



Press Briefing to the Pool By Ari Fleischer

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Andrews Air Force Base

5:30 P.M. EDT

MR. FLEISCHER: The President will address the nation tonight, upon his return to the White House. He met this afternoon for one hour and five minutes with his national security team via live tele-conference from Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska.

Among the things the President said were, "We will find these people and they will suffer the consequence of taking on this nation. We will do what it takes," and he continued, "No one is going to diminish the spirit of this country."

The President has also heard today from countless world leaders either who are calling to -- back to Washington or have sent him directly communiques. He's heard from Britain, France, Germany, Russia -- a host of nations, all of whom have expressed their outrage at this attack, and who have assured the American people that the international community stands with America.

That's what I've got.

Q The message tonight, do you know how soon after he gets back to the White House he'll be able to do that?

MR. FLEISCHER: Can't indicate yet.

Q And when he does, the message is to the American people, as he said earlier, and to foreign countries ?

MR. FLEISCHER: It will be a message of resolve and reassurance. It will be a reassuring message that our nation has been tested before, our nation has always prevailed.

Q Does the President have any information about the source of the violence and the mastermind behind it?

MR. FLEISCHER: I'm not going to discuss any of the intelligence information that's been provided to the President.

Q Can you give us some idea of why the stops that we made today were made? I understand the nature of the tragedy that we're dealing with, but why these particular locations?

MR. FLEISCHER: For security purposes that involve the President.

Q I mean, was this more like a roll of the dice as in, which Air Force bases will we end up at? Or is this more wanting ?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, of course, nobody would ever know what Air Force base we would end up at. That's routine procedure. There are a series of plan that you always hope remain on the shelf that, unfortunately, today had to be implemented.

And so, as a matter of security, the President traveled in the manner that he did and that also allowed the national security community to assess the ongoing nature of a threat. Obviously, the President is now returning to Washington.

Q Why is he returning now? Who makes the decision that it is safe for his return now?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, ultimately, it's the President. Information is provided to the President about any type of threat, and the President makes the final determination. The President wanted to get back to Washington. He understood that there can be a period of caution so that the security people can make a full and proper assessment about any threats.

They were afforded that opportunity. The President traveled to a secure location while they took that opportunity. And now, obviously, the President is returning home safely.

Q There was some confusion earlier about whether the Vice President was at the White House the entire time, or whether he was evacuated and ultimately returned to the White House.

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, my information is he was at the White House the whole time. You'd have to check with his office

about what time he arrived at the White House. But from the beginning, when the President spoke to him this morning, he was at the White House, that's where the President reached him.

Q A number of domestic groups have called off, you know, scheduling a number of activities -- baseball, Emmy awards. How does the President now view the next few days for his concentration? He will have to deal with this pretty exhaustively over the rest of the week.

MR. FLEISCHER: The President thinks it's important for America to return to their lives. As he indicated, this is a test of America's resolve and that no one will diminish America's spirit; and America's spirit includes a return to normal lifestyles.

Q As for his schedule for the rest of the week, he will now focus on this primarily?

MR. FLEISCHER: Of course, this will be his top priority now.

Q What are his plans for -- in terms of, is he going to stay in the White House? Is he going to be moved to a different location from there?

MR. FLEISCHER: We'll, of course, advise you of any presidential travel, as always. But the President is returning to the Oval Office and he will go to work.

Q He will what? I'm sorry.

MR. FLEISCHER: The President is returning to the White House to go to work.

Q And you'll let us know details of the speech?

MR. FLEISCHER: Yes.

Q Have the networks been informed ?

MR. JOHNDROE: No.

Q Now, at this teleconference meeting with these -- his national security team, was he projected on a wide-screen TV or did someone videotape him? Was he alone? Can we get some more details on him?

MR. FLEISCHER: People could see each other, that's how these tele-conferences work.

Q Did he sit in a room before a single, solitary camera? Was he in that room alone or was he with his aides and advisors?

MR. FLEISCHER: No, there were other people in the room with him. And he was visible. And he could see the people who were talking to him from the White House.

Q They were ?

MR. FLEISCHER: It was two-way.

Q -- imposed on a video screen for him, at his location?

MR. FLEISCHER: It was two-way.

Q Thank you.

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