

Aug. 14 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:41 p.m. in the Plaza Ballroom at the Adam's Mark Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Bob Beauprez, State chairman, Republican State

Central Committee of Colorado; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Exchange With Reporters in Albuquerque, New Mexico August 15, 2001

Situation in the Middle East

Q. One question about the Middle East, sir. Do you believe that they are on the brink of war there? And have you come to believe that it's no longer realistic—

The President. [*Inaudible*]*—the violence in the Middle East, but I'm confident that the leadership there will understand that war is avoidable and will work to bring peace. The parties must—must—make up their mind that peace is preferable to war. The suicide bombings have increased; there's too many of them. And Mr. Arafat must do everything in his power to discourage the suicide bombers. And the Israelis must be restrained in their response.*

There's too much violence in the Middle East, but I'm confident that we can avoid war so long as the leadership makes the concerted effort to do so. My administration is constantly in touch with the parties.

I spoke to Secretary Powell this morning. We're working with the appropriate folks. The Egyptians are in town. Not only are we talking to the Palestinians and the Israelis, we're talking to other nations in the neighborhood to encourage them to convince Mr. Arafat to do everything he can to prevent and stop suicide bombings and needless violence.

Congratulations, Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News]. You actually got me to say something. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:40 a.m. in room 117 at Griegos Elementary School. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at Griegos Elementary School in Albuquerque August 15, 2001

The President. Thank you for the warm greeting. It's an honor to be here on the first day of school. I can remember—I think I can still remember the excitement I felt when I was—the first day of school as a first grader at Sam Houston Elementary School in Midland, Texas. At least I felt—I felt the energy of the kids, and I

kind of could relate to it. And I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come.

I want you to know that the idea of coming here was Heather Wilson's. We were sitting around the Cabinet Room at the—right outside the Oval Office, and she said, "I understand you're thinking about coming to New Mexico." I said, "You bet.