

War on Terror/Freedom Agenda

Mr. Engel. The war on terrorism has been the centerpiece of your Presidency. Many people say that it has not made the world safer, that it has created more radicals, that there are more people in this part of the world who want to attack the United States.

The President. Yes. That theory says, by confronting the people that killed us, therefore, there's going to be more; therefore, we shouldn't confront them.

Mr. Engel. Or creating more people who want to kill us, one could also say.

The President. Well, you can say that, but the truth of the matter is, there's fewer Al Qaida leaders; the people are on the run; they're having more trouble recruiting in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, our partner, has gone after Al Qaida. People now see Al Qaida for what it is, which is a group of extremists and radicals who preach nothing but hate. And no, I just—it's just the beehive theory. We should have just let the beehive sit there and hope the bees don't come out of the hive.

My attitude is, the United States must stay on the offense against Al Qaida—two ways. One from—

Mr. Engel. But haven't you just smashed the bees—

The President. —two ways—

Mr. Engel. —in the hive and let them spread?

The President. Excuse me for a minute, Richard, two ways: One, find them and bring them to justice—what we're doing; and two, offer freedom as an alternative to their vision. And somehow to suggest that bees would stay in the hive is naive. They didn't stay in the hive when they came and killed 3,000 of our citizens.

Mr. Engel. Thank you very much for your time, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir. Yes.

Mr. Engel. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:02 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Lt. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA, acting commander, U.S. Central Command; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 19.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr.

May 19, 2008

Secretary Paulson, thanks for coming. And I just got back from the Middle East, and the Secretary came over to talk about the economy and how he sees it. And we're working through tough times, and I appreciate the leadership you're providing.

He did assure me that the refund checks are heading out; people are getting that money. And that's good. It should help our economy and, more importantly, help people

pay their bills. And we hope people use that money and take care of their families and shop.

I also asked him how he was doing in helping people stay in their homes. We spent time talking about the housing industry. And one of the really impressive programs has been the HOPE NOW program. Secretary Paulson has taken the lead in—to help people refinance and help people

get the financial help necessary to stay in homes. And that help comes in all different kinds of ways, but generally, it just means that the lending institutions are—help a creditworthy person stay in their home, and that's what we want to have happen.

Since the program started, 1.4 million people got mortgage relief so they can stay in their homes. And in the first quarter of this year, 500,000 households, 500,000 families were helped.

And I appreciate your leadership on that, Hank. It's been—our policy in this administration is, we—laws shouldn't bail out lenders; laws shouldn't help speculators; the Government ought to be helping creditworthy people stay in their homes. And one way we can do that—and Congress is making progress on this—is the reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. That re-

form will come with a strong, independent regulator.

The Secretary is briefing me on the progress being made on the Hill on this very important subject. Our fellow citizens have got to know that these major players in the mortgage markets, if reformed properly by Congress, will really help stabilize the markets and make it easier for people to stay in their homes.

And we look forward to working with Congress to get a good piece of legislation to my desk that helps our fellow citizens and helps us get through this housing issue.

So, Mr. Secretary, thank you for your briefing. I appreciate very much your leadership on the issue.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Earthquake in China *May 20, 2008*

Laura and I have come to the Chinese Embassy. Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much. Madam, thank you very much. We've come to express our country's condolences for those who mourn for the loved ones.

We stand ready to help in any way that the Chinese Government would like. We know there's great courage being displayed, Mr. Ambassador, as rescue workers search for those who may still be living.

This natural disaster is very hard on many of your people, and we understand

that. And we extend our deepest sympathies and pray for recovery and pray for the strength of those who are—whose lives have been torn apart during this terrible tragedy.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. at the Embassy of China. In his remarks, he referred to China's Ambassador to the U.S. Zhou Wenzhong and his wife Xie Shumin.

Statement on Senator Edward M. Kennedy *May 20, 2008*

Laura and I are concerned to learn of our friend Senator Kennedy's diagnosis. Ted Kennedy is a man of tremendous cour-

age, remarkable strength, and powerful spirit. Our thoughts are with Senator Kennedy and his family during this difficult