

Interview With TV3 of France May 29, 2003

France-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, are you going to forgive the French attitude on Iraq? What are you going to tell President Chirac when you're going to see him face to face?

The President. Sure.

Q. Are you still mad at him? Are you going to take sanctions against France?

The President. No, no. No sanctions. I'm not mad. I mean, I'm disappointed, and the American people are disappointed. But now is the time to move forward, and there's a lot of issues that we can work together on. I know that Jacques Chirac feels strongly about Africa, and so do I. And therefore, we can work together, for example, on the AIDS pandemic in Africa. I laid out a bit initiative here for the American people, and the Congress passed a \$15 billion, 5-year plan to work on HIV/AIDS in Africa. And there would be an opportunity, for example, for America and the French to work together to solve some big problems.

And I'm going to remind him, just like I'm going to remind a lot of people, that we can do a heck of a lot more together than we can arguing with each other. And I can understand why some didn't agree with our policy in Iraq, but it's now time to move forward.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Considering the roadmap, peace in Middle East—you are going to meet most of the protagonists next week—how do you plan concretely to succeed where your predecessors failed?

The President. Yes. Well, first of all, I appreciate the understanding of Jacques Chirac and the administration about me leaving a little early from Evian to go to the Middle East, where I will first meet with our Arab friends, some of the leaders in the neighborhood, and remind them they

have a responsibility to the process. In other words, if they're interested in the achievement of peace, that they must cut off funding, for example, or work to cut off the financing of money to terrorist groups that would like to destroy the process.

Secondly, I believe that the Palestinian Authority—the new Prime Minister is firmly committed to the defeat of terror and the advancement of a state and the institutions necessary to make a state viable. And so I'm very encouraged by his emergence.

And thirdly, I believe Israel recognizes it's in their self-interest to support the notion of two states living side by side in peace. I'm the first President to have ever proposed that. I did so at the United Nations, and I take that vision into the Middle East knowing that the process is going to be difficult. But I believe that people now see the necessity of achieving that end result.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, what do you answer to the American press that are trying to say that you have not released yet the proof of the existence of arms of massive destructions in Iraq? What do you answer to them?

The President. Well, they must not be paying attention, is what I answer, because we've discovered mobile biological laboratories, the very same laboratories that Colin Powell talked about at the United Nations, the very same laboratories that were banned by the resolutions of the United Nations.

Q. The situation in Iraq is far from being stabilized. We have seen some American soldiers killed. Do you fear the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in this region against the occidental world, against United States? And do you fear at the same time the risk

of creation of an Islamic republic backed by neighboring Iran?

The President. No, I don't fear that. I think the Iraqi people want to run their own state. They don't need to have an Iranian-backed regime. I think the Iraqi people are plenty capable of managing their own affairs.

Secondly, I fully recognize that democracy didn't flourish overnight. But I didn't expect it to. This is a country which has been ravished by a brutal dictator who murdered and tortured to stay in power. And it wasn't all that long ago that they were liberated from Saddam Hussein. So it's going to take a while.

And therefore, I've told Jerry Bremer that our Government, my Government, will be patient, as he makes progress toward improving the lives of the Iraqi people. And I say "he," it's not only Jerry Bremer and the United States; there's a lot of people that are involved with the reconstruction of Iraq. And as life returns back to normal and as we get a hold of the situation—particularly in Baghdad—of the killers and people that are wreaking havoc—in other words, as we bring security to the neighborhoods, you'll see a good, democratic government emerge.

Iran

Q. Is Iran a preoccupation for you—the ayatollahs with Al Qaida, which might be in that country attacking the United States?

The President. Well, we are concerned—we are concerned that there's Al Qaida in-

side of Iran and have made our concerns very clearly. And this will give me a chance to do so again. To the extent that they have got Al Qaida in their country, we expect them to detain them and eventually hand them over to their countries of origin. There's no preoccupation. Our main focus right now is to find Al Qaida wherever they exist and bring them to justice, and we will do that. We'll continue to do that, and we expect others to join us.

And I want to compliment the French for joining in this fight against Al Qaida. The French intelligence service have been very good to work with, and we've shared intelligence which has made France more secure and America more secure. And for that I'm grateful.

Q. Mr. President, I want to thank you very much, and I definitely wish you all the best and great success for the future.

The President. Thank you, sir. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:43 p.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 4:30 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Nile TV of Egypt May 29, 2003

Upcoming Visit to Egypt/Meeting With Arab Leaders

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much for talking to Egyptian television. Mr. President, you're coming to Egypt next week,

and you are meeting with President Mubarak and a number of other Arab leaders. What are you going to tell them? What role do you see the Arab countries playing in the coming stage?