

I am confident that this matter can be resolved.

*Q.* Are you worried that it could change the course of the war?

*The President.* I think that we ought to guard against anything that can change the course of the war. So, I think everybody realizes what Saddam Hussein was trying to do—to change the course of the war, to weaken the coalition. And he's going to fail. I want to say when the Soviet Union made such a strong statement, that was very reassuring. We are in close touch with our coalition partners, and this coalition is not going to fall apart. I'm convinced of that.

*Q.* Mr. President, 2 days ago you launched a war, and war is inherently a two-way street. Why should you be surprised or outraged when there is an act of retaliation?

*The President.* Against a country that's innocent and is not involved in it—that's what I'm saying. Israel is not a participant. Israel is not a combatant. And this man has elected to launch a terroristic attack against the population centers in Israel with no military design whatsoever. And that's why. And it is an outrage, and the whole world knows it, and most of the countries in the world are speaking out against it. There can be no—no—consideration of this in anything other than condemnation.

*Q.* Why is it that any move for peace is considered an end run at the White House these days?

*The President.* Well, you obviously—what was the question?

*Q.* That—

*The President.* End run?

*Q.* Yes, that is considered an end run—that people who still want to find a peaceful solution seem to be running into a brick wall.

*The President.* Oh, excuse me. The world is united, I think, in seeing that these United Nations resolutions are fulfilled. Everybody would like to find a way to end the fighting. But it's not going to end until there is total cooperation with and fulfillment of these U.N. resolutions. This man is not going to pull a victory off by trying to wage terrorist attacks against a country that is not a participant in all of this, and I'm talking about Israel.

And so, I think everyone would like to see it end, but it isn't going to end short of the total fulfillment of our objectives.

*Q.* Mr. President, you gave assurances on this platform a few weeks ago—reiterated here today—that the coalition would withstand an attempt to engage Israel, or perhaps even Israel's retaliation against an attack. Can you give us some better idea today, sir, of what the basis for your assurance is on that point?

*The President.* Well, a lot of diplomacy has gone on behind the scenes in this regard, and I feel very confident about what I've said.

*Q.* If I could follow up, sir, a particularly touchy situation obviously exists with regard to Jordan, whose position in the neighborhood is particularly sensitive, sir. Can you update us on any understandings that may exist, any diplomatic initiatives that may be ongoing to assure the Jordanians or to convince them to take no action, or about what would happen if they did?

*The President.* Brit [Brit Hume, ABC News], I don't think there are any understandings on that with Jordan at this point, and so I can't elaborate on that.

*Q.* Mr. President, there was some indication last night—I appreciate you not wanting to tell us what is going on right now—but last night it appeared that Israeli planes got off the ground and headed toward Iraq. Did this government stop an Israeli retaliation that was underway?

*The President.* No.

*Q.* Secondly, are we trying to kill Saddam Hussein? We have blown out several buildings where he could have been last night—yesterday.

*The President.* We're not targeting any individual.

*Q.* Mr. President, do you have any message of reassurance to the people of Israel that the restraint being shown by their government doesn't place them in risk?

*The President.* I think that they know of our determination to safeguard them following this attack—or prior to this attack. And we are going to be redoubling our efforts in the darnedest search-and-destroy effort that has ever been undertaken out in that area. And I hope that that is very reas-