

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines November 22, 1993

American Airlines Strike

Q. Mr. President, are you willing to intervene in the American Airlines strike?

The President. Well, I'm concerned about it. I've asked the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Labor to look at the situation, and we're looking into it now. But I don't want to raise any false signals. We're looking into it, we're examining it, and we're looking at all the options. No decision has been made.

Congressional Priorities

Q. Mr. President, what are your priorities now if Congress wraps up before they head home?

The President. Well, as they head home here, I hope the House will pass campaign finance reform today. And I still have a little hope that they can work out their differences over the Brady bill and give it to the American people for a Thanksgiving present. I would like that very much.

Deficit Reduction Proposal

Q. What about the Penny-Kasich—

The President. Well, as you know, I think that's a mistake. I think if it were to pass, if it were to actually become law, it would imperil health care. It would raise the prospect of further defense cuts, which are very unwise. It also sort of heads off the disciplined approach we had planned for next year with the entitlements commission and with the further budget cuts that are scheduled anyway that we still have to make. So I think it would be a mistake.

Q. Were you surprised—

North Korea

Q. Have you ruled out a preemptive strike in North Korea?

The President. I have nothing to say other than what I said at the APEC meeting about that. We're working hard on that issue, and I've consulted with the South Koreans and with the

Japanese and with the Chinese at the APEC meeting extensively about that issue.

Handgun Control Legislation

Q. Were you surprised that the Brady bill got a new lease on life? And you thought it would happen?

The President. I mean, I think that those who were filibustering it really considered where they were and where the American people were, and they were out of harmony with the American people. The American people want us to act on crime. They want us to do something about violence. They want us to move forward. And the Brady bill is symbolic of the serious effort to move forward. And so I was very pleased. I appreciate the fact that the filibuster was abandoned.

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

Philippines

Q. Mr. President, what in the Philippines interests you?

The President. Well, just about everything that goes on in the Philippines interests me. Our country and the Philippines have a long and deep friendship that goes back many decades. And I was very impressed with the leadership that President Ramos showed at the APEC meeting in Seattle and the vision he demonstrated about the importance of our remaining partners in the Asian-Pacific region in the years ahead. So I'm looking forward to having the chance today to talk to him about what the two of us can do together to strengthen our partnership.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.