



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
June 29, 2005

## Interview of the President by Danish Broadcasting Corporation

The Map Room

June 29, 2005

1:45 P.M. EDT

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Let me initially thank you for this opportunity. It is actually the first time an American President in office has been interviewed like this on Danish television.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, thanks. Glad to do it. Thank you.

Q And there is obviously an abundance of subjects that would be of great interest to talk about, but since we only have limited time, I would like to start rather bluntly, if I may. There are many people in Europe and in Denmark who feels that America, under your leadership, has become an often arrogant superpower. And the "either you're with us or against us" attitude has created a more violent and dangerous world. What do you say to those people?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I can understand why some people didn't agree with or support my decision to, for example, take the Taliban out in Afghanistan, or take the action I took in Iraq. Those are hard decisions. And I can understand why some said, well, gosh, we don't understand why he did that, nor do we agree with it.

On the other hand, people have got to understand my mentality, and it changed after September the 11th. For some in Europe, September the 11th was just a moment, a sad moment. For me, it changed how I looked at the world and changed how many Americans looked at the world because we were attacked. And we believe we're at war with a group of hateful men who profess an ideology that is the opposite of ours.

And -- but having said that, in defense of my policies, I did go to the United Nations, not only for Afghanistan, but for Iraq. And we did work with allies and we did ask people's opinion. And we put a coalition together, of which your great country joined. And I'm thankful for your Prime Minister's tough decision. He's a good man, and he's a friend.

It's -- I understand we have an obligation as an influential nation to reach out to others. And I believe I've done so as the President. And we also have an obligation as an influential nation to help others. And I'm going to the G8 here -- I'm going to Denmark first, then the G8, and I'm proud to talk about the record we've got when it comes to HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa, or feeding the hungry. But -- and I've got a -- I look forward to going to Denmark and explaining what's in our heart and our intentions and our desires, and our friendship with the Danish people.

Q But I do also sense that there are some who feel that the moral leadership of the United States has been somehow compromised by the fact that the world was led to the war in Iraq believing that there was weapons of mass destruction. It now seems like there wasn't. And I know that there were other nations, there was the U.N., who also believed there were weapons of mass destruction. But you said it again and again; people in your administration said it again and again.

THE PRESIDENT: Right.

Q How do you feel about that today?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm obviously disappointed. I thought there were -- I thought we'd find weapons of mass destruction, as did the world. In other words, it wasn't just our intelligence, nor was it just my administration. My predecessor, President Clinton, felt the same way, based upon what everybody thought was solid intelligence. That's why I -- here I put together a group of distinguished citizens from both political parties to analyze what went wrong on the intelligence. As a matter of fact -- announced today that we were implementing some serious reforms of our intelligence-gathering.

On the other hand, I believe we made the right decision because Saddam Hussein was not only a tyrant, but he was a threat to world peace. He had the capacity to make weapons of mass destruction. Even though we hadn't found the weapons themselves, we certainly know he made the capacity.

And people who went and analyzed the situation came back and said, look, he was a dangerous person -- even though no weapons were found, the ability to make weapons, and his intent and his relationship with terrorists. So I --

Q But do you understand that there are people who say, can we believe it the next time a grave danger is emerging?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I can. Sure. Absolutely. And I, myself, want to make sure that the intelligence that we share with our friends and allies is -- or the intelligence we get from our allies -- is good, solid intelligence. Absolutely. I've got to make decisions based upon good information.

And people of Denmark got to understand, listen, committing troops ought to be -- is the last option for me. It's the hardest thing a President does. And I don't like to commit troops. Yesterday, I gave a speech to the nation about a way forward in Iraq. I'm confident Iraq is going to be a free and democratic nation. Before I did so, I met with 38 families, all of whom had a loved one die in Iraq and Afghanistan. And it's hard to do that. It's hard to know that my decision put these kids in harm's way and they didn't come back to the arms of their loved ones. And you just got to know, it is -- it is the last thing I want to do. The last decision I want to make is to put our young folks into harm's way.

And it's -- I had to tell every one of them two things. One, I thanked them for their sacrifice, but also reminded them that we're laying the

foundations for peace. And I truly believe we are. I would not put those kids out there if I didn't believe there's a better world ahead.

Q Now, you have, as President, been dealing seriously and intensively with Europe for the last four-and-a-half years. And if I may ask you a little unconventional question: What do you think is the most annoying aspect of the way that we Europeans look at the world?

THE PRESIDENT: You know, that's a very tough question because if I answer it, obviously I admit there's something annoying about Europeans, which I don't want to admit, I don't want to say that. Listen, I think --

Q But we do look at the world very differently, don't we?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, for example, Kyoto. Let me bring up a very controversial subject. A lot of the leaders in Europe and a lot of people in Europe believe that all -- get the United States to sign Kyoto and everything would be fine with the environment.

Well, first of all, Kyoto would have wrecked our economy. And I couldn't, in good faith, sign Kyoto. And nor -- 99 senators, U.S. senators from both parties, said, don't sign Kyoto, we're not for Kyoto. It became a point of contention that I didn't think was healthy or necessary, and yet, it became a -- it became a -- kind of a signpost of whether or not the United States was willing to participate with other nations.

By the way, Kyoto didn't include China and India, for starters, who happen to be big polluters, as well. And so I'm going to go to the G8, by the way, and I'll talk to Anders about this when I see him, about my plans to share a lot of the research and development we're doing. I mean, we're spending \$20 billion to better understand the science, and better -- and more likely to develop technologies that will enable this country to diversify away from fossil fuels.

See, we got to diversify away from fossil fuels. We're hooked on oil from the Middle East which is a national security problem and an economic security problem, and at the same time, burning fossil fuels is a part of the cause of greenhouse gases.

Q Let me change subjects completely if I may. The cultural war, as it often described here in America, is something that we in Denmark look upon with some interest and some also maybe lack of understanding -- gay marriage, abortion, and so forth.

THE PRESIDENT: Sure.

Q Why have these subjects become such a focus in America today?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think abortion -- I know abortion has been a focus for quite a period of time. And there is a genuine philosophical debate, a debate amongst good people -- good, decent, honorable, patriotic Americans who have a difference of opinion. I happen to be one who believes that we ought to guard life; life is precious in all forms, all stages. And that then leads into political debates, that philosophy, that belief leads into political debates on issues like whether or not a parent should be notified prior to a daughter's abortion, for example. That's how it has manifested -- different laws, for example. Occasionally -- somebody proposed a law, for example, if you murder a pregnant woman, should the person be charged with murder once or twice? I happen to believe the person ought to be charged twice, first the mother and second the -- the child. And that, of course, sparks debate. And that's why you're seeing debates on this issue.

Gay marriage is another issue --

Q Can I just, if I may, your personal -- do you think abortion should be illegal?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I've always believed that there -- we ought to -- abortion ought to be illegal with the exception of rape, incest, or life of the mother. But, look, I'm a realist, as well. I mean, this is an issue that has polarized the American political society. And in order to get good policy in place that protects the life of a child, we're going to have to change hearts. And it's -- so I've been promoting what I call a culture of life, at every aspect of the debate remind people that life is precious. And -- but I can see why people take an interest in the debates here. It's -- it's -- I happen to believe a society based upon respect for life is an important society -- is a whole society, I guess is a better way to put it.

Q When I told my 11-year-old daughter the other day that I was going to interview you, she asked me what does a President really do. And I told her, maybe a little simplistically, that he rules the world. (Laughter.) And she then asked me, what does a man with so much power think about before he falls asleep?

THE PRESIDENT: That's great.

Q So if I may be a little personal here, Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Sure.

Q -- I would like to convey her question to you, and what do you think about when you have time alone?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, fascinating question. Sometimes the 11-year-olds ask better questions than us -- than we adults. First, if I -- if she asked me what do I do, I would -- I would say, I make a lot of decisions. It's a decision-making job, which means I better listen to good people. And I think when the people take a look at my government, they'll say, gosh, that old George W. is surrounding himself with some great people. And I have. And I give them a chance to tell me what's on their mind. I listen carefully, and then I make up my mind, and they say, yes, sir, Mr. President.

You've got to tell your daughter that, one, I sleep well at night. I subscribe that -- this may be controversial for some -- I subscribe it to the fact that I've got peace of mind. And I attribute that to my faith, and to this amazing fact about America: Millions of people -- no matter what their political affiliation may be or their background -- pray for me and Laura. And for that, I am incredibly grateful.

I'm an exerciser. I love to exercise. Your Prime Minister has challenged me to many a run and bike ride. I'm -- I can only -- I can't run with him because my knees hurt. And I probably won't be able to bike with him because he's a great athlete, but nevertheless, I exercise a lot. And that helps take the stress off.

I read a lot. And so when I -- tell your daughter, right before I go to bed, after I do my homework, I'm an avid reader. I like to read history. I just finished a book about George Washington. And so I get my mind off my work, and get my -- I get -- if I've got troubles, I get my -- get the troubles off my mind by reading a lot. And then I -- I'm kind of getting to be an old guy so I fall asleep about 9:30 p.m., much to the chagrin of Laura Bush. Up at 5:15 a.m., I get to work about 6:45 a.m.

Q Thank you, sir. Just this very last question.

THE PRESIDENT: Please.

Q What are you looking forward mostly to your visit to Denmark?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm looking forward to seeing your Prime Minister, who I like. He's a good guy. I'm looking forward to seeing Her Majesty. I have never been to Denmark; I'm looking forward to seeing the beauty of the country. I don't get out much when I travel, I must confess. I won't be your average American tourist being able to move around freely. I wish I could. But the job doesn't afford me to do that, nor -- you know, it would be unfair to the people of Denmark if I tried to move around too much because the security would be quite inconvenient to them. But I really am looking forward to having a good discussion, talking about our common interests, talking about a way forward to help promote democracy and peace. And I'm looking forward to a good night's sleep on the soil of a friend.

Q Thank you very much, sir, for your time. And I hope you have a pleasant and enjoyable visit to Denmark.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, sir, appreciate it.

Q Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Good job.

Q Thank you.

END 1:58 P.M. EDT

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