

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
AND TURKISH PRIME MINISTER BULENT ECEVIT
AT A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY
LOCATION: THE OVAL OFFICE, THE WHITE HOUSE,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
DATE: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2001

PRESIDENT BUSH: Okay. I'm going to have an opening statement welcoming our friend to the Oval Office. The prime minister is going to say a few remarks. Both of us have agreed to take some questions. I would like those traveling with the Turkish press to have a chance to ask some questions today as well. We'll both take two questions a piece.

Thank you for coming, Mr. Prime Minister. I'm proud to welcome you. As a friend, you have been steadfast in your support in the war against terror, and for that, my nation is very grateful. We appreciate your leadership when it comes to foreign policy, and we appreciate your leadership when it comes to economic policy. You and your administration have made some very tough decisions and the economy is improving as a result of your leadership. And we look forward to having a good discussion about how we can increase trade.

And today I'm informing the prime minister that we're lifting the travel ban on Turkey --

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Oh, that's wonderful.

PRESIDENT BUSH: -- so that our citizens can feel comfortable going to that wonderful country to visit and to enjoy the rich history of one of our valued allies and friends.

So welcome, Mr. Prime Minister. It's a delight to welcome you, and thank you for coming.

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Thank you very much for your kind invitation, Mr. President. It is a great honor for us. We deeply appreciate the support that you have extended, since you have taken over, to relations with Turkey. We had always good relations with the United States, and during your term in office, you have further enhanced this cooperation and friendship.

We have some very good -- concrete good news now, as you have referred to it, Mr. President. The State Department has today issued a statement expressing the will of the United States that we will be able to form an economic partnership --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Right.

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: -- in addition to our political partnership. We attach great importance to that.

Our cooperation with you against terrorism is a great service not only for our own people, but for the whole world.

The American determination to get rid of terrorism in the world is of great importance, of historic importance, and we are glad, we are very happy that we have the chance to cooperate with you to that effect. And Turkish and American cooperation, partnership now together with economic partnership will be beneficial for the peoples of both our countries.

We had very fruitful discussions during the brief period here. We still have other items on our agenda. And we shall go to New York also to visit the place of terrorism. Thank you very much for sharing this time, showing this kind of generosity and friendship to us.

PRESIDENT BUSH: You're welcome, sir.

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Hal, and then Tony.

Q Sir, what do both of you see are the chances of negotiating a settlement to the Cyprus feud?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I'll let the prime minister speak.

Of course, we're very encouraged that there is a dialogue now taking place. And I want to thank the prime minister and the foreign minister for encouraging that dialogue. You can't solve a problem unless the parties are willing to talk.

And Mr. Prime Minister, would you like to speak about the Cyprus situation?

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Yes. We attach great importance to our dialogue with you. With regards to Cyprus, it's good news that the leaders of the two communities are now having face-to-face dialogue. They may not attain concrete results immediately, but the very fact they're in the process of dialogue may lead to very satisfactory agreements between the two communities.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I appreciate that very much.

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Anybody from the Turkish press care to --

Q Yes, Mr. President. To make your Iraqi policies more efficient, in your efforts to make Iraqi policy more efficient --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Iraqi policy?

Q Yeah, your policy towards Iraq. What are your expectations from the Turkish government?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I'm going to have a discussion with the prime minister about Iraq. And my expectations most importantly are not from Turkey, are from Iraq. I expect Saddam Hussein to let inspectors back into the country. We want to know whether he's developing weapons of mass destruction. He claims he's not. Let the world in to see. And if he doesn't, we'll have to deal with that at the appropriate time.

My discussions with the prime minister are going to be not only regional in nature, but global in nature. And I will assure him that we will consult closely with Turkey on any decisions that I make. Turkey's an ally and a friend. And no decisions have been made beyond the first theater, and the first theater is in Afghanistan.

And I do appreciate very much the Turkish support for our efforts in Afghanistan.

Sonya.

Q On that question --

Q What if Saddam Hussein doesn't let the U.N. inspectors?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Excuse me. If he doesn't let them in? He'll find out.

Q On the question of Afghanistan, do you support the Turkish idea of leading the peace-keeping operation there? And if the United States essentially made the peace there, why not involve U.S. troops in keeping the peace?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, first of all, there's been a lot of international interest in providing troops to help keep the peace, and we welcome that support. As you know, the Brits have now taken the lead in the first round. There are some discussions as to whether or not Turkey will take the lead in the second round. And I appreciate their consideration of this very important -- important matter. I believe there's plenty of troops from other nations that are willing to help, and after all, I've made it clear that our troops will be used to fight and win a war. And that's exactly what they've done. We sent them over to fight a war, and we're winning the war.

And on the other hand, we're more than willing to help with the reconstruction efforts, make serious contributions to the interim government of Afghanistan so they can help rebuild themselves. We look forward to the conference in Tokyo. We'll have representatives there. And just today, Richard Armitage, our deputy secretary of State, met with the finance minister of the interim government of Afghanistan, and I've been told they had a very good discussion about how to get cash starting to move into the coffers.

But I think there's ample -- ample support from around the world to provide troops to help stabilize Afghanistan so the government can eventually take over its own defense.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Mr. President, are you going to channel more funds to support Turkey in its role in Afghanistan?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Channel more funds to support Turkey in its role in Afghanistan. You mean as -- if and when they provide troops? That's what you're talking about?

Q Yes.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, they haven't had the discussion yet. And one thing for certain is that we're providing a lot of funds now in the Afghan theater. After all, we're proudly leading the efforts to destroy the Taliban and root out the al Qaeda. As to reimbursements, that's a discussion we'll have at a later date. Turkey hasn't made up her mind yet as to whether or not she is going to lead the coalition forces. We're just in discussion phases. So I think the budgetary phase, the budgetary discussions should take place after a commitment has been made.

STAFF: Thank you all. Thank you all very much.

(Cross talk.)

Q Mr. President, do you have anything generous to say, sir, about Senator Kennedy's call for --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Oh, let me comment -- I appreciate that very much.

Q I thought you might want to. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, we -- Mr. Prime Minister, we put a significant tax relief package in place right at the right time. Our economy was beginning to slow down in March of 2001. Fortunately I was able to work with both Democrats and Republicans in our Congress to get a good tax relief package out. And when the economy slows down, it make sense to cut taxes, and that's exactly what's happened.

And those who want to revoke the tax cut, basically raise taxes, are those who just don't share my view. I think raising taxes in the midst of a recession is wrong economic policy. It would be a huge mistake. It's bad for American workers. It will hurt when it comes to creating jobs.

And so I strongly disagree with those who want to raise taxes here in Washington, D.C. I'm confident that the American people agree with me as well. And if members of the House and the Senate listen to their constituents and listen to those who want to find work, they will understand the wisdom of our ways.

Thank you.

STAFF: Thank you, everybody.

Q Had any more pretzels?

Q How's it feel?

STAFF: Thank you all.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you all for coming.

Sonya, I knew you'd get a question in. I was proud to be a party to it.

Q Thank you, sir.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Nobody asked any questions about -- (off mike)

Q That's yesterday's news.

PRESIDENT BUSH: It doesn't look --

Q It looks fine.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Let me tell you, all the editors have brightened up the cut, and everything like that, to make it look worse than was. (Laughter.)

Q Barney's outside. We'll ask him.

PRESIDENT BUSH: (Chuckles) Ask Barney! That's right!

END

PRESS STAKEOUT
WITH TURKISH PRIME MINISTER BULENT ECEVIT
FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BUSH
LOCATION: THE WHITE HOUSE DRIVEWAY, THE WHITE HOUSE,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
TIME: 4:07 P.M. EST
DATE: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2002

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: We had a very interesting talk with the president. It has been a very friendly meeting. We deeply appreciate the invitation that he has kindly extended to us. We have discussed all matters that -- in which we have an interest jointly with the United States.

We know that -- we have learned from the declaration issued today that the United States has decided to enhance economic relations, trade relations, with Turkey, and to upgrade our partnership to the level of economic partnership also, not only political, but economic also. This is very important for us.

And we have just got the news that -- from the president that the ban on tourism to Turkey is to be lifted. So we will be very happy to see a great number of tourists from the United States. So too government-to-government relations, people-to-people relations also will increase between Turkey and the United States.

We are very happy with the results of the discussions that we have all held. The discussions will still continue yesterday (sic) and day after. It has been a very good meeting.

Thank you.

Q Mr. Prime Minister, on the question of Iraq, do you find the American administration listening to your advice on Iraq?

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Well, Mr. President -- the president has said, as well as his colleagues, that if and when the United States wants to take certain measures against Iraq, they will consult with us.

Q Mr. Prime Minister, did you discuss the Aegean issue with President Bush?

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: I have expressed the hope to the president that it may be possible to reach a compromise between Turkey and Greece on the Aegean this -- that is both -- that is in interest of both countries in solving the problem of the Aegean, and I'm sure that it can be solved.

Thank you.

Q Was Cyprus one of the issues brought to the --

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Well, just mentioned.

Q How about the military debts? Are they going to erase them or reschedule them?

PRIME MIN. ECEVIT: Well, as it is stated in the declaration of the State Department today, there will -- a very high level of comity will be established, headed by Mr. Larson at the American side, to take up all the economic issues between the two countries in an effective way.

Thank you.

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