

Minister, as you know, the air war in Afghanistan is one month old today. There are many experts on both sides of the Atlantic who believe that the air war is limited in its ability to really inflict a decisive blow against the Taliban. Many say the only way you can defeat the Taliban is to put boots on the ground. One, do you agree? And two, are you willing to commit large numbers of British troops, beyond the SAS and the Royal Marines, to the effort to defeat the Taliban?

Prime Minister Blair. Well, first of all, let me say something to you I often say to our own media when I am asked a question about the precise nature of our military operations. And that is that I have learned in these situations that it is not a sensible thing to discuss in detail the types of military operation that you may undertake, for very obvious reasons.

But we are completely committed to seeing this thing through. I think people know that the strategy has to encompass more than airstrikes alone, although do not underestimate the enormous damage that is now being done to Taliban frontline troops, because that is where the air power is being concentrated.

But of course, there are other operations that we will mount, as well. And there are, obviously, the support and the assistance that we are giving to the Northern Alliance. There are the measures that we are taking of a political and diplomatic nature, as well.

And when you said a moment or two ago that the airstrikes were just—and the conflict was a month old, I think it is probably just as well to reflect upon that for a moment. It is simply a month old. And we have begun this action. We have taken it at a number of different levels. I think it is already having a huge impact.

Some of the information that I have seen—I think sometimes people don't always reflect on maybe enough when we state it to people—but literally, we have destroyed virtually all the terrorist training camps of Al Qaida; we have destroyed an enormous amount of the military infrastructure of the Taliban. Their air power, insofar as it exists, is completely taken out. We therefore have a very, very strong situation from which to move forward. And I think what is—what is

different about this conflict is that every part of it has to come together; in other words, not just the military part but also the support for those parties in opposition to the Taliban, and the political and diplomatic aspects that help build a strong coalition that can secure the objectives we want to see. And I have absolutely no doubt at all that we will achieve the objectives that we want.

And those objectives are very simple. Sometimes people say to me, "Well, you know, clarify the military objectives." There's no difficulty about doing that at all. It's Al Qaida and the terrorist network shut down; it's the Taliban regime out; it's a new regime in that is broad-based; and it's a decent future for the people of Afghanistan, based on some stability and progress, not based on a regime that oppresses its people, treats its people appallingly, is a threat to regional stability, and basically thrives on the drugs trade.

Now, I think those are pretty clear objectives, and I've absolutely no doubt at all that we will achieve them in full, and we will not let up until we do.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The President also referred to the Report by the Sharm al-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, which was chaired by former Senator George J. Mitchell.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Proposed "Armies of Compassion" Legislation

November 7, 2001

Dear Mr. Leader:

Since September 11, Americans have come together to help meet our national needs in this time of great crisis. They have given more than \$1 billion to disaster relief efforts and many Americans have volunteered their time. Although individual generosity is evident everywhere, thousands of our Nation's charities, paradoxically, have been suffering. Donations to organizations not directly involved in disaster relief have

declined dramatically. Soup kitchens are low on food. Mentoring programs for needy children are low on dollars. America's charities have stood by America—it is now time for America to stand by her charities, as they suffer from the economic consequences of September 11.

I believe the Congress must address these issues now. We must pass and sign into law an "Armies of Compassion" bill this year that encourages and supports charitable giving, removes unneeded barriers to government support for community and faith-based groups, and authorizes important initiatives to help those in need. The House of Representatives has already advanced key elements of this agenda, and Senators Santorum and Lieberman have made great strides on consensus legislation. I believe the Congress needs to come together before recess to consider a bill that would:

- Provide incentives for charitable giving, such as the non-itemizers deduction for charitable contributions, tax-free distributions from IRAs, the charitable deduction for contributions of food, and Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to help low-income individuals save money;
- Provide for equal treatment of community and faith-based charities, an expedited process for grassroots groups to become 501(c)(3) organizations, and a Compassion Capital Fund to provide technical assistance and capacity building for community and faith-based groups; and
- Provide support to populations in need, such as the more than 2 million children with a parent in prison.

As you know, there is strong bipartisan support for these important measures. I hope that the Senate will find time to take up and pass these provisions before the Congress adjourns this year.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Letters were sent to Thomas A. Daschle, Senate majority leader; and Trent Lott, Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks During a Tour of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and an Exchange With Reporters in Atlanta, Georgia

November 8, 2001

The President. You know, a lot of Americans never heard of the CDC. They're wondering what CDC means. And they have learned that the folks who work at CDC are part of a vast army to fight off the terrorist attacks in America. And I'm so fortunate to be able to come by and say hello to the people that are working endless hours to provide good public health information, remedies, a quick response to people who have been affected by this evil attack.

I believe—firmly believe that because of the good folks who work in this building and other buildings throughout Atlanta, Georgia, and throughout the country for CDC, that we've saved a lot of lives in America. And the very least I can do is come by and thank them for their hard work and their dedication to the country. So, for a group of folks that have made a difference in America, it's—and no one ever heard about, they're going to hear about—be heard about tonight. I'm going to talk about public health officials as part of being the new heroes of America. And that's why I've come by today, to thank them.

Resources for the Centers for Disease Control

Q. Mr. President, what sort of—[*inaudible*—]does the CDC need now from the administration?

The President. Well, one of the things that they need is for there to be an organization that allows for the free flow of information—that when the CDC finds something, gets information, they're able to pass it throughout our Government. And we're getting really well organized. The CDC's whole function is to help save lives, and the faster information can move, the more analysis can happen on a real-time basis, the more likely it is people will live.

In terms of the CDC budget, one of the jobs of Tom Ridge, the new Homeland Security Director, is to collect information. And we'll present a budget to Congress. And if we need to present a supplemental, we'll do