

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2022/47/242
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

47/15/5

EMBASSY OF IRELAND, WASHINGTON
FAX COVER SHEET

Tel: 202-4623939 Fax: 202-2325993 E-Mail: adrianirl@aol.com

Date: 18 February, 2000 Pages: 16

To: Political Division

For: Mr Declan Kelleher From: Adrian O'Neill

c/c: Ms O'Flaherty (Anglo-Irish)

Re: Interview with Governor George W. Bush

The influential ***Newshour with Jim Lehrer*** did a major TV interview with Governor George W. Bush. It focused in large part on foreign policy issues, including Northern Ireland (page 4/5), the Middle East, Russia, Chechnya, the ABM treaty, China in the WTO and Austria.

Attached is a transcript which you may wish to circulate to the appropriate colleagues.

END

cc Secretary Gallagher
Asst Secretary, Belfast
Ambassador Enders
Counsellor A.I.
Mr O'Fearail —

21/2 —

©DFA/2022/47/242

Online NewsHour
a NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript
ONLINE FOCUS

NEWSMAKER: GEORGE W. BUSH

February 16, 2000



Jim Lehrer spoke with Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush, who's campaigning in South Carolina, earlier today.

Click here to listen to this segment in RealAudio

NewsHour Links

Online NewsHour coverage of Election 2000

Online NewsHour coverage of South Carolina politics

Feb. 15, 2000 Journalists handicap the GOP primary in South Carolina

Feb. 11, 2000 Campaign snapshots of George W. Bush and John McCain

Feb. 9, 2000 What's a conservative?

Dec. 10, 1999 George W. Bush and John McCain in New Hampshire

Nov. 11, 1999 George W. Bush on the campaign trail.

Oct. 28, 1999 The controversy over the George W. Bush

JIM LEHRER: Governor, welcome.

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Thanks, Jim. I appreciate you very much.

On the campaign trail, defending his record

JIM LEHRER: How do you feel about last night's debate?



I believe it's very important for me to defend my record and to lay out my agenda. And that's what I've been doing here in South Carolina.

GEORGE W. BUSH
Texas Governor, Presidential Candidate

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: I thought I did fine. My job was to let the people know that I could lead, that I could hold my ground, that I've got -- I am able to articulate different issues, and I felt I did a pretty good job. More importantly, the people who were for me in South Carolina seemed to be unusually energized today. A lot of people have been coming up in a rally saying, 'Well, you did a great job last night, George W.'

JIM LEHRER: OK. You know, the press coverage this morning emphasized the anger and dislike between you and Senator McCain. They used phrases like "assailed each other," "bitterly revealed the depth of their mutual anger," "frequently emotional, at times downright angry." Do those accurately describe what you think happened last night?



GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: I don't think so, Jim, at all, I really don't. I felt no personal animosity whatsoever. Nor do I feel bitter toward John McCain. I understand

©DFA/2022/47/242

biography

Aug. 6, 1999
Is the media too focused on George W. Bush?

June 14, 1999
A look at the beginning of the George W. Bush campaign

Browse the NewsHour's coverage of politics and ampaigns

Outside Links

George W. Bush

[redacted] McCain. I understand politics, and I understand sometimes campaigns get carried away. And so, while I express indignation about being compared to Bill Clinton, as far as my trustworthiness goes, I don't harbor any personal bitterness, and last night I didn't feel bitter in the least. As a matter of fact, had I felt bitter, I am confident that a lot of people would have said 'You didn't do a good job.' I mean, no one wants a bitter person running for president. And on the set and on the stage, I didn't feel any real animosity. I felt like I needed to defend myself at times and hold my ground, but, you know, there were some sharp exchanges; but I didn't feel anything personal.

JIM LEHRER: The *New York Times* in an editorial this morning said that this has become "a junkyard campaign of smears and attacks." Is that true?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Oh, I don't think so. I stand by my ads that I put on TV, and I don't think it's a junkyard attack. I don't know where they've come up with that, but I just don't believe that's the case. I believe it's very important for me to defend my record and to lay out my agenda. And that's what I've been doing here in South Carolina.

Defining national strategic interests

JIM LEHRER: All right. Let's go through some follow-ups from some of the points that you made last night, Governor. On the important issue all the surveys show this to be underlined -- most voters -- the most important issue nationally is how to use our power in this new post-Cold War world. You said you would deploy U.S. troops only when our national strategic interests are at stake. How are you going to go about deciding when they are?

At some point in time the president has got to clearly define what the national strategic interests are, and while Africa may be important, it doesn't fit into the national strategic interests, as far as I can see them.
GEORGE W. BUSH
Texas Governor, Presidential Candidate



GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Well, obviously you're going to have to take each circumstance as they arise, Jim, but first and foremost, I define the theaters of national strategic interest. It's in our national strategic interest that we have a peaceful and prosperous Europe. It's in our national strategic interest that the Far East be peaceful and prosperous. There's two areas right there where,

©DFA/2022/47/242

for example, I mean, I can give you an example -- I supported the president's actions in Kosovo -- late as they may be -- and haphazard as they were in terms of how we were going to commit troops because I was worried it would affect NATO, and a strong and healthy NATO is very important to keeping the peace in Europe.

I will -- I will help Taiwan defend itself if the Chinese reach the one China policy. In our own hemisphere last night I talked about the need to keep the Panama Canal treaty open - I mean, to keep the Panama Canal open after we've turned over the canal as a result of the treaty. In other words, there will be circumstances that will obviously -- if merited -- dictate the use of troops, so long as we commit troops to win and there's an exit strategy.

JIM LEHRER: Yeah. What about -- let's go through some of the more recent ones, other than Kosovo. Somalia, was that the right thing to do?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Well, obviously it's an issue of -- that my dad was involved when clearly -- when the mission evolved from one of humanitarian help to one of, you know, of politics, the mission lost its bearings. I don't know if I would have done the same thing if I were President Bush or not under those circumstances.

JIM LEHRER: But does Africa fit in to your definition of strategic interests?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: No. It fits into my definition of economic interest, and that's why I try to promote free trade. But last night, when we were talking about troops in Rwanda, I would not have committed troops in Rwanda under the circumstances as I know them.

JIM LEHRER: Why not?



GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Well, because it's not -- at some point in time the president has got to clearly define what the national strategic interests are, and while Africa may be important, it doesn't fit into the

©DFA/2022/47/242

national strategic interests, as far as I can see them. Now, that doesn't mean that we couldn't have rallied folks such as the United Nations to go help keep warring parties apart in Rwanda, but at some point in time the president has got to clearly define what is in our interests.

JIM LEHRER: So you would disagree with what Senator McCain said last night, that there are -- there are some times, in addition to strategic interests -- human rights or U.S. values' interests -- for introducing U.S. troops?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Well, I would never say 'never,' but I am going to be very hesitant to deploy troops outside those areas that I've defined as our national strategic interests.

Keeping the peace abroad

JIM LEHRER: Now, in areas that involve our power diplomatically, rather than sending troops, is it proper for the U.S., for instance, to play a role in brokering the peace in Northern Ireland as it is trying to do now?



GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Yes, it is very important, I think, Jim, that the United States use our power and prestige, our standing in the world to bring parties together, whether it be in Northern Ireland, as the president was trying to do. They've had some success it looked like, and then it fell apart. And, hopefully, they'll be able to get the talks back together again -- or in the Middle East -- but the danger is, is that any president allow -- you know -- public opinion in the United States to drive or standing in the public opinion polls to drive the U.S. to dictate terms of peace. And it's very important that we serve as an honest broker. And I intend to do so.

It's important for us to work with our allies to keep in check weapons of mass destruction and to say to those perpetrators of potential terror 'We're not going to countenance it -- we're going to do what's necessary to maintain the peace.'

GEORGE W. BUSH
Texas Governor,
Presidential
Candidate

JIM LEHRER: Are you suggesting that we're not doing that in Northern Ireland, or we are?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: No, I'm not suggesting that at all. I'm just making it clear to people that the difference between being a true mediator and a country that tries to decide what the proper terms of peace

©DFA/2022/47/242

ought to be -- because if you try to do that, the peace will not be a lasting peace. If you dictate the terms, if we were to use our power to dictate the terms, let's say in the Middle East, and it was unsatisfactory for either party negotiating a peace treaty, that peace treaty will ultimately come apart.

JIM LEHRER: All recent administrations, including you father's, spent a lot of energy and a lot of worry on the Middle East trying to negotiate peace over there. Why is it so important?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: One, it's in our national strategic interest that there be peace in the Middle East; secondly, we have made a strong commitment to Israel to help Israel defend herself. Thirdly, obviously, we have economic interests in the region.



And, fourthly, what's very important in that region today is -- in the post-Cold War era, the region tends to be a place where weapons of mass destruction or the proliferation of terrorist activities seem to be emanating from, and it's important for us to recognize that. And it's important for us to work with our allies to keep in check weapons of mass destruction and to say to those perpetuators of potential terror 'We're not going to countenance it -- we're going to do what's necessary to maintain the peace.'

JIM LEHRER: Well, let's say there's a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. Would you accept or support the idea of deploying U.S. troops to maintain that peace in the Golan Heights, as some people have suggested?

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH: Jim, I need to know the terms -- you know, I don't want to say anything that could be used to possibly undermine the peace talks going on -- I'd want to know the terms that -- obviously I would hope that we'd be able to achieve an agreement without the use of troops. And it's like the same issue of aid to Syria -- would you support aid to Syria. It would be awfully difficult to do so if Syria continued to harbor terrorism in that part of the world.

©DFA/2022/47/242