

I admire Nelson Mandela. As a matter of fact, my administration was the one that gave him the Medal of Freedom because of his courage and bravery. I just happen to disagree with him on his view of how best to secure America.

But you can be rest assured that if I think America is threatened, I will act. And you know, I understand criticism. I mean, look, but I'm not the kind of person that runs around trying to take a poll to determine what to do. If I believe it's necessary for my country, I will act.

I also believe it's necessary, when we see people enslaved, to work on behalf of their freedom, because this country believes that freedom is the desire of every human heart. And one of the great benefits of our action in Iraq is not only going to make America more secure, but it's going to make the Iraqi people more free. And you know, these mass graves we're finding is just the tip of the iceberg about what these poor people had to suffer at the hands of Saddam Hussein. And it's that kind of suffering that troubles me. And I believe the use of—proper use of power by America will make the world more peaceful, America more secure, and as importantly, people more free.

Mr. Marks. Mr. President, bon voyage.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:17 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Charles Taylor of Liberia; Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With the Voice of America July 3, 2003

Liberia

Vincent Makori. Mr. President, if the U.S. was to send a peacekeeping force to Liberia, what role will it play and what limitations will you have?

The President. I haven't made up my mind, Vincent, whether we are going to send a so-called peacekeeping force. I have made

up my mind there needs to be stability in Liberia, and one of the conditions for a peaceful and stable Liberia is for Mr. Charles Taylor to leave the country.

And so we're working the issue now. And I say "we," it's my—of course, the Secretary of State, the very capable Colin Powell, is working with Kofi Annan, who is also working with others on the continent to facilitate that type of move.

As well, there was a meeting today with ECOWAS leadership as to what the nature of a so-called peacekeeping force might look like. And that's very important information for me, the decisionmaker on this issue, to understand what the recommendations might be. I have yet to get those recommendations, but I expect I will in the next couple of days.

Mr. Makori. Mr. President, you have asked Mr. Charles Taylor to step down for the sake of peace. What will be your response to him if he does not heed your advice?

The President. Oh, I think we'll have to wait, Vincent, on that. You know, I suspect he will, and so therefore, I'm an optimistic person. I'm not going to take "no" for an answer. My hope is—it's not only my voice. It's the voice of a lot of others saying the same thing, and I think it's very important for us to be positive about having a good outcome.

Mr. Makori. And given the historical ties between the United States and Liberia, does the U.S. have a moral obligation to intervene in Liberia?

The President. Well, there's no question there is a—it is a unique relationship between Liberia and the United States, and I suspect that's why we're—I don't suspect; I know—that's why we're very much engaged in the discussions about how to bring a peaceful and secure Liberia to be. I mean, it's—yes, there is a unique history between the United States and Liberia.

Democracy in Africa

Mr. Makori. Mr. President, because all this boils down to leadership, what is the best thing the U.S. can do to discourage despotic and dictatorial rulerships in Africa and promote democracy, true democracy?

The President. Well, I appreciate that question. One thing is, we can help deal with the AIDS pandemic. A society which is ravished by AIDS is a society which is likely to be unstable. And therefore, if we can bring good health care to the millions who suffer and love to the orphans whose parents might have died from AIDS, it makes it easier to have a stable platform for growth.

Secondly, trade: I'm a big backer of what they call AGOA, which is trade agreements between African countries and the United States. Trade is more likely to make societies prosperous. Our aid program needs to promote the habits necessary for the evolution of a free society. In other words, we're not going to give money to corrupt rulers, and we're not going to give money to nontransparent societies. The American taxpayer and this American President believes that in return for aid—and we've got a generous amount of aid available—we expect people to take care of their people by educating them and creating good health care. We expect there to be market-oriented economies growing. And we expect the rulers to be thoughtful and mindful of who they represent, and that is the people of their country, not themselves or their ruling elite.

War on Terror in Africa

Mr. Makori. Mr. President, on the area of terrorism, which parts of Africa do you consider the hotspots for terrorism, and what role is the U.S. playing, especially with the regional leaders, to ensure that you are achieving the desired result?

The President. Well, unfortunately, a hotspot now is your country, Kenya. And we're very closely working with the Government there. And I will tell you, the Kenyan Government is very strong when it comes to fighting terror. The best thing we can do is share intelligence, is to work closely with the intelligence services of a particular country and then, when we find information, provide that information and encourage the Government to act. And Kenya has done a good job of working with the United States to protect Kenya. And that's what we want. We want people to be able to defend themselves against terror.

And unfortunately, some terrorists have been—and this has all come to light recently—obviously, there was a bombing in Kenya, and now it looks like there may be some action there as well. But the Government is making some very strong moves.

Mr. Makori. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Vincent, thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:25 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Charles Taylor of Liberia and Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With CNN International

July 3, 2003

Tomi Makagabo. Mr. President, thank you very much for speaking with us, and welcome to South Africa.

The President. Thanks. Thanks for having me.

Liberia

Ms. Makagabo. If we could begin with the issue of Liberia, President Charles Taylor in particular. You said he needs to step down; he needs to leave the country. The U.S., along with other west African countries, are busy negotiating the whole issue. What are the discussions and options that are being put on the table?

The President. Well, I'm glad you brought up the departure of Charles Taylor. In our judgment, he needs to go in order to create the conditions necessary for a peaceful solution to this difficult situation occurs.

You know, look, we're talking to ECOWAS countries right now to determine whether or not the—what the nature of a peacekeeping force might look like. I'm the kind of person that likes to know all the facts before I make a decision. We've got special ties to Liberia. There are historical ties to the United States. That's why we are involved in this issue, and I am going to look at all the options to determine how best to bring peace and stability.