



The White House

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
April 29, 2004

President Bush Meets with the 9/11 Commission on Thursday

Remarks by the President in Q&A with the Pool
The Rose Garden

1:16 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: The Vice President and I just finished a good conversation with the 9/11 Commission. It was wide-ranging, it was important, it was just a good discussion. And I appreciate the members.



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President's Remarks

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I want to thank the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for bringing the commission here and giving us a chance to share views on different subjects. And they had a lot of good questions. I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I took the time. This is an important commission, and it's important that they ask the questions they ask so that they can help make recommendations necessary to better protect our homeland. It was -- I enjoyed it.

Let me ask -- answer a couple of questions.

Q Mr. President, what topic did the commissioners want to spend most of the time on? And were there any subjects that you didn't answer or were advised by your counsel not to answer?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I was never advised by my counsel not to answer anything. I answered every question they asked. Really -- probably best that I not go into the details of the conversation; let them incorporate into their report. There was a lot of interest in -- about how to better protect America. In other words, they're very interested in the recommendations that they're going to lay out. And I'm interested in those, as well.

And we discussed a lot of things, Terry, a lot of subjects. And it was a very cordial conversation. I was impressed by the questions and I think it helped them understand how I think and how I run the White House and how we deal with threats.

John.

Q Mr. President, as you know, a lot of critics suggested that you wanted to appear jointly with the Vice President so that you two could keep your stories straight, or something --

THE PRESIDENT: Yes --

Q -- can you tell us what you think of the value of appearing together and how you would answer those critics?



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THE PRESIDENT: Yes -- first of all, look, if we had something to hide we wouldn't have met with them in the first place. We answered all their questions. And as I say, I think I -- I came away good about the session, because I wanted them to know how I set strategy, how we run the White House, how we deal with threats. The Vice President answered a lot of their questions -- answered all their questions. And I think it was important for them to see our body language, as well, how we work together.

But it was -- you know, the commissioners will speak for themselves over time. They will let you know whether they thought it was a fruitful series of discussions. I think they did. I think they found it to be useful.

Yes.

Q Mr. President, don't you think that the families deserve to have a transcript, or to be able to see what you said?

THE PRESIDENT: Adam, you asked me that question yesterday.

Q I'm hoping for an answer today.

THE PRESIDENT: I've got the same answer.

Yes.

Q Mr. President, can you say with any confidence that there are no al Qaeda operatives active in the country today?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I can't say that.

Q Did the commission ask you about that?

THE PRESIDENT: No, they didn't. But I'm not going to get into any more details about what they asked me. I told you I wasn't going to get into details about what they asked me, and then I just fell into your trap.

But, no, let me talk about vulnerabilities, and then I've got to get back to work. We are still vulnerable to attack. And the reason why is, al Qaeda still exists, al Qaeda is dangerous, al Qaeda hates us. And we have to be correct a hundred percent of the time in defending America, and they've got to be right once. And therefore, we are vulnerable.

But people need to know, we're working -- we, the government, at all levels -- we're working long hours to protect America. We're doing the best we can. The best way to secure America, however, is to stay on the offensive and bring those people to justice before they harm America again. And that's what we're continuing to do. But, yes, so long as there's an al Qaeda enemy that is willing to kill, we are vulnerable.

Thank you all.

END 1:20 P.M. EDT

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