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President Bush, Prime Minister Blair Discuss Keeping the Peace

Remarks by the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair in Photo Opportunity
Camp David, Maryland



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President's Remarks

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3:51 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Its my honor to welcome the Prime Minister back to Camp David. I look forward to spending a good three hours talking to our friend about how to keep the peace. This world faces some serious threat -- and threats -- and we're going to talk about it. We're going to talk about how to promote freedom around the world. We're going to talk about our shared values of -- recognizes the worth of every individual.

And I'm looking forward to this time. It's awfully thoughtful of Tony to come over here. It's an important meeting, because he's an important ally, an important friend.

Welcome.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Thanks.

I'm looking very much forward, obviously, to discussing the issues that are preoccupying us at the moment with the President. And I thank him for his kind invitation to come here and his welcome.

The point that I would emphasize to you is that the threat from Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, potentially nuclear weapons capability, that threat is real. We only need to look at the report from the International Atomic Agency this morning showing what has been going on at the former nuclear weapons sites to realize that. And the policy of inaction is not a policy we can responsibly subscribe to. So the purpose of our discussion today is to work out the right strategy for dealing with this, because deal with it we must.

THE PRESIDENT: AP lady.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what conclusive evidence of any nuclear -- new evidence you have of nuclear weapons capabilities of Saddam Hussein?

THE PRESIDENT: We just heard the Prime Minister talk about the new report. I would remind you that when the inspectors first went into Iraq and were denied -- finally denied access, a report came out of the Atomic -- the IAEA that they were six months away from developing a weapon. I don't know what more evidence we need.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Absolutely right. And what we -- what we know from what has been going on there for a long period of time is not just the chemical, biological weapons capability, but we know that they were trying to develop nuclear weapons capability. And the importance of this morning's report is it yet again it shows that there is a real issue that has to be tackled here.

I mean, I was just reading coming over here the catalog of attempts by Iraq to conceal its weapons of mass destruction, not to tell the truth about it over -- not just over a period of months, but over a period of years. Now, that's why the issue is important. And, of course, it's an issue not just for America, not just for Britain, it's an issue for the whole of the international community. But it is an issue we have to deal with. And that's why I say to you that the policy of inaction, doing nothing about it, is not something we can responsibly adhere to.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to call on somebody? You don't have to if you don't want to. (Laughter.)

Q A question for the President and the Prime Minister. Will you, Mr. President, seek a U.N. resolution prior to any action against Iraq?

And for the Prime Minister, would you sanction any action against Iraq before -- without a U.N. resolution?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first, I'm going to give a speech next Thursday, and I'd like you to tune in.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: As I said to you I think at the press conference we gave earlier in the week, this is an issue for the whole of the international community. But the U.N. has got to be the way of dealing with this issue, not the way of avoiding dealing with it. Now, of course, as we showed before in relation to Afghanistan, we want the broadest possible international support, but it's got to be on the basis of actually making sure that the threat that we've outlined is properly adhered to.

Because the point that I would emphasize to you is it's not us, it's not Britain or America that's in breach of United Nations resolutions. It's Saddam Hussein and Iraq. And therefore, this issue is there for the international community to deal with. And we've got to make sure that it is a way of dealing with it.

THE PRESIDENT: Patsy.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q -- what is your actual target in Iraq? Is it weapons of mass destruction, or Saddam Hussein? And if the Prime Minister could answer, too.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as you know, our government in 1998 -- action that my administration has embraced -- decided that this regime was not going to honor its commitments to get rid of weapons of mass destruction. The Clinton administration supported regime change. Many members of the United States Senate supported regime change. My administration still supports regime change. There's all kinds of ways to change regimes.

This man is a man who said he was going to get rid of weapons of mass destruction. And for 11 long years, he has not fulfilled his promise. And we're going to talk about what to do about it. We owe it to future generations to deal with this problem, and that's what these discussions are all about.

Final question.

Call on somebody. (Laughter.)

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Yes, sure.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

Q Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, do you have any support from any --

THE PRESIDENT: Pardon me?

Q Do you have any support from any other countries in the world, apart from Britain? And Mr. Blair, too.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. A lot of people understand that this man has defied every U.N. resolution -- 16 U.S. resolutions he's ignored. A lot of people understand he holds weapons of mass destruction. A lot of people understand he has invaded two countries. A lot of people understand he's gassed his own people. A lot of people understand he is unstable. So we've got a lot of support. A lot of people understand the danger.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Yes, and I can tell you from the discussions I've had with people, of course, there are people asking perfectly reasonable questions about this, but the one thing that no one can deny is that Saddam Hussein is in breach of the United Nations resolutions on weapons of mass destruction -- that is, chemical, biological, nuclear weapons; that that poses a threat not just to the region, because there is no way, if those weapons were used, that the threat would simply stay in the region.

People understand that. Now, we've got to make sure that we work out a way forward that, of course, mobilizes the maximum support, but does so on the basis of removing a threat that the United Nations itself has determined is a threat to the whole of the world.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all for coming. I appreciate you, thanks.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Pardon me?

Q Will you take one on 9/11, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, go ahead.

Q Let me ask you, sir, when you asked the American people for support --

THE PRESIDENT: The only reason why is he's a fine fellow.

Go ahead.

Q When you asked the American people for support two years ago, there was no way, sir, anyone could have imagined the grim nature of the job you would take on. Had you known then what the job would entail, would you still have asked for it, sir? And would you have had any compunction about --

THE PRESIDENT: There's no way that I could have possibly known what we were going to have to deal with. I'm a citizen of a country that has had these two vast oceans protecting us. For all these years we were safe. People couldn't come and attack us -- so we thought. Of course, Hawaii got attacked, but that's not a part of our mainland. We felt secure here in the country.

There's no way we could have possibly envisioned that the battlefield would change. And it has. And that's why we've got to deal with all the threats. That's why Americans must understand that when a tyrant like Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction, it not only threatens the neighborhood in which he lives, it not only threatens the region, it can threaten the United States of America, or Great Britain, for that matter.

The battlefield has changed. We are in a new kind of war, and we've got to recognize that.

There's no way I could have possibly predicted that future. I'm honored to be the President. And so long as I am the President, I'm going to work hard to make America safe, and the world more peaceful.

Thank you all.

END 3:59 P.M. EDT

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