

our country's uniform. I'm glad I did it. It was also a really good landing.

U.S. Relations With Chile and Mexico

Q. The criticism is that—the criticism was made of Chile and Mexico that they would not support the resolution in the U.N. Security Council, the war against Iraq. What is your opinion of this?

President Bush. They're friends of ours, period. We've got great relations with Mexico, and we'll continue to have great relations with Mexico. We've got an important free trade agreement with Chile that we're going to move forward with.

President Aznar. For my part, I have to say that in addition to being our friends, they're family.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:58 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. President Aznar referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations. President Aznar spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference. The Presidential determination suspending the Iraq Sanctions Act is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar and an Exchange With Reporters
May 8, 2003

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Amir of Qatar to the Oval Office. The Amir has shown great leadership. He has led his country to join in a vast coalition to make the world more peaceful, to make the world more free.

Mr. Amir, you made some promises to America, and you kept your promises. We're honored to call you friend. We appreciate your steadfast support.

The Amir also has served as a strong example of what is possible in his part of the world. He is a reformer. He's promoted a new constitution which allows women to vote. He's promoted women into his cabinet. He is a strong leader. He believes strongly in education; an educated populace is one more likely to realize their dreams.

So, Your Highness, it's such an honor to have you here, and I welcome you, and I want to thank you for your friendship.

Amir Hamad. I would like to thank the President very much for his gracious invita-

tion for me to come and meet with him here at the White House. We in Qatar are very keen to have a very unique and strong and distinct relationship with the United States, a relationship that it is transparent.

Our military relationship is very good. We are very committed with the United States regarding every agreement that we have signed to fulfill our part.

We are also so grateful for the United States, because it is helping Qatar in the areas of education and economics and economic development. And in Qatar we welcome all American corporations who are willing to come and invest in Qatar.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Keil [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Iranian Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Mr. President, there are reports this morning that Iran may be pursuing or accelerating its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Is this of a concern to you, particularly

as you are also trying to deal with a similar situation in North Korea?

President Bush. Well, I've always expressed my concerns, that of the Iranians may be developing a nuclear program. I have done so publicly. I have done so privately. As you may recall, I expressed those concerns to Vladimir Putin when I went to Russia. And as I understand, the IAEA is coming out with a report in June, and we'll wait and see what it says.

But one of the things we must do is work together to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is a major issue that faces the world, and it's an issue in which the United States will still lead.

Stretch—you're not Stretch [Bill Sammon, Washington Times].

Women in Combat

Q. Mr. President, I know you support our women in the military, but sometimes female prisoners of war are treated worse than males. Is it time to review the Clinton-era rule change that puts women into combat situations?

President Bush. I will take guidance from the United States military; our commanders will make those decisions. I will tell you this: When I was on the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, I met two women pilots. I would have just have been happy to have one of those pilots fly me on that carrier as the guy, as "Loose" flew me on the carrier.

But in terms of whether or not, you know, the configuration of our force and who ought to be fighting where, that's going to be up to the generals. That's how we run our business here in the White House. We set the strategy, and we rely upon our military to make the judgments necessary to achieve the strategy.

Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Tax Cut on Dividends

Q. Mr. President, can you live with a scaled-back tax cut on dividends the Senate is talking about now?

President Bush. Well, first of all, the question is, will the Congress respond in a bold enough way to help people who are looking for work find a job? That's the fundamental question Congress ought to ask.

Q. What do you think of this compromise—

President Bush. And I continually remind people that I want something strong enough so people can work. And I will continue reminding Congress that they have a responsibility to listen to the voices of those who are unemployed. I certainly have heard those voices, and you'll see me next week continuing to take that message out to the country.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters] and the last question.

Secretary Powell's Upcoming Visit to the Middle East/Roadmap for Peace

Q. Secretary Powell is going to the Middle East this weekend. Are you seeing any progress at all on the roadmap? The violence seems to be going—

President Bush. That was supposed to be a dramatic announcement for my speech tomorrow at the University of South Carolina: I hereby send Secretary Powell to the Middle East. It doesn't sound like it's that dramatic anymore. [Laughter] You've jumped the gun on me.

Q. Sorry, sir. [Laughter]

President Bush. That's all right. It's your job. That's your job.

Q. Have you seen any—

President Bush. Yes, of course we're going to make progress. Yes, we'll make progress, absolutely. And the reason why we'll make progress is that the Palestinian Authority has now got a leader in the Prime Minister who has renounced violence. And he said he wants to work with us to make the area more secure. He understands what we know, that a peace process will proceed if and when there is a concerted effort to fight violence.

So one of the things I'll be talking to His Highness about—who, by the way, is very active in this process—is how do we work with the Arab world to encourage the Arab world to assume its responsibilities of stopping the funding of terror and to working with the Palestinian Authority to encourage the habits of democracy and freedom with the Palestinian Authority.

So I'm very optimistic. That's why I'm sending Secretary Powell there—a secret which is no longer a secret. [*Laughter*]

Thank you all. Very good work, Holland.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Comdr. John P. “Loose” Lussier, USN, executive officer, VS-35, Naval Air Station North Island, CA; and Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. Amir Hamad spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Honoring Central European Nations on Their Upcoming Admission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization May 8, 2003

Thank you all very much, and welcome to the White House. We're glad you're here. Interestingly enough, it was here, 58 years ago today, that President Harry Truman announced the end of the war in Europe. And the people of America and Europe celebrated that victory together.

This year on V-E Day we mark another kind of victory in Europe. Just hours ago, the United States Senate voted unanimously to support NATO admission for Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. These heroic nations have survived tyranny. They have won their liberty and earned their place among free nations. America has always considered them friends, and we will always be proud to call them allies.

I appreciate the Foreign Ministers of the NATO nations—or the nations who will soon be joining NATO—who are with us today. We just had a great discussion in the Roosevelt Room in the White House complex.

I appreciate so very much the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who has been a strong and tireless advocate for the expansion of NATO.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Senate who have joined us here today. I appreciate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee for coming. I particularly want to thank Chairman Dick Lugar and ranking member Joe Biden for their strong leadership in getting the Senate to vote unanimously for the admission of these nations into NATO. Great job, Senators.

I also am honored to welcome George Voinovich, the Senator from Ohio and, more importantly, Janet Voinovich, his wife—[*laughter*—and Senator Carl Levin from Michigan. Welcome. I'm glad you all are here, and thanks for coming.

I want to welcome the chairmen and chairwomen of the Parliamentary foreign affairs committees who are here. I appreciate the Ambassadors from our current and future allied nations who are joining us today. I want to thank General Richard Myers for joining us today, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And I want to thank all of our distinguished guests for coming.

The defeat of Nazi Germany brought an end to the armed conflict in Europe, but that victory did not bring true peace and