

President's Reaction to September 11

Q. Will you take one on 9/11, sir?

President Bush. Yes, go ahead.

Q. Let me ask you, sir, when you asked the American people for support—

President Bush. The only reason why is, he's a fine fellow.

Go ahead.

Q. When you asked the American people for support 2 years ago, there was no way, sir, anyone could have imagined the grim nature of the job you would take on. Had you known then what the job would entail, would you still have asked for it, sir? And would you have had any compunction about—

President Bush. There's no way that I could have possibly known what we were going to have to deal with. I'm a citizen of a country that has had these two vast oceans protecting us. For all these years we were safe. People couldn't come and attack us—so we thought. Of course, Hawaii got attacked, but that's not a part of our mainland. We felt secure here in the country.

There's no way we could have possibly envisioned that the battlefield would change. And it has. And that's why we've got to deal with all the threats. That's why Americans must understand that when a tyrant like Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction, it not only threatens the neighborhood in which he lives—it not only threatens the region—it can threaten the United States of America or Great Britain, for that matter. The battlefield has changed. We are in a new kind of war, and we've got to recognize that.

There's no way I could have possibly predicted that future. I'm honored to be the President. And so long as I am the President, I'm going to work hard to make America safe and the world more peaceful.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:51 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Transmitting a Report on Military
Personnel and Civilians Involved in
the Antinarcotics Campaign in
Colombia**

September 5, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to section 3204(f), title III, chapter 2 of the Emergency Supplemental Act, 2000 (the "Act"), as enacted in the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2001, Public Law 106-246, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. The report provides "the aggregate number, locations, activities, and lengths of assignment for all temporary and permanent U.S. military personnel and U.S. individual civilians retained as contractors involved in the antinarcotics campaign in Colombia."

In so doing, I note and appreciate the continued strong bipartisan support given to U.S. programs assisting Colombia in the Act and elsewhere. This report is classified because of force protection considerations and the high level of terrorist threat in Colombia. However, the aggregate numbers given below are unclassified.

The report indicates that as of July 12, 2002, the end of this reporting period, there were 170 temporary and permanent U.S. military personnel and 228 U.S. civilians retained as individual contractors in Colombia involved in supporting Plan Colombia. This report further indicates that during May, June, and July 2002, these figures never exceeded the ceilings established in section 3204(b) of the Act, as amended.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 9.

**Remarks on Implementation of the
“Smart Border” Declaration and
Action Plan in Detroit, Michigan**

September 9, 2002

Thank you all very much. Thanks. Thank you all. Thank you for joining us today. It’s a pleasure to be back in Detroit—just across the river from Windsor—to reaffirm a special relationship, an important relationship, and to address a common challenge. America and Canada face new threats to our security. It’s the new reality of the 21st century, and we can’t forget that.

And some of those threats must be stopped at our borders. This great and peaceful border must be open to business, must be open to people, and it’s got to be closed to terrorists and criminals. And so today we’re taking two steps to turn this vision into reality.

I appreciate so very much the Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, for joining us here. He has been a steadfast friend. I really enjoy dealing with him on a personal basis. He’s a plain-spoken fellow with a good sense of humor—probably won’t go too good up here in Canada, but he’d be a great Texan. [Laughter]

I appreciate Tom Ridge joining us. Tom is my adviser for Homeland Security, former Governor of Pennsylvania. I want to thank Tom for working hard with the Deputy Prime Minister John Manley from Canada, who—both these two men work hard to—[applause]. The Prime Minister and I, of course, get the credit if it goes well. [Laughter] They get the blame if it doesn’t. [Laughter] The truth of the matter is, they did a lot of the work, and I want to thank both of you men for working hard for what’s best for our countries.

I appreciate so very much the members of our congressional delegation who have shown up here, Congressman Joe Knollenberg, Carolyn Kilpatrick. I had a chance to say hello to Congresswoman Kilpatrick’s little boy at the airport. [Laughter] He’s doing a fine job as the mayor of Detroit. I know she’s proud of what a fine job he is doing. I want to appreciate very much Congressman John Conyers as well and Sandy Levin and Nick Smith from the—both Republicans and

Democrats who share deep concern about our border and what transpires here. So I thank the Members of Congress for coming today.

I also appreciate so very much our Ambassador from Canada, Paul Cellucci, my close friend, for being here as well. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for coming.

I want to thank Robert Bonner of the Customs, U.S. Customs, for being here, and Rob Wright, who’s the Commissioner of Canadian Customs. Thank you both for coming.

I appreciate Jim Ziglar so very much, the head of our INS, for being here. He’s got a tough job, and he’s handling his job in fine fashion. Jim, I want to thank you for your service to the country.

I appreciate very much our friend the Governor from Michigan, John Engler, for introducing me. Lieutenant Governor Dick Posthumus is with us today. Lieutenant Governor, thanks for coming. And Candice Miller, the Michigan secretary of state, is here as well. And I want to appreciate all the officials for coming.

This bridge right here is a symbol of the close and unique relationship—close and unique relationship—between our two nations. This single bridge carries more trade than any other border crossing on this continent. And that’s saying a lot. This is a—this is an active bridge. Thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement, more than 500,000 people and over a billion dollars worth of goods cross the U.S.-Canadian border every day. The ties of trade and travel and family between America and Canada are closer than ever. And our countries are better for it.

Yet, nearly a year ago, we saw the terrorists, coldblooded killers, using our openness, the openness of our societies against us. We were awakened to threats that can arrive across our borders. We realized, at least in our country, that we had become a battlefield. And we’ve got to confront those threats. We have no choice but to confront the threats head-on, while we preserve the freedom and the openness of our societies.

We have hard-working inspectors at this border, and I want to thank all the folks who work hard to expedite the traffic here.