

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 19.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and an Exchange With Reporters

September 19, 2002

The President. Good morning. I appreciate our Secretary of State coming by to brief the Vice President and me and Condoleezza Rice about our progress in working with the United Nations, convincing the United Nations Security Council to firmly deal with a threat to world peace.

Before we talk about that, I do want to express our condolences to those who lost their lives in Israel. It's been back-to-back suicide bombings. We strongly condemn terror. We strongly condemn violence. And we continue to send our message to the good people of that region that if you're interested in peace, that if you want people to be able to grow up in a peaceful world, all parties must do everything they can to reject and stop violence.

At the United Nations Security Council, it is very important that the members understand that the credibility of the United Nations is at stake; that the Security Council must be firm in its resolve to deal with a true threat to world peace, and that is Saddam Hussein; that the United Nations Security Council must work with the United States and Britain and other concerned parties to send a clear message that we expect Saddam to disarm. And if the United Nations Security Council won't deal with the problem, the United States and some of our friends will. That's the message the Secretary of State has delivered forcefully. That's the message that he will continue to carry.

And Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your hard work. You're doing a fine job.

Secretary Powell. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. And we're proud of your efforts.

Secretary Powell. Thank you, sir.

The President. I'll be glad to answer a few calls—answers, starting with Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

Coalition Against Iraq

Q. How many of our friends are willing to join the United States in this effort?

The President. Ron, I think time will tell. I think you're going to see a lot of nations—that a lot of nations love freedom. They understand the threat. They understand that the credibility of the United Nations is at stake. They heard me loud and clear when I said, "Either you can be the United Nations, a capable body, a body able to keep the peace, or you can be the League of Nations." And we're confident that people will follow our lead.

Campbell [Campbell Brown, NBC News].

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Good to see you, Campbell, for starters. Glad you're here—finally showed up. [Laughter]

Iraq

Q. The chief weapons inspector is going to be briefing the U.N. Security Council today, and there have already been some reports that, in his talks with the Iraqis, that they're limiting access to certain sites. Are those reports true? And do you think they're trying to—

The President. Well, I haven't gotten a report from what he intends to say. But let me give you just some general observations. First of all, there are no negotiations to be held with Iraq. They have nothing to negotiate. They're the people who said that they would not have weapons of mass destruction. The negotiations are over. It is up to the U.N. Security Council to lay out resolutions that confirms what Iraq has already agreed to, see.

Secondly, I don't trust Iraq, and neither should the free world. For 11 years, they have deceived the world. They have said, "We'll conform to resolutions." They've never conformed to resolutions. They've never conformed to the agreement that they laid out 11 years ago. Sixteen times they've defied Security resolutions.

And so, they—the burden of proof is—must be placed squarely on their shoulders. But there's no negotiations about whether or not they've been telling the truth or not.

Let's see here—Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Congressional Resolution on Iraq

Q. Mr. President, are you going to send Congress your proposed resolution today?

The President. I am.

Q. And are you asking for a blank check, sir?

The President. I am sending suggested language for a resolution. I want—I've asked for Congress' support to enable the administration to keep the peace. And we look forward to a good, constructive debate in Congress. I appreciate the fact that the leadership recognizes we've got to move before the elections. I appreciate the strong support we're getting from both Republicans and Democrats and look forward to working with them.

Q. Mr. President, how important is it that that resolution give you an authorization to use force?

The President. That will be part of the resolution, the authorization to use force. If you want to keep the peace, you've got to have the authorization to use force. But it's—this will be—this is a chance for Congress to indicate support. It's a chance for Congress to say, "We support the administration's ability to keep the peace." That's what this is all about.

Q. Will regime change be part of it?

The President. Yes. That's the policy of the Government.

Campbell, congratulations, you got two questions in one day.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. And it wasn't even a followup. That's a brilliant performance.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A reporter referred to Hans Blix, Executive Chairman, United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission for Iraq.

Remarks Following a Visit With Homeland Security Employees and an Exchange With Reporters

September 19, 2002

Homeland Security Legislation

The President. I appreciate Governor Ridge giving me a tour of this important facil-

ity. It's—we're working hard to make sure that we do everything we can to protect our homeland, coordinate among the various agencies, until we get a Department of Homeland Security.

Our House of Representatives has passed a good bill. The Senate is struggling with a bill. I urge the Senate to get a bill to my desk before they go home, a bill which gives us the flexibility necessary to move the right people to the right place in order to better protect the homeland, a bill which safeguards prerogatives that former Presidents have had in regards to national security matters. We're at a time of war, and the Senate shouldn't be making it harder for an administration, whether it be this one or future administrations, to do their job. Nor should the Senate be trying to strip this administration or future administrations from any prerogatives or power that former administrations have had.

We're aware that there is hard work on the Senate floor by Senator Gramm of Texas, a Republican, and Senator Miller of Georgia, a Democrat, to develop a comprehensive substitute for a piece of legislation which we believe is flawed. We hope the Senate would work with Senator Gramm and Senator Miller, vote that bill off the Senate floor, so we can get it to a conference committee and get the bill to my desk before they go home.

This is a really important piece of legislation. America is still threatened. There are enemies out there which still hate us. We must do everything we can to secure the homeland today and, at the same time, leave a legacy behind so future Presidents and future Members of Congress can deal with what will be an ongoing threat to our freedoms and to our people.

But anyway, I appreciate your hospitality, Governor. You've got some fine people here working hard on behalf of the American people. It's wonderful to see you all again today. Thank you.

Q. Is one vote enough—is Zell Miller's vote enough on this compromise?

The President. [*Inaudible*—I'm not counting votes. I'm just calling on the right—calling on the Senate to do the right thing for the American people.