

Australia; former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, USA, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamed of Malaysia; and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy. A reporter referred to King Abdullah II of Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on Senate Passage of Partial-Birth Abortion Legislation

October 22, 2003

I applaud the Senate for joining the House in passing the ban on partial-birth abortion. This is very important legislation that will end an abhorrent practice and continue to build a culture of life in America. I look forward to signing it into law.

Statement on the Death of Don Luis Ferre

October 22, 2003

Don Luis Ferre was a distinguished statesman and a great American, who dedicated himself to his family and the economic and cultural growth of Puerto Rico. As a member of Puerto Rico's House of Representatives, president of the senate, and Governor, he was an effective advocate for the political empowerment of the people of Puerto Rico. He was widely recognized as a strong leader in his community. In 1991, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his years of distinguished service to America. He was a good friend of my family, and I valued his advice and counsel.

Laura joins me in sending our condolences to the Ferre family and to the people of Puerto Rico.

Exchange With Reporters Following Discussions With Prime Minister John Howard of Australia in Canberra, Australia

October 23, 2003

President Bush. Can't get any better than that. [*Laughter*]

Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. Bush, did you discuss the free trade agreement? And how are you committed to keeping agriculture in the free trade agreement if it goes ahead?

President Bush. What I'm committed to is seeing that we can get this free trade agreement done by the end of December. That's what John and I talked about in Crawford. I think a free trade agreement with Australia would be good for America, good for American workers. I also believe that it would be good for Australia.

Prime Minister Howard. Very good.

President Bush. And the commitment we talked about was to make sure our negotiators push forward with a deal. Obviously, agriculture is an important issue; intellectual property is an important issue. There's a lot of important issues that we've got to work through if—and I think we can.

Prime Minister Howard. Thank you, American?

President Bush. Yes, Tom.

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, the Defense Secretary has written a memorandum saying there have been mixed results in the war on terror, that it's going to be a long, hard slog, and no bold steps have been taken yet. Do you agree with that characterization?

President Bush. What I agree with is that the war on terror is going to be tough work, and it's going to take a while. And we're making great progress. We're dismantling the Al Qaida network. They hide in hills, in caves, and you know, they hide in free societies. And it takes a while to find them, which is