

Investigation of Presidential Pardons

Q. Sir, I just wanted to follow up on the previous question. You had mentioned—you've often said, about your predecessor, that you want to look forward, and not the past. Do you think it's a good idea for Congress to be investigating pardons or for the Justice Department to do that? Or should they just let it go?

The President. I think it's time to move on. And——

Q. Will you ask Chairman——

The President. No, the Congress is going to what they're going to do. They've already started the process.

Q. What about your Attorney General?

The President. I haven't talked to the Attorney General about it. I read something about it today, but——

Q. He would consider——

Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. The Attorney General just simply said that he would look at what Congress was doing.

The President. Yes, I don't think—didn't investigate; he was responding to a congressional inquiry. You know, the Congress is going to do what they're going to do. My attitude is, you know, all this business about the transition—it's time to move on; it is. It's time to stay looking forward, and that's what I'm going to do.

Q. Are you concerned that there's an—the appearance of a quid pro quo with all of the money flowing into the Democratic coffers?

The President. That's up for the able journalists in America to determine.

Always a pleasure. Sorry we don't get to spend so much quality time like we used to in the campaign.

Baseball

Q. Are you warming up for opening day? It's only 6 weeks.

The President. Down in Houston? [Laughter]

Q. Are you going to work with Tony Williams to bring a ball team to Washington?

The President. You're not going to believe this. It was one of the first topics he brought up during our conversation—seriously. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. en route from Norfolk, VA, to Andrews Air Force Base, MD. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of Japan; President Vicente Fox of Mexico; Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada; and Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia. The President also referred to LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on Departure for Charleston, West Virginia

February 14, 2001

Situation in the Middle East

Good morning. I strongly condemn the terrible act of violence in Israel this morning. I have called Prime Minister Barak to express my condolences to the families of the people killed and to all the Israeli people.

As I told the Prime Minister, the tragic cycle of violent action and reaction between Israel and the Palestinians, particularly the escalation this week, needs to stop. I'm urging all parties to do their utmost to end the violence.

We will continue to work with all parties to try to restore calm to the region.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With Employers of National Guard Personnel and Reservists in Charleston

February 14, 2001

The President. The Secretary and I are thankful you all are here; very thankful that the good Senator from this great State has traveled with us. It's an honor to be in his presence. He is an eloquent spokesman on what's right about America, and a pretty darn good spokesman about what's needed in West Virginia, I might add. [Laughter]

I appreciate the newly elected Congresswoman as well, Shelley Moore, for being

here. I want to thank the other members of the delegation.

I'm so pleased to come and talk about the Guard and reservists. I used to be in the Guard, and one of the best things about being the Governor, Governor, is to be the commander in chief of the Guard in Texas, and in your case, West Virginia. It's an honor, and I know you're going to take it and do a good job. You've got a pretty darn good start with a general leading the troops here in West Virginia.

I want you to know, Colonel Raney, I would have come back whether I won or lost. [Laughter] I fell in love with West Virginia during my time here. But now is not the time for politics. This is a visit about public policy, and that's the defense of our Nation. I'm going to give a more formal speech later on, but the purpose of this visit is to listen some but also to assure you.

I understand a couple things that are important: One, the role of the Guard and reservists not only abroad is important but, as importantly, at home. Part of our job is to assess real threats to the Nation and address those threats with corresponding defense policy. I'm worried that we are trying to be all things to all people around the world and, therefore, creating the tension that you accurately described. It's not only a tension for employer to employee; it's tensions, often-times, between husband and wife. And over-deployments, constant deployments really create a severe issue for morale all throughout the military. And we're going to address that by starting with redefining the mission or clarifying the mission of the United States military. And that's this: to be trained and prepared to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

Our administration will keep our commitments, and we've got a lot of commitments to keep. There will be no precipitous withdrawal from the commitments we inherited, but as we go forward we will be careful about troop deployment, judiciously use our troops. We understand that overdeployments not only affect those on active duty but also affect those in the Reserves and Guard. And I appreciate you bringing that up so very much.

I also appreciate very much the opportunity to highlight the patriotic role not only the guardsmen and reservists play but the patriotic role that the employer plays in America. It's a two-way street, and our Nation needs to be grateful for those who understand the bottom line is more than just profit and loss; the bottom line is also service to the country.

There's all kinds of ways employers can do that. They can give generously of health care; they can give generously of contributions and dollars to help in the communities in which they live. But employers also give incredibly generously when it comes to supporting the Guards and reservists—guardsmen and reservists who are now fulfilling much of the mission that is now taking place overseas.

It's a huge honor to be the Commander in Chief. I take the responsibility very seriously. We're going to have a foreign policy that's strong and consistent and clear, with a military that is focused and prepared to keep the peace. And the guardsmen and reservists will play a major role.

Now, Colonel Raney, I'm told that there are some other folks who may want to say something, in which case I'm prepared to listen or answer questions if you have any. If I don't know it, the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld will. [Laughter]

[At this point, the discussion continued.]

The President. I think it's important for the Nation to understand the critical role the Guard and reservists play in today's mix. And this mission—or this trip today is to clarify the mission, to not only say thanks to the folks of West Virginia but, hopefully, to get people around the country paying attention to reality. And reality is, the Guard and reservists carry quite a bit of the load overseas and also serve—set up some of these good employers as examples for others to look at and to follow.

So, thank you, Governor. Good luck on your speech tonight. You'll do great.

[The discussion continued. A participant stated that letting everyone know about the opportunities available and having employers encourage people to take advantage of them

would contribute to a viable force in the future.]

The President. John, I appreciate that. The good news is, in your State, is you've got more folks applying for jobs than exist in the Guard and Reserve. So evidently, word-of-mouth advertising is pretty darn effective.

Q. Our general helps us with that. [*Laughter*]

The President. We've got an overall issue of recruitment and retention throughout all the military. The Secretary and I will address that. It starts with better pay but also requires our Nation to have a focused mission. So it's clear about what the mission of the military is.

And I keep saying this over and over again, and we'll work with our allies to help them understand that our Nation is a nation of peacemakers; we'll help make the peace. But we're going to be reluctant to put troops on the ground to keep people apart, warring parties apart. It's a concern of me and the Secretary and others. And we will work with our allies to make sure they understand what our position is before we take any action.

[*The discussion continued. A participant stated that, given the energy situation, the United States had no choice but to be involved in the Middle East to ensure a continued oil supply.*]

The President. I appreciate you saying that. It reminded me of what Senator Byrd told me the other day. I can't quite put it as eloquently as he did, but he reminded me that we need a national energy policy of which coal needs to be an integral part.

Q. We are importing 60 percent of our oil daily—

The President. Which is a national security concern.

Q. —and about 12 million barrels a day.

The President. It is up to all of us to remind folks that we can safely mine coal, and we can cleanly burn it with the right technology. As a matter of fact, the Senator and I—Senator Stevens—were not only talking about the use of technology at home, clean coal technologies here at home, but also being able to have clean coal technology as part of an export policy, so that nations that

have not developed like we have will be able to utilize the technologies that have been developed, much of which have been developed right here in the State of West Virginia.

The energy situation in the country is very serious. Demand is greater than supply. And we can affect demand, and will. We'll work on conservation measures. But we also have got to understand that we need to work on the supply side, Senator, and coal is in abundant supply here in America.

And my job and the job of others will be to convince many in the country who don't believe we can have a clean air policy and burn coal at the same time. I believe we can, and many of the experts know we can. And we've got to do it; we've got to sell the country on that.

In the meantime, we've also got to make sure that we're less dependent on foreign sources of crude oil. The lack of an energy policy and national security concerns go hand-in-hand. And I'm very aware of that, sir.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the Armory at the West Virginia Army National Guard Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, Adjutant General, and Col. William R. Raney, Director of Facilities and Engineering, West Virginia Army National Guard; and Gov. Robert E. Wise of West Virginia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to National Guard Personnel and Reservists in Charleston

February 14, 2001

The President. Thank you all. Sit down, please. Well, thank you very much, General. I appreciate those kind words, and I appreciate your warm welcome. I'm glad I came back to West Virginia. This is a State of good people, good folks, down-to-earth folks. And I'm glad to be in your midst again.

I particularly want to say thanks to General Tackett for his leadership. He's one of the finest Guard Generals in the United States of America. All you've got to do is look at his record.