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diers to intervene in the conflict but to contain it and work toward its resolution. And that's what we've sought to do in many other places in the world. That's what we have sought to do with our humanitarian aid mission in Somalia, to at least give those people some breathing space so they could put something back together and you wouldn't have a conflict that again could engulf millions of people.

We will not always be successful, but the big success, that is, preventing another world conflict and preventing the commitment of millions of Americans to a life-or-death struggle, we can avoid that if we proceed with discipline. And that is a thing that weighs on my mind as I watch Normandy unfold again after 50 years.

Mr. Blitzer. Thank you very much. We're out of time.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 8 p.m. aboard the U.S.S. *George Washington* en route to Normandy, France. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Harry Smith of CBS News
June 5, 1994

Role as Commander in Chief

Mr. Smith. I've been talking with a lot of veterans, and a lot of them respect you as Commander in Chief. Some of them aren't so sure. Do you feel like you have something to prove to them?

The President. No more than to any other Americans, except I think that the veterans of this country are entitled to know what they fought for in the Second World War is not going to be squandered at the end of the cold war. We understood, I think all of us understood, what we had to do as a country when communism rose at the end of the Second World War and took over Eastern Europe. And basically there was nothing we could do about it. I think everybody knew there was nothing we could do about that. But we were able to draw a line in the sand in Europe; we were able to limit the expansion in Korea. Maybe we made some mistakes in overreacting not perhaps just in Vietnam but in Central America because we were so worried about communism. But at least we did do that. We contained communism until it could collapse of its own failures and the truth reaching in to all these Communist countries. And even when we erred, we did so with—in good faith I think.

Now, at the end of the cold war, people are having a lot of questions about what's our national defense for or how do we keep our prestige alive and what's our job now in the world. It is a difficult and different world. And what I owe them is to make sure that we always have a strong, well-prepared, well-motivated, highly supportive military and that we move to contain the chaos and madness that is still abroad in the world and limit it so that our very existence is not again threatened by alien powers and so we never again have to do a D-Day. I owe them that. And I'm going to do my best to pay them.

Mr. Smith. Do you feel comfortable in your role as Commander in Chief?

The President. Oh, yes. I worked very hard at it. I've spent an awful lot of time with the service chiefs. I've spent a good deal of time out and around with the various services. I have tried to get to know pretty well a lot of the officers who have to make recommendations on policies and then have to carry them out. I've really worked at it.

If you come to the Presidency from a Governorship, you only have experience insofar as any of your forces, that is, our National Guard had been involved in something like Desert Storm, or if you've got to call them up for some terrible emergency. It's very different. It's something that I knew I'd have to invest a lot of time and effort in, especially at the end of the cold war. A Governor could more easily move into the role of Commander in Chief during the cold war because the road map was a lot clearer. So I have had to devote a good deal of time to it and still do. But it's something I enjoy, something I believe in, and something that is very important to me. The lives of these men on this ship are very precious to me. And I

am well aware that if I send them out into harm's way, I need to be as right as God will let me be right and that this enormous power the United States has now has its limits and its possibilities and clearly its responsibilities.

D-Day Commemoration

Mr. Smith. It is hard to be in Europe now during this time, especially in places that you've been and places you will go, and not do some soul-searching. Have you been doing some?

The President. Sure, I think we all have. I think everybody who's been part of this experience is so overwhelmed by the magnitude of the effort, by the level of courage and will that was required to prevail and how—it was not a foregone conclusion. It could have gone the other way. And if D-Day hadn't succeeded, even if we ultimately had won, millions of more people would have died, literally millions, before it could have been resolved. And it's made me think more deeply, more soberly, more prayerfully even, about the responsibilities that I have now and the problems that we're facing now.

Vietnam War

Mr. Smith. Has it made you think or reconsider at all your own lack of service during the Vietnam war?

The President. Not in that way, not in the way you ask it. I thought then, based on what I knew then, and I knew quite a bit for a person my age because I'd studied a lot of the documents, that our involvement was an error and that I should try to do what I could honorably to oppose it and to change it. I still believe that.

But I think that military service is an honorable thing, and it's something that in that sense I wish I had experienced. And none of us can control the time and place in which we live and the kinds of things that happen. We can only control our reaction to it. At the time I did the best I could. And you know, of course, from what came out that I felt—I had very mixed feelings about it. I tried to get myself even back into the draft because I was so confused about it. But I did the best I could at that time, and I'm doing the best I can now.

One of the things that I think we learned from that war is that even when we are extremely well-motivated, heroic, and willing to die in large numbers, we cannot win a fight for someone else. We can support other people on their own land fighting for their own destiny, but we can't win a fight for someone else. There are limits to what we can do. And the enormous reaction after that war happened and after the South Vietnamese forces collapsed 10 days after our final withdrawal almost caused our country to go into a shell for a while. That was also bad. First we overreached, and then we didn't do perhaps what we should have done to sort of stick a stake in the ground.

And what I'm determined to do is learn as much as I can from history but not be imprisoned by it and certainly not be bogged down by it. I have a job to do now. And nobody else in the world has it but me. And one thing I owe these people who are in the armed services is to get up every day and do it the very best I can, unencumbered by anything anybody else says about it but always listening to other people.

North Korea

Mr. Smith. Along these lines, are you still going to pursue sanctions against North Korea?

The President. We're going to take the sanctions debate to the United Nations. There is still time for North Korea to change its course. There is still time for North Korea to work with other countries. It's important that the American people understand what's at stake here. They agreed, North Korea did, not to become a nuclear power. Since I've been President they have let us inspect, because we worked very hard at it, all their facilities for what they're doing now and what they might do in the near future. They have not permitted us to go back and inspect for what they did back in 1989 before I took office.

The international inspectors say that means they could divert and may have already diverted nuclear fuel for nuclear weapons. Now, they gave their word they wouldn't do that, and they gave their word they'd let us inspect. They deal with a lot of countries that are rogue countries that promote terrorism. We feel that they ought to keep their word. And if they don't, then we feel we have to seek sanctions. But they can still turn away.

Mr. Smith. The North Koreans have said that sanctions would to them be an act of war.

The President. Well, they say that, but they keep trying to blame other people for their behavior, Mature, disciplined adults can't do that. They have to take responsibility for their own

behavior. They cannot anymore blame us for their behavior. This is about their behavior, not mine. I approached them in the spirit of peace. I was elated when they joined this nonproliferation group, when they said, "We want to work our differences out with South Korea; we want a relationship with the rest of the world." I would like to have a relationship with North Korea. I would like for them to work out their differences with South Korea. But that's up to them, not me.

Mr. Smith. If they act on these sanctions—[*inaudible*]—does that mean we are prepared to go to war with North Korea?

The President. Well, I don't want to join their escalation of words. We have a treaty commitment that commits us to the security of South Korea. They are our friends; they are our allies. There are American soldiers today on the DMZ. I have visited them there. They are brave; they're good people; they're doing their job. And we will honor our treaty commitments.

But we are not trying to provoke North Korea. We are only asking them to do what they have already promised to do. And if they will keep their promise, the promises of the West and of Japan and of South Korea and now even of China and Russia who do not want them to do this, to be a part of a great world community—[*inaudible*]. These people have talent. They have achieved some things. They have quite a lot of technological proficiency, even though they're very poor economically. They've done well in other things. We want them to come be a part of our world, not to run away from it.

Mr. Smith. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thanks, Harry.

NOTE. The interview began at 8:13 p.m. aboard the U.S.S. *George Washington* en route to Normandy, France. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Sam Donaldson of ABC News
June 5, 1994

North Korea

Mr. Donaldson. Mr. President, thank you very much for the interview. A lot of people have suggested that if North Korea can't be brought to reason and other nations such as China and Russia don't support tough sanctions, that the United States ought to impose them unilaterally. Do you agree?

The President. Let me first say that the American people need to understand what's at stake here. They agreed not to become a nuclear power. They have honored the testing requirements for what they've done since I've been in office. But they still haven't allowed us to test for what they did in 1989. Under those circumstances, I don't think we have any choice but to go to the United Nations for sanctions. I have talked with President Yeltsin, along with Prime Minister Major and the new Prime Minister of Italy, Mr. Berlusconi. I'm going to see the French leaders the day after tomorrow. We are in touch with the Chinese.

I believe there is a general sense in the world community that we have to go forward with a sanctions resolution in the United Nations. I don't want to say what I'll do if we lose there because I'm not prepared to say we will lose there. I think most people know and believe that the North Koreans should cooperate on this. After all, they promised to do it. We're just asking them to keep their word.

Mr. Donaldson. I understand, sir, but Secretary Perry suggested today that in fact the United States would do it alone if it had to.

The President. Well, there is—we would not have to go it alone. The real question is could we have what has been called a coalition of the willing that included as many nations as would observe the sanctions as possible? The answer to that is we would certainly consider that if we failed at the United Nations. But keep in mind, China and Russia have both moved toward the West. And both have interests like Japan's, South Korea's, and the United States. None of us wish North Korea to be a nuclear power. And all of us know they promised they wouldn't be one. All of us know they still deal with other rogue states who support