



STATEMENTS BY M. JACQUES CHIRAC, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, DURING HIS JOINT PRESS BRIEFING WITH MR GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AT THE END OF THEIR MEETING (EXCERPTS)

(Paris, 5 June 2004)

THE PRESIDENT Ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by extending today the warmest of welcomes to the President of the United States of America, who has come to Europe for the sixtieth anniversary celebration of the D-Day landings. Tomorrow, during the ceremonies taking place in Normandy in the presence of the veterans, and in particular the American veterans of Operation Overlord, I'll have the opportunity to express to America and the Americans our feelings of gratitude, today, when we think of the willing sacrifices they made, the blood they shed for the liberation of our country and, more generally, of Europe. I'll tell them that France says "thank you" to them and does not forget.

Since he was coming to Europe for these ceremonies, President Bush stopped off, as you know, in Italy, and today in Paris, which has allowed us to take stock on a number of problems ahead of the major summits which are going to take place in June, in particular the G8 Sea Island Summit in a few days' time and the NATO Summit in Istanbul at the end of the month.

We had discussions trusting and sincere ones, as you can imagine about all the problems facing today's world. I say "trusting and sincere" because I read comments from time to time which don't always reflect reality. France and the United States have shared a common history for two hundred years, and for two hundred years they have upheld and defended the same values, the values of democracy, peace and human rights. Consequently, dialogue is always easy between us on the issues where our responses are identical, and on the others of course. On most of the issues, we are working together very positively, and we talked about them, i.e. everything to do with peace and stability in the world.

We talked about our strong cooperation in the battle against terrorism. We've considerably stepped up our collaboration and cooperation in this area, especially in the last two years. The same applies to the battle against proliferation, on which we also have an identical approach and exemplary cooperation, as demonstrated inter alia by our cooperation on the PSI [Proliferation Security Initiative] programme and the passing of UNSCR 1540 on non-proliferation.

We also talked about the regional crises, particularly the peacekeeping operations in which American and French soldiers are working together. It's the case in Afghanistan where France is involved in Operation Enduring Freedom, as it is in Afghanistan with ISAF as you know, Eurocorps is going to take over its command, with a French general in Kabul. We also enjoy excellent



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cooperation in the Balkans, in both Bosnia and Kosovo. We cooperated to avoid the worst in Haiti. (...).

And today we also discussed our common worries about what's happening in Africa, the crises in Africa and, more particularly, the one we're seeing today in Kivu and the risks this entails for stability and peace in that part of the world, and our great concern about the future and stability of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As for Iraq, where everyone knows that our countries have had different approaches and solutions and didn't see things in the same way, today we share one conviction, which is that, things being what they are, there's no alternative to the restoration of peace and thus of security and development in Iraq, and that everything must be done to achieve that objective. Hence the discussions which have begun at UN Security Council level to come up with a resolution which, in Iraq's current situation, must signal the whole international community's determination to achieve an objective. And this objective is the return to full sovereignty of an Iraqi government which can restore hope to the Iraqi people.

We have absolutely the same policy on this and I think things are moving in the right direction, the discussions are taking place in the best of atmospheres. I hope we shall arrive in the next few days at a resolution which clearly addresses what, in our eyes, is the essential thing, i.e. the need to give the Iraqis the feeling that they have regained their sovereignty and control of their destiny. Since it seems to us that this is a prerequisite for any long-term solution of the problems confronting that country.

We also talked about the conflict in the Middle East and I expressed to the President our concern at the continuation of this conflict with all its potential to cause harm not only in the region, but beyond. We also discussed the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese dimensions of this problem. As regards Lebanon, we reiterated our firm belief that Lebanon had to be assured of her independence and sovereignty.

In a few days' time we shall be meeting again at the G8 Summit in Sea Island, to exchange ideas and talk about decisions to be taken, sign declarations on a number of problems to do with growth, development, jobs, security and the battles against terrorism and proliferation, and also about development in general and sustainable development in particular.

(...)

Q. (...) You said that now, you believed that the new Iraqi government was going to become fully sovereign. Do you have any objections with respect to the new UN resolution?

(...)



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THE PRESIDENT On the resolution, I repeat, I think that we have made very positive progress and should shortly be able to finalize the text. We still have to clarify properly the matter of the security arrangements establishing relations between the Iraqi government a government we want to be sovereign and with full powers and the multinational force. (...) Letters are being exchanged between the force and the Iraqi government and the main points of these must be included in the resolution. I hope that all this can be finalized, I repeat, very rapidly.

In my view, what's important isn't so much the technical arrangements. The important thing is to act in such a way that the Iraqi people really feel they have recovered their independence and control of their destiny. I believe that this is the only way to resolve the substantial problems in that country and gain control over the extremely powerful centrifugal forces within Iraq. This is why we are very mindful of the need to ensure that no negative signal throwing doubt on their sovereignty can be given to the Iraqis which could lead them to lose their confidence.

(...)

Q. Given that your government also thought there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq before the war, do you believe there was a failure on the part of intelligence services throughout the world?

(...)

THE PRESIDENT You said that, before the war, the French government had said that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; that isn't true. I've always said that I had no information leading me to think that there were or that there weren't. And that's the truth. We had no information on this point allowing me to decide the matter. This is why I've always said, particularly to President Bush, that I was incapable of giving an opinion on the existence or non-existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Q. Despite your opposition to the war, do you believe that Iraq is in a better situation today compared with the situation which existed before the war?

THE PRESIDENT There is at least one gain, which is that Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime is no longer there. That's the positive point. The negative point is that disorder reigns. So the problem today is to try and bank the positive element, i.e. pave the way for what could be a form of democracy and ensure that the violence abates. That's what needs to be done. But we'll have to wait for a bit before seeing that. We're not out of the woods, don't think we are. We're in a very precarious situation.

Q. To what extent do you think President Bush's comparison of the liberation of Europe from Nazism sixty years ago, which you are celebrating today, and the liberation of Iraq by the American forces a year ago is justified?



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THE PRESIDENT I perfectly understand what led President Bush to make this comparison (...). I believe that history doesn't repeat itself and that it's always extremely difficult to compare historical situations. Consequently, I believe that there's a situation (...) in Iraq, which we have to try to bring under control. This requires a lot of efforts, great determination and skill. We need to put our hearts into this and, perhaps, it will work. |