

Let me also say, President Mubarak and I will have statements to make and will answer questions later, but I'm glad to welcome him back to Washington to congratulate him on his election. And this is the first opportunity I've had face to face to thank him for the critical role that he has played in the Middle East peace process. We're looking forward to having a good discussion about that, and we'll have more to say about it later.

Q. Mr. President, over the weekend, Bob Dole said that returning Aristide to Haiti is not worth a single American life. What's your response?

President Clinton. Well, my response is that our policy is to attempt to restore democracy in Haiti, that we are doing it in the way that we think is best and that is supported by Aristide and Prime Minister Malval. We have our ships there, and you know what we're doing. And they've never asked us to run the country for them. They've asked us to help the democratic process to be restored. We hope it can be done. The United States has an interest in that, avoiding large-scale outpourings of refugees, making sure the country is not a conduit for drug deliveries to this country, and promoting democracy in our hemisphere. And we're pursuing that policy.

Palestinian Prisoners

Q. President Mubarak, can we ask about your feelings about Israel's releasing these Palestinian prisoners today?

President Mubarak. I think it's a very good act. And we have discussed this before with Prime Minister Rabin. And the man really—[inaudible]—in doing as far as he could to restore peace and reach a comprehensive settlement to the problem. It's a very good step forward.

Q. Mr. President, your feelings?

President Clinton. I agree. I'm very pleased. He should come every day. I can say I agree—[laughter]—shorten my answer.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Invitation to Egypt

Q. Can I ask a question, Mr. President? When are you going to come and visit Egypt? [Inaudible]—invitation from me.

President Clinton. I think President Mubarak will have to invite me.

Discussions with President Mubarak

Q. President Clinton, which is the topic you wish to discuss with President Mubarak?

President Clinton. We have many things to discuss. I want to discuss how we can continue to work together on a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. And I want to ask President Mubarak's advice on a whole range of foreign policy issues. I want to be able to thank him personally for the absolutely indispensable role that he has played in the peace process in the Middle East so far. I don't think we would be where we are today if it weren't for President Mubarak. And we'll have our conversation, and then I'll answer your questions afterward. And I'll try to make sure you get equal time with the American press.

Q. Is Somalia on the topic of your talks with President Mubarak?

President Clinton. Oh yes, I expect to discuss Somalia, yes.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:09 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt October 25, 1993

President Clinton. Good afternoon. It's a great pleasure and honor to welcome President Mubarak to Washington once again.

Egypt has acted as one of our Nation's partners over a long time. They were actively involved in the Camp David peace process over

a decade ago. And today, Egypt remains one of our most important global partners. We continue our partnership in working for peace and stability in the Middle East. We're also partners in a host of global efforts, from Operation Desert Storm to peacekeeping in Somalia today.

And I want to express my personal appreciation to President Mubarak for his commitment to enhance Egypt's effort in that difficult humanitarian effort as well as for his personal involvement in the recent developments between Israel and the PLO, which I am convinced would never have come about had it not been for your continuing encouragement, Mr. President.

President Mubarak has proven repeatedly that he is a leader of great courage and determination. As he enters his third presidential term he has a bold vision for his nation: to reform the economy, to build a future of full employment and free markets. This process is vital to the well-being of the people of Egypt.

The President and the government have played a crucial role in the Middle East peace process. As I said, President Mubarak was pivotal in helping Israel and the PLO reach their agreement on September 13th. And like the United States and others in the international community, Egypt has been working to help turn this agreement into reality, an effort for which I am also very grateful. Egypt is hosting the substantive talks between Israel and the Palestinians begun earlier this month, a tribute to the confidence and trust all sides place in Egypt's leadership for peace. That leadership is essential as we work for peace and as we work for a comprehensive peace.

The President and I agreed in our talks this morning that we have to keep going in this process until all the pieces are in place, until there is a full and broad and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We discussed the next steps in the process, including our common commitment to making sure that the Israel-PLO agreement is implemented properly. We agreed that this accord can serve as a catalyst for achieving a comprehensive settlement. I'm going to work with President Mubarak and other Arab leaders to help the Arab world follow through in creating a new climate of dialog and reconciliation with Israel.

We also discussed the President's goal for his third term, and we discussed ways in which two nations can continue cooperating to address regional conflicts in Africa and elsewhere and to respond to other global challenges.

Egypt will always hold a special meaning for all of us. It is the birthplace of much of our civilization, many of our modern arts and sciences. Today, Egypt has a leadership role both as it confronts the challenges of its own development and the challenges of building a

better future for all the people in the Middle East.

The historic Egyptian experience demonstrates the importance of moderation, of tolerance, of dialog in shaping the future of the Egyptian people in the Middle East, a future marked by prosperity, by coexistence, and by stability. President Mubarak has been an exemplar of that experience. It is a joy to work with him and to welcome him once again to Washington.

Mr. President.

President Mubarak. I was very pleased to meet with President Clinton for the second time in 6 months. And our meeting today has reinforced my impression of the President as a man of courage and mutual commitment. We discussed several issues of mutual concern, and discussions revealed a great similarity of views between us. President Clinton was quite receptive and openminded.

On African matters, we agreed on the need to remain alert until apartheid is actually abolished and replaced by a democratic system of government. On Somalia, we concluded that the political solution lies in the full implementation of the resolution of Addis Ababa Conference on National Reconciliation. We are watching the situation there closely, and I am in touch with President Zenawi of Ethiopia who received a mandate to follow up the situation.

The United States and Egypt have worked together on peace in the Middle East for almost two decades. Our joint effort has been fruitful and promising. The peace process was boosted dramatically when Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin signed an historic document on the South Lawn of the White House on September 13th. That was by no means a ceremonial function. It was a living testimony to deep commitment to peace and justice. It was also a personification of the generous contribution of the U.S. to the whole process. It would have been impossible to realize this great achievement without the active American role. We thank the American people and their energetic leadership.

In the weeks ahead, we shall continue to work hard together in order to maintain a momentum and to keep the process on track. The Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles should be implemented in good faith and without delay.

On the other hand, negotiations on the other tracks must be resumed with full determination

to reach agreement soon. Particularly important is achievement of meaningful progress on the Syrian track promptly. I believe that the gap between the positions of the two parties can be bridged within a short period of time. The resumption of the Washington talks would present a golden opportunity for attaining this objective.

President Clinton, our discussions of bilateral relations demonstrated our shared commitment, certify our cooperation in all fields. The U.S. support for our economic reform program has enabled us to carry out this reform very successfully, indeed. Your continued support is most needed for the continuation of the program. Each and every Egyptian appreciates your support and values your friendship, Mr. President. You have been a reliable friend and partner. You can equally count on our friendship and cooperation.

I see such an opportunity to extend an invitation to President Clinton to visit Egypt at his earliest convenience. This would afford the Egyptian people an opportunity to express their appreciation and affinity to the President, to his great Nation.

Thank you.

Ukrainian Nuclear Weapons

Q. Mr. President, leaders in the Ukraine told Secretary Christopher today that they won't go along with the destruction of all of their country's long-range nuclear weapons or the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Do you think that that stand is justified, as they say, by the instability in Russia?

President Clinton. I understand their position, but I think that it is not justified because we're making progress with Russia, too, in complying with all these agreements. And there is no evidence that any of the developments which they might conceive in their worst fears would lead to an unwillingness to cooperate in the nuclear regime.

I think they may see that as a counterweight to nonnuclear pressures they might feel in the future. But I think it's very important. We've been very clear from the beginning with Ukraine that we want to have a strong partnership with them but that we expect this work of reducing our nuclear arsenals and complying with all the relevant treaties to go forward, and we'll keep trying to do that.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, back on the Mideast, in your discussions with President Mubarak today, he mentioned the resumption of the Syrian track talks. What would you like to see as a concrete step forward in the peace process?

President Clinton. I think it's very important that we resume the talks between Israel and Syria. But I also think it's important that we maintain a climate in which those talks can succeed. I believe that Prime Minister Rabin and President Asad, I believe that the people of Israel and the people of Syria want to see this process go forward. But we've got to implement the Israel-PLO agreement. We need to continue to make progress on the other tracks. We need to encourage a greater receptivity in the level of contacts between Israel and the other Arab states, as has already begun. And so I want to do all of that as well. And I think that if we do all of that, I think you will see ultimately, in the not too distant future, a successful conclusion.

Could we give some—I want to give some equal time to the Egyptian journalists who are here. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, you have been invited to come to Egypt. Will you be visiting other Arab countries in the area? And in the meantime, would you try to resume the talks between the Israelis and the Syrians and the Lebanese before you go, and would you send Warren Christopher to the area very soon?

President Clinton. Well, I just was invited today to go, so I haven't worked out a schedule yet. I think it's fair to say that the United States and the Secretary of State will continue to be very involved in the region, and I'm very hopeful that we will have a comprehensive resumption of all the efforts in the Middle East. I think you know that that's our administration's position.

Terrorism

Q. There is extraordinary security here today for Mr. Mubarak's visit. Is this a response to a specific threat? And in general, can you tell us if you discussed any of the terrorist issues that are troubling both countries and what your discussions were on that?

President Clinton. We talked about it a little bit, and I may want the President to make a comment, or give him a chance to. I think he's made marked progress in his country in dealing

with these issues. The security is at the level we thought was appropriate because of all the obvious tensions that surround the whole Middle East peace process, we think the people of all of our nations are yearning for that peace. We consider President Mubarak a valuable asset. We just wanted to go out of our way to make sure that he felt secure here in our Nation.

Q. On the terrorist issue in this country, is there a specific threat against you, sir, here—

President Mubarak. Here in the United States, you mean?

Q. Yes, that has prompted so much security?

President Mubarak. Really, I didn't hear of any of that in the United States. If you speak about in our country, we are much, far better than ever before. You may hear an incident every now and then, but it happens everywhere in the world now. But we are in a very safe country. And you could come and visit our country, walk on the streets, and so you could evaluate yourself what is the situation.

President Clinton. We have an Egyptian question in the back.

Somalia

Q. Mr. President, do you have any special role from Egypt relating to your position in Somalia? You are asking Egypt to do any special role?

President Clinton. Well, we're going to continue to discuss that over lunch after we have this press conference. But let me say this: I'm grateful for Egypt's continued involvement in Somalia, and I think that we agree, the President and I do, about what our common objectives should be there, what our hopes are. And I think we also agree that ultimately the Somalis are going to have to decide the future of their country for themselves, hopefully with the involvement of supportive Arab nations in the area.

Haiti

Q. Mr. President, on the subject of Haiti, the U.N. representative, Mr. Caputo, has suggested that former President Carter might be a useful representative, and other leaders, to try to get the process moving. Do you think that's a good idea? Would you encourage Jimmy Carter to go? And what is your assessment of whatever progress may have been made over the weekend with General Cedras?

President Clinton. Well, as I said earlier today, it's always hazardous to be hopeful about Haiti.

But I do believe that some of the signs over the weekend were hopeful, that there was some outreach, some understanding that there has to be an accommodation here, and that is hopeful to me.

Mr. Caputo has done a good job and has worked very closely with my Special Envoy there, Ambassador Pezzullo. The first I heard of this suggestion was this morning. I have discussed Haiti on several occasions with President Carter. He knows President Aristide; he did go to President Aristide's inaugural ceremony. He has been working with this administration on some other problems and some other nations. So this is not anything that we've ever discussed in a specific sense. I think that before I would make a comment on it, I'd have to see what his reaction was.

I understand Mr. Caputo mentioned Michael Manley also. What they would do under these circumstances would be up to them. But all of these things I think generally are hopeful. It means everybody is trying to reach out and bring this matter to some resolution.

Is there another Egyptian question in the back there?

U.S. Aid to Egypt

Q. Mr. President, is the American aid to Egypt going to decrease because of the peace agreement in the Middle East?

President Clinton. I wouldn't put it that way. I have continued to support strong American aid to Egypt, and I will continue to do that. And I think it's fair to say that our relationship in the future, including the aid relationship, will be a matter of close conversation between President Mubarak and me and will be whatever is appropriate to help Egypt to succeed and to lead in such a constructive manner.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. I want to follow up on your answer on Syria for a second. Do you think the political traffic in Israel right now could bear a breakthrough on the Syria-Israel front? That is, do you think Prime Minister Rabin could sell to the Israeli public Asad back on the Golan and Arafat in the West Bank in the same window of time here?

President Clinton. I don't know what the answer to that is, but I will say this: At least we can all count, and we know that if you look

at the composition of the Knesset with the Shas minority party out of the coalition, temporarily at least, but not yet voting against the peace process, it is important that the Prime Minister know that there is not only a lot of popular support for what is being done but that that popular support can be translated at least into a Knesset that does not attempt to tie his hands in going forward.

Which is why the position of the United States has been, number one, that I believe Prime Minister Rabin wants a comprehensive peace in the Middle East; number two, that in order to do it he has to have the support of the people of Israel, which means we have to implement the present agreement between Israel and the PLO, we have to continue to make progress in opening up other Arab nations' attitudes toward Israel, we have to continue to make progress on the other tracks. And there has to be some time in which he can work out whatever his situation is with this parliamentary body. We don't need to have him in a position where he can't make peace.

Now, I can't offer you a definitive analysis of Israeli politics or public opinion, but I think what I'm committed to doing is to getting this thing on track. Everybody in Israel has got to know in the end there can't be a total peace in the Middle East unless there is some peace with Syria. But the timing is very important, and progress on the things that are now at hand is very important.

Is there another Egyptian question back here?

Russia

Q. Mr. President, concerning the foreign aid, are democracy and human rights records the criteria for U.S. foreign aid? If so, was your support to Yeltsin as an example or an exception for that policy?

President Clinton. Well, democracy and human rights are important, but I would argue that it's an example of that policy. Yeltsin is today the only democratically elected leader in all of Russia. He is doing his best to set up a constitution in which a Parliament will be elected democratically and it will have legitimacy, along with him. And there will be a lot of people who disagree with him in that Parliament, but they will have a legitimate base of authority under a new constitution. Also, I would say that, given the circumstances that he

confronted, he responded with real restraint, I think.

NAFTA

Q. Mr. President, can I ask a question on NAFTA?

President Clinton. Sure.

Q. You have less than a month now before the House is scheduled to vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement. How important will this vote be in terms of your Presidency? In other words, if you lose this vote and NAFTA goes down the drain, will this reflect—how seriously in terms of the big picture, in terms of your success or failure as President of the United States?

President Clinton. Well, I think the more important thing is, how important is it to the United States? I think it's very important to our country, and I'm working very hard on it. I'm going to have a series of meetings and calls today, but I've already done some work on it this morning. And then I think, beginning along toward the end of the week you will see, from then until the vote, an enormous increase in the focus of my personal efforts along with the continued full-court press of the administration.

I'm hopeful, though, I have to say. We made some good moves last week, and I think there will be some good movement this week. And from my point of view it is clearly in the interest of the United States to adopt this. It means more jobs. It means more access to more Latin markets, which means more jobs still. It means a much better climate of cooperation on drugs and immigration and a whole range of other issues with Mexico. It is a very, very important agreement.

The thing that's most important to me is I think that we're already at a point where if there were a secret ballot on NAFTA, it would carry easily. And I think that in the end, the statesmanship urges and impulses of the men and women in the House of Representatives will take over, and I think it will prevail.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 31st news conference began at 12:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras, commander of the Haitian armed forces, and Michael Manley, former Prime Minister of Jamaica.