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Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Military Leaders

May 19, 1994

Representative Dan Rostenkowski

Q. On Rostenkowski, sir, should the public be concerned at all that you and he have the same lawyer?

The President. No.

China

Q. Mr. President, did you send Michael Armacost to China to negotiate some kind of deal?

The President. Well, we've had a number of Americans in China and speaking with the Chinese, and those conversations are ongoing. And I think until they are resolved, one way or the other, I shouldn't say more about them.

Q. It's being reported that you have made a decision to go ahead and renew MFN.

The President. We are still in discussions with the Chinese. I don't know that I should call them negotiations; that's not an accurate characterization. We are having discussions with them about our differences and about the importance of our relationship. And I will have a decision on the matter in a timely fashion. No decision has been reached yet; we're still talking with them.

Q. Is it true that China has—[*inaudible*]—leaders willing to make concessions on human rights——

The President. I don't think I should speak for the Chinese. All I can tell you is there are some things which have been reported which have actually occurred, and we've had discussions about other matters. But I don't think I should discuss them now. We're still in discussions with them.

Q. What's the purpose of this meeting?

The President. What?

Q. What's the purpose of the meeting?

The President. We meet on a regular basis to discuss a number of national security issues. And there are a number of things that the CINC's are going to bring me up to date on. I have some questions to ask them about some of the challenges we face around the world.

North Korea

Q. On North Korea, sir—[*inaudible*]—North Korea divert its spent nuclear fuel? And if so, is it too late to avoid sanctions?

The President. Well, let me say I certainly cannot answer that first question in the affirmative. That's why we have inspectors there now. And they are working hard, and as far as we know, they're—I got a report this morning—they are proceeding with their inspections. They should be in a position to give us a report imminently, in the near future. So I don't think you'll have to wait long for an answer to that. But the inspectors are there and working, and we should know more about it. And I think that the better course of action is for all of us to refrain from any kind of comment until we know what the facts are, because we will have the facts soon.

Q. Sending troops anywhere? [*Laughter*]

The President. To Normandy. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:14 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Armacost, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of India

May 19, 1994

The President. Let me say that it's a great honor for me personally and for the United States to welcome Prime Minister Rao and his delegation here.

India is the world's largest democracy, by a long ways, and a very important partner for the United States on many issues, with a very impressive rate of economic growth now and the prospect of a real partnership with our country, spanning not only economic but many other issues. And I'm really looking forward to our discussions. And I'm delighted that he's found the time to come and be here with us.

Nuclear Nonproliferation

Q. Mr. President, how much of a hang-up is the issue of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and India's resistance to signing it? Will

that come up? And do you think there's any way of persuading India to sign this treaty?

The President. Well, we'll have a chance to talk about a number of issues. I think that, as you know, we have a broad-based approach. We're supporting the comprehensive test ban. We want to have the fissile materials production ban. We've got a lot of things to discuss, and we'll have a chance to talk about them.

But he just got here. I don't want to presume upon the conversation that hasn't yet occurred.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Q. Mr. President, do you have anything to say to the Kennedys? Do you have any words for the Kennedys? You know, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is——

The President. Hillary and I have been in touch with Mrs. Onassis in the last several days and are getting regular updates. She's been quite wonderful to my wife and to my daughter and to all of us. And we're thinking about her, praying for her.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room and another group entered.*]

The President. I would like to say it's a great honor for me personally and for the United States to welcome Prime Minister Rao and his party here.

India is not only the world's largest democracy, but a very impressive one, having preserved democracy through all manner of difficulties and challenges. We are mindful of the profound importance of our relationship with India, and the many aspects of that relationship. And I am looking forward to establishing a good working relationship with the Prime Minister and to building on that as we go into the future. I'm very hopeful about it.

India

Q. Mr. President, may I ask you a question? The economic reforms in India and the end of cold war—what kind of an impact do you think these two events have had on the Indo-American relationship?

The President. Well, I think it should—both those things should permit that relationship to grow and to flourish, to deepen, and should permit us to do things that together as leaders in the community of nations, as we work together in the United Nations. And India, for example, has been very constructive in Somalia and Mozambique and other places around the world. So I think we'll have a deeper and better partnership now. and I'm looking forward to building on it, and that's one of the things that I hope to have a chance to discuss with the Prime Minister.

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—said that this trip was a turning point in Indo-U.S. relations. What do you think? Would it prove to be a turning point?

The President. Well, if it's a positive turning point, that would make me very happy because I think it's very important that the United States and India have good relations and strong relations. And so I'm hopeful of that.

Let me remind you, we're going to have a time that the press—at the end of this, where we can both make statements and answer questions. So let's do that after we have a chance to visit.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Rao of India

May 19, 1994

The President. Good afternoon. I have just completed a very productive meeting with Prime Minister Rao. It's an honor for me and for the United States to host the leader of the world's largest democracy, a nation of almost 900 million people.

It was a distinct pleasure for me to meet the Prime Minister who has led India through what to me is an absolutely astonishing period of economic transformation. He's kept a steady hand on the helm of Indian democracy through many challenges.

India has sustained its commitment to representative government for many decades now. And I expressed my admiration to the Prime Minister for the remarkable achievement of India's people in social, cultural, and scientific areas.