

workers; it is a bill that has got some economic stimulus as a major part of it. And now the Senate needs to do something. The Senate needs to act and get the bill to my desk, and I look forward to signing it.

But we've had too much—too much non-movement on this important issue. And it's time to go. It's time to get a bill, and it's time for me to end the press conference.

[Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.); Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. The President also referred to the Tenet plan, the Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire and security plan of June 13, 2001, negotiated by Director George J. Tenet of the Central Intelligence Agency; and the Mitchell report, the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30, 2001. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Powell.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Corporate Management Reform and an Exchange With Reporters in St. Petersburg, Florida

March 8, 2002

The President. I want to thank Mike and the good folks here at America II for welcoming me and Jeb and members of the Florida congressional delegation. We've just had a fantastic discussion about why this is a unique company. It's unique because it has got a culture that understands that the worker is an incredibly important part of the vitality of the company and therefore its success.

I'm real proud of Mike. Mike started this company in 1989. He had a dream. He worked hard to achieve it. He's wise enough to understand that he's only as successful as the good folks who work with him. And so it's an honor to be here.

In the room, I'm going to talk about the opportunities for this country to usher in a period of responsibility. Part of a responsible society is for there to be a responsible atti-

tude for corporate management toward employees and shareholders and disclosure, if you're a publicly traded company.

America II is really the best of the best here in America, and I want to thank you for letting me come, Mike. And I want to thank you all very much for sharing.

I'll answer a couple of questions here.

Aftermath of September 11

Q. Mr. President, when you looked down on the ruins of the Pentagon on September 11th, didn't you, in your heart of hearts, expect that by the time you celebrated the sixth anniversary, that you would know where bin Laden was and where Omar was?

The President. No. You know, I knew that we were in for a very different kind of war. And on 9/12 and the days following, when we put the war plan in place, I wasn't sure how long this was going to take. I knew we were in for a long struggle, though. And I never had any artificial deadlines. The good news is, the American people also understand we're in for a long war and that, when it comes to defending freedom, we'll take however long it takes to defend our freedom.

A little later on here, I'll have the privilege of meeting a mom and a dad of a soldier who just died in Afghanistan. And I'm going to remind them that those lives were not lost in vain and that we will fight terror wherever terror exists.

I will tell you, I am pleased at the progress we have made in a quick period of time. Six months is not a very long period of time when you think about the enemy we fight. We've made tremendous progress, thanks in part to the coalition and thanks in part to the brave men and women who wear our uniform. And I am grateful, and so is the Nation grateful.

Those who are preoccupied with one individual do not understand the struggle. We fight terror wherever terror exists. And for those people who say, "Well, one person matters," they elevate that person to a status that he does not deserve. I don't know whether Mr. bin Laden is alive or is dead. I do know we haven't heard from him in a long period of time.

National Economy/Stimulus Package

Q. Sir, employment grew for the first time in 7 months. Is the economy now out of the woods? And the Senate has passed your stimulus plan—your reaction, sir?

The President. Well, first, I am glad the Senate passed the stimulus plan. I think it's going to be really good for workers whose lives have been affected as a result of 9/11. And it's good for entrepreneurs and businessowners because it encourages investment, it encourages employment. And the best stimulus plan is one that focuses on jobs.

And I applaud the House that stayed with this, and I'm glad the Senate finally passed it. I look forward to signing it. It is a good piece of news for workers and entrepreneurs alike.

Look, Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters], in terms of the numbers, there's going to be a lot of statistics thrown around about our economy. But let me tell you bluntly how I feel. People's lives were deeply affected on September the 11th. A lot of people got hurt as a result of that attack, and I'm concerned about it. I'm concerned about anybody who's not working and wants to work, and so we'll let the numbers talk. But in terms of policy and the focus of this administration, we're going to do everything we can to increase jobs so people can find work.

One of the reasons we came here is Mike, in the midst of a significant downturn in his business, laid nobody off. There wasn't one layoff at America II. If he was—well, you know, what about the numbers? Well, the numbers here show that he was in a big slow-down. Sales dropped by 40 percent. And yet, he understood his responsibility as a decent citizen, and nobody got laid off.

And I'm real proud of that, Mike, and I want to thank you for it. And it's the kind of thing, by the way, that workers years from now in America II are going to remember, that in the midst of this unbelievable, despicable act of evil on America that affected our economy—I don't care what the number crunchers say; it affected our economy; and it affected a lot of people's lives—this man understood the importance of the workforce and kept people employed here.

Anything else?

Florida Gubernatorial Election

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Who are you with?

Q. St. Petersburg Times.

Anything to say to Janet Reno, who's tooling around on the other side of the bay? [Laughter]

The President. Pardon me?

Q. Anything to say about Janet Reno, who's campaigning on the other side of the bay today against your brother?

The President. No, I don't have anything to say. All I've got to know is, the people of Florida have got a really good Governor. They would be wise to keep him. [Laughter]

Operation Anaconda

Q. Mr. President, the battle going on outside of Gardez—there's some rumors now from the Afghan—our Afghan allies that there may be some real top leadership, maybe even bin Laden up there. What do you know about that?

The President. I don't know of any specific names, John [John Dickerson, TIME]. I do know we're making great progress. I do know that any time we find Al Qaida bunched up like that, we'll get them. And it's going to be—there's going to be more battles like this one, and American people just need to understand that the best way to secure a homeland is to bring them to justice and to get them. And that's exactly what's happening as we speak.

Our military is tough. Our coalition is strong. And by the way, we're fighting fierce fighters. These people evidently don't—they don't want to give up. And that's okay. If that's their attitude, we'll just have to adjust, and they will have made a mistake, because we're going to be relentless and we're steady and we're supporting our military and they'll have the tools necessary to achieve victory. But as of specific names, I don't know.

Look, here's the thing. We're fighting leaders of the murderers that sent people to commit suicide missions. They're real brave. They say, "You go ahead and commit suicide. I'm going to find a cave. We'll send youngsters to their death. In the meantime, I'm going to try to find a deep cave somewhere."

And so when you fight people like that, you never know.

You know, we've closed up a lot of caves in Afghanistan, and one of these days, you know, we might find some people still in there. But I just don't know, nor am I that focused on it individually.

I realize we're in for a long struggle. And I'm giving a speech on Monday that will outline where we are in this war on terror. And I'm going to remind the American people that we've still got a task at hand in Afghanistan, which is to deny sanctuary to Al Qaida killers. We have achieved a significant victory in Afghanistan by routing the Taliban.

I'm also going to remind people that we're denying sanctuary in other countries as well. I don't want to give you the whole speech; I'd like for you to come and listen to it. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. in the offices of America II Electronics. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Galinski, founder and chief executive officer, America II Electronics; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. A reporter referred to Mullah Mohammed Omar, former head of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan; and former Attorney General Janet Reno, Democratic candidate in Florida's gubernatorial election.

Remarks to Employees of America II Electronics in St. Petersburg

March 8, 2002

Thank you for that warm welcome. I love to be introduced by my brother. [Laughter] I know I'm not supposed to say this, but he's doing a great job as Governor. He's really—[applause]. I'm really proud of him, and it seems like a lot in Florida—a lot of people here are proud of him, too. But it's good to see you, Jeb. Thanks, and I hope you're still listening to Mother. [Laughter]

For all of you out there who have got children, I want you to know that you can tell them the President said, listen to their mothers—[laughter]—because I'm still listening to ours—[laughter]—whether I want to or not. [Laughter]

I'm so honored that we could come to America II. I was impressed by what I read on the briefing paper before I arrived at the company. I am doubly impressed, having talked to Mike and the people who work here, about the incredible culture that exists in this fine company, a culture that recognizes the worth of the people who work for the company. And Mike, I want to thank you for letting us come.

One of my jobs is to remind people, the role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. Here's a guy that started off with 5 employees and no children—[laughter]—now has 4 children and 500 employees. [Laughter] And so I want to congratulate you all, and thanks for your hospitality.

I also appreciate the members of the Florida congressional delegation for flying down today. We had really a good talk about issues that matter to our national security as well as issues that matter to Florida. Congressmen Bilirakis, Davis, Miller, Putnam, and the chairman, Congressman Bill Young, thank you all for coming.

And I want to thank the mayor. Mr. Mayor, you did a fine job of getting America II prepared for just a little visit from the President. [Laughter]

I want to spend a little time talking about the big challenges our Nation faces, starting with an unrelenting drive to defend our freedom. We were attacked by a ruthless enemy who must not have understood America. They must have thought we were soft and so incredibly materialistic and self-absorbed that we would not find the will to fight and sacrifice for that which we hold dear. And they have made a huge miscalculation.

In the beginning, I told the American people we were in for a long, difficult struggle, that I wasn't sure how long this was going to take. But I really wasn't concerned about the calendar. I'm concerned about our future. And I'm concerned about this Nation leading the world to rout out terror wherever it exists, so our children and grandchildren can live in freedom. That's our concern.

I told the world that you're either with us, or you're against us. A lot of people are now with us. [Laughter] And it's important that