

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy in Strelna

July 15, 2006

President Bush. I've enjoyed my visit with the Prime Minister, Romano. I've known him for a long time. This isn't the first time we have had discussions, and so therefore, the discussions today were very cordial. They reflect the important relationship that the United States shares with Italy.

Before I say anything beyond this, I do want to congratulate your great country for winning the World Cup.

Prime Minister Prodi. I am happy to—

President Bush. I bet you are happy for it. And we were very excited for the Italian people as they celebrated the magnificent victory.

Romano and I talked about a lot of issues that face the world. No question, when Italy and the United States works together, along with other countries, we're able to achieve important breakthroughs. We talked about Iran; we talked about the Middle East; we talked about a variety of issues. We talked about energy; we spent a lot of time talking about energy.

I want to thank you for your time, thank you for your frank discussions. It's good to see you again.

Prime Minister Prodi. I hope that we can meet sometime again.

President Bush. Yes, sir, thank you.

Prime Minister Prodi. I confirm what George told—we had a very frank conversation concerning all that—[inaudible]—issues. But now—[inaudible]—first of all, Middle East, of course, then Iran and Iraq and Afghanistan. Then we spent a lot of time on the future. I think we—[inaudible]—for Africa—[inaudible]. There's certainly a vision between U.S. and Italy—[inaudible]—and our friendship is stronger, Mr. President.

President Bush. Yes, sir. Thank you, Romano.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:44 p.m. in Cottage Nine at the Konstantinovsky Palace Complex. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters in Strelna

July 16, 2006

President Bush. It's good to be here with my friend and our close ally. We just had a wide-ranging discussion. We talked about the Middle East; we talked about Iraq; we talked about Iran. I was pleased to inform and thank Tony for the good work in the United Nations on a unanimous resolution regarding North Korea.

We talked about trade. We're both committed to a world that trades freely. All in all, it's a typical Blair-Bush conversation—it was wide-ranging and conclusive. And I appreciate your insight and your thoughts.

Prime Minister Blair. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. The President has indicated to you the subjects we discussed. And we went through basically all of the international agenda, as evidence of a very strong common agreement on the key questions.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Israel's offensive in Lebanon appears to have no end in sight at this point. Are you willing to go along with Lebanon's call for a ceasefire?

President Bush. One of the interesting things about this recent flareup is that it helps clarify a root cause of instability in the Middle East—and that's Hizballah and Hizballah's relationship with Syria and Hizballah's relationship to Iran and Syria's relationship to Iran. Therefore, in order to solve this problem, it's really important for the world to address the root cause.

We, of course, are in continued discussions with Israel. All sovereign nations have the right to defend themselves against terrorist attacks. However, we hope that there is restraint as people respond. And one of our concerns, of course, is the fragile democracy in Lebanon. So in order to solve this problem, the international community must address the root causes, otherwise there may

be apparent calm and then all of a sudden, there will be more conflict.

Remember, Hizballah started this by capturing two Israeli soldiers and firing rockets into Israel. And as we talk about Hizballah, we must always remember that there is an issue in Gaza as well. And we've discussed this issue, and we will continue to work with the parties involved to solve that issue as well.

Prime Minister Blair's Upcoming Meeting With President Vladimir Putin of Russia

Q. Last night President Putin said that if you asked him about Russian democracy, he had some questions to ask you about Lord Levy. Do you feel that your ability to play a role in international states is now being seriously undermined by Lord Levy's activities?

Prime Minister Blair. No, I don't. I think—I'm sure we will have a discussion not just about that but about the full range of international issues that we've been discussing including, obviously, the most pressing issue on the international agenda at the moment.

Q. Do you expect him to raise Lord Levy with you?

Prime Minister Blair. No, I'm not, frankly.

President Bush. Keil [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, you've talked here about your concern about the fragility of the democracy in Lebanon and the Prime Minister there calling for a ceasefire. Do you think that's needed now to protect his Government? And, if not, why?

President Bush. My message to Israel is that as a sovereign nation, you have every right to defend yourself against terrorist activities. And again, I repeat, this started because Hizballah decided to capture two Israeli soldiers and fire hundreds of rockets into Israel from southern Lebanon. That's the cause of the crisis.

And so our message to Israel is, look, defend yourself, but as you do so, be mindful of the consequences. And so we've urged restraint.

Q. What about a ceasefire?

President Bush. Well, it's really important—this is a moment of clarification. It's becoming clear for everybody to see some of the root causes of instability. I say, "some of the root causes of instability," because there's still a militant wing of Hamas that wants to stop progress.

But let's step back for a minute. We were making progress toward a two-state solution, two democracies living side by side in peace. There's a Prime Minister from Israel, Olmert, who is dedicated to a two-state solution. He comes to the United States and holds a press conference and says, "I am dedicated; as a matter of fact, I am so dedicated, I'm campaigning on the platform that if need be, we will unilaterally make the decision that there's a Palestinian state." That's a remarkable statement. He also said that he is willing to reach out to President Abbas, which he has done. He's also reached out to other nations in the neighborhood in order to—in order to make sure there's a negotiated settlement.

As progress was being made, it obviously scared those who can't stand the thought of democracy. So you have the militant wing of Hamas act first, and then you had Hizballah act. And in order to solve this problem, Dick, the world must address the root causes of the problem.

And so we have said to Israel—and we're in touch with Israel a lot—remember, there's a fledgling democracy on your northern border, which will ultimately help you achieve the peace you want. And today here at the G-8, we'll discuss this issue. And it's a—one of the interesting things about this moment is, it's now become clear to a lot of people why we don't have peace in the Middle East. It's a moment of clarification. And therefore, it's a moment that requires all of us to work together to send a clear message not only to Hizballah but to the Iranians who finance Hizballah and to the Syrians who house Hizballah.

G-8 Summit/Middle East

Q. Mr. Prime Minister and Mr. President, do you get a sense among the other leaders who are gathered here today that you are all on the same wavelength when it comes to the Middle East? Or do some leaders have

very different views about what's happening there?

President Bush. I think most leaders are now beginning to recognize the root cause of the problem. Clearly, the Prime Minister does. And our respective political directors and foreign ministers and Secretary of States have been talking about this issue a lot. And there seems to be a consensus growing that in order for us to have the peace we want, that the world is going to have to recognize that there are terrorist elements who are dedicated to stopping the advance of democracy and peace. And therefore, we must deal with those. And I repeat, there are two nation-states that are very much involved with stopping the advance of peace, and that would be Iran, and that would be Syria.

War on Terror/Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, can I just ask you on this: The Russians have said they feel Israel's use of force is excessive. What do you think of that? And could you just spell out exactly what influence the Russians, you think, have or could have in this situation?

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I think everyone is going to work very hard to find a common and unified position. But the essential point is this: We all want the situation to clam down, and we want it to calm down because we're mindful of the need to protect Lebanese democracy, and we're also deeply mindful of the need to try to reengage people with the negotiated process towards a two-state solution, Israel and an independent, viable state in Palestine.

Now the question is, how do we calm it down from this position now? And as the President was just saying a moment or two ago, the absolute essence of this, the only way we are going to get this situation calm and we're going to get the cessation of hostilities, is if we address the reasons why the situation has arisen. And the basic reasons are that there are extremists who want to interrupt the process that can lead to that two-state solution—Israel with its security protectors, a proper independent Palestinian state—and there are also extremists backed, I'm afraid, by Iran and by Syria who want to disrupt the positions in Lebanon and who

want to create a situation of tension and hostility there.

So if we're going to make this work—and we've got the U.N. mission that is out there now, and that's obviously very important, and we support it—if we want to make this work, we have got to deal with those underlying conditions that have given rise both to the problem in the Gaza and the problems into Lebanon. And I hope very much that everybody here, because we have a common position in supporting Lebanon and its democracy and supporting the security of Israel, and supporting the two-state solution—since we're agreed on those basic fundamentals, we should be able to agree on a position here. And I think it would be a very good signal to send out to the world at this moment, that we can agree to such a position.

I think that sometimes, for understandable reasons, there's been a hesitation in putting the real truth of this situation up to people, and the fact is there are those out in that region, notably Iran and Syria, who do not want this process of democratization and peace and negotiations to succeed.

President Bush. Let me just say one thing. You've triggered a brilliant thought. [Laughter] A couple of points—Kofi Annan is going to be here, and the United States, as well, supports the mission in the region. Secondly, of course, all of us care deeply about the loss of innocent life. And in thinking about that, I remember a year ago what took place during the G-8 hosted by Tony. There were terrorist attacks in London, and there was a loss of innocent life. And there was outrage, as there should have been, and a determination to work together to protect life.

And that same determination must be applied to the Middle East as well. The terrorists will do anything to achieve objectives. They went into London subways. They'll fire rockets into Israel, all aiming to disrupt, to destroy, to prevent free societies from flourishing, because they don't agree with freedom. And the stakes are high, and the stakes have been clarified once again, during yet another G-8. And Tony and I will call upon our fellow leaders to come together and to

make it clear that we reject this kind of violence and that we will be steadfast in our support of freedom.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 a.m. in Cottage Nine at the Konstantinovsky Palace Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations. A reporter referred to Baron Michael A. Levy, Prime Minister Blair's personal envoy to the Middle East, who was arrested on July 12 in connection with a police investigation into possible infringements of honours and elections laws. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Jacques Chirac of France in Strelna

July 16, 2006

President Bush. I want to thank Jacques Chirac for coming over. It's always a pleasure to visit with Jacques. He is a man who is able to crystalize his thoughts, who is able to discuss issues in a very clear way.

Obviously, we're going to spend time talking about the Middle East. The United States is proud to work with France on Resolution 1559 of the United Nations, which is a clear statement of principle and concern about Lebanese democracy. I'm confident that other leaders will look at the spirit of 1559 and recognize that one way to help heal in the Middle East is to address the root causes of the problems there, and the root cause of the problem is Hizballah and Syria and the Iranian connection.

The President has taken a strong lead on this issue in the past. We are in discussions with his administration, and I'm confident that we'll be able to come up with a clear position between France and the United States on this vital issue.

I look forward to discussing other issues with my friend Jacques Chirac. It's good to be with you, sir. Thank you for coming by.

President Chirac. First of all, I just like to say how delighted I am to have this opportunity to meet with the American President. And I note, albeit it, that this has been difficult circumstances, as we have been witnessing the sad events that have been unfolding in the Middle East. But I'm especially struck and delighted by the fact that we share the same views of the issues at stake here. We witness the tremendous sadness, the hardship of the civilian population in this region. You know what longstanding ties France has always had with Lebanon. And when I say, this region, I refer not only to Lebanon but, of course, to what's happening to the Palestinians. So we would call—[*inaudible*—]—for a show of moderation on the part of all parties involved, so that we can establish the conditions of a long-lasting, lasting ceasefire in the region.

Now, I entirely agree with the American President in what he said about supporting the U.N. mission, which is designed, among other things, to ensure the release of the Israeli soldiers being detained right now both by Hizballah and by Hamas, and put an end to the firing of Kassam rockets.

Now, with respect to Gaza, which is a separate issue from that of Lebanon, we feel that it is essential—it is of the essence—that we renew dialog with Mahmoud Abbas.

Now, as regards Lebanon, I couldn't agree more with President Bush in saying that what is at the heart of this is the to-the-letter implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559. That is what must be done forthwith. And we must stop all those who are at present engaging in jeopardizing the security, the stability, and authority of Lebanon.

President Bush. Thank you all. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:14 a.m. in Cottage Nine at the Konstantinovsky Palace Complex. President Chirac referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.