

regard.

Q. This is the first time there's been sustained combat between American soldiers and Arab forces. There's been an enormous amount of concern about what the reaction of the Arab world would be. Now that the war is underway, how concerned are you about that problem? Is there anything that could be done by you to minimize the damage to the links between Arab countries and the United States?

*The President.* You're not talking about in—this in relationship to the attack on Israel.

Q. More in terms of the Arab matter—

*The President.* Gerry [Gerald Seib, Wall Street Journal], you see, I've never believed that the Arabs would oppose what's going on right now. I believe when you see the Arab League and Egypt itself, which I guess is the largest in population of Arab countries, strongly supporting what we're doing, that this idea that all Arabs—the idea that he tried to sell—Saddam did—that Arabs versus America is phony. It's a phony argument.

There are Arab forces in the air probably right now—Kuwaiti or Saudi forces. There is a strong Arab element in this coalition. There are many countries in the Arab League that are opposed to Saddam Hussein and have long felt that he was the bully of the neighborhood. And it is about time that his aggression come to heel. And so, I don't worry about it, long run. I do think when this is over we will have some very sophisticated diplomacy to do. But I believe at this point that most people in the Arab world understand and approve of what the United Nations tried to do and is trying to do now. So it doesn't concern me.

Now, there are some elements that, clearly, you might say, are on the other side. And that would worry me in a sense, but it worries me for the future, not so much for the present. I think when all this is over, we want to be the healers. We want to do what we can to facilitate what I might optimistically call a new world order.

But that new world order should have a conciliatory component to it. It should say to those countries that are on the other side at this juncture—and there aren't many

of them—look, you're part of this new world order. You're part of this. You can play an important part in seeing that the world can live at peace in the Middle East and elsewhere. So, there are some that oppose us. There are some of the more radical elements that will always oppose the West and the United States.

But there are countries involved there that may have leaned—tilted, to use an old diplomatic expression, towards Saddam Hussein and towards Iraq that will clearly be in the forefront of this new world order. I am not going to write off Jordan. We've had a long-standing relationship with King Hussein, but he's in a very difficult position there. I have had some differences with him, but they've been respectful, but I would like to see him be more publicly understanding of what it is the United Nations is trying to do here and the United States role. We're not going to suggest that Jordan, because they've taken this position, can't continue to be a tremendously important country in this new world order.

So, I don't accept the premise that Saddam Hussein tried to sell the world that it was the Arabs against the United States. There is overwhelming evidence to show that he is wrong. What he was trying to do, obviously, is divert world attention away from the brutal aggression against Kuwait. You heard it in the 'Aziz press conference. I mean, if there ever was evidence as to what I'm saying, it was the way he conducted himself in that press conference.

So, so far, Gerry, I think there has been understanding as to why we're doing what we are doing. And, I'd like to think, respect for the coalition because I think they see, as I do—the Arab world—that out of this there's a chance for a lasting peace.

Thank you all very much.

*Note: President Bush's 70th news conference began at 12:03 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel; Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada; President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union; Secretary of State James*