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NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:21 a.m. on March 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of Portugal, President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain, and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom in the Azores, Portugal

March 16, 2003

Prime Minister Durao Barroso. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am very pleased to welcome here in the Azores the leaders of three friends and allied countries, the United States, Spain, and United Kingdom; President Bush, Prime Minister Aznar, and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

This meeting in the Azores also shows the importance of transatlantic relations and also shows the solidarity among our countries. Actually, these agreements have approved two statements, one statement on transatlantic relations and a statement on Iraq.

We have joined this initiative, and we organized it here in the Azores because we thought this was the last opportunity for a political solution. And this is how we see it: This is the last possibility for a political solution to the problem. Maybe it's a small chance, a small possibility, but even if it's one in one million, it's always worthwhile fighting for a political solution. And I think this is the message that we can get from this Atlantic summit.

As I was saying, for my English-speaking guests, I'll speak English now. First of all, let me say, welcome, George Bush, to Europe. I think it's important that we meet here, in a European country, in Portugal, but in this territory of Azores that is halfway between the continent of Europe and the continent of America. I think it's not only logistically convenient; it has a special political meaning, the political meaning of our friendship and our commitment to our shared values.

So welcome to all of you. Welcome to you. And I now give the floor to President George Bush.

President Bush. Jose, thank you very much for your hospitality. You've done a great job on such short notice. And I'm honored to be standing here with you and two other friends as we work toward a great cause, and that is peace and security in this world.

We've had a really good discussion. We've been doing a lot of phone talking, and it was good to get together and to visit and to talk. And we concluded that tomorrow is a moment of truth for the world. Many nations have voiced a commitment to peace and security. And now they must demonstrate that commitment to peace and security in the only effective way, by supporting the immediate and unconditional disarmament of Saddam Hussein.

The dictator of Iraq and his weapons of mass destruction are a threat to the security of free nations. He is a danger to his neighbors. He's a sponsor of terrorism. He's an obstacle to progress in the Middle East. For decades, he has been the cruel, cruel oppressor of the Iraq people.

On this very day 15 years ago, Saddam Hussein launched a chemical weapons attack on the Iraqi village of Halabja. With a single order the Iraqi regime killed thousands of men and women and children, without mercy or without shame. Saddam Hussein has proven he is capable of any crime. We must not permit his crimes to reach across the world.

Saddam Hussein has a history of mass murder. He possesses the weapons of mass murder. He agrees—he agreed to disarm Iraq of these weapons as a condition for ending the Gulf war over a decade ago. The United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1441 has declared Iraq in material breach of its longstanding obligations, demanded once again Iraq's full and immediate disarmament, and promised serious consequences if the regime refused to comply. That resolution was passed unanimously, and its logic is inescapable: The Iraqi regime will

disarm itself, or the Iraqi regime will be disarmed by force. And the regime has not disarmed itself.

Action to remove the threat from Iraq would also allow the Iraqi people to build a better future for their society. And Iraq's liberation would be the beginning, not the end, of our commitment to its people. We will supply humanitarian relief, bring economic sanctions to a swift close, and work for the long-term recovery of Iraq's economy. We'll make sure that Iraq's natural resources are used for the benefit of their owners, the Iraqi people.

Iraq has the potential to be a great nation. Iraq's people are skilled and educated. We'll push as quickly as possible for an Iraqi interim authority to draw upon the talents of Iraq's people to rebuild their nation. We're committed to the goal of a unified Iraq, with democratic institutions of which members of all ethnic and religious groups are treated with dignity and respect.

To achieve this vision, we will work closely with the international community, including the United Nations and our coalition partners. If military force is required, we'll quickly seek new Security Council resolutions to encourage broad participation in the process of helping the Iraqi people to build a free Iraq.

Crucial days lie ahead for the world. I want to thank the leaders here today and many others for stepping forward and taking leadership and showing their resolve in the cause of peace and the cause of security.

Jose Maria.

President Aznar. Good evening, everyone. I would firstly like to thank the Prime Minister, Jose Manuel Durao, for his hospitality and welcome, which I particularly am grateful for. And I'm very pleased to be in the Azores once again.

I have short remarks on our debates on this situation and on the documents we've agreed on during today's meeting. I'd first like to refer to our document on Atlantic solidarity. We have renewed Atlantic commitment on our common values and principles, in favor of democracy, freedom, and the rule of law.

We understand that the expression of this commitment is essential, by way of guarantee of peace, security, and international freedom. And I honestly believe that there is no other alternative to the expression of the Atlantic commitment in terms of security. We are committed on a day-to-day fight against new threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and tyrannic regimes that do not comply with international law. They threaten all of us, and we must all act, consequently.

This transatlantic link, this transatlantic solidarity, has always been, is, and should continue to be, in my opinion, a great European commitment, and as such, amongst other things, we express it this way: Without this commitment, today's Europe could not be understood; and without that commitment, it would be very difficult to picture the Europe of tomorrow.

So I would like to invite our friends, our allies, to leave aside any circumstantial differences and to work together seriously for that commitment of democracy, freedom, and peace, so that this becomes a commitment of us all.

We've agreed on launching, on boosting the Middle East peace process, and on our vision that that peace process has to accommodate with all necessary security guarantees and putting an end to terrorism. And this should end with the peaceful coexistence of two states, an independent Palestinian state and the Israeli state.

In view of the situation created by Iraq, with their continued noncompliance of international law, I would like to remind you that we all said before we came here that we were not coming to the Azores to make a declaration of war, that we were coming after having made every possible effort, after having made this effort, continuing to make this effort, to working to achieve the greatest possible agreement, and for international law to be respected and for U.N. resolutions to be respected.

And we would like to say that we are aware of the fact that this is the last opportunity—the last opportunity expressed in Resolution 1441, adopted unanimously by the Security Council, and that, being aware that this is the last opportunity, we are also making the last effort. And we are ready to make this last effort of the very many efforts we've been

making throughout these last weeks and months.

We are well aware of the international world public opinion, of its concern. And we are also very well aware of our responsibilities and obligations. If Saddam Hussein wants to disarm and avoid the serious consequences which he has been warned about by the United Nations, he can do so. And nothing in our document nor in our statement can prevent him from doing so if he wants to. So his is the sole responsibility.

Tony.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you, Jose Maria. Thank you, Jose, for hosting us today. And I think it's worth just returning to the key point, which is our responsibility to uphold the will of the United Nations set out in Resolution 1441 last November. And for 4½ months now, we've worked hard to get Saddam to cooperate fully, unconditionally, as that resolution demanded.

Even some days ago we were prepared to set out clear tests that allowed us to conclude whether he was cooperating fully or not, with a clear ultimatum to him if he refused to do so. And the reason we approached it in that way is that that is what we agreed in Resolution 1441. This was his final opportunity. He had to disarm unconditionally. Serious consequences would follow if he failed to do so.

And this is really the impasse that we have, because some say there should be no ultimatum, no authorization of force in any new U.N. resolution; instead, more discussion in the event of noncompliance. But the truth is that without a credible ultimatum authorizing force in the event of noncompliance, then more discussion is just more delay, with Saddam remaining armed with weapons of mass destruction and continuing a brutal, murderous regime in Iraq.

And this game that he is playing is, frankly, a game that he has played over the last 12 years. Disarmament never happens. But instead, the international community is drawn into some perpetual negotiation, gestures designed to divide the international community but never real and concrete cooperation leading to disarmament.

And there's not a single person on the Security Council that doubts the fact he is not fully cooperating today. Nobody, even those who disagree with the position that we have outlined, is prepared to say there is full cooperation as 1441 demanded.

Not a single interview has taken place outside of Iraq, even though 1441 provided for it. Still, no proper production or evidence of the destruction, or for example—just to take one example, the 10,000 liters of anthrax that the inspectors just a week ago said was unaccounted for. And that is why it is so important that the international community at this time gives a strong and unified message.

And I have to say that I really believe that hadn't we given that strong message sometime ago, Saddam might have realized that the games had to stop. So now we have reached the point of decision, and we make a final appeal for there to be that strong, unified message on behalf of the international community that lays down a clear ultimatum to Saddam that authorizes force if he continues to defy the will of the whole of the international community set out in 1441.

We will do all we can in the short time that remains to make a final round of contacts, to see whether there is a way through this impasse. But we are in the final stages, because after 12 years of failing to disarm him, now is the time when we have to decide.

Two other points, briefly, on the documents that we've put before you. The first is the—President Aznar was just saying to you a moment or two ago on the transatlantic alliance is, I think, very important. Some of you will have heard me say this before, but let me just repeat it. I believe that Europe and America should stand together on the big issues of the day. I think it is a tragedy when we don't. And that transatlantic alliance is strong, and we need to strengthen it still further.

And secondly, we've set out for you that should it come to conflict, we make a pledge to the people of Iraq. As President Bush was just saying to you a moment or two ago, it is the people of Iraq who are the primary victims of Saddam: the thousands of children that die needlessly every year; the people locked up in his prisons or executed simply for showing disagreement with the regime;

a country that is potentially prosperous reduced to poverty; 60 percent of the population reliant on food aid.

And what we say is that we will protect Iraq's territorial integrity; we will support representative government that unites Iraq on the democratic basis of human rights and the rule of law; that we will help Iraq rebuild—and not rebuild because of the problems of conflict, where if it comes to that, we will do everything we can to minimize the suffering of the Iraqi people, but rebuild Iraq because of the appalling legacy that the rule of Saddam has left the Iraqi people—and in particular, Iraq's natural resources remain the property of the people of Iraq. And that wealth should be used for the Iraqi people. It is theirs and will remain so, administered by the U.N. in the way we set out.

Finally, on the Middle East peace process, I welcome very much the statement that President Bush made the other day. I think it's important now. He said he wanted a partner on the Palestinian side. I think the coming appointment of Abu Mazen is so important there. It allows us to take this process forward. The roadmap give us the way forward. The appointment of Abu Mazen gives us the right partner to take this forward. And I believe that that will demonstrate—and it's important to demonstrate in particular at this time—that our approach to people in the Middle East, in that troubled region, is indeed evenhanded. And all of us will work to make sure that that vision of a Middle East, two states, Israel confident of its security, a Palestinian state that is viable, comes about and is made reality.

Thank you.

Summit Results/Portugal's Role in the Coalition

Q. [*Inaudible*].

President Bush. They couldn't hear the question.

Q. I was asking the Portuguese Prime Minister, how does he see the result of this summit? Does the Prime Minister think that starting now, Portugal has more responsibilities with this war that seems to be inevitable?

Prime Minister Durao Barroso. The results of this summit, as I described them and as all the other heads of state and government said it, too, this summit is—this is the last opportunity for a political solution to this very serious problem for the international community. This has been said here. It's been said here that tomorrow we'll start with these last initiatives towards a political solution. And for that reason I am very, very happy with the results of this summit.

Now, coming to our responsibility in case there is a conflict, I must say that the responsibility falls entirely on the dictator Saddam Hussein. He bears the entire responsibility because he has not respected for all of these years international law and consistently violated the U.N. resolutions. And in that case, if there is a conflict, I want to repeat it once more, Portugal will be next—side by side with his allies. And the fact that we are here today in the Azores with the United States, with Spain, and with the UK, this is very significant.

As it's been said here before, the transatlantic relationship is very, very important, not only for Europe and for the U.S., but it's very important for the whole world. I remember a few days ago, Kofi Annan in the European conference in Brussels, said the same thing. He said this is very important. It's very important for Europe and the U.S. to remain united and not separate, because the world needs the U.S. and Europe working together towards the same direction, in the same sense—not only about the security but also fighting underdevelopment and all the other tasks that fall to the international community.

President Bush. Ron Fournier [Associated Press].

Last Effort at Diplomacy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Before I ask my question I just want to nail down one thing so there's no confusion. When you talk about tomorrow being the moment of truth, are you saying that is the——

President Bush. Just a question, or are you trying to work in two questions?

Q. Yes, sir. [*Laughter*] Because there's one thing we need to make clear. When you say tomorrow is the moment of truth, does that mean tomorrow is the last day that the resolution can be voted up or down, and at the

end of the day tomorrow, one way or another the diplomatic window has closed?

President Bush. That's what I'm saying.

Q. Thank you, sir. And now for the question——

President Bush. And now for your question?

Q. That being the case, regardless——

President Bush. That being my answer——

Q. Regardless of whether the resolution goes up or down or gets withdrawn, it seems to me you're going to be facing a moment of truth. And given that you've already said you don't think there's very much chance Saddam Hussein is going to disarm, and given that you say you don't think there's very much chance he's going to go into exile, aren't we going to war here?

President Bush. Tomorrow is the day that we will determine whether or not diplomacy can work. And we sat and visited about this issue, about how best to spend our time between now and tomorrow. And as Prime Minister Blair said, we'll be working the phones and talking to our partners and talking to those who may not clearly understand the objective, and we'll see how it goes tomorrow.

Saddam Hussein can leave the country, if he's interested in peace. You see, the decision is his to make. And it's been his to make all along as to whether or not there's the use of the military. He got to decide whether he was going to disarm, and he didn't. He can decide whether he wants to leave the country. These are his decisions to make, and thus far he has made bad decisions.

Further Discussion at the United Nations

Q. I understand that if tomorrow is the day for taking the final decision, that means that you consider that there's no possible way out through the United Nations because a majority does not support a war action. I would like to know, Mr. Blair, Mr. Bush, whether in that military offensive you count on many countries, whether it's going to be the UK and the U.S. carrying out the military offensive? I understand from what Mr. Blair has said that you're counting on the U.N. for the reconstruction. Are you going to look for other countries through the United Nations?

And for Mr. Aznar, what is Spain's participation in that military offensive, in addition to your political support?

President Bush. [*Inaudible*]—Resolution 1441, which was unanimously approved, that says Saddam Hussein would unconditionally disarm, and if he didn't, there would be serious consequences. The United Nations Security Council looked at the issue 4½ months ago and voted unanimously to say: Disarm immediately and unconditionally, and if you don't, there are going to be serious consequences. The world has spoken. And it did in a unified voice.

Sorry.

Prime Minister Blair. The issue is very simply this, that we cannot have a situation where what happens through the United Nations, having agreed 1441, having said there would be serious consequences if he doesn't cooperate fully and unconditionally, what we cannot have is a situation where we simply go back for endless discussion.

Now, we have provided the right diplomatic way through this, which is to lay down a clear ultimatum to Saddam: Cooperate or face disarmament by force. And that is entirely within the logic, the letter, the spirit of 1441. And that is why—you know, all the way through we have tried to provide a diplomatic solution. After over 4½ months since we passed Resolution 1441, we're now, what, 3 months on from the declaration that Saddam made on the 8th of December that not a single person in the international community—not one—believes was an honest declaration of what he had. And yet, 1441 said the first step of cooperation was to make an honest declaration.

So when people say haven't we exhausted all the diplomatic avenues, we've tried exhausting them. But understand from our perspective and from the perspective of the security of the world, we cannot simply go back to the Security Council for this discussion to be superseded by that discussion, to be superseded by another discussion. That's what's happened for 12 years. That's why he's still got the weapons of mass destruction. We have to come to the point of decision. And that really is what the next period of time is going to be about.

President Aznar. Well, I would like to say that this statement we're making today, as we've all said, it's a last chance, one last attempt to reach the greatest possible consensus amongst ourselves. And I can assure all of you that we've made—we have all made—enormous efforts, and we're going to continue making these efforts in order to try to reach an agreement, to reach a solution.

We have our own worry, our own responsibility to make U.N. resolutions be abided by. If the Security Council unanimously adopts a resolution—Resolution 1441—giving one last opportunity to disarm to someone who has weapons of mass destruction, and we know he has used them, the Security Council cannot, one year after the other, wait for its resolutions to be implemented. That would be the best way to do away with it altogether. And it could do away with all the United Nations' credibility, and we honestly don't want that to happen.

To me, there is no—you cannot have the same distance between illegality and impunity. And neither Saddam Hussein nor any other tyrant with weapons of mass destruction can set the rules for international law and the international community.

Role of the United Nations

Q. Andrew Marr, from the BBC. Can I ask, first of all, Prime Minister Blair—you said that you want a second resolution to be put down and voted on. Could we be clear? Is that what's going to happen tomorrow, under all circumstances?

And either way—also, if I may, for President Bush—if you don't get that second resolution, what is the future for the United Nations? You've talked about Saddam Hussein dividing world community. Surely, he succeeded.

Prime Minister Blair. Well, on your last point, I think this is one of the things that is tragic about this situation, that Saddam plays these games, and we carry on allowing him to play them. Now, we will do, in the next period of time, in respect to the resolution, what we believe to be in the interest of the U.N.

But I want to say why I think it is so important that even now, at this late stage, we try to get the United Nations to be the route of resolving this, because the threat is there and everyone accepts it, the threat of weapons of mass destruction, the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists who will cause maximum damage to our people. Everybody accepts the disarmament of Saddam has to happen. Everybody accepts that he was supposed to cooperate fully with the inspectors. Everybody accepts that he is not doing so.

So, whatever the tactics within the U.N.—and that's something we can decide—whatever those tactics, the key point of principle is this, that when we came together last November and laid down Resolution 1441, now is the moment when we decide whether we meant it and it was his final opportunity to disarm or face serious consequences, or whether, alternatively, we're simply going to drag out the diplomatic process forever. And that's why I say it's the point of decision.

Q. Vote or not?

President Bush. I was the guy that said they ought to vote. And one country voted. They showed their cards, I believe. It's an old Texas expression, "Show your cards, when you're playing poker." France showed their cards. After I said what I said, they said they were going to veto anything that held Saddam to account. So cards have been played, and we'll just have to take an assessment after tomorrow to determine what that card meant.

Let me say something about the U.N. It's a very important organization. That's why I went there on September the 12th, 2002, to give the speech, the speech that called the U.N. into account, that said if you're going to pass resolutions, let's make sure your words mean something. Because I understand the wars of the 21st century are going to require incredible international cooperation. We're going to have to cooperate to cut off the money of the terrorists and the ability for nations, dictators who have weapons of mass destruction, to provide training and perhaps weapons to terrorist organizations. We need to cooperate, and we are. Our countries up here are cooperating incredibly well.

And the U.N. must mean something. Remember Rwanda, or Kosovo. The U.N. didn't do its job. And we hope tomorrow the U.N. will do its job. If not, all of us need

to step back and try to figure out how to make the U.N. work better as we head into the 21st century. Perhaps one way will be, if we use military force, in the post-Saddam Iraq the U.N. will definitely need to have a role. And that way it can begin to get its legs, legs of responsibility back.

But it's important for the U.N. to be able to function well if we're going to keep the peace. And I will work hard to see to it that, at least from our perspective, that the U.N. is able to be a responsible body, and when it says something, it means it, for the sake of peace and for the sake of the security, for the capacity to win the war of—the first war of the 21st century, which is the war against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in the hands of dictators.

Thank you all.

Prime Minister Durao Barroso. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. This is the end of the conference. Have a good trip.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:30 p.m. in the community activity center ballroom at Lajes Field Air Force Base, Terceira Island. Prime Minister Durao Barroso spoke in Portuguese, and President Aznar spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by interpreters. Some questions were also asked in Portuguese or Spanish and then translated by interpreters. In his remarks, President Bush referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Prime Minister Blair referred to Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), who accepted the post of Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority on March 19. Prime Minister Durao Barroso referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations.

Statement of the Atlantic Summit: Commitment to Transatlantic Solidarity

March 16, 2003

We, the leaders of four democracies with strong Transatlantic affiliation, meet at a time of great challenge. We face painful choices.

We uphold a vision of international security we share with other nations. Our nations and people know the horror of war, whether visited upon us, or whether we are called to confront a great danger.

At this difficult moment, we reaffirm our commitment to our core values and the Transatlantic Alliance that has embodied them for two generations. Our alliance rests on a common commitment to democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. We are bound by solemn commitment to defend one another. We will face and overcome together the twin threats of the 21st century: terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. All nations must unite to defeat these dangers. We will not allow differences of the moment to be exploited in ways that bring no solutions.

Our security is tied to peace and security throughout the world. Together, we are working to bring security to Afghanistan, and to root out the terrorists who remain there. We affirm a vision of a Middle East peace in which two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace, security, and freedom. We welcome the fact that the roadmap designed to implement this vision will soon be delivered to Palestinians and Israelis, upon the confirmation of an empowered Palestinian Prime Minister. We would welcome the appointment of a Palestinian Prime Minister with sufficient authority to put an end to terrorism and consolidate necessary reforms. We shall look to the parties to work constructively together. We have today issued a statement outlining the challenge that Saddam Hussein poses for the world, and our vision of a better future for the Iraqi people.

We urge our friends and allies to put aside differences, and work together for peace, freedom and security. The friendship and solidarity between Europe and the United States is strong and will continue to grow in years to come.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement of the Atlantic Summit: A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People

March 16, 2003

Iraq's talented people, rich culture, and tremendous potential have been hijacked by