

expansion of NATO to your border. These are peace-loving people. These are freedom-loving people that are now on your border. You ought to welcome them. It should help Russian security”—that the cold war is over, that the United States doesn't view Russia as a threat and neither does NATO. So we've got to address our sights to the new threats.

#### **Russia-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Relationship between Western democracies and Russia seems to be very friendly. But do you really trust President Putin?

**The President.** Sure, of course. I press any leader that doesn't believe 100 percent in freedom, and of course I do—I'm—freedom of the press or Chechnya or issues that indicate that there might not be a whole-hearted commitment to freedom of the people. I do it in a way that's a friendly way. I believe the best way to work together is to do it in a spirit of cooperation. I believe the best way to make sure we've got good relations is to make it clear that there's no animosity. But of course I do. I work very closely with him. Russia is an important country.

And we want Russia to be a country based upon the values which we share, because we believe those values are the best values for the human condition of everybody. I like to tell people, freedom is not an American gift; freedom is a gift from the almighty God. And I firmly believe that. And freedom is important in any country in the world.

#### **Lithuania**

**Q.** Some people wonder why the United States, the superpower of the world, pays so much attention to the small Baltic state Lithuania. What could you tell those people?

**The President.** Well, I can tell those people everybody matters. See, our country believes in the worth of every individual. We believe everybody is precious; everybody counts; and that we are rooted, our whole history and our very being is rooted, on the notion of people being able to realize their dreams. And that's what we believe.

That's why we never recognized the Soviet domination of the Baltics. We called Lithuania independent for all those years. And now we can say Lithuania is independent,

and Lithuania is forever free. And that's our commitment.

#### **Future of NATO**

**Q.** How do you imagine the future of NATO Alliance after new members will join?

**The President.** Better—better because the—NATO will have this new spirit. Listen, if you lived under slavery and subjugation and you're free, there's a spirit. There's a strength of purpose. There's a remembrance of what it's like. There's no gray areas between good and evil. That's an important spirit in NATO. Lithuania brings a wonderful spirit of strength of purpose, of endurance.

Secondly, as we change the military strategy to reflect the new threat—see, Russia is not a threat militarily. The threats that we now face come from a global terror network. And we'll change our military capabilities to meet the strategies necessary to defeat terrorism. And Lithuania will have an important contribution to make, as will all countries in NATO. So the expansion of NATO will make it easier for us to defend the peace.

**Q.** Mr. President, thank you very much, indeed. It was a great pleasure to talk to you.

**The President.** We'll see you in Vilnius.

**Q.** Thank you.

**The President.** It's going to be exciting for me.

**Q.** For us, too. We're waiting for that.

**The President.** I can't wait. Thanks. Make sure the weather is good, will you? [*Laughter*]

**Q.** Yes, we'll do our best. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was videotaped at 1:32 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The transcript of this interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 21. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

#### **Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters in Prague**

*November 21, 2002*

**President Bush.** I'm really looking forward to visiting with the Prime Minister of

Great Britain, Tony Blair. He's a friend; he's a strong leader. He and I are bound by the strong conviction that freedom belongs to everybody, and we're going to work together to make the world a more peaceful place.

I'm greatly disturbed by the news from the Middle East today. There's been yet another suicide bombing. It is clear that those who want to use terror to stop any process for peace are still active. In order to achieve peace, all countries in that region must be responsible for—take responsibility, do their best to fight off terror.

And I know the Prime Minister joins me as we mourn the loss of life. But we are going to continue to work toward peace in the Middle East. Two states living side by side in peace is the vision. And we will continue to work with those who share that vision—for the sake of the Israeli people, for the sake of the Palestinians.

Mr. Prime Minister.

**Prime Minister Blair.** Mr. President, first of all, we're pleased to see you again and exchange views on a range of issues that confront us at the moment. And I agree with what you said a moment ago. Our thoughts are obviously with the victims of the latest terrorist outrage in Israel.

And the two things that are so clear is that, first of all, we need the action on security and action against terrorism, and secondly, to make progress in building a lasting peace in that region, based, as you say, on the two-state solution. It's an issue that I think—what is interesting is that the whole world wants to see us now, having—take this very firm stand against terrorism, against issues of weapons of mass destruction, but also try and make sure that we provide the secure future with lasting peace in the Middle East. And I think those issues are all very much linked together.

**President Bush.** We'll take a question apiece. Greg [David Gregory, NBC News].

### **Germany-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Mr. President, can you tell us if you've had a chance this week to speak with German Chancellor Schroeder yet?

**President Bush.** I did. I had a cordial meeting at that meeting last night. We greeted each other cordially.

**Q.** Can you give us an assessment of the state of U.S.-German relations in light of the recent election?

**President Bush.** It's a—Germany is an important friend of the United States. And we've got a relationship to maintain, and we will maintain it.

### **Iraqi Cooperation on Disarmament**

**Q.** Mr. President, you put a formal request to Britain and other countries to supply troops for a possible conflict in Iraq.

**President Bush.** Is that a question, have we, or an asserted statement?

**Q.** I understood you had—

**President Bush.** Oh, I see.

**Q.** —and I wonder what your expectation was for what Britain might do.

**President Bush.** Well, my expectation is, is that we can do this peacefully, if Saddam Hussein disarms. That's my expectation. This is—Saddam Hussein has got a decision to make: Will he uphold the agreement that he has made? And if he chooses to do so by disarming peacefully, the world will be better off for it. If he chooses not to disarm, we will work with our close friends, the closest of which is Great Britain, and we will disarm him. But our first choice is not to use the military option. Our first choice is for Mr. Saddam Hussein to disarm. And that's where we'll be devoting a lot of our energies.

**Q.** And Prime Minister, you have this request now. You also seem to have a prospect of another fire strike as well. Do you believe that many British troops and reserves are going to have to prepare for a Christmas away from their family celebrations in either fighting fires or fighting Saddam Hussein?

**Prime Minister Blair.** We will do what's necessary, both to secure ourselves at home and to make sure that the will of the United Nations is enforced abroad. And I think what you will find here at this NATO summit is a totally united determination on behalf of the international community, reflected in the unanimous United Nations resolution, that Saddam Hussein has to disarm himself of all weapons of mass destruction. And how that happens is a choice for him.

We hope, and want it to happen, through the United Nations inspectors mandated by the whole of the international community.

But if he fails to cooperate with them, if he fails to do all he can—and it is within his power—to help that process of disarmament through the United Nations, then he will be disarmed by force. And that is the clear will of the international community. And I think you will find now that there is a consensus for that position virtually right across the civilized world.

**Q.** Thank you very much.

**President Bush.** Sure. I'm glad to answer your every request. [*Laughter*]

**Q.** How about our every question?

**President Bush.** I don't want you to get used to asking too many questions. I've been answering them all the whole time I've been here, question after question after question. If you were to ask a question, Stretch, what would it have been, so I can think about it for tomorrow? I won't answer it now.

#### ***Usama bin Laden***

**Q.** What's your reaction to the confirmation of bin Laden being alive on the tape?

**President Bush.** Thank you. I've got a formulated answer. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 a.m. at the Prague Congress Center. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

#### **Remarks at the North Atlantic Council Summit in Prague**

*November 21, 2002*

America is very pleased by today's decision. We believe it strengthens our Nation's most important alliance, NATO. By welcoming seven members, we will not only add to our military capabilities; we will refresh the spirit of this great democratic Alliance.

We believe today's decision reaffirms our commitment to freedom and our commitment to a Europe which is whole and free and at peace.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. at the Prague Congress Center.

#### **Proclamation 7628—Thanksgiving Day, 2002**

*November 21, 2002*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

In celebration of Thanksgiving Day 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote, "Rarely has any people enjoyed greater prosperity than we are now enjoying. For this we render heartfelt and solemn thanks to the Giver of Good; and we seek to praise Him—not by words only—but by deeds, by the way in which we do our duty to ourselves and to our fellow men." President Roosevelt's words gracefully remind us that, as citizens of this great Nation, we have much for which to be thankful; and his timeless call inspires us to meet our responsibilities to help those in need and to promote greater understanding at home and abroad.

As the Pilgrims did almost four centuries ago, we gratefully give thanks this year for the beauty, abundance, and opportunity this great land offers. We also thank God for the blessings of freedom and prosperity; and, with gratitude and humility, we acknowledge the importance of faith in our lives.

Throughout the Thanksgiving holiday, let us renew our commitment to make our country and our world better. As we welcome new opportunities and face new challenges, we are thankful for the resolve and generosity of so many of our people who are touching countless hearts and souls through thoughtful acts of kindness. By answering the call to serve others, Americans are building a culture of service that strengthens our Nation. We also honor and salute the selfless sacrifice of the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who are defending our lives and liberty at home and abroad with skill, honor, and dedication.

This Thanksgiving, we recognize the ties of friendship and respect that bind us together. And we renew our pledge to uphold the timeless principles of freedom, equality, and opportunity that have made our country into a great Nation. By working together, we will continue to build mutual trust, peace,