

forts. What do you do on midnight on January 15th?

*The President.* Well, Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News], I can't tell you I know on midnight, but I do feel that the action taken by the United States Congress today is a very important step in, hopefully, getting Saddam Hussein to realize what he's up against—the determination of the American people. I have felt that the support is there from the people, but I think now with the Congress—the representatives of the people—on record, it makes it much, much clearer to Saddam Hussein.

*Q.* The polls have shown people support moving fairly quickly after the 15th. Would that be your intention?

*The President.* I have said—and without trying to pin it down or in any sense go beyond what I'm about to say—sooner rather than later. And I got into a discussion—I know that's perhaps not of much help, but I think the worst thing you'd want to do is, if a determination was made to use force, to signal when you might be inclined to act. That would, in my view, put the lives of coalition forces needlessly at risk.

*Q.* Sir, I'm sure you're doing all these scenarios that are coming out, the various peace scenarios. One has it that Saddam Hussein will wait until after the 15th—we get into this face-saving again—wait until the 16th or the 17th possibly and then start to withdraw—say, look, I stood up to George Bush, but I'm willing in order to avoid war to pull my troops out now. Is that the type of thing that will go into your calculations? Would that be important to you? Would you say, well, let's give the guy a couple of days and see if, indeed, that scenario is true?

*The President.* I don't want to give any indication to Saddam Hussein that we will be interested in anything that looks like delay or trying to claim victory. It isn't a question of winning or losing. It's a question of his getting out of Kuwait rapidly without concession. And so, I'd have to know a lot more about the situation, the scenario, as you say, before I could give you a more definitive response.

But I don't want anything here to be interpreted by him as flexibility on our part. We have not been flexible. We have been

determined, and we are still determined to see that he complies fully with the resolutions. Now, Rita [Rita Beamish, Associated Press] raised the question, is it logistically possible to fully comply? At this moment, I'm not sure that you could—logistically possible to fully comply. But if he started now to do that what he should have done weeks ago, clearly, that would make a difference. And I'm talking about a rapid, massive withdrawal from Kuwait. But I still worry about it because it might not be in full compliance. So, the standard full compliance with all these resolutions—now, some can't be complied with fully before the 15th. One of them relates to reparations. And reparations is a very important part of this. It's a very important part of what the United Nations has done. So, I don't think the whole question of reparations can be resolved before the 15th.

*Q.* Sir, can you explain why sooner is better than later?

*The President.* Yes, because I think that's been a major part of the debate on the Hill. And I think it is very important that he knows that the United States and the United Nations are credible. I don't want to see further economic damage done to the Third World economies or to this economy. I don't want to see further devastation done to Kuwait. This question of when was debated in the United Nations, and these countries came down saying this is the deadline. And I don't want to veer off from that for one single iota. And I certainly don't want to indicate that the United States will not do its part in the coalition to fulfill these resolutions.

*Q.* Mr. President, you spoke of the debate. It was a very somber day up there.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* People talked about the cost of war. I wondered if you watched it and what effect it had on you.

*The President.* That's a good question. On the parts of it I saw I couldn't agree more. It was somber, properly somber. It was, I thought, with very little ancor. I thought it was conducted for the most part—not entirely—in a very objective manner in terms of the subject, and yet subjective in terms of the individual speaking. The compassion