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We've had 50 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth, which is the longest in American history. So you know something—but I'll be dead before they finally figure out my administration because history—it takes awhile to get the true history of an administration.

Q. Okay, first we both see how it's going to be. We might not be dead by then. [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't think so. I think—listen, they're still writing books analyzing George Washington.

Q. That's very true. That's right. And they come to different conclusions in every new book.

The President. They do. And so therefore, my attitude is, if they're analyzing the first President, the 43d President doesn't need to worry about it. The key thing that people need to know is, I make up my decisions based upon principles, not based upon politics—you know, what's good for a political party or trying to be popular. If you chase popularity, you can't lead. And popularity is just like—it comes and goes. And I've never been one to really worry about that, you know? Because when it's all said and done, I think the key thing in life is to look in the mirror and say, I didn't compromise my core beliefs. And I believe people will say that about me.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. You're welcome. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:33 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

The President's News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Mount Vernon, Virginia

November 7, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome. Thank you very much for coming here to Mount Vernon, and thank you for coming to the United States. I think it's safe to say that you've impressed a lot of people here on your journey. You bring a lot of energy, enthusiasm for your job, love of your country, and a strong set of universal values in your heart.

We've just had an extensive conversation, one that you'd expect good friends to have. We talked about Iran and the desire to work jointly to convince the Iranian regime to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions for the sake of peace. We talked about the Middle East and the upcoming talks at Annapolis, Maryland. We spent some time on Kosovo, and I appreciate the President's leadership on Kosovo.

I can't thank the President enough for his willingness to stand with young democracies as they struggle against extremists and radicals. And one such democracy is Afghanistan. Mr. President, your leadership on that issue for your country was very impressive. You sent a very clear message. It's clear that you're a man who does what he says he's going to do. It's the kind of fellow I like to deal with.

And so, Mr. President, I also want to thank your administration in your staunch—strong stance for human rights and human dignity. Whether they be to those who are oppressed in Burma or Darfur or on the island of Cuba, France's voice is important, and it's clear that the human rights of every individual are important to the world. And I look forward to advancing peace and freedom with you, Mr. President.

Our bilateral relations are important. They are strong, and we intend to keep them that way. And so welcome here to George Washington's old home. Proud to have you in America. Thanks for coming.

President Sarkozy. I want to thank President Bush, his administration, and all Americans who have welcomed us in such exceptional fashion. I get the distinct sense that it is France that has been welcomed so warmly, with so much friendship, so much love. This was my hope, my ambition. And with Bernard Kouchner, Christine Lagarde, Rachida Dati, and myself, this is exactly what we wanted.

We've been very moved, deeply moved by your wonderful welcome, together with Mrs. Laura Bush, yesterday at the White House.

I especially enjoyed the skit of the dialog between George Washington and Lafayette that we witnessed.

The tokens of friendship that we have seen since we've been here, your openmindedness and the fact that we can address any and every subject—all those that you mentioned, sir, even though the European defense policy and NATO have also been addressed, environmental issues, which are close to our heart, and Afghanistan. I said that we would stay there because what is at stake is the credibility of the Atlantic Alliance and the fight against terror.

We spent hours discussing very important issue, commercial, economic, and others. And I will say that we have done so in a spirit of openness and trust, and that is something I've been particularly struck by. And I can tell you that this visit, I think, has been very widely covered in France. So when I say that the French people love the American people, that is the truth and nothing but the truth.

Now, I expressed—I spoke at length this morning, and I think the best would be that after President Bush—whom I wish to thank once again—we could answer any questions you may have.

President Bush. Two questions a side. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press]. We'll go——

Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, you came down so hard on Burma and other nations for their crackdowns on prodemocracy demonstrators. Yet you seem to be giving Musharraf a pass. So the question is, why are you going so soft on Musharraf? Is there a double standard?

President Bush. I spoke to President Musharraf right before I came over here to visit with President Sarkozy. And my message was that we believe strongly in elections, and that you ought to have elections soon, and you need to take off your uniform. You can't be the President and the head of the military at the same time. So I had a very frank discussion with him.

Look, our objective is the same in Burma as it is in Pakistan, and that is to promote democracy. There is a difference, however. Pakistan has been on the path to democracy; Burma hadn't been on the path to democracy. And it requires different tactics to achieve the common objective.

And as I told you, I just spoke to President Musharraf before I came here. And my message was very plain, very easy to understand, and that is, the United States wants you to have the elections as scheduled and take your uniform off.

You want to call on somebody?

President Sarkozy. You know, in France, I don't choose; I don't pick the journalists.

President Bush. You don't get to choose? Who chooses? I choose? [*Laughter*] Who would you like me to choose? [*Laughter*] Oh, he chose. Wait a minute. It didn't last very long, did it?

President Sarkozy. I didn't choose; I indicated a general direction. [*Laughter*]

Iraq/France-U.S. Relations/Pakistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My question is on Iraq. Mr. President, this morning you talked at length about Afghanistan, Iran, but not Iraq. And I wanted to ask both of you, is France reconciled with the United States as the United States is reconciled with France? So what about Iraq? Can France, for instance, help to get out of the Iraqi quagmire? And President Bush, where do you stand on Iraq and your domestic debate on Iraq? Do you have a timetable for withdrawing troops?

President Bush. Yes. I don't—you know, "quagmire" is an interesting word. If you lived in Iraq and had lived under a tyranny, you'd be saying, "God, I love freedom"—because that's what's happened. And there are killers and radicals and murderers who kill the innocent to stop the advance of freedom. But freedom is happening in Iraq, and we're making progress.

And I can't thank the President enough for sending his Foreign Minister to Baghdad. It was a clear message that freedom matters; that when people are struggling to live in freedom, that those of us who have the comfort of a free society ought to help them.

We had a difference of opinion with your great country over whether or not I should have used military force to enforce U.N. demands. I reminded a TV reporter—I don't know if the person is here or not—but I said,

I just want to remind you that 1441 was supported by France and the United States, which clearly said to the dictator, you will disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. Now, I'm the kind of person that when somebody says something, I take them for their word.

Having said that, we had a difference of opinion. But I don't sense any difference of opinion now that a struggling democracy wants help from those of us who live in the comfort of free societies. And, Mr. President, the strong gesture of sending your Foreign Minister there wasn't a message to the United States, because we're good friends; it was message to the Iraqi citizens. That said, we hear your cries for freedom; we want you to succeed, because one of the lessons of history is, free societies yield peace.

And so I appreciate your leadership on that issue, and I want to thank your Foreign Minister for—I don't see your Foreign Minister. Look, the guy was here. [*Laughter*] Oh, there he is, yes, next to—look, the President was blocking—next to Madam Rice. Anyway, thank you, sir.

President Sarkozy. Allow me to give you two answers in one. On Pakistan, yes, we're worried about the situation. It's worrisome, and we need to have elections as swiftly as possible. You cannot combat extremism using the same methods as extremists, and it is very important, it is of the essence that Pakistan organize elections. I, like President Bush, I wish this to take place as speedily as possible.

Let me remind you that this is a country of 150 million inhabitants who happens to have nuclear weapons. This is very important for us that one day we shouldn't wake up with a government, an administration in Pakistan which is in the hands of the extremists. And we should, each and every one of us, think about this, of the principles, the values that we uphold and that we defend and we must continue to uphold. And then there's the complexity, as it were, in the field. That's why it's important to convene election, call elections.

Now, on Iraq, Bernard Kouchner's trip to Iraq was very successful. What does France want? A united Iraq. No one—no, it is in no one's interest to see Iraq dismantled. We want a democratic Iraq. We want a diverse Iraq, where each component element of Iraqi society has learned to live with others; an Iraq which is—which can administer and govern itself and that has the means of ensuring the peace and security of every one of its citizens. And that is exactly Bernard Kouchner's message when he went to Iraq. And this is in the interest of one and all that it be thus, and that position is the position I will defend until the end.

President Bush. Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

Q. Mr. President, with——

President Bush. Which one?

Q. Both of you.

President Bush. Get moving, will you? [*Laughter*]

Oil Prices/Iran

Q. Okay. Mr. President, with oil approaching $100 a barrel, are you concerned that your hard words for Iran on its nuclear program are helping drive up oil prices, which can end up hurting the U.S. economy?

President Bush. No. I believe oil prices are going up because the demand for oil outstrips the supply for oil. Oil is going up because developing countries still use a lot of oil. Oil is going up because we use too much oil, and the capacity to replace reserves is dwindling. That's why the price of oil is going up.

I believe it is important for us to send clear signals to the Iranian Government that the free world understands the risks of you trying to end up with a nuclear weapon. And therefore, we will work together to try to find if there's not rational people inside your Government who are tired of isolation and who believe there's a better way forward.

Every time I give a talk about Iran, I make sure I speak to the Iranian people. And I want them to hear once again that we discussed your country today; that we believe—that I believe that you've got a bright future; that we respect your history and respect your tradition. However, you are governed by people who are making decisions that are isolating you from the rest of the world, and you can do better than that.

The idea of Iran having a nuclear weapon is dangerous, and therefore, now is the time for us to work together to diplomatically

solve this problem. And we spent a lot of time on the subject. And I thank the French President for his resolve on solving this issue peacefully.

Do you want to call on some——

President Sarkozy. I just wanted to say that we exchanged all the intelligence and information we had. It is unacceptable that Iran should have, at any point, a nuclear weapon. But Iran is entitled to the energy of the future, which is civilian nuclear energy. I believe in the effectiveness of sanctions. I believe even in the need to toughen the sanctions. But in my mind, the two go together. In other words, the open—the outstretched hand of dialog, of continuing discussions, because Iran deserves a better fate than that isolation. And I cannot imagine that there are not people, leaders in Iran who will stop to think about the consequences of what is going on.

This is a great people and a great civilization, and we must be firm for as long as there is no gesture on their part. And we have to keep the way of dialog open, because we must do everything to avoid the worst-case scenario. And this is indeed—was the subject of a very lengthy conversation which showed exactly how convergent our views were.

France's Role in Afghanistan/Lebanon's Presidential Election/Spread of Democracy

Q. Mr. President, with respect to your statements on Afghanistan and France's commitment on engagement, does this mean that France is going to be sending additional ground troops in to fight in the southern regions of Afghanistan, as the U.S. wishes them to do?

How do you feel about the fact that France has been engaging Syria on the upcoming Lebanese Presidential election? Do you think that's a good idea? And what are the chances that Lebanon will have a Presidential election by November 24th? Thank you.

President Bush. Thanks, good question. You want me to go first?

President Sarkozy. Well, on Afghanistan, I said what I thought and what I think. We've talked about it with President Bush. We will not pull out of Afghanistan because what is at stake here is the solidity of our alliance, and ultimately, what is at stake here is the fight against terror. We're thinking about the best way to help bring about a democratic Afghanistan. Is it by strength, in stepping up our training efforts so that we lay the groundwork or the basis of a modern Afghan state? Or is it by other means? Maybe perhaps military means? We're still thinking about it.

President Bush. First of all, you know, the Syrian influence in Lebanon was something that the previous Government and I worked on to—collaboratively. And because France and the United States worked together, we passed 1551 Resolution out of the United Nations, which got Syria out of Lebanon, by and large. And so we spent time collaborating on how best to make sure that Syria doesn't influence the Presidential elections, that, in fact, the Presidency is picked by the Lebanese people.

And I'm very aware that Mr. Hariri and Nabih Berry are in consultations as to whether or not they can come up with an acceptable candidate to them, not to Syria; whether or not the Lebanese people can be assured that their President is going to be representing the people of Lebanon, not the people—not the Government of Syria.

And I'm comfortable with President Sarkozy's Government sending clear messages that meet common objectives. And our common objective here is for this Lebanese democracy to survive, thrive, and serve as an example for others.

We will work with France and with others to see that this process be completed by November 24th. We believe it's in the interests of the Middle East that this Lebanese democracy survive.

I want Lebanon to serve as an example for the Palestinians, to show them what's possible. I believe in a two-state solution. I believe there ought to be two states living side by side in peace. So does the President; we discussed that today. There's nothing better for the Palestinians to see what is possible with a stable democracy in Lebanon.

The interesting challenge we face in the world in which we live is, there are murderers who will try to stop the advance of democracy, particularly in the Middle East. Isn't it interesting that the places where there's most violence is where there's young

democracies trying to take hold, whether it be Iraq or Lebanon or in the Palestinian Territories?

And the call for nations such as ourselves is to support those who want to live in freedom. Freedom is the great alternative to the ideology of people who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives—by the way, the very same ones that came and killed 3,000 of our citizens.

And so what I'm telling you is—let me end this press conference by telling you this: I have a partner in peace, somebody who has clear vision, basic values, who is willing to take tough positions to achieve peace. And so when you ask, am I comfortable with the Sarkozy Government sending messages, you bet I'm comfortable.

Mr. President, thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:12 p.m. at the Mount Vernon Estate. In his remarks, he referred to President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner of France; and Parliament Member Sa'ad Hariri and Speaker of Parliament and National Assembly President Nabih Berry of Lebanon. President Sarkozy referred to Minister of Economy, Finance, and Employment Christine Lagarde and Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals Rachida Dati of France. President Sarkozy and some reporters spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas

November 8, 2007

Thank you all very much for having me here today. If anybody were to come to this center, they would have to leave inspired and thankful, inspired by the service men and women who are recovering from wounds with such courage; thankful that there are instructors and preachers and volunteers who are helping these people get back on their feet and getting their lives together.

This center was funded entirely by contributions of more than 600,000 Americans through what's called the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. This center is a tribute to the generosity of the American people. Make no mistake about it, the American people support the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform. This center is a testament to our deep belief that someone wounded in the defense of America needs all the help he or she can get. The service men and women here have borne the burdens of battle. They have kept our country safe. We honor them and their families by helping them with all we can.

I am here to highlight one of the world's top rehabilitation facilities, right here in my home State of San Antonio, Texas. It's a partnership between the private sector and the Federal Government. The Center for the Intrepid makes use of the best available technologies to give severely injured service members and amputees the opportunity to lead full and productive lives. That's the mission. The mission is to take a good man who I've met before and help him live a full and productive life.

This facilities include a pool, a—where's my man; there he is—a wave runner—by the way, this guy from Oklahoma handled those waves pretty well—an indoor running track, a two-story climbing wall, a prosthesis center, a virtual driving program that teaches patients how to control an automobile—that was my driver, right there—a fully furnished apartment that helps patients learn to adjust to disabilities in the real-life world.

This center also provides compassionate support for the families. The Fisher House Program—and I want to thank the Fishers for joining us today—provides onsite housing for up to 57 families, who—they're here to visit their injured loved ones. The Fisher family, that has supported the Fisher Houses, is a remarkable family, and these good folks represent the true spirit of America, people coming forth to help a neighbor in need. Real proud you both are here.

Medical advances have enabled facilities such as this one to provide wounded warriors with care that would have been unimaginable just a decade ago. The technology that's being used here is state of the art. Our system for managing the care, however, has fallen behind. The technology has advanced; our system needs to be modernized.