

The President. I don't know. Do you think I possibly would be invited? I don't know.

Ms. Christiansen. We're very happy that you come over in July.

The President. I'm looking forward it, and I want to thank you for this good interview.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:21 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia; Presi-

dent Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister-designate Nuri al-Maliki, and Speaker of Parliament Mahmoud al-Mashhadani of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarfawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Jurgen Klinsmann, head coach, Germany's 2006 World Cup men's soccer team. Ms. Christiansen referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Kai Diekmann of Bild May 5, 2006

The President. Have you ever been in the Oval Office before?

Mr. Diekmann. Once, a long time ago—

The President. I'll give you a quick tour before our interview. So the first thing that a President does, which I didn't realize, was pick a rug. I've have no idea about rugs. And so in this job, you've got to delegate. The American President is in a position where there's just unbelievable complexities to the job—Darfur, Iran—a whole lot of issues. So I delegated the decision about the rug to my wife.

The second thing a President has got to do is have a strategic mind. In order to be successful, in my judgment, as the President, you've got to constantly think strategically. And so I said to her, "You pick out the colors; you be the tactical person; but I want it to say, 'optimistic person.'" That's all I wanted it to say. Here is the result. Isn't it beautiful?

Mr. Diekmann. Yes, it is very beautiful.

The President. There's a sense of optimism when you come in here. And there's a reason why. You cannot lead people un-

less you're optimistic about what you're doing. You've got to believe it in your very soul. One of the interesting things about the Presidency is people watch me like a hawk. They're looking at my moves. And if I'm going to be wringing my hands and if I'm all worried about the decisions I make—are not going to lead to a better tomorrow, they'll figure it out.

And so when you talk to me today, I just want you to know, I not only strongly believe in the decisions I make, I'm optimistic that they're going to work—very optimistic.

These are all Texas paintings. That's west Texas; those are other Texas paintings. At least if you're a Texan, it reflects a way of life and a way of thinking. The interesting thing about Washington is that they want me to change—"they" being the—and I'm not changing, you know. You can't make decisions if you don't know who you are and you flip around with the politics. You've got to stay strong in what you believe and optimistic about that—you'll get good results.

And so—the other thing I want you to know about me is that no matter how pressurized it may seem, I’m not changing what I believe. Now, I may change tactics, but I’m not going to change my core beliefs—a belief that freedom is universal or the belief that private markets work, a belief in ownership—when people own something, society is better off; a belief that there’s a role for government, but it’s limited in nature. And I’m not changing. I don’t care whether they like me at the cocktail parties or not. I want to be able to leave this office with my integrity intact.

That’s George Washington, the first President, of course. The interesting thing about him is that I read three—three or four books about him last year. Isn’t that interesting? People say, “So what?” Well, here’s the “so what.” You never know what your history is going to be like until long after you’re gone—if they’re still analyzing the Presidency of George Washington—[laughter]. So Presidents shouldn’t worry about the history. You just can’t. You do what you think is right, and if you’re thinking big enough, that history will eventually prove you right or wrong. But you won’t know in the short term.

Lincoln—this is the place on the Oval Office wall where the President puts the most—the best President, and I put Lincoln here, and I don’t think there’s any question—now, people will have their—but I think he was the most influential President ever. And the reason why is because that in the midst of a difficult Presidency, needless to say—the Civil War, thousands of people dying, with Americans killing Americans—he had a vision of a United States. It’s conceivable this country would have ended up being two countries had he not had a clear vision, even though all around him was seemingly falling apart. He was a great President.

That’s called “A Charge to Keep,” based upon a religious hymn. The hymn talks about serving God. The President’s job is never to promote a religion. The great

thing about America—and Germany, for that matter—is that you should be able to worship freely. I like to tell people, you’re equally American whether you’re a Jew, Muslim, Christian, or atheist—you’re equally all Americans—and that if we ever lose that, we begin to look like the Taliban.

I understand, in parts of Europe, some scoff at my faith. It doesn’t bother me. But I happen to believe, for me at least, faith is one way to make sure that my values stay intact and that I keep life in proper perspective, which is a very important part, in my judgment, of being a good decisionmaker.

Finally, the desk, where we’ll have our picture taken in front of is—nine other Presidents used it. This was given to us by Queen Victoria in the 1870s, I think it was. President Roosevelt put the door in so people would not know he was in a wheelchair. John Kennedy put his head out the door.

Mr. Diekmann. Yes, the very famous picture—

The President. That’s it—the most famous picture. And then Reagan, interestingly enough, put the bottom on there. He was a big guy; he didn’t want to bump his knees under the desk.

Anyway, this is the Oval Office. It’s a shrine to democracy. And we treat it that way. When people walk in here, they don’t come in here in bathing suits and flip-flops. They come in here dressed like they’d come to a shrine. It is to be respected and honored because the Office of the President is bigger than the person who occupies it. It’s one of the great things about a true democracy, is that the institutions outlast the individuals, and therefore, there’s stability in the process.

Some Presidents forget that they’re not bigger than the Office. But all Presidents must always honor the Office and remember it is a sacred trust to uphold the honor of the Presidency.

Mr. Diekmann. Thank you for taking the time.

The President. Yes, glad to do it.

Mr. Diekmann. Bild has 12 million readers. It's the largest newspaper in Germany. And there's one thing which is really special about our newspaper—every German who wants to work for the newspaper, he has to sign in his working contracts some beliefs—and there's the belief you have to be for reunification; you have to be against totalitarianism from riots on the right side and the left side; and you have to be for the peace and for the understanding with Israel. And since September 11th, we have a new belief—you have to be for partnership with America. Otherwise, you can't work for us, you can't come—you have to sign it in your contract.

The President. My kind of guy. [*Laughter*]

War on Terror

Mr. Diekmann. Okay, so I would like to start. Mr. President, the fifth anniversary of the terrible 9/11 attack is nearing. Has the Western world really learned the right lessons from 9/11?

The President. Yes. The Western world, by and large, understands that we face an enemy that is coldblooded and will kill innocent life to achieve an objective. That killing not only took place on September 11th here in our country, but it has taken place in other countries around the world since then.

Secondly, the governments of the Western world understand that in order to protect our respective peoples, there must be intelligence sharing. We must be willing to converse with each other in ways that might not have happened before. In other words, if we know something is going to happen in Germany, it's very important for the United States Government to call up its counterparts and to share that information. And there's a lot of that information sharing.

Thirdly, we understand that money is what fuels these terror cells. And the idea of sharing intelligence about the movement

of money is necessary to make sure we protect our people.

The degree of understanding about September the 11th varies, however. For some people around the world, September the 11th was just a terrible moment. For me and a lot of other people in America, September the 11th was a change of attitude; it was a call to arms in the sense that this is the first—for America—the first battle of the war in the 21st century.

One of the things that I hope people come to understand is that there are two ways to defeat this enemy: One is to bring them to justice so they don't harm people, which means we've got to be constantly on the offense, finding them where they hide and bringing them to justice. And secondly is that the way to defeat their hateful ideology is by the spread of liberty. That notion—some understand that, and some don't. But I want your readers to understand, I fully understand it—that liberty will yield peace that we all want.

And so part of our strategy is to work with countries, particularly in the Middle East, to encourage the spread of liberty and freedom. And we're making progress there.

Mr. Diekmann. But still we see bombs in Tel Aviv—

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. —suicide bombers. And just a couple of days ago, even the U.S. Government delivered a warning that there could be attacks and strikes at the World Cup in Germany.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. Do you really believe we have a chance to win the war against terrorism?

The President. Absolutely. I know this: That if we don't try to win the war on terrorism, the world will be a lot worse off; that if we believe these are just isolated incidents and people are maybe just temporarily angry, it is an attitude that will ultimately lead to more catastrophe, more danger.

This is an enemy which is—has clearly stated they have ambitions. They want to spread their ideology throughout—starting in the Middle East. They want to topple moderate government. They want to—they believe capitalists and democrats are soft—by democrats, I mean people living in democracies—are soft. They believe it's just a matter of time before the Western world tires. They have stated clearly they want weapons of mass destruction and that they want safe haven from which to launch their attacks. This is what the enemy has said. And I think those of us in positions of responsibility must take the words of the enemy very seriously.

They can be defeated, and they will be defeated, so long as we don't lose our nerve. And so the United States is committed to finding these folks where they hide, to bringing them to justice, which we're doing, and to—but recognizing that the world has changed from the world of the past because of the spread of liberty. Just look at Europe; it's whole, free, and at peace, because democracies live side by side in peace. That's one of the great lessons of the 20th century. And it's a lesson that must be applied to the 21st century.

And so, absolutely, we can win this war on terror. The victory in the war on terror won't come with a signing ceremony. The victory in the war on terror will come as the enemy becomes more and more marginalized. You cannot judge defeat or victory on whether or not a suicide bomber is able to pull off an attack. You can see progress in the war on terror as new democracies take hold around the world and deny—which denies an enemy a safe haven.

And one such democracy that's now evolving and getting stronger is Iraq. Another such new democracy is Afghanistan—50 million people who once lived under the thumb of a tyrant—or two tyrants now are free. And I strongly believe the world is better off for it, and I know that those two democracies are a major defeat for the terrorists.

Relations With the Muslim World

Mr. Diekmann. We have to learn in dealing with the Muslim world. Do we learn the right lessons? Do we have to deal in a different way with the Muslim world?

The President. There is a—there needs to be more understanding between the Muslim world and the Western world. There needs to be a better understanding of the true beliefs of their respective religions. We must understand, words mean things to different people. There's got to be a better way to communicate with ourselves. Sometimes my own messages send signals that I don't mean to send—but stirs up anxieties in the Muslim world.

On the other hand, I take great comfort in knowing that the true Muslim—Islam, itself, is a peaceful religion, and those who adhere to Islam are people that respect the rights of others. And there's common values in the great religions. And what we cannot allow happen is for these totalitarians, these Islamic extremists, to distort a great religion and define the nature of that religion.

And so there's a lot of work that needs to be done between America and the West and the Muslim world, but we can do that work without sacrificing the need to defend ourselves and without condemning people to tyranny.

Europe-U.S. Relations

Mr. Diekmann. How important is the partnership between the United States and Europe when it comes to the war on terror?

The President. The partnership between the United States and Europe is a vital partnership that transcends the war on terror. Part of our relationship is working together in the war on terror, but there are many other areas where we can and will continue to work together.

One such area is, obviously, trade. Europe and the United States benefit from free and fair trade. Another area is to help those who are afflicted with disease, like

HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa. Another is to deal with suffering that we see in the world. And hopefully, we'll be very strong in our determination to end the genocide in Darfur of Sudan.

But when the United States and Europe cooperate, we can achieve security for our people and enhance the prosperity for our people as well—as well as do our duty. See, I believe there's a duty to help ease the suffering in the world. I believe in the admonition that to whom much is given, much is required. And the United States—the people of the United States have been given a lot. We're a blessed nation—and same for the people of Europe. And we have a duty to work together to help relieve the suffering of those who are less fortunate.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Democracy in Russia

Mr. Diekmann. In this context, is Russia a reliable democratic partner?

The President. Russia is a country in transition. And if you really think about where our fathers, at our age, if they had been sitting around talking about Russia—maybe a little younger—they would have been talking about an enemy, the great Soviet Union. And by the way, that enemy at that point in time bound the relationship between Germany and the United States—at least a part of Germany and the United States—very closely. It gave us a common front.

So Russia no longer is that enemy, and that's a major change. Secondly, Russia is a country that has made some signals that are mixed signals, signals that allow—cause us to question their commitment to whether or not they intend to become a true democracy, where there's a freedom of the press or freedom of religion, all the different freedoms that are inherent in democracy.

I, personally, have a working relationship with Vladimir Putin, and that's very important. I've got a warm relationship with him. It's a relationship where I can sit down

with him and ask him direct questions as to why he's made the decisions he's made. It's a relationship where he questions me about what the intentions of the United States may be. It's one that I value, and I think it's an important relationship not only for the United States to have, but it's an important relationship for countries in Europe, for the United States to have a relationship with Vladimir Putin.

One of our concerns is economic nationalism, to a certain extent, where he's using his oil companies to achieve what appears to be political objectives. And we make our concerns known when someone uses natural gas, for example, to effect—to send signals to government. As you might recall, Secretary Rice was in Europe, and she spoke out loudly about the gas contracts with Ukraine. And the reason she did that is it's—we have a duty to express our concerns, but in such a way that the relationship is one that—where, at my level, I'm able to be comfortable in discussing concerns with Vladimir Putin.

We've got commonality when it comes to dealing with proliferation. It's very important that the United States and Russia work closely to make sure that nuclear materials are stored as safely as possible. We've got commonality when it comes to fighting the war on terror. And we've now got a new, important issue to work together on, as well as working together with Germany and others, and that's Iran.

Germany's Role in the War on Terror

Mr. Diekmann. What role must Germany play in the war on terror?

The President. Germany plays a vital role in the war on terror. Germany is in the heart of Europe. Germany is—whether it's this current administration or the previous administration, we have had a—amongst our intelligence services as well as our law enforcement services—a close coordination and a close discussion. Germany's will is important. When the German Chancellor stands up and says, “The war on terror

must be won,” or—“is a vital part of the security of our peoples,” people around the world listen. Germany plays a very important role.

Iraq

Mr. Diekmann. Taking a look at the past, do the Americans feel that the Germans abandoned them when they went to war with Saddam Hussein?

The President. I’ve come to realize that the nature of the German people are such that war is very abhorrent, that Germany is a country now that is—no matter where they sit on the political spectrum, Germans are—just don’t like war. And I can understand that. There’s a generation of people who had their lives torn about because of a terrible war.

I felt like—I made the decision I made based upon my full understanding that threats must be dealt with before they come to fruition. And I fully understood during that period of time not everybody would agree with me. And so we put together a significant coalition and followed through on a difficult decision.

The point now is not what went on in the past; the point now is, how do we work together to achieve important goals? And one such goal is a democracy in Germany. And I appreciate the German Government’s—previous Government’s support and this Government’s support of helping the Iraqis rebuild their lives. Training missions are important. Debt relief was important. Gerhard Schroeder relieved the debt on Iraq. And all those gestures are very important gestures that say that even though people disagreed with the decision to go into Iraq, we now agree that it’s important that a democracy in Iraq succeed. And that’s how I view the relationship.

Democracy in Iraq

Mr. Diekmann. The dictator is on trial now, but at the same time, the violence in Iraq is getting worse. Is it really a vic-

tory? Is the war against Iraq really a success?

The President. Oh, yes, it’s going to be a success, absolutely. When 12 million people go to the polls—listen, these people lived under a brutal tyrant. People seem to forget, quickly forget, the nature of Saddam Hussein. This is a man who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He had invaded his neighbors—Kuwait. He was shooting at U.S. aircraft. He was violating sanctions. He had—as we now know, he had been using the Oil-For-Food Programme to enhance his own standing inside the country. We didn’t find the weapons of mass destruction that everybody thought he had, but we do know he still had the capacity of making weapons of mass destruction. He had ties to terrorist groups.

Removing Saddam Hussein has made the world a safer place. We found—particularly for Iraqis. We found graves stuffed full of Iraqi men, women, and children. This guy was a brutal, brutal tyrant.

But it is hard work to go from a tyranny to a country based upon liberty. We’ve been there 3 years. And I think if you look at the history of—in post-World War II, it took a long period of time to recover. And yet we live in a world where there’s supposed to be instant success. And my work and the work of those of us in Iraq require patience, and the need is to give the Iraqi people a chance. And they haven’t let us down.

Just think about what happened in December: 12 million people voted. That’s a lot of people going to the polls in the face of intimidation and threats. These are people that had no chance to express themselves at a ballot box during Saddam Hussein—in free elections. And yet when given a chance, they went to the polls. And now what you’re seeing is the formation of a unity government. You’ve got Shi’a, Sunni, and Kurds, all committed to a unity government, all willing to fight off the terrorists, to get rid of the militias, and to form a

government that the Iraqi people can be proud of.

And no question, there's still Al Qaida, which has said they want Iraq as a base from which to attack, willing to recruit suicide bombers. Those are hard to stop. But slowly but surely, the Iraqis, with American help, are reconciling their differences politically, are marginalizing those who are still loyal to Saddam, and are bringing the Al Qaida and the foreign fighters to justice.

Iran

Mr. Diekmann. But Iraq—it's still a long journey to peace, and now there's a new threat. You already mentioned it; that is Iran.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. Iran is on the way to a nuclear program. How are we going to prevent them from making true what they threaten us, for example, in destroying Israel?

The President. You know, it's interesting; the world in which we live is one that requires great confidence in our values and strength of purpose. And we are challenged with the Iranian issue. And I want your readers to know that it is my desire and my belief we can solve this diplomatically. And the best way to solve this issue diplomatically is for there to be common purpose amongst the nations of the world.

Any diplomatic solution requires agreement on the goal. And there is solid agreement that the Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon or the knowledge and capacity how to make a nuclear weapon. That agreement—when I say that's the agreement, it's the agreement amongst Germany, France, Great Britain, the United States, Russia, China, and a lot of other nations. We all agree. And that's the most important step. If we didn't agree on the goal, it would be impossible to put together a coalition, a group of nations anxious to say to the Iranians with one voice, "You're not going to have a weapon."

The way forward diplomatically, because of the intransigence of the Iranian Government, is to go into the United Nations Security Council. And that's where we're headed, and we are working closely with our counterparts to develop the tactics to move forward once in the United Nations Security Council. Our message there is, the Iranians have defied the world, and you're now isolated, and it's your choice to make. They must make the choice to give up their weapons.

People have said to me, "Well, why aren't you at the negotiating table?" We are at the negotiating table—in this sense: We're with our partners on a regular basis. I think about this issue a lot. I talk to respective leaders a lot; the United States laid down the Security Council resolution, along with others. I speak to Angela Merkel quite frequently on this subject. It is the number-one item on our agenda when it comes to international coalitions. And the thing that we've got to do is be effective. And what the Iranians are looking forward is weakness among our group. They want to see how firm we are. So one of my jobs is to keep people firm in our resolve. And it's easy, by the way, with your Chancellor. She is firm in her resolve.

Threat of Terror/Iran

Mr. Diekmann. The German Chancellor and the new head of state, Olmert, of Israel, they said the Iranian President is as dangerous as Adolf Hitler. Do you share their view?

The President. I think that it's very important for us to take his words very seriously. When people speak, it is important that we listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously. For example, when Al Qaida speaks, I take their words seriously. When bin Laden says, "We'll bring harm to the West," I take them seriously. When Zarqawi says, "It's just a matter of time for the U.S. to get out of Iraq so we can have safe haven," I take him seriously. Zawahiri, the number-two man in

Al Qaida, he's constantly speaking about their grand designs to spread their ideology.

And when Ahmadi-nejad speaks, we need to take it seriously. And when he says he wants to destroy Israel, the world needs to take that very seriously. It's a serious threat. It's a threat to an ally of the United States and Germany. But what he's also saying is if he's willing to destroy one country, he'd be willing to destroy other countries. And therefore, this is a threat that has got to be dealt with in a way that—where the world—this is an important moment for the world to come together and deal with this in a way that's diplomatic, so that the next person who thinks or the next country that thinks they can threaten will understand that there is an effective response.

Mr. Diekmann. Do you rule out, as a last resort, a military intervention against Iran?

The President. As you know, I have said this on German soil; I've said it on U.S. soil, that my first choice is to solve this diplomatically. I think we can, but all options are on the table.

President's Relationship With Foreign Leaders

Mr. Diekmann. Mr. President, it seems that since Chancellor Angela Merkel took office, the ice age between Washington and Berlin is over. Are good personal ties really so important for the relationship between America and Germany?

The President. I've always felt like it's important to establish personal ties with my counterpart. And the reason why is, is that the role of a President is to be a strategic thinker as well as to be able to understand the tactics necessary to achieve the strategic objectives. And in order to be able to work strategically with my counterparts, I've got to have a personal relationship with them. I've got to be in a position such that when they speak, I listen, and when I speak, they listen, so they know that there is a compatibility to the point where we're comfortable

sharing ideas as we try to work together to solve problems.

And this world is full of problems. You're in the Oval Office during this interview—there are—Sudan, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine—I mean, that's just to name a few of the problems that come to this desk that I deal with on a regular basis. In order for us to be effective, I've got to have a personal relationship with other leaders so that we can work together to achieve common objectives.

Germany/Leadership

Mr. Diekmann. During a state visit in 1989, your father described Germany as “partner leadership.”

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diekmann. Does this statement still apply today?

The President. Absolutely. Absolutely. And it's manifesting itself on the Iranian issue. Chancellor Merkel has been strong. It's very important for the Iranians to know that there is a Germany committed to working with others to send the strong message to the Iranians that their nuclear ambitions, their nuclear weapons ambitions, will cause them isolation in the world in which we live.

President's Upcoming Visit to Germany

Mr. Diekmann. You will visit Germany in July. What would you—did Angela Merkel ask what you would like to see in Germany?

The President. It's really interesting. She felt like it was important for me to go to East Germany—old East Germany. There is no East Germany now—the old East Germany. And, one, I appreciated that a lot. You know, we're all products of how we are raised and, in many ways, where we were raised. If people want to get to know me better, they've got to know my parents and the values my parents instilled in me and the fact that I was raised in west Texas, in the middle of the desert, a long way away from anywhere, hardly.

There's a certain set of values you learn in that experience.

I was very intrigued by dealing with a very strong woman who had been raised in a Communist country and what it meant—what it meant. I spent some time with her upstairs in the private dining quarters here in the White House complex, listening to her. I asked her what it was like to grow up as a child. And the interesting thing—she first described her mother and father, which said a lot to me about the kind of person she is. I thought that was really insightful. She talked about her dad, the pastor, and her mom. She talked about going to school in a Communist system. And she told me she wanted me to come to her home, which, in my part of the world, at least where I'm from, inviting somebody to your home is a gesture of generosity. It's hospitality that is very gracious.

And so I'm really looking forward to going. I'll let her plan my itinerary once I get there. And it's going to be a very fascinating moment for me. And I thank her very much for her invitation.

President's Views on Germany

Mr. Diekmann. Are there things that bother you about the Germans? And are there things that you envy about the Germans?

The President. I am—look, I mean, Germans have always been incredibly efficient, capable businesspeople, and when they make a product, it is always of the highest of quality. The only thing that interests me about Germany is—it's not bothersome, but it's just a challenge for Germany—is the absorption of East and West, and the difficult assignment it is to really help the eastern Germany develop an economy that will be able to give people hope. But, again, I have great respect for Germany.

Trade With Germany

Mr. Diekmann. What kind of role does Germany play in the world?

The President. Germany is vital for the European Union's vitality. And Germany—and that's important for the United States. Listen, we want our trading partners to be strong. If you—if we have trade between one another, it really helps when there's economic vitality with your partner. You want your partner doing well. Trade is not a zero-sum game. Trade is an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship. And therefore, we want the European Union's economy as a whole to be doing well. And Germany has a great—when Germany's economy is vibrant, it has a chance to really help all the countries around her to grow well.

National Economy

Mr. Diekmann. The U.S. economy is booming.

The President. Yes, it is, thankfully.

Mr. Diekmann. Yes. It is booming because you made big tax cuts.

The President. True.

Mr. Diekmann. What do you think about the Germans—are you—they acting correctly if they increase taxes now?

The President. We have—our economy is booming for several reasons. One is, no question, the tax cuts help, and I intend to keep our taxes low. Secondly, our work rules are very flexible, and so is our economy.

We've got some issues that put us at a competitive disadvantage, and one is we've got too many lawsuits. And we're trying to do something about that. I am smart enough, however, to allow each country to make its own fiscal decisions as suits the needs of their constituents and the people.

Pope Benedict XVI

Mr. Diekmann. You are a practicing Christian. Does having a German Pope 60 years after World War II have a special meaning to you?

The President. You know, it's interesting that the last two Holy Fathers were from the same neighborhood. The Holy Father

who just passed away, who was a great man, came from Poland and really helped rally the spirits of the people to challenge the tyranny of communism. And the current Holy Father came from a country torn asunder by war and is witness to a renewal of a united Germany. And I think it helps the world to have that perspective in a very important position of leadership. I admire the two Popes. These are strong, capable men who challenge the concept of moral relevancy.

The Presidency

Mr. Diekmann. Three last very short questions. What was the most wonderful moment in your terms of being President so far, and what was the most awful moment?

The President. The most awful moment was September the 11th, 2001.

Mr. Diekmann. The famous picture, when somebody gave you the information?

The President. Yes, that. I think, like all of us, it took a while for the—it was more than a moment. It was the event and the aftermath. On a situation like that, it takes a period to understand exactly what was going on. When somebody says, “America is under attack,” and—you’ve got to fully understand what that meant. And the information coming was haphazard at best for a while. We weren’t sure if the State Department got hit. I’d heard the White House had got attacked. Of course, I was worried that—my family was here.

And so I would say the toughest moment of all was after the whole reality sunk in, and I was trying to help the Nation understand what was going on, and at the same time, be empathetic for those who had lost lives.

The best moment was—you know, I’ve had a lot of great moments. I don’t know, it’s hard to characterize the great moments. They’ve all been busy moments, by the way. I would say the best moment was when I caught a 7½ pound largemouth bass on my lake. [*Laughter*]

2006 World Cup

Mr. Diekmann. Perfect. Very last question—you’re a great sports fan.

The President. Yes, I am.

Mr. Diekmann. How important is the international World Cup in Germany? And what is your personal take on who will be at the end, the world champion?

The President. Listen, the World Cup is a—first of all, most Americans, up until recently, didn’t understand how big the World Cup is. And we’re beginning to understand. And the reason why is, a lot of us grew up not knowing anything about soccer, like me. I never saw soccer as a young boy. We didn’t play it where I was from. It just didn’t exist. I can’t even—I’m thinking about all the—between age 6, when I can remember sports, and 12 or 13, I just never saw soccer being played.

And so there’s a generation of us that really weren’t fanatic. There’s a new generation of Americans that did grow up on soccer. And there’s obviously a huge interest amongst that crowd in the World Cup. And some of us older guys are now beginning to understand the significance of the World Cup around the world. It is the major sporting event worldwide, and it’s got to be a great honor for Germany to host the event. And I’m confident that the German people will do a magnificent job of welcoming people from around the world.

And, of course, my team is the U.S. team. They tell me we’ve got a good team. Now, whether it’s good enough to win it all, who knows? But I know they’ll try their hardest.

Mr. Diekmann. Mr. President, thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany;

Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran. Mr. Diekmann referred to Prime Minister Ehud

Olmert of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of General Michael V. Hayden as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency *May 8, 2006*

The President. Good morning. Today I'm pleased to nominate General Mike Hayden as the next Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mike Hayden is supremely qualified for this position. I've come to know him well as our Nation's first Deputy Director of National Intelligence. In that position, he's worked closely with our Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte, to reform America's intelligence capabilities to meet the threats of a new century.

Mike has more than 20 years of experience in the intelligence field. He served for 6 years as Director of the National Security Agency and thus brings vast experience leading a major intelligence agency to his new assignment. He also served as Commander of the Air Intelligence Agency, as Director of the Joint Command and Control Warfare Center, and as Deputy Chief of Staff of the United States and U.N. Forces in Korea.

He's held senior positions at the Pentagon, the U.S. European Command, the National Security Council, and served behind the Iron Curtain in our Embassy in Bulgaria during the cold war.

Mike knows our intelligence community from the ground up. He has been both a provider and a consumer of intelligence. He's overseen the development of both human and technological intelligence. He has demonstrated an ability to adapt our intelligence services to the new challenges of the war on terror. He's the right man

to lead the CIA at this critical moment in our Nation's history.

It's my honor to welcome Mike's wife, Jeanine, and their family to the Oval Office. I want to thank them for their willingness to support Mike Hayden in his long service to the United States.

With the agreement of the Senate, Mike will succeed a great patriot in Director Porter Goss. Under Porter's leadership, the CIA launched a 5-year plan to strengthen the Agency's human intelligence capabilities. This plan involves increasing the number of operatives and sources in the field and building up the Agency's analytical capabilities, so the hard-working men and women of the CIA have the resources they need to penetrate closed societies and secretive organizations.

Porter also played a vital role in shaping the new relationship between the CIA and the new Director of National Intelligence. And this process benefited greatly from the decades-long friendship between him and Director Negroponte.

Porter took on a critical job at a critical moment in our Nation's history. He instilled a sense of professionalism in the CIA and maintained the high standards of this vital agency at a time of transition and transformation. Throughout his public life, Porter Goss has been a man of accomplishment and integrity, and America appreciates his service.

I'm confident that Mike Hayden will continue the reforms that Porter has put