

the other countries in the region that are reluctant right now—

*The President.* Well, I don't think the countries are reluctant to—

*Q.* —reluctant to put pressure on.

*The President.* They may be putting pressure on, and you just don't know about it. But I know that they're not reluctant when it comes to the idea of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. And we are in constant contact with the Japanese and the South Koreans and the Chinese and the Russians. As I said—and the decision to cut off fuel oil was a joint decision. It was not a U.S. decision; it was jointly made with the South Koreans and the Japanese and the European Union, for that matter.

It's important for the American people to remember the history of Kim Chong-il. He created some international tension, and the United States of America went and signed an agreement with him. And the agreement was that we'd provide—along with others, we'd provide fuel oil and help, and in return, he would not enrich uranium. But it turns out he was enriching uranium. And we blew the whistle on the fact that he was in violation of the '94 agreement. And the parties to that agreement came together and said, "Well, in return for him making that decision, in terms of him abrogating the agreement, there will be a consequence." And that's where we stand right now.

So the parties have come together. There has been a joint declaration of intent. And we will continue working to resolve the situation.

Yes, Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

*Iraq/National Economy*

*Q.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* I'm tired of these people calling you Heidi.

*Q.* I appreciate you—

*The President.* And I will correct them—*[laughter]*—particularly on camera.

*Q.* If we do have to go to war and—

*The President.* With which country?

*Q.* With Iraq. And if—and with our economy stagnating, what makes you confident that we can afford—

*The President.* First of all, you know, I'm hopeful we won't have to go war, and let's leave it at that.

*Q.* But if we do, though, what—

*The President.* Until Saddam Hussein makes up his mind to disarm—see, it's his choice to make. See, you need to ask him that question, not me.

*Q.* But the White House is drawing up plans to pay for the war, if we come to that. So why—

*The President.* Well, let's leave it at "if," for a while then, until it happens.

*Q.* So you don't want to talk about whether our economy could sustain it, if that's a possibility?

*The President.* I thought that was the question I answered yesterday, so we'll go back to that question, Heidi. I mean, Holly.

*Q.* Thank you, sir.

*2004 Election*

*Q.* How do you size up the Democrats who are in line to oppose you? What do you think of Senator—

*The President.* Not paying attention to it yet, not paying attention to the race yet. I've got a lot on my agenda and a lot on my platter. And I understand politics. I know there's going to be a lot of verbiage and a lot of noise and a lot of posturing and a lot of elbowing. To me, that's just going to be background noise. My job is to protect the American people and work to create confidence in our economy so that people can find work.

*Q.* On some level, were you getting ready for a rematch and hoping for a rematch with Al Gore?

*The President.* Really wasn't paying much attention to it, Stretch [David Gregory, NBC News]. I seriously was—I've got my mind on the peace and security of the American people. And politics will sort itself out. And one of these days, somebody