both in war and in peace. And this recent situation was no exception.