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NOTE: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. at the South Carolina Statehouse. In his remarks, he referred to David H. Wilkins, speaker, South Carolina house of representatives; Gov. Mark Sanford and Lt. Gov. Andre Bauer of South Carolina; and Glenn F. McConnell, president pro tempore, and Hugh K. Leatherman, Sr., majority leader, South Carolina senate.

Interview With the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation

April 18, 2005

Q. Thank you for your time, Mr. President.

The President. My honor, thank you.

U.S. Support for Lebanese Freedom

Q. Recently there isn't a day that passes by without you mentioning Lebanon. Why now, this country that was under occupation for almost 30 years, became so important for the United States?

The President. Well, there's a movement toward freedom around the world. And the Lebanese people have made it clear that they want to be free of Syrian influence; they want there to be free elections. And the United States of America stands squarely with the people of Lebanon.

Syrian Withdrawal From Lebanon

Q. Are you concerned, Mr. President, that your calls for freedom in Lebanon, for free elections, and for the Syrians to be out of Lebanon could be seen as interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs?

The President. No, I don't think so. I think people will see that the United States is consistent in working with the people so that they can have a free voice, and so they get to decide the Government. The people of Lebanon will decide who is in their Government, not the United States. But the United States can join with the rest of the world, like we've done, and say to Syria, "Get out—not only get out with your military forces, but get out with your intelligence services too. Get completely out of Lebanon, so Lebanon can be free and the people can be free."

Q. Do you have any doubts that Syria will be out by end of April?

The President. I am pleased that they're beginning to get out. And we expect them to be completely out, and I mean not only the troops but the people that have had—that have been embedded in parts of Government, some of the intelligence services that have been embedded in Government and others. They need to get completely out of Lebanon so the people of Lebanon can decide the fate of the country, not another Government, not agents of another Government, but the people.

And Lebanon is a great country, and Lebanon has had a fantastic history. It's also had some difficult days. But I think there is a better day ahead for the people of Lebanon, and I think people, no matter what their politics may be, really want Lebanon to succeed.

Lebanese Freedom

Q. Mr. President, I'm sure you saw the pictures of the demonstrations in Lebanon. Beirut was packed with maybe a million people in the street, calling for freedom and democracy in Lebanon. What was your—what did you feel when you saw it?

The President. Well, I wasn't surprised, because I think everybody wants to be free. I think people long to be free, and I think people are tired of living under a Government which, in essence, was a foreign occupation.

The other thing is, in our great country, there's a lot of Lebanese Americans that love Lebanon. And everywhere I go in my country, people are saying, "Now, listen, as the President, you must work there to be a free Lebanon." And so I'm not surprised. If the spirit of those Lebanese Americans is strong here, imagine what the spirit will be of their relatives and friends in Beirut. People live in a free society here, and not one there, but there will be one soon.

Hezbollah/Implementing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559

Q. You worked closely with the French on resolution 1559. And this resolution calls Hezbollah to disarm. How will the United States ensure this happens?

The President. Well, first things first, and that is to make sure that there are free elections. Secondly, listen, we put Hezbollah on

the terrorist list for a reason; they've killed Americans in the past. And we will continue to work with the international community to keep the pressure on this group of people. And we'll work with the international community to fully implement 1559.

But ultimately, the people of Lebanon are going to decide the fate of the country. And you can't have a free country if a group of people are like an armed militia. In other words, there needs to be police organized by the state, a military organized by the state. But citizens groups that are armed, trying to impose their will on a free society is just not the definition of a free society.

Q. But Mr. President, what if Lebanon is not capable of implementing this element of the resolution 1559?

The President. Well, the international community is going to have to work to help them achieve that capability. Listen, not every free society is capable of internal security right off the bat. And there's ways for the international community to come together to reassure the people that there will be help to secure the country.

Freedom in the Middle East

Q. I'm sure, Mr. President, you heard what I want to say maybe thousands of times, and maybe from Presidents and Kings that come and see you here in the White House—some people think that it's not in the best interest of America to have democratic Arab countries——

The President. Right.

Q. ——because democracy and free elections may help anti-American groups, radical groups to come to power. What do you respond to that?

The President. I respond to them and say, "Well, I guess they don't really understand me, and they don't understand my view of freedom, because I think freedom is embedded in everybody's soul." I do believe there is an Almighty God, and I believe that freedom is that Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. I believe that a true free society, one that self-governs, one that listens to the people, will be a peaceful society, not an angry society but a peaceful society.

And the reason I believe that is because I believe, for example, most mothers want to raise their children in a peaceful world, and they want their little children to be able to go to school and to grow up in peace. And if that's the ultimate feeling of the people, the Government, if it's a true democracy, will reflect that.

Support for the Lebanese Economy

Q. Well, Mr. President, I'm sure you know that Lebanon is also facing severe economic problems.

The President. Yes.

Q. Would the U.S. be willing to rally the world community to help Lebanon's economy?

The President. Of course. The United States as well as European finance ministers would want to work closely with international organizations, like the IMF or the World Bank, to help this country get back on its feet after occupation, help this new democracy succeed. Yes, there will be plenty of help.

The Lebanese people are going to have to, though, however, have elections. In my judgment, they ought to be as scheduled. And the elections need to be free and fair, without interference. There will be monitors, hopefully, international monitors, to make sure they're free and fair. The people of that good country ought to feel comfortable about going out and voting and expressing their opinion. And when a democracy is up and running, I believe the international community will want to help this new democracy.

Syria-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, we all know that Syrian-American relations are at their lowest now. Is there a roadmap for Syria to improve its relationship with the United States?

The President. Well, Syria has heard from us before. We have made it very clear that—what we expect, in order to be able to have relations with us. First on the agenda, right now, there's two things immediately that come to mind. One is to stop supporting Ba'athists in Iraq, stop those people in Syria who are funneling money and helping smuggle people and arms into Iraq. They've heard that message directly from me. And secondly,

of course, is to completely withdraw from Lebanon. Syria must shut down Hezbollah offices. Hezbollah not only is trying to destabilize the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, but Hezbollah, as you know, is a dangerous organization.

Q. But those offices are in Lebanon; they're not in Syria.

The President. Well, they're in Syria too. And Syria has got to do its part about making sure that Hezbollah doesn't receive support from Syria.

Q. What if the diplomatic effort and the sanctions fail in changing Syrian attitudes? Is there another option?

The President. Well, I think the Government will feel the international pressure. We're just beginning. And obviously, diplomacy is the first course of action. And we hope—I think diplomacy will work.

Israel-Syria Relations

Q. Mr. President, for the last four or five decades, Israel was seen as a country trying hard to be accepted by its Arab neighbors and signing peace agreements with them. Nowadays we hear someone like President Bashir of Syria complaining that all Syria's attempts to relaunch peace talks with Israel were not taken seriously. Are you doing something to intervene and maybe to put the two parties together?

The President. Well, first of all, Syria and Israel have got current obligations. Syria has got a current obligation to get out of Lebanon. And again I'll repeat this, because I want it very clear what I mean by, "Get out of Lebanon." I mean not only troops but intelligence services as well. And we expect that to happen. Syria has also got to stop inciting or providing—allowing people in their country to incite violence against Iraqi citizens and our coalition troops.

Israel has got obligations under the current roadmap to help the Palestinians. Israel is getting ready to withdraw from Gaza, and we expect the Government of Israel—and want to work with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to make this withdraw successful. And so there's a lot of obligations that these two countries have right now in order to affect world peace.

Late Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri

Q. I want to go back to Lebanon and ask you, Mr. President, what do you recall from your last meeting with the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri?

The President. Yes. I remember I met members—I remember their family love. I remember how proud he was of his boys. And then Laura and I met Mrs. Hariri in France when we were there. I was there visiting President Chirac, and he hosted a dinner for me and my delegation, and Mrs. Chirac kindly hosted a dinner for Laura, and Mrs. Hariri was one of the guests. I remember how striking she was, very lovely lady. I know her heart is broken at the loss of her husband.

Prime Minister Hariri was here to talk to me about Lebanese affairs. He clearly loved the country and loved the people of Lebanon. And I know he'll be sorely missed.

Message to Lebanese People

Q. Mr. President, is there anything else you would like to convey to the Lebanese people?

The President. I will. United States believes in freedom, and we appreciate courage. We appreciate the courage of those who are willing to stand up and say, "We want to be free. We want to be a democracy. We want to help establish a Government that responds to the people." And you'll have our help.

Q. Thank you so much, Mr. President. We greatly appreciate it.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:56 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 19. In his remarks, the President referred to Nazek Hariri, widow of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14 in Beirut; and President Jacques Chirac of France and his wife, Bernadette. The interviewer referred to President Bashir al-Asad of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Dedication in Springfield, Illinois

April 19, 2005

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Laura and I are so very grateful for your generous invitation to be here. Mr. Speaker, thank you for your incredibly warm words. I appreciate your leadership. I appreciate your friendship, and so do the people of Illinois.

I am so honored to be here to dedicate a great institution honoring such a great American. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum was a long time coming. But as many speakers have said, it's really worth the wait. Laura and I were just given a tour by Richard—appreciate his leadership, by the way. I guess the best way to describe what we saw is a superb collection, a superb resource for scholars, and an invitation for all, especially the young, to rediscover Lincoln for themselves.

The mission of this library is essential to our country, because to understand the life and the sacrifice of Abraham Lincoln is to understand the meaning and promise of America. Most of you all know the First Lady was a librarian. Any time she can get me into a library is a pretty good deal, as far as she's concerned. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your Governor and Patti for their hospitality. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor.

I thank the two United States Senators from Illinois, Senator Durbin and Obama. I appreciate the members of the United States congressional delegation who are here. I particularly want to pay my respects to Ray LaHood, who has worked so hard on this project.

I want to thank all the members of the statehouse who are here. I appreciate the mayor, Mayor Davlin. I appreciate the secretary of State and treasurer—I appreciate you all for coming.

It's an honor to be here with our fellow citizens. I particularly want to say thanks to my friend Jim Edgar for his leadership to get this museum going. I want to thank Brian Lamb. C–SPAN happens to be one of my mother's favorite networks. [*Laughter*] I particularly want to thank Mihan Lee for standing up in front of us and expressing her words so eloquently about living in a free society. I thank Reverend McLean for his prayers. And I thank you all for coming.

All of us have come here today because of our great appreciation for the 16th President of the United States. In a small way, I can relate to the railsplitter from out West because he had a way of speaking that was not always appreciated by the newspapers back East. [*Laughter*] A New York Times story on his first Inaugural Address reported that Mr. Lincoln was lucky "it was not the constitution of the English language and the laws of English grammar that he was called upon to support." [*Laughter*] I think that fellow is still writing for the Times. [*Laughter*]

In Washington, DC, where Lincoln served America and where he was assassinated, we honor his influence in a great temple of democracy. Here in Springfield, in Illinois, where he lived along with Mary and where their sons were born and where the funeral train ended its journey 140 years ago, we honor his good life in a more personal way. Here we can walk through his house, see his belongings, and read the Gettysburg Address in his own hand. And even across the mounting years, we can sense the power of his mind, the depth of his convictions, and the decency that defined his entire life.

Abraham Lincoln started life in the last month of Thomas Jefferson's Presidency, with no early advantages other than curiosity and character. Before history took notice, he earned money as a storekeeper, a surveyor, and a postmaster. He taught himself the law. He established a successful legal practice and rose in a new political party on the power of his words. Those who knew him remembered his candor, his kindness, and his searching intellect, his combination of frontier humor with the cadences of Shakespeare and the Holy Bible. As a State legislator in Springfield, a Congressman, and a debater on the stump, Lincoln embodied the democratic ideal that leadership and even genius are found among the people themselves and sometimes in the most unlikely places.

Young Lincoln didn't worry much about how he looked or what he wore. He took