

legal system and our immigration system ought to recognize that important relationship and make it work.

Ms. Meluza. Even those who are here now?

The President. That's very much of a possibility, of course. I mean, obviously, they're here doing a job that somebody wants them to do. But there's got to be the matching of the willing employer and willing employee. And if they're here now, fine. They ought to be discussed, and they ought to be a part of the mix, of course.

Ms. Meluza. I think that my time is up. Thank you very much, sir.

The President. Thank you. Good job.

Ms. Meluza. Thank you very much, sir. Lots of pressure.

The President. You look great in red.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:01 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico; and President Alejandro Toledo of Peru. He also referred to section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which expired April 30, 2001. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Telemundo

March 20, 2002

Mexico-U.S. Border and Immigration Policy

Q. Mr. President, you're going to make an announcement about the situation on the border with Mexico. And that's something that, for millions of our viewers, is very, very important. Can you advance something of what you're going to say? [Laughter]

The President. *La frontera es muy importante por los Estados Unidos y tambien Mexico.* The infrastructure—*la frontera necesita*—I mean, we've got to change for the better. We need to focus on new technologies, and we need to have a smart policy which recognizes two things.

One, there is a lot of normal traffic that ought to be facilitated, as opposed to stopped. There's a lot of traffic with trucks and a lot of traffic with people. Secondly, we've got to be wise about stopping things we don't want to have happen. In other words, we've got to encourage things we want to have happen and wise about stopping things we don't want to have happen, *los coyotes*, the terrorists, *las drogas*. And we can do a better job of assigning risk and focusing our resources and infrastruc-

ture and technologies to make it work better.

That's really what it is. There's not much new; there really isn't much new, except for a determined focus to make the border work. And our cooperation with the Fox Government has been very good.

Q. There's a huge challenge balancing homeland security—

The President. Yes.

Q. —and not disturbing something that is part of the blood of this country; that is immigration.

The President. That's right.

Q. How do you manage to do something like that?

The President. Well, it's the first to recognize that there are people who come to our country *para trabajar*. They love freedom; they want to work; they want to feed their families. Those family values—*values de la familia no pare in la Rio Bravo*. They've got moms and dads in Mexico who want to work.

And so a good immigration policy recognizes there are people in the United States who want to employ, Mexicans who want

to work, and we've got to facilitate them coming together. That has nothing to do with the war on terror; that has everything to do to make sure that our economy grows. And we can do a better job of that. We need to modernize that part of the immigration law.

At the same time, when we share intelligence, when we modernize the border, when we use biometrics, for example, on the border, when we've got new machines that are able to look inside trucks, then I think we can do both. We can have an immigration policy that's wise and an antiterrorist homeland security for both countries that is effective. And that's what I've been talking to President Fox about, as well as the Canadians. And we've got good relationships. So we can do a lot better job of making the border work better.

Q. The Mexican consulates are giving to the Mexicans in this country an ID called *matricula consular*. And in some counties in California and in Texas—and it's expanding—it's been accepted officially as an ID, and they can open bank accounts and stuff like that. Is it realistic to think that there could be a way to think in further terms about something like that?

The President. *Es posible.* Remember there are—again, I think it's very important for us to differentiate between those who on the border go back and forth on a daily basis—and that's easy to figure out a way to facilitate that. It may be biometrics; it may be a card; it may be—something. That's been discussed for a long period of time. And then there are those who are inside the country legally, and again, some kind of ID is a possibility. These are all open for discussion.

But the thing that is important for Americans to understand is that there are a lot of employers looking for people to work and a lot of people from Mexico who are willing to do the job and looking for work, and we've just got to come up with a plan that facilitates that. And I don't know all

the details, and I don't have—but those are the kinds of things that our people are discussing with the Mexicans to come up with a compassionate policy.

Colombia

Q. Are we closer to seeing U.S. troops in Colombia?

The President. No. No, no, no. We have committed to help the Colombians fight narcotrafficking. We're in the process of discussion with Congress the make—to allow our aid and advice to help the Colombians fight terrorism. As you know, we put the terrorist groups within Colombia on our list of terrorist organizations.

And so I don't see any role beyond advising and training. And I think that's important. It's important for the Colombians to make the decision themselves, to get the will necessary to take on these terrorists. And we will help them help themselves. It is a terrible situation where a part of your country has been taken over by a terrorist organization, that evidently doesn't want to reach an accommodation with you—I'm talking about FARC, now—does not want to reach an accommodation with the Colombian Government. Pastrana tried, and he tried, and he tried, and every attempt to create peace and a peaceful situation has been rejected by them. And now they're going to take a new tack, and we're there to help.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:09 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico; and President Andres Pastrana of Colombia. He also referred to FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Exchange With Reporters in Alexandria, Virginia March 20, 2002

Military Tribunals

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Yes.

Q. What are you hoping to achieve by holding the military tribunals? And at this point, do we have any people eligible to face those tribunals?

The President. Well, the tribunals are just an option for us. And we'll be using the tribunals if in the course of bringing somebody to justice it may jeopardize or compromise national security interests. So they're a tool; they're an option. As you know, we're discussing rules about how they can function well. The Defense Department asked a lot of opinions from respected scholars, and the world's now beginning to see what we meant by a fair system that will enable us to bring people to justice but at the same time protect national security. I have no plans right now to use anybody—nobody in mind yet. But the option is available.

Q. Are many of those people otherwise going to be sent back to their home countries, and have you decided which ones would be—

The President. Well, we're still in the process of getting as much information from the detainees as possible. Remember, these are—the ones in Guantanamo Bay are killers. They don't share the same values we share. They would like nothing more than to come after Americans or our friends and allies. And so, therefore, it's in our national interest to make sure we know enough about them before we decide what to do with them. So there's a process—ongoing process to get as much information as we can from the prisoners, the detainees. Some talk; some don't talk.

Q. But let me follow, if I could—

The President. There will only be three questions.

Q. Okay, sorry. But if you say they're killers—

The President. They said they're killers.

Q. —what makes them eligible to go to the tribunal?

The President. I told you, if any evidence that is required to convict them jeopardizes the national security interests of the country, we'll use the tribunal.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, are you frustrated by the continuing violence in the Middle East, that looks—one day it looks good, the next day it's—

The President. Of course I am. I am frustrated by the violence in the Middle East, and so are a lot of people who live in the Middle East. I know there are some people who do not want us to achieve any kind of peaceful settlement of a long-standing dispute. And they're willing to use terrorist means to disrupt any progress that's being made. And that frustrates me. It frustrates mothers and dads who happen to be Palestinians and Israelis, because they want to raise their children in a secure environment.

Nevertheless, we'll continue to work the issue and work it hard. Zinni is over there; he's making some progress. He's saying to both parties, "Stay the course. Work hard to get into Tenet." And hopefully we can achieve what we all want to achieve, which is eventually a political settlement. But first and foremost, we've got to come up with a security agreement. We made some progress, and I want to thank Zinni for his job that he's doing there. And I'm looking forward to being briefed by the Vice President tomorrow morning when he gets back from—he's getting back this afternoon, but he's going to come in tomorrow morning. We'll have breakfast first thing