

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 29, 2000

PRESS BRIEFING BY
JAKE SIEWERT

The James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:12 P.M. EST

MR. SIEWERT: Welcome to the last briefing of what Mark Knoller assures me is the millennium. (Laughter.) The next millennium begins on Monday. Unfortunately, the news of the day -- I don't have any news for you, although I can assure you that the President and First Lady are in the final stages of negotiations over the purchase of a Washington residence. As you know, in New York, their home in Chappaqua will continue to serve as their principal residence. And we'll let you know -- I think we hope to have something by the end of the day and we'll let you know when that's coming out. We'll probably put a piece of --

Q Do they have to borrow money for that, or do they have the cash?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't want to get into a lot of the details, but I expect that they'll put together a mortgage. But we'll get to the details later on that. And as we did when they bought the house in Chappaqua, we'll put a piece of paper out which explains the basic parameters.

Q And White Haven is the address?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I haven't seen the place, but I understand that it's in that neighborhood. But we'll let you know. We'll give you a piece of paper at the end of the day that outlines --

Q Why do they need six bedrooms?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know much about the property.

Q With seven baths and a half-bath. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: Well, you seem to know a lot more about this home than I do.

Q He got used to the White House I guess. (Laughter.)

Q Are they planning to have more children?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm familiar with the geography there. I think it's pretty close to the Naval Observatory. But we'll let you know at the end of the day.

Q What's the state of play on the Middle East?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, we are awaiting a reply from the region. Obviously, the President had a chance to talk to you a little about where he thinks things are, and I don't have much new on that today. We obviously think this is -- as the President said yesterday, this is the best chance that both parties have had for a long time now to resolve what are age-old conflicts in the region. And the President has urged both parties to seize the opportunity. We have heard back from the Israelis and we're awaiting a return -- a reply from the Palestinians.

Q Is he going to hold up this trip to Camp David because of waiting for a response or will he just continue to work on that?

MR. SIEWERT: No. I think he may go to Camp David as early as today. I know that we've been back and forth on that a little bit today, but I think that just has to do with his own personal schedule. He has the day off, essentially, and he'll be taping the radio address, doing one or two meetings. But he essentially has the day off and he can leave for Camp David when he and the First Family decide.

Q Is he going to ring in the New Year at Camp David with family?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, they've got some family and friends there. We'll provide you with more information as we get it. But he obviously plans to spend the New Year there. It's their last chance to spend the New Year at Camp David, so he's going to take advantage of it.

Q The window for signing the International Crime Court Treaty is coming up fast. Has he made a decision?

MR. SIEWERT: Sunday, I believe. No, he has not made a decision, but we'll let you know when he does. Obviously the President said yesterday that's something he's been considering and he will probably take the chance over the next day or so to confer with some of his advisors and reach a final decision, I believe by Sunday.

Q So you'll just put out a paper on that?

MR. SIEWERT: We'll probably end up putting out a piece of paper -- unless you want a briefing on Sunday. No, apparently. Okay.

Q Jake, what was the thinking behind declaring a state of emergency in Arkansas and Oklahoma, and not declaring it a disaster area? And do you expect that declaration to come sometime over the weekend?

MR. SIEWERT: Those are governed by an assessment of what the situation is on the ground. The President receives a request from the governors. They then conduct a review through FEMA, and that was their recommendation at this stage. If there's more work done on that, we'll let you know. But that was their assessment of what the situation on the ground warranted at the moment. If there's anything new on that, I'll let you know. But FEMA generally makes the request, and then we act upon that request when we get it.

Q Can you outline the essential difference between a state of emergency and a disaster declaration?

MR. SIEWERT: Not right now, no. But I'll do my best to find out exactly what -- we rely essentially on James Lee Witt and his team

there, a very professional team, to make an assessment of what the situation requires. Obviously, as you know, one simply requires a greater severity of injury.

Q What are the President's New Year's resolutions?

MR. SIEWERT: He hasn't shared them with me, to the extent he has any. I think he told you yesterday he's looking forward to earning a living and providing for his family. So I assume that's one of them.

Q He's collecting a paycheck.

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, that's true. As he says, he's collecting a paycheck. And we're working every day, busier than most of us expected.

I had one piece -- before I got off track here I wanted to let you know that we are sending -- the President got a question yesterday about his report on Japanese whaling, and he is sending that report to Congress today. We have already taken some action on this issue. We've restricted future access to fishing rights, to the Japanese fishing rights in the United States fishing waters. And as part of the report today he's going to recommend that we continue to investigate and keep under review Japanese practices here.

This is -- the President has made clear that we and most of the international community strongly oppose Japan's continued whaling, and we're going to continue to work with those people who oppose it to stop this practice. We have -- as part of the report, we're going to continue active review and can recommend trade sanctions and measures at any time, going forward, and particularly going to investigate whale manufacturers -- manufacture of whaling equipment in Japan as candidates for additional measures.

We have already cancelled U.S. participation in two environmental meetings that were scheduled to take place in Japan, and we've organized a coalition within the International Whaling Commission to move the next meeting of that commission out of Japan. They had been trying to host that meeting -- we've eliminated future access of Japanese to fishing permits in U.S. waters.

So that report will go up today and we'll have a piece of paper out on that. But the President had said yesterday that he was going to take further action on that and this is what we're doing at this moment.

Q Jake, on the announcement on cancelling the ethics pledges yesterday -- the statement that was put out by Ms. Nolan explained why the change was being made, but it wasn't clear to me why it was made retroactive, why did the President feel -- what did he feel was the policy argument for releasing people who had perhaps left government two years ago from pledges they agreed to when they came in?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think the general impetus for that policy was to ensure that people who left the Clinton administration did not have undue influence with their former colleagues in the Clinton administration, or in a future Democratic administration.

That tends to be the kind of situation where someone leaves and they can then contact their former employees or their former bosses, where you could have a potential conflict of interest, which is why we put the ban in place. Given that the next administration is liable to

be -- every day we learn liable to be full of more and more Republicans, with whom I think most Democratic and Clinton appointees have very little personal contact with, close personal relationship with, I think the President felt that there isn't much of a question about whether former Clinton appointees would have undue influence with the members of a Bush administration, whether they left yesterday or whether they left today.

So we had consulted with the Vice President's staff and he was willing and wanted to leave that pledge in place, given that that situation could have led to some of the conflicts of interest. But we felt that Clinton appointees are not liable to have any special relationship or any special influence over the appointees in a Bush White House or a Bush administration.

Q What harm was the ban doing -- if indeed the prospects for Clinton administration people going on to be lobbyists is so bleak, what harm did abiding by the pledge do?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think that there was a lot of criticism from groups in Washington, nonpartisan groups and partisan groups, but group think tanks in the area on both sides of the aisle that this was overbroad, literally prevented former Clinton administration officials from calling up and asking the very simplest of questions, and that rather than try to narrow it in a way that might -- narrow the scope of it, we just let the next administration decide what additional ethics requirements it wants to impose on its employees beyond those already required by law.

The law already requires a one-year ban on contact. We had lengthened that, but also broadened it in a number of ways that many people felt was unworkable and overbroad. So the Bush administration can make its own decisions about whether to take measures that go beyond those that are required by law.

Q Jake, does the President plan to sign any more executive orders, or sign any more pardons before the New Year or before he returns to Camp David?

MR. SIEWERT: I wouldn't expect any more pardons before the New Year. On executive orders, nothing major coming up. There may be some paper coming through here between now and the end of the day, but I don't think anything that --

Q But before he leaves office, there will be many?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know about many, but there are certainly a number of issues that we're continuing to work on. There is going to be some action --

Q How about ANWR?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't have anything to announce on that. There have been some monument designations that are recommended by Secretary Babbitt to the President, so we're reviewing those now. I'm not aware that a recommendation has come over on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Q And do you have anything -- has the President tried to call Putin or anything in connection with the Russian-Iranian deal, possible arms?

MR. SIEWERT: He talked to President Putin yesterday -- two days ago, but I don't believe that that came up. I don't believe that that came up. Obviously, that's --

Q Did that take us by surprise?

MR. SIEWERT: I think it's something that we've been discussing with them. As you know, there are expert-level talks on conventional sales, so I know that there's been some ongoing discussions with the Russians about proliferation issues. But I'll see if we have more for you on that. But I don't think it came up in their discussions yesterday. They primarily focused on the Middle East and on some of -- the situation in the Caucasus.

Q Has he made any more calls in the last day about the Middle East?

MR. SIEWERT: No, not since yesterday. But we'll let you know if he makes any today.

Q Yesterday he made calls?

MR. SIEWERT: Wednesday. Yes, the calls to Putin, Abdullah, and King Fahd. And he did talk to Schroeder yesterday briefly and they had a short discussion of it. But that was a more broad-ranging discussion.

Q Has he put a deadline, per se?

MR. SIEWERT: We obviously think that -- the President said yesterday very clearly that there's a window of opportunity now for both parties to discuss what next steps we can take, and the President laid out the parameters of what he thinks would be a good discussion. But we're waiting to hear back from them. We think -- the President said yesterday, there's an obviously window of opportunity here and he hopes that both sides will seize it.

Q After the Prime Minister's of India cease-fire announcement there are still attacks by the militants, and some of those militants are now going to Pakistan to consult the militants in Pakistan whether they should honor the cease-fire by the Prime Minister -- Is the President in touch now with either party?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't believe that he, personally, has been in touch with either party. But I now we've urged both sides to show restraint in that area, and we've praised the government of India for its move on a cease-fire during this holiday period. So we've urged both sides to honor that and we think that could be a constructive way of moving forward and renewing dialogue in the region about how to lessen tension there.

Q In another report in India Globe And Asia Today, if you can have any comments that next year President will be a film star in Hollywood or -- either he will start a TV show, weekly TV show.

Q You Bet Your Life. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: Really. I have no independent knowledge of that, other than what I read on the Internet. (Laughter.) But, no, I don't think the President has made clear what his plans are beyond

January 20th. But when he has an idea of what he's doing, then I'm sure he'll let you know.

Q Did he ask you to go as a staffer?

MR. SIEWERT: No. No, he has not. (Laughter.)

Q Has he asked anyone here?

MR. SIEWERT: I think he actually has asked a couple people to help him as he transitions into private life. As you know, the former Presidents have an office and they sometimes take people with them. So there are a number of people, I think, from the White House that will either be helping him in his efforts to set up an office in New York, or helping him set up an office around the library in Little Rock. We'll let you know as those appointments become formal.

Q Do you yet know where the President will be going to after the new President is inaugurated? Have you had the guts to ask him yet? (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: That's a tough -- Mark. (Laughter.) I will let you know when we have something to announce there. I have a better sense of that than I used to, but I don't have anything to announce yet.

Q What is the radio address about?

Q Is he going to get a last ride on Air Force One?

MR. SIEWERT: The last ride on Air Force One.

Q It won't be Air Force One.

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, it's flight 28000 -- 20000.

The radio address I think will cover some of the measures that the President is undertaking to help people deal with the cold weather this year, and we'll let you know. We'll tape that this afternoon, probably put paper out today, embargoed for tomorrow.

Q Has he been on the phone with people in Arkansas, with friends down there at all, do you know? Because parts of Arkansas are in pretty bad shape.

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know. I can check on that. I know he had a chance to talk to some people through here the other day, from Arkansas; but I don't know whether he's talked to anyone down there.

Q Will he be mentioning the real new millennium in his radio address?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't expect he will. The Knoller millennium -- (laughter) -- I don't know. I think the radio address actually is focused on the specific weather that we're experiencing today and the past week or so.

Q Well, how do you perceive the next 20 days?

MR. SIEWERT: I think it will be a busy 20 days. We, obviously -- the President has pledged to work up until the last day and we have a lot of work that we plan to get done. We have some

environmental measures that we're looking at. I think they're pretty widely known what they are. I think that's something that the President will be working on and has spent some time on, already.

And he'll obviously be occupied with some of the important foreign policy challenges around the world, particularly in the mid-East, and that's something he has devoted a great deal of time to, even in this holiday period, and I expect he'll continue to devote some time to it in the new year.

Congress will be back, actually, and he'll be attending some events -- in a more ceremonial capacity -- to watch his wife assume her seat in the Senate. But I expect we also may try to get a little bit of business done there. We have already said that we're going to submit one appointment to the new Congress and we'd like to see them act on that -- the appointment of Roger Gregory to the bench. And there may be other work that we'd like to see Congress get done. Even though it's just a short period, we recognize that that's not typically the most productive time, but there's some work that could get done when Congress is back here, even if it's relatively light lifting.

Q Thank you, Jake.

MR. SIEWERT: Thank you. Let me give you the week ahead, real quickly -- not that I have much. The radio address will be taped today and broadcast tomorrow. As I said, departure to Camp David is TBD.

The President has no public schedule on Sunday night. He will spend the night at Camp David and return either late Monday or Tuesday morning -- we'll try to figure that out.

He will attend a swearing-in reception for Mrs. Clinton on Tuesday evening, and come back to the White House that evening. That's a reception, the actual swearing-in is the following day, and he will, I expect, be on hand for that, as well. All of these press issues have not yet been worked out. And there may be a dinner that night, also, to celebrate Mrs. Clinton's new job.

And on Thursday afternoon we'll be holding a health-related event here at the White House, in the East Room, that will be open to the press. And that day, not involving the President, but I expect General McCaffrey will be here in the briefing room to release the final national drug strategy report on Thursday, January 4th.

On Friday I expect we may have another event on a domestic-related issue, but we'll keep that secret for now.

Q No travel next week?

MR. SIEWERT: Not expecting any travel out of the Washington region next week.

That's it, and I'll be meeting my counterpart -- excuse me?

Q Is there going to be a State of the Union from --

MR. SIEWERT: We haven't made a decision on that. The President will probably have another opportunity or two to make remarks on his domestic agenda and the opportunities that confront a new administration. But I don't know whether we'll actually do a farewell address or State of the Union; we haven't made a final decision on that.

Q Any major press conference before he leaves?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know. We obviously have considered that. We had one yesterday -- (laughter) -- and the day before, actually, in the Oval Office. Whether we have a formal press conference is something we -- but I don't think you'll see him today, unless I'm missing something.

Q You're meeting with Ari, did you say? Is Ari coming over?

MR. SIEWERT: He may be over today. It might be a secret, though, so I don't know if I'm supposed to -- a secret meeting. (Laughter.) No, there are a series of meetings around here with the people who have now been designated officially to serve in some sort of formal capacity. I'll be meeting with the new Press Secretary. I talked to him yesterday. I talked to Mike and Joe, as well, so we're going to provide him our best advice on how to confront and help the White House press corps.

Q When will you know about Camp David?

MR. SIEWERT: About their actual departure time? I don't know. We'll just wait to hear from them about their plans.

Q Are they leaving today?

MR. SIEWERT: It could be today or it could be tomorrow.

Q Jake, I'm sorry, I may have missed, what will be the President's radio address, the subject?

MR. SIEWERT: It will deal with energy and the weather.

Q In India. (Laughter.) And Hollywood.

END 12:32 P.M. EST

#29-12/29

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 2, 2001

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
JAKE SIEWERT

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

1:47 P.M. EST

MR. SIEWERT: Happy New Year. Mr. Plante, welcome back. There's some mail, by the way, for Sam Donaldson inside if he's available.

I have no announcements.

Q Were you watching your successor? Is that why you're late?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes. In fact, I wanted to catch the end of that before I came out here and then think about it for a little bit.

Q Well, how did he do?

MR. SIEWERT: He seemed to do fine. But you're a better judge of that than I am.

Q Said he got 42,000 resumes. He could count them, but he can't count the ballots. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: Wow. Make sure that's on the transcript. I have no comment on that. But we had a lot of interest, obviously, in working in this administration, but only a couple of us were lucky enough to end up with jobs here. I have --

Q Did you put your resume in?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I did not. No. In fact, I'm looking forward to retirement, although I was informed today that my pension won't kick in for a little while longer, so I may have to

-MORE-

#30-01/02

find gainful employment after this.

Q You need a pension?

MR. SIEWERT: Apparently, I need to spend a little more time working.

I have no announcements for you. I'll preempt the most obvious question by saying that we will have some sort of informal readout of the meeting with Chairman Arafat afterwards. I don't think, unfortunately, it will be for camera, but we'll try to make someone available to give you a rundown of what happened in the meeting afterwards.

Q Do you expect that he'll go to the stakeout position?

MR. SIEWERT: He usually does, so I don't see any reason why he wouldn't. But we obviously have let him know that is an option that's available to him.

Q Given the fact that Mr. Barak has said there's really little likelihood of getting a peace treaty before the election, what's your feeling about the success possibilities at this meeting today?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, obviously the President and Chairman Arafat decided that this was a meeting that was worthwhile to have, and the Chairman agreed to come here in the hopes that we could reach some sort of common understanding about the parameters of the negotiation if that were to take place. We have heard from the Israelis that they think that such a negotiation is worthwhile, and they think that they would be happy to sit down, but we're waiting to hear back on a final answer from the Palestinians.

In the interim, the President talked to both Chairman Arafat and the Prime Minister over the weekend, and as a result of that call with Chairman Arafat, they agreed that it would be useful to meet today and try to see whether we could come up with the general parameters, whether we could have a common understanding of the parameters that would guide such a negotiation.

The President told you all last week that he's had a chance to share some ideas about how we could have a fruitful negotiation, and we will obviously use the time remaining for us here to stress the importance of doing that. But ultimately, it's up to the parties to decide whether they want to sit down and talk.

Q What's the level of urgency?

MR. SIEWERT: Time is of the essence here. We have a relatively narrow window of opportunity, but the President has promised to work up to the last day, and there's no reason why these negotiations, if they commence, could not be successful. But ultimately, it's up to the parties to decide to sit down and to make the hard choices that are involved.

Q Is the President saying take it or leave it?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, the President told you last week that he didn't see any point in sitting down and having negotiations between the parties unless there was some understanding of what the parameters of such a discussion would be. And so he laid out his idea of what those guidelines should be.

Q Well, then, you have to accept his territorial parameters.

MR. SIEWERT: Well, there is -- look, there's a lot of negotiation to be done if they actually sit down. But the President has shared some ideas along with his team, with the Israelis and Palestinians, and he thinks that lays the groundwork for a discussion about how best to move forward. And both sides obviously, in any negotiation, have to give a little bit. But there is more to be discussed. What we're talking about today is whether we can come up with an understanding about the guidelines that would govern any such negotiation.

Q Has the White House seen the Palestinian critique of the peace plan, as they understand it, and what do you think about that?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know that we've seen anything in particular. Obviously, we're in regular contact with the Palestinians. We know pretty well where they see things today, and that's part of what going to govern this discussion today.

Q Jake, is there any input from the incoming administration, either Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice or George W. about the whole -- about their input to this?

MR. SIEWERT: Input, I don't know. I mean, we have been consulting with them on a pretty regular basis. And we appreciated the President-elect's support, expressed support last week for the way in which we've conducted these discussions. The President appreciates that kind of support, and we have been

sharing with them the progress of the discussions, and what our own plans are.

But I don't know that we're in the business here of getting input from them. The President has obviously worked very hard on this. His advisors and team have spent a lot of time on the details of this negotiation. And I think we'll make our own decisions about how to proceed, but we appreciate the support that they expressed for the President's work on this, and effort on this.

Q Is the President optimistic?

MR. SIEWERT: I keep getting that question for some reason. The President is determined to work hard on this, and work up until the last day, to make this -- to give it his best shot, and to do everything we can with the window we have left to try to get these two sides back to the table. But, ultimately, it is up to the parties to decide, to make the hard choices.

Q Jake, with some of the Palestinian negotiators offering rhetoric in support of, or encouraging the Intifada, do you think it's still possible for the Israelis to be able to trust that they're going to have a deal that the Palestinians will keep?

MR. SIEWERT: Negotiations are very hard and there is always a lot of heated rhetoric around them. The Israelis have indicated that they want to sit down and try to hammer out some of these hard issues. These problems don't get any easier with time, and the President has said that they have never been closer to getting a final agreement on some of the toughest issues, some of the ones that involve compromise, and involve tough choices.

So the Israelis want to sit down and try to work these difficult issues through, and we are going to do everything we can to try to encourage both sides to sit down and resolve those issues. But ultimately, they have to make those decisions, but they want to sit down and talk and the President thinks both sides ought to seize this window of opportunity now to sit down and hammer out some of the hardest issues.

Q So the President really thinks that the Palestinians should compromise, and no refugees can return to their homes?

MR. SIEWERT: We are not going to get into the substance of the negotiations. What we think is that they ought to sit down and have an opportunity to talk through some of those differences.

Q Did the President relay to the Palestinians and the Israelis the idea that if they don't act before he leaves office, it may be a while before anything can happen?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think everyone is aware of the calendar and that there is a pretty narrow window in which to continue the work that we've undertaken with both parties over the last eight years. So I don't think anyone is under any illusion that we have about 18 days and counting to work through these tough issues, so I don't even know that that's a message that needs to be conveyed.

But everyone understands that there is a certain urgency to working these issues out, but at the same time the President said that he only thinks we should talk if we can agree on guidelines that would govern such a discussion.

Q Sorry, just to be clear about today's session, is the President looking for a yes from Chairman Arafat today? And if not, is the game up?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't think that we necessarily expect a final answer on whether he wants to sit down and discuss -- negotiate with the U.S. and the Israelis the final status issues; what we are expecting is that we both -- both sides can make a good-faith effort to understand what such a discussion would entail, and I think that there is no doubt that he may need to take a little time to consult before he makes a final decision. And we will be obviously in touch, as we have been throughout the process, with other leaders in the region, stressing the importance, stressing the narrow window of opportunity here.

Q Jake, the 18-day deadline sort of implies that the occupant of the White House is a critical function of whether or not a peace deal is struck in the Mideast. Does that imply that you're concerned that on January 21st, the peace talks stop because the new president comes in?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I think both sides have indicated an interest in working with the President. That's why Chairman Arafat is coming to town today, because he wants to talk to President Clinton about the work that they've done.

They've obviously developed relationships, working relationships, over the last several years. And so I think the parties ultimately have to make these decisions about whether they want to negotiate, whether they want to work through these issues, and they have indicated that they would like to work with

President Clinton and try to resolve some of the hardest, toughest issues which remain at the end.

And so, ultimately, obviously the President has spent a lot of time on this, has worked very hard on it. He wants to try to make as much progress on this before he leaves office as he can. But ultimately, the parties are going to have to make decisions about whether they want to sit down and hammer out the hardest and final issues.

Q Jake, has the framework of these discussions changed really, dramatically at all since the Camp David proposals?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think that we left Camp David with a pretty solid understanding of what divided the parties and what's happened in the interim is that we have shared some ideas about how to narrow the differences, how to bridge some of the differences between the two parties. And as the President said, that effort has brought the parties closer than they ever have been before to at least understanding what the toughest issues are, where the compromise lies.

But there are issues to be negotiated still. That's why we've encouraged both sides to sit down and discuss them. But there's no doubt that we've come some way since Camp David in that we have a firmer understanding of what a final compromise might look like. But it's up to the parties to make those final decisions, and that's why we've encouraged both of them to seize this opportunity and try to work through those difficult issues.

Q If I may follow up for a second, I guess the undercurrent of my question is, could this kind of deal possibly have been struck back then?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I don't know that there's much point in going through the whole history here. I mean, you heard from the President right after Camp David; he felt that they achieved a great deal of progress in working through those issues and thought that they were very close then and possibly could have done a little bit more. But we're focused on the here and now, and this is not a time to think about what could have been. We're focused on trying to use the next several weeks to do what we can to try to encourage the parties to make those tough choices.

Q Should something not come by the time the President leaves office, how confident is President Clinton in President-elect Bush's ability to continue these negotiations?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, we're focused on today's meeting, not a meeting -- not the next several weeks. We're focused on what we can do today, and after today, we'll let you know what next steps we'll take, if any. But our focus is, as it always has been, on the work that's right in front of us.

Q Well, how do you see this meeting? This meeting is not a negotiating meeting, right?

MR. SIEWERT: No, this is not a meeting to negotiate --

Q -- to deliver his answer.

MR. SIEWERT: We need both parties to negotiate. This is to try to reach an understanding of what such a negotiation would look like, what the boundaries of such a negotiation would be, and how we would move forward if we were to sit down. As I've said this morning --

Q So it has to be within the President's framework.

MR. SIEWERT: We think that any negotiation should take place within the framework that the President outlined, because that's where the really tough issues really need to be decided, and that sitting down with a common set of understandings is the most -- is the best way to move forward. And the President's told both sides what he thinks -- where that framework is, where the sidelines are, if you were. But we understand that there's still more negotiating to be done, and that's why we're encouraging them both to agree to sit down.

Q There has been a criticism in the Arab world about the way how President Clinton is dealing with this, and trying to achieve a deal before he leaves office, and that is by pressuring the Palestinian side to agree on his proposal.

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I don't want to get into the substance of the discussion, but I don't think -- look, ultimately the parties have to make decisions about whether they want to negotiate, whether they want to make the hardest, toughest decisions. No one can force them to do that. We're not trying to force them to do that. They have to make a decision about whether they want to confront these decisions now, or they want to confront them tomorrow. We think that there is an opportunity now to do it, and we've encouraged both sides to do it. But we're not -- we're not in a position to tell anyone what they can or can't do.

What we're trying to do is encourage them to make the tough

decisions, to take the risks for peace. But no one thinks these decisions are easy. The President has made clear that he thinks that these are the hardest issues, but that they've never been closer, and that there's a window now in which both sides can act. And he's encouraged them to do so. But ultimately that's a decision for the parties to each make on their own.

Q Is the President putting his parameters on paper, and if not today, is he planning to do that sometime?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know that we've put anything on paper, but we have shared ideas with both sides. And in his discussions with Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat over the weekend, he made clear, obviously, where we think the parameters are. I think they understand pretty well where they are, but we're going to sit down today and discuss that probably in a little bit more detail, with Chairman Arafat, and we'll hear from him after that meeting.

Q Jake, does the President still believe that land concessions, including holy sites in East Jerusalem are on the table?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not going to -- Ken, I'd love to go through each issue one by one, but if I start down that road, we'll never end. So we'll leave the substance of these negotiations to the negotiators. But what I can tell you is that the President thinks that the toughest issues remain, and he's offered some ideas about how -- to both sides, about how to resolve them. But that still leaves a fair amount of negotiating for both sides to do.

Q How long is the meeting? It's been a while.

MR. SIEWERT: We've scheduled an hour and a half for it. But that's really just a loose construct on the President's time. Ultimately, the meeting will last as long as it takes, and --

Q Jake, if I can come back to that, the President believes -- there's been obviously a lot of conflicting comments on both sides regarding specifically land, but other issues as well. Is the President at least aware of this, and does he have a -- has he moved his position?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I think the President has recognized all along that the parties have to make the decisions about what they are going to do. What he's offered is some guidelines about how to try to hammer out those decisions, how to reach those decisions. Look, every negotiation involves a lot of give and take, and both sides are going to have to decide, ultimately, what

their bottom line is. What we're trying to do is offer them some ideas on how to do that, some constructive ideas on how to do that.

Q Was there some consideration of the plight of refugees in Lebanon, and if there is any preparation for these countries -- Syria and Lebanon -- for the comprehensive peace that we seek?

MR. SIEWERT: Again, that goes into the substance of some of the issues that are best really left for the negotiators and for the parties, themselves, to discuss. But we've obviously been consulting with other -- some of the other Arab leaders in the region and will continue to do that, and we'll continue to discuss how they can be helpful. All of them indicated an interest last week -- President Mubarak and others -- in helping do what they could to resolve the toughest issues. And they lent their support to the President's efforts to try to bring this to a close. And we'll wait and hear from them, consult with them further about how we move forward after today's meeting.

Q Jake, is the President, is he willing to entertain the possibility of changing these guidelines at all? Are they fixed?

MR. SIEWERT: I think -- look, there is obviously -- some of the meeting today is based on the idea of a more thorough understanding of what the guidelines are. But the President said last week very clearly that he thinks that there's not much point in having a discussion unless we agree on some basic parameters that he's shared with them about what those guidelines are and how we move forward.

Q Jake, the President, over the weekend, signed the International War Crimes Court Treaty.

MR. SIEWERT: Yes.

Q Is there any concern about possible opposition coming from Congress on this treaty, and coming from perhaps the Bush administration?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, well, we understand that there are some concerns about the treaty. We signed it because we want to be able to address some of those concerns. And in fact, the President outlined in his statement some of the concerns he had. But we think, all in all, that ultimately the International Criminal Court could provide greater accountability. But in order to influence the final shape that such a court would take, we need

to have signed that treaty and be part of that process.

So the President signed that, recognizing full well that it's not a perfect product, but that he wanted to be able to let the United States continue to try to shape that treaty, and he is not planning on sending it to Congress, certainly, until he's concerned that some of the areas that we outlined have been addressed. That will be for a future administration to decide, but they will have an opportunity now, since we signed it, to take part in the process of correcting some of the problems that the President outlined and that others have outlined, both inside and outside the administration.

Q When do you foresee more pardons?

Q Jake, after the President leaves office, will he occupy a townhouse on Jackson Place that's part of the White House Complex as his office?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't think he will use that office himself. We have made arrangements, as have other presidents in the past, to have some office space nearby where they can handle, essentially, the correspondence and paperwork as they transition to his full-time office. But his full-time office will be in New York City. I don't think we have a final site for that yet, but it's something that we're working on.

But President Reagan had an office across the street. I saw there was some wacky criticism from some of the wackier elements of Washington, but the reality is that this is an office that other presidents have used, and we expect that it will be on a staff level. But I told one reporter on Friday that it's time for some of the -- we're getting ready to move on here pretty soon. It's time for some of the Clinton-haters to move on, too, to find something else to do with their lives.

Q Just a quick follow-up. Some of the so-called wacky criticism is that -- questions whether it's appropriate since it's part of the White House Complex and he's no longer --

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I mean, look, it's perfectly appropriate. It's envisioned, in fact, by the Presidential Transition Act that the President would have an office afterwards. It's essentially an intra-government reimbursement, but GSA is reimbursed for the costs of that office, just as it was under President Ronald Reagan, for space. In fact, the Reagan office was two doors or three doors down over on Jackson Place.

But, again, this is fairly traditional use of it and one that's envisioned by the Presidential Transition Act. There's money provided for it by Congress, pretty straightforward. So I don't know what all the fuss is about.

Q Does he know what staff he's taking with him?

MR. SIEWERT: He has made some decisions about that. In fact, we may have some news for you on that shortly. But, obviously, a much smaller staff, but there are a couple people he's talked to about moving with him to the next stage of his life.

Q Has he made a decision on the exact date the Roger Gregory nomination is going to go to Congress?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know, but I expect we'll send it up shortly so that they have plenty of time to act on it.

Q Obviously before the 20th?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes. No, in fact, I would expect it would go up this week, but I'll double-check on that.

Q Any more pardons coming up?

MR. SIEWERT: He is going to review some more. I can't promise that he will act in a positive way on any of them. But he has more to review and we'll let you know when he's done reviewing the next round.

Q Jake, Hillary is expected to be sworn-in tomorrow. How does the President feel as she embarks on this new chapter in her life and how does he feel about being the spouse of a senator?

MR. SIEWERT: I think he is very much looking forward to it. He has talked himself about how privileged he feels to be the first President in history to have a spouse who has taken on a role in Congress after he leaves office. And so he's going to be part of the festivities this week; he's going to go as a spectator, as an observer, to the swearing-in and some of the other events that she has planned around this. But this is very much her week, as far as that goes, and he'll stay focused on the work he has to do here.

Q He won't be a participant, then?

MR. SIEWERT: Oh, he'll be there, but he's there as an

observer, as a spouse.

Q Speaking of him being a spouse, when his term ends on the 20th, will he leave Washington, or will he just move over to the new house?

MR. SIEWERT: I expect -- he will make his permanent residence in New York, so I expect that before -- I don't know exactly what the plans are for the 20th. We'll let you know when we make a final decision. But I expect that he will spend the bulk of his time in the New York house in Chappaqua, that we've told you time and time again is their permanent residence --

Q Yes, but this is a big one, Jake. I mean, either the helicopter lifts him off the lawn and takes him to Andrews and he gets the hell out of town, or he gets in a car and drives up Massachusetts Avenue, saying, see you soon. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: I expect we'll be leaving town. There's been some question about whether we would go to Arkansas or New York that day. And so when we have a final decision on that, I'll let you know.

Q But he is leaving town on the 20th?

MR. SIEWERT: We will leave town. And as I said -- (laughter) -- I'll be leaving, too, hopefully -- although I may come back. But --

Q You're going to leave with him?

MR. SIEWERT: I expect so. That's fairly traditional. We may even take the press. I looked this up -- (laughter) -- but I looked it up and in the last administration they didn't take the press with them on the trip out. There was one journalist brought along for the ride. That was not tradition, so I think we're going to try to restore the tradition.

Q Well, it is tradition to send reporters.

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, I know, but eight years ago it wasn't done, for reasons that are beyond me.

Q I took LBJ home.

Q Twelve years ago it was done.

Q It was Johnson --

MR. SIEWERT: Twelve years ago it was done. But eight years ago it was not. No, I think it's a tradition worth honoring. I think we ought to bring the press with us to wherever we go. That way you'll know. (Laughter.)

Q That he made it. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: We'll pass out those cards that tell you when we land. (Laughter.)

Q Does he have a speaking role at any of the events this week for the First Lady?

MR. SIEWERT: He may talk a little bit informally at some of the parties, but he doesn't at the formal swearing-in, I don't think.

Q Anything further on farewell addresses and when those might -- address or addresses.

MR. SIEWERT: No. I know he's given what he considers two major speeches already, one in Warwick and one in Nebraska at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. And we will probably give a speech -- the President will give a speech, not we -- on his domestic agenda, and we're looking at a final couple of options for him. But we'll let you know when we have one.

Q Is the President considering national monument status for ANWR, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

MR. SIEWERT: He is -- Secretary Babbitt has forwarded a number of monument suggestions to the President. That is not included among them. And the President actually did address this in an interview with the Discovery Channel in which he said that he wasn't sure that giving ANWR monument status would confer any additional protections on it in terms of oil exploration. We oppose exploration of oil in ANWR and we've made that pretty clear. But it's governed already by legislation and any future administration would have to go to Congress and get that ban lifted.

So we think that it's a terrible mistake to open ANWR for drilling. We think that it's one of the most pristine wilderness areas in America and should be left that way. But I don't -- the President is not certain and has not received a recommendation yet about whether or not to designate that as a monument. Although ultimately -- you'd have to check with Interior whether they plan

any additional work on that.

Q Is there any other protection he could confer on it, or is that the only one he can?

MR. SIEWERT: I mean, the legal protection under the congressional law is pretty strong. But it's obviously something that some of the staff around the government have looked at, but I don't think we've received a recommendation on it.

Q Jake, the President had asked the Justice Department to look into some of the statistics on the federal death penalty. I know they reported back in September. There's been some ongoing work at the Justice Department. Any thought about the President setting up some sort of citizen panel to ensure this would go on in the next administration?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I think this is something -- I think this is something the next administration is going to have to confront. The President was troubled by the geographic disparities that the initial numbers showed, and obviously he's asked the Department of Justice to look at this further. And he granted, in fact, a stay of clemency while that work was going on. But there are obviously more cases that will come up that will have to be dealt with by the new administration. That was not -- that was an issue that was very specifically at the heart of the clemency plea in the Garza case.

There may be other cases where it's not specifically addressed. But the whole issue of racial and geographic disparity was raised by the petitioner in that case, so the President put it off for six months. That's something the next administration will have to do.

Q Do you expect any more executive orders coming out this week?

MR. SIEWERT: Possibly, you never know. We're still always looking at a couple of the ones that are -- where we've made preliminary rulings, but we have not made any final announcements.

Q Do you know who will be in the meeting with Arafat besides the President?

MR. SIEWERT: Is it one on one?

MR. CROWLEY: It starts in a large group, and then it comes

down to two on two.

MR. SIEWERT: We'll let you -- we'll give you names later.

Q -- Albright --

MR. CROWLEY: Secretary Albright will be in the meeting.

Q Jake, what has Norman Mineta told the President about his meetings with George W. Bush?

MR. SIEWERT: That's a good question. I don't want to get out ahead of whatever announcement they may or may not make.

Q Oh, go on. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: But just on our end, Norm Mineta, who has worked very closely with the President throughout the eight years, and has served as Secretary of Commerce, did call the President to let him know that he had been approached. So I believe he spoke to the President on Friday, also spoke to the Vice President, and spoke to John Podesta over the weekend.

And obviously, the President thinks Norm Mineta has done a terrific job in Congress, and at the Commerce Department, and would be a valuable member -- has been a valuable member of his team, would be a valuable member of the President-elect's team. But that's ultimately a decision that they have to make. But he did let us know that he'd been approached, and was thinking of following up. And the President and Vice President encouraged him to do so.

Q Were any other Cabinet members approached?

MR. SIEWERT: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Q No one else has informed the President that they have been asked?

MR. SIEWERT: I've seen some speculation in the press about some -- one particular person staying on, but I don't know whether that person's actually been approached. You'll have to check with them.

All right, thank you.

END

2:16 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 3, 2001

PRESS BRIEFING BY
JAKE SIEWERT

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

12:00 P.M. EST

MR. SIEWERT: As you know, the President met last night with Chairman Arafat -- for those of you who were lucky to stick around until 11:30 p.m., we briefed on it. He again talked this morning with Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak. Chairman Arafat told the President that he had accepted the President's parameters; at the same time, he expressed some reservations. What that means is that both sides have now accepted the President's ideas with some reservations. That represents a step forward.

We understand that to move forward, to build on that work, we have more work to do. And we will, in particular, not reach an agreement, let alone engage in serious negotiations, without a change in the climate and a reduction in the violence.

In the coming days we'll discuss the reservations that both sides have expressed, their interpretations of the President's ideas with each side separately. We'll work to see whether we can reconcile these interpretations in a way that allows us to move forward. So that's where we are. There's still a lot of work to do and the President and his team are committed to doing everything they can in the days ahead to try to do everything they can to move the process forward.

Q Do Chairman Arafat's reservations go to the heart of some of the President's proposals, for example, abandoning the right of return for Palestinian refugees?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, it may be edifying, but not particularly helpful for us to discuss the substance here. Over the last -- throughout this process we've been very careful about discussing the substance and negotiating from this podium, and I'm not going to start today. He expressed some reservations, as the Israelis did, and what we need to do now is work with each

-MORE-

#031 - 1/3/01

side to see whether we can reconcile those interpretations in a way that would lay the groundwork for serious negotiations with the parties.

Q When did you get an acceptance from Arafat -- this morning or last night?

MR. SIEWERT: I think this is obviously a work in progress. He expressed some support for the President's ideas last night and we had another discussion with him this morning. But what he said this morning was consistent with what he had said last night. Yes, we spoke to him by phone this morning. The call with Chairman Arafat this morning was about 15-20 minutes; the call with Prime Minister Barak was about 35-40 minutes.

Q Where was Arafat?

Q And in what order --

MR. SIEWERT: He spoke to the Prime Minister first.

Q Is he being not available because he still has to meet with the Arab leaders in Cairo tomorrow?

MR. SIEWERT: He will be consulting, obviously, with the Arab leaders in Cairo tomorrow. And I think the Prime Minister is talking to his own cabinet and his own government.

We recognize that there is still a lot of work ahead. There is some progress -- the Chairman's trip was helpful here in helping clarify the parameters that the President laid out. But we have a lot of work ahead.

Q Well, what is the next step, Jake? Does Dennis Ross go to the region? Are there talks with each side now?

MR. SIEWERT: We're not, today, prepared to announce anything. The President's team will be immediate contact with both parties and with other leaders in the region. We have a wide range of ways to communicate with them, but I'm not prepared to announce anything now. We're working on it.

Q Are you hopeful that there's going to be a summit before the President --

MR. SIEWERT: We're not at that stage yet. I think it's premature to talk about a summit.

Q Jake, technically, you still do have time between

now and January 20th to have a deal, should parties agree. I mean, there's not some technical reason why that couldn't happen.

MR. SIEWERT: No. I don't know that we'll get there. I think there's an awful lot of work to do, and all we can do is give it our best efforts. But, ultimately, the parties are going to have to make the tough decisions. And even if we see our way to a negotiation, that negotiation involves the very hardest issues, those are why these issues have been left to the last piece of work.

So when we do make a judgment about how to proceed, there's still a lot of work to do. So we're going to give it our best shot, but I don't know that we're going to -- I would not presume that we will get this done, but the President is committed to trying.

Q Jake, when you say parameters, conditional acceptance of parameters, both sides agreed to a conditional acceptance of parameters -- what do we mean by parameters? Do we mean the subjects under which they might -- what does that mean?

MR. SIEWERT: The President has offered -- I mean, we haven't discussed the substance of those, so it's a little difficult, but I think what's happened here is the President has offered some ideas about how a negotiation could be conducted and which issues should be on the table, which issues should be off the table, and offered some guidelines that would shape a negotiation, a serious negotiation of the final status issues.

Those are the parameters within which we think the parties have the best chance of success of resolving their differences. But we don't presume that they will be successful in doing that. So what we've done is shared those ideas with the parties. Both parties think that that was helpful and they want the President to remain engaged until the last day. They want the President to stay involved in this, and they think his involvement has been helpful, his ideas have been helpful.

But I understand we're somewhat handicapped here in describing this because these are negotiations that are being conducted privately. There have been, I'd caution you, there have been a lot of reports out of the region; obviously both sides, and in some cases, the enemies of the process, trying to make the best-possible point that they can for their own interpretation of this. But we can't do that here. We have to conduct these negotiations privately and avoid talking about the substance.

I understand that leaves us in a slightly difficult

position, but that is our judgment about the best way to try to work through these most difficult issues. But there are, essentially, guidelines that would guide -- that would inform a negotiation on the final issues.

Q Jake, you guys haven't been specific, but of course, the Palestinians have put on a website a very specific outline of the issues, and they've detailed in great specificity their reservations. I guess I'm wondering, without getting into the substance, what's the difference between accepting the plan with this long list of several pages of reservations, and actually rejecting the plan?

MR. SIEWERT: Very hard for me to go through those individually because, one, we're not in the business of discussing the substance; two, whether those go to the parameters or actually what would be subject to the negotiations is something I simply can't discuss from this podium. That's something that we're not going to do.

At the same time, the meetings were designed to come to some sort of common understanding of what a negotiation would look like, and what the parameters are. And that's, I think, why Chairman Arafat came here, to get a better understanding of what is still to be negotiated if we move to that stage.

We thought it was helpful that he came here. We thought the discussions yesterday, three and a half hours or so with the President, were helpful in clarifying his understanding and our understanding of what the parameters of such a negotiation would look like.

Q Didn't you know that weeks ago, months ago?

MR. SIEWERT: Look, I think the Chairman thought it was helpful for the President --

Q The President said last week there was nothing left to speak about unless they were willing to agree to his parameters, right?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think that both sides now have accepted those parameters. They have some reservations, and we're going to work with both parties to try to reconcile their interpretation of it so that we can make a judgment about how to move forward.

Q What was Prime Minister Barak's reaction to Arafat's acceptance with reservations? How do the Israelis feel about what they heard today?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think he wants to take -- he has accepted the President's parameters and would like to move towards negotiation. But he has to talk, obviously, to his own cabinet, his own people. And I don't want to characterize his specific reaction; I'll leave that to them to do.

Q Do you think that the reservations on each side are equal? Are they equally big and problematic?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't want to get into that, but I think that we appreciate that both sides have accepted the President's ideas and think it's helpful to move forward. And we're going to make a judgment about how best to move forward after we've spent some more time working with the sides.

At the same time, let's not lose sight of the fact that there's too much violence in the region today. Chairman Arafat made some specific commitments to the President last night about intensifying his efforts to fight terrorism, arresting those responsible for violence, and resuming cooperation with security forces to stop violence where we can. And it's going to be very important that some of that work gets done and gets translated into action on the ground, because it's impossible, as I said, to imagine the parties concluding a deal while there's an atmosphere and a climate of violence on the ground. So seeing some action on those commitments is going to be critical.

Q So was there an agreement that action has to be taken in those three specific areas before there can be a summit?

MR. SIEWERT: I think -- I don't want to -- I think it's very hard to imagine that we could conclude an agreement, much less have serious negotiations, unless there's a change in the climate, a change in the violence.

Q With all this talk about parameters, conditions and reservations, is it fair to say that President Clinton gave Arafat "wiggle room" in terms of the proposals --

MR. SIEWERT: No. The parameters are what we've laid out before. I mean, he has accepted them; he has some reservations; and we're going to work with him to see if we can reconcile his reservations and the reservations that the Israelis expressed in a way that will allow us to move towards a negotiation.

Q Has the President said that -- at least about the proposals that have been reported -- that there is room for negotiation on those proposals?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't specifically understand your question. I think the President -- the President said, these are the parameters in which a deal could be struck. This is our best judgment of how we can -- to move towards a resolution of the final toughest issues. That's our judgment. Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak have said that they accepted those parameters and they have some reservations, and we're going to continue to discuss that. That's what we're going to continue working on for the next couple of days.

I don't know that we'll get there, but we've made some progress, we've taken a step forward in that both sides are willing to accept the parameters that we've laid out.

Q Jake, in making his case, does the President ever say to Arafat and/or Barak, look, I've now got 17 days left in office, it's going to be very difficult for an incoming president, even though he may have an interest in the region, even though he may have the best of goodwill toward you, he'll be an incoming president, he has a lot to do bringing in a new administration, he simply can't focus on your problems right now; therefore, this is your last best chance at least for a long time, to conclude a deal -- does he ever use that argument, the remaining days of his presidency?

MR. SIEWERT: I think everyone recognizes that time is short. And the President said that there are some obvious deadlines here and I think everyone is well aware of those. In fact, I think the parties very much want the President to stay engaged. And that's why Chairman Arafat came here to meet with the President to spend some of his time here -- somewhat unusual, I would imagine. I'll leave it to the historians to judge that. But it's somewhat unusual for the President to be this deeply engaged in a process at this late in the game, but it's because the parties want him to be engaged. But what's going to be critical is that they make the decision that they want to make the tough decisions, the final decisions.

Q You say time is running short. Time is running short for Bill Clinton. Is he saying that because time is running short for him --

MR. SIEWERT: I think they, as I said earlier, they believe that the President has been absolutely essential to helping them narrow some of their differences, and they appreciate the work he has done and want him to remain engaged in his time left.

Q Is there a timetable?

-MORE-

#031 - 1/3/01

MR. SIEWERT: For us there is. Absolutely.

Q I mean within this --

MR. SIEWERT: No. I think we're just going to work in the next several days and see whether we can reconcile these interpretations, see a reduction in the violence.

Q Anyone going to the Middle East from here?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't have anything to announce on that yet, but we're working on that.

Q Former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said yesterday, publicly, that in some ways he hopes that there is not a deal that results now, that any deal structured in the waning days of an American presidency and with the Israelis facing their own election will be inherently flawed. Does the President think he may be pushing too hard and it might be better left to another administration?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I think these issues don't get any easier over time. The President does not think that -- these issues are not going to get easier, these choices are not going to get easier over time. The parties have never been closer to resolving their differences, to reconciling their differences. And the President believes that we ought to use this time to see if we can bridge those gaps, narrow those gaps a bit and find a way to tackle the toughest issues.

Q Jake, will the President call on other Arab leaders -- perhaps Egypt or Jordan?

MR. SIEWERT: We'll certainly be in contact, the team will be in contact with other Arab leaders today and over the next coming days. But I don't know if the President has any calls specifically planned, but we'll let you know if he does make any calls.

Q By seeking clarifications in the plan, was Arafat actually seeking changes in the President's parameters?

MR. SIEWERT: No, the parameters are set and I think both parties understand that. But it's understandable that there be some reservations, some differing interpretations. These parties come at these issues from very different perspectives and they have different views on even basic, very basic things. So what we're trying to do is bring them together, bring them closer. And what we're going to be discussing in the coming days is whether we can reconcile their interpretations in a way that

allows to conduct serious negotiations.

Q Jake, how does the White House evaluate the response from other Arab leaders so far?

MR. SIEWERT: I think that the leaders the President has spoken to have been very supportive of the process and want him to stay engaged and want us to do everything we can to try to move these parties closer together. But it's very hard for me to assess that without a more specific question. I mean, most of the Arab leaders the President has spoken to -- President Mubarak, Crown Prince Abdullah -- King Abdullah -- have all expressed their interest in seeing the President remain engaged and seeing the parties do everything they can in our final days here to resolve their differences.

Q Jake, does the President believe that this process over the last couple of weeks has brought the two sides closer together?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, very much so. The President said the parties have never been closer than they have been --

Q But he said that in advance of this process.

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, and I think that we think that the Chairman's visit here was useful and productive in gaining a broader understanding of what the parameters are and what a negotiation might look like. So I think that that has been a helpful process and that the President thinks that the work they've done over the last four and a half hours or so was useful work.

Q Which Arab leaders is he going to call?

MR. SIEWERT: We don't have anything scheduled, but the team will be in touch with Arab leaders and with others.

Q Today?

MR. SIEWERT: The team will be; I'm not sure he will. But if he does make calls, I'll let you know.

Q Jake, do you think the President believes that this is the best plan for the peace process in the Middle East, even when the political situation in Israel could be a threat for this proposal?

MR. SIEWERT: I guess I'd answer it the same way that I did to the question about our own time here, is that the choices

do not get any easier with time; if anything, they can get harder. And we've done a lot of work through the Camp David process and the work since then to bring the parties closer together, and we want to do everything we can to try to narrow the differences further.

I'm not saying we'll get there -- I don't presume to know that we will. But the President wants to remain engaged and see what he can do to help narrow those differences.

Q Jake, are you troubled at all by the fact that the Palestinians have not yet, themselves, unequivocally said that they accepted the President's proposals -- admittedly, with reservations -- as some sort of a basis for further talks?

MR. SIEWERT: All I can tell you is what the Chairman told the President, and he said he accepted those parameters and, at the same time, he did express some reservations. But he told the President that he accepted them and he wanted to work more on this.

Q What do you think it will mean for the process if you don't reach a point right away that you think you can negotiate? How debilitating is that?

MR. SIEWERT: It's hard to judge that now. We have some work ahead of us and that's what we're going to do. We'll make that assessment. If we get to that point at some point, the President is going to have to make an assessment of where we go next. But we're not there yet.

Q Jake, because of the time constraints, is there a danger that if a deal were reached that it would be weaker than, say, if you had three more months or six more months?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know. There's a lot of work that's gone into it. I think the President believes that the best ideas on how to resolve the final differences are on the table, and that we've spent enough time that the parties have a deep enough understanding of their positions that we are in a place where we can put the best ideas on the table.

So I think he thinks the team that he's worked with -- Secretary Albright, Dennis Ross, Sandy Berger and others -- have laid out some ideas about how best to resolve this that are the product of years and years of work, and years and years of experience, and years and years of consultation with the parties.

Those are what we believe are the best ways to try to resolve the very toughest issues. Let's not forget that we're

dealing with the very toughest issues because we're at the end here, and that we've actually made a great deal of progress in resolving some of the other issues that were tackled at Camp David and other places.

Q Jake, let's just go back over what you actually hope that you can accomplish during the rest of this administration. You would like to get a framework agreement, which is different from a final agreement, right?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I'm not -- what we'd like to do is see if we can get to a point where we could have the parties sit down and begin to tackle these tough issues and try to resolve them. I'm not going to put a title on it at this point. What we want to do is see whether we have enough common understanding about parameters that we could move towards a serious negotiation. We're going to work with each party separately over the next couple days to see if we can do that.

Q Last year I think the plan was and the dates were set -- I think you were supposed to have a framework agreement in something like February, and then a final agreement in September, I don't remember what it was --

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, I don't know that those titles are particularly helpful.

Q Those titles, they're not helpful?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know if the titles are particularly helpful. What would be helpful is resolving the issues that remain on the table. I think you all know what they are. We don't discuss them in great detail from this podium, but we know what the hardest issues are and we'd like to see if we can get the parties together and we'll make a judgment about whether getting them together would be productive over the next several days.

Q Is the Bush administration aware of all of the proposals we've presented, and also the money that's involved that they will have to obviously go along with?

MR. SIEWERT: They have been fully briefed on the progress of our talks, both through Secretary Albright and through Sandy Berger. And they know the rough shape of what we've outlined, and I think they've been kept abreast of the latest talks and appreciate again -- I said it yesterday, but appreciate again President-elect Bush's comments yesterday in support of the President's work on this initiative and his entire team's support for those efforts.

Q Does the President have any out-of-town travel planned anytime soon, or between now and the end of his presidency?

MR. SIEWERT: We actually may have a travel announcement later today that's of a personal nature, perhaps this week. And then I think next week we'll be looking at some more travel. But I don't have anything to announce yet, do I, Nanda? She says no.

Q He has New York and Arkansas, one of those, on a personal --

MR. SIEWERT: We'll let you know later. He may be going somewhere relatively shortly on a personal private matter. But we'll let you know about that when we --

Q Has he made up his mind about whether he's going to return to Arkansas on January 20th or fly up to New York?

MR. SIEWERT: Since yesterday? He may have made up his mind, but I'm not prepared to announce it yet. I'll let you know when we have a final decision on that. But we'll continue the dodge up here for now.

Q Why is it so difficult? Why doesn't he just go home to Arkansas?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know. I don't want to speak for him. This is obviously a personal decision. He has a new home in New York and a library that's beginning construction in Arkansas. I think he probably wants to thank the people of both New York and Arkansas before he leaves office, and we'll find a way to do that.

Q Have they moved anything into the house in Washington?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't think they've closed yet. So I think probably the owners would be surprised if we started moving in. I don't know. I've never bought a house, but I understand that you usually wait until you close. (Laughter.)

Q Have they moved things out of here?

MR. SIEWERT: They've moved some things to Chappaqua, but no, I don't think they've started moving into the house. They haven't closed yet. We'll let you know when they do.

Q I mean, all the files --

MR. SIEWERT: That's a constant process. Nanda is in charge of Press Office archiving, and she can tell you that's been going on for months --

MS. CHITRE: Since when? (Laughter.) I beg to differ on that.

MR. SIEWERT: So -- anything else? We've exhausted all our other --

Q Jake, a couple of weeks ago, the White House was upset that George W. Bush and his people were talking about an economic slowdown. And yet, this morning Minority Leader Dick Gephardt was on television and he was talking about the recession is looming and that it may require a tax cut bigger than the ones the Democrats were talking about. Does that disturb the White House?

MR. SIEWERT: I think that when we're talking about the economy that we're going to stick to the facts. And the Wall Street Journal yesterday had a survey of economists, the vast majority of whom saw positive growth this year, 2 to 2.5 percent, for the most part. That's not a recession. That's growth; that's stronger than the growth under the previous Bush administration.

We think that we're leaving the economy in very good shape. We've had eight years of solid growth, low inflation, record low unemployment -- no one is predicting unemployment to go much over 4.5, 5 percent, which was unthinkable when we took office here. We're also leaving the new administration with a lot of new tools, a stronger tool box to confront any difficulties that they may encounter in the next four years. They have a lot of levers to pull. So they have a strong fiscal balance sheet, low unemployment, low inflation. So they have a lot of room to maneuver. We didn't have that kind of room to maneuver when we took office.

So, look, they'll have to make their own decisions about how to talk about the economy, what size of tax cut to have -- and they'll obviously have to work with Democrats on that, there will obviously be a lot of maneuvering in Congress over that. But when we're talking about the tax cut, I think it's very important to recognize that under their own tax plan there is no stimulus in their tax plan for the economy in fiscal year 2001 -- zero. And in fiscal year 2002, it's only about \$20 billion, which is a relatively small amount in the larger scheme of things.

So this is not really about whether the economy needs a tax cut. This is largely about whether or not they want a tax cut and how strong it is. They want a tax cut whether it's raining out or snowing out or it's 80 degrees and sunny. This is -- mostly this campaign around the tax cut is a campaign for a tax cut, pure and simple. And I think it should be understood as such by their own. Any economist -- The Washington Post had a very good article on this last week -- will tell you that tax cuts are often a poor tool for immediate fiscal policy and that decisions are best left to the Federal Reserve.

Q That sounds like you have something against tax cuts.

MR. SIEWERT: No. We proposed a tax cut and, in fact, I understand why the Minority Leader might want to reassess the exact size and shape of the tax cut, given that we have new surplus figures. What is important is that we don't see the tax cut as a panacea to an economic stimulus. The tax cut is a very rough tool to use. But there may be good reasons, and we proposed a tax cut -- a very sizeable one -- to give people back some of their money.

Q Do you have any reaction or comment on the reports, rumor, speculation that Saddam Hussein is hospitalized at this point?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't have any independent information to verify that. I've seen those reports, but that's it.

Q -- have you seen the editorial in The Washington Post today? My question is, the White House always support Pastrana besides his strategy to negotiate peace with the rebels in his country. Is this administration changing its mind about the sums that President Pastrana gave to the --

MR. SIEWERT: Not that I'm aware of. I'll check on that, but I'm not aware of any change in our position on that.

I should -- maybe, can I announce that we'll have a briefing tomorrow morning, on a somewhat related topic. Yes, Barry McCaffrey will be in here tomorrow. He probably is in a better position to answer that question. At 11 a.m.

Thank you.

END

12:29 P.M. EST

#31-01/03

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 5, 2001

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
JAKE SIEWERT

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

12:20 P.M. EST

MR. SIEWERT: I think you just saw former Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, so I'll start with a statement from the President on his meeting.

"Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, and I met this morning to discuss his report concerning the comprehensive test ban treaty, CTBT. The report argues persuasively that ratifying the CTBT would increase our national security and that the security benefits of the treaty outweigh any perceived disadvantages.

"The report's recommendations address concerns raised during the October 1999 Senate debate over CTBT. I urge Congress and the incoming Bush administration to act on them. I also hope the Senate will take up the treaty at an early date as a critical component of a bipartisan nonproliferation policy. CTBT is supported by our friends and allies overseas and designed to reduce existing nuclear dangers, as well as those that might emerge in the future.

"I commend General Shalikashvili for his thorough and rigorous report and his continued service to the nation." That is a statement by the President.

Q Jake, do you know if the President mentioned this issue when he met with President-elect Bush?

MR. SIEWERT: I do not know. But they certainly talked about proliferation generally; I don't know if he specifically raised this, but I'll check on that. He's tended to want to keep that conversation private, but that's a question I could probably

-MORE-

#032 - 1/5/01

put to him, whether he specifically raised that one.

Q Keep it private, like the conversation with the Palestinians? (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: Yes. A lot of conversations in private around here.

The President next week will take a couple of trips and he will take the opportunity to travel a bit around the country to some places that have mattered a great deal to him over the years, places that helped him become President, get reelected and build a tremendous record here over the last eight years.

On Tuesday, he will travel to East Lansing, Michigan, make remarks at Michigan State University and will made an additional stop in the midwest, returning to Washington that evening. And on Thursday, the President will travel to a state where I spent a lot of time, New Hampshire. He will be going to Dover and Manchester and Boston, Massachusetts, on the way back.

And he will make, in Dover, one of a series of speeches that he's been making about the challenges the nation confronts. That one will focus primarily on his record and his achievements on domestic policy, but also on the sort of continuing work that the nation has in front of it. So he will also, I expect, return to Washington that evening.

As you remember, East Lansing was the site of one of the presidential debates. It's also near the bus tour that he took in 1992. In New Hampshire, Dover was the place where the President gave his now famous "last dog dies" speech, on February 13th in 1992. And Manchester is a place that he spent a lot of time walking the streets talking to the citizens in New Hampshire, and he wanted to take this chance to talk to and thank some of his supporters in both those places, and talk about not just the past, but about the challenges the country has in front of it today.

Other than that, I don't think I have anything, other than the fact that in another -- it's unremarkable, I suppose, but it's remarkable that it's unremarkable that the unemployment rate is at 4.0 percent today, a rate that many economists thought unthinkable when we took office. It's now been there well over a year, and we, in the year 2000, had the lowest unemployment rate since 1969.

And as we move forward, as we said before, we leave the incoming administration with a very solid employment picture -- 22.5 million new jobs and a tremendously low unemployment rate,

one below what most economists thought was achievable. Most economists thought that NAIRU, the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment, was in the neighborhood of 5 percent, or thereabouts, and we've actually been well below that for a long time now. So, by any measure, that's a good number.

Q Jake, we keep hearing from the Bush folks that the economy may be faltering, it may not be in as good as shape as it should be. How do you reconcile that with the unemployment numbers?

MR. SIEWERT: The unemployment numbers show that the economy remains in relatively solid shape. What we've seen is a slight decrease in the rate of growth. But the economy is growing and the economy remains in very solid shape. What we have also is we have, aside from an unemployment rate that was unthinkably low just eight years ago, we've had 22.5 million new jobs. And we now have, instead of a \$290 billion deficit that we inherited, we now have a surplus that's over \$200 billion.

Most importantly, the incoming administration has a lot of tools that were not available to this President when he took office. He took office when the unemployment rate was at 7.2 percent, and he had huge budget deficits to deal with, which obviously limited his options. Whereas, this incoming administration has a lot of new options, a strengthened budget picture, a strengthened IMF, a strong economy that's 50 percent bigger than it was when he took office. So they have a lot of levers to deal with problem spots as they crop up, and we'll see how they deal with it.

Q What happened on the Camp David trip this morning, and why was Bruce Lindsey along on that trip? Was it just a packing trip?

MR. SIEWERT: The President was -- no, actually I checked on that. But the President was traveling to Camp David just on some personal matters. I think he wanted to take care of a couple things up there, packing and the like. He will probably be going back to Camp David one more time, but he wanted to take the time that he's there next to enjoy it with some family and friends, and not have to deal with some of the minutia of daily life.

So Bruce was simply along because he had some work to do, and he was going to take the opportunity to talk to the President on the trip to Camp David, on the trip back. So Bruce was talking to him about some other matters, and matters that involved Bruce's work here, and he was just simply along for the ride, as it were. As you know the President's --

Q You make it sound like he's got something stashed up there. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: I actually -- I've never really seen his quarters up there, so I can't speak to that. But I think -- no, this is pretty routine housekeeping, as he said.

Q Is there going to be a farewell address? Is he planning anything?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not sure whether we'll do a farewell address. But we'll certainly -- the President has taken the time to give some speeches over the last month or so, and we'll give another speech next week in New Hampshire. And we may have other opportunities to talk to the nation, but we have not yet decided whether he'll do a farewell address. But we'll let you know if he does decide.

Q Will the speech today at Ft. Myers be a farewell address to the military?

MR. SIEWERT: That it certainly will be. The President appreciates the work that Secretary Cohen and the Joint Chiefs have done in putting together an event that honors him for his work as Commander-in-Chief, and he wants to pay tribute to the work that they've done, the hard work that they've done over the last eight years for the American people.

He'll obviously cite the work that they've done as we transitioned out of a Cold War footing and created a new and ready fighting force. He'll also certainly celebrate some of the work that they did in trouble spots, like the Persian Gulf and in the Balkans over the last eight years.

Q Jake, are more pardons likely, and, if so, how soon?

MR. SIEWERT: I would not expect anything until towards the end. I expect that -- he's asked to review some more; Counsel's Office is looking at them and I think they'll probably present a package to him at some point. But I think that would be very much towards the end. I wouldn't expect anything at the early part of next week or over this weekend.

Q What about the President's meeting today on the Middle East, this evening? Can you give us an update on his mood and on the situation? Is he more optimistic today?

MR. SIEWERT: He's been kept apprised of the discussions by Sandy Berger and he is determined to keep working

at this. He's dedicated some time tonight to meet with the Israeli negotiator, who is in town. They'll meet in the Oval Office around 5:30 p.m. They obviously have agreed, in principle, to the parameters the President has laid out. They've expressed some reservations, as have the Palestinians, and the President will take the opportunity to talk to them about how we might reconcile the interpretations so we can move forward.

But the President believes that it is critical that in his last days that he do everything he can to try to make his best effort to see whether we can put the parties in a place where they can begin to talk. But, ultimately, it's up to the parties to make that decision.

Q Will there be more activity, Jake, this weekend, do you figure?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know that we have anything planned, but the President always has the ability to pick up the phone and talk to someone. But I don't think we have anything scheduled other than the negotiations today. We're obviously expecting at some point that a Palestinian negotiator will come in and do something similar that we've done with the Israelis.

Q What about the New York speech Sunday night?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think, inevitably, the President will address the work that has gone on on the Mideast peace process in that speech, and probably have a little bit to say about where we are today.

Q On the Middle East, how quickly would this Palestinian negotiator come in?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't think there's anything planned yet, but I think we'll decide -- the President today will take the opportunity to meet with the Israeli negotiator, assess where we are, and when we're done with those discussions we'll let you know how we're going to proceed from there.

Q How much time is planned for that?

MR. SIEWERT: It's slated for a half an hour, 45 minutes, I think.

Q Coverage -- photo, anything?

MR. SIEWERT: We'll put out an official photo.

Q Can you confirm that the Director of the CIA will

go to --

MR. SIEWERT: I'd refer you to the CIA on that.

Q On the environmental announcement, a couple of things -- Alaskan Republicans are really unhappy about it, and are trying to push to have it overturned. Senator Markowski's spokesman is saying, nobody has done this much environmental damage going out the door since Saddam Hussein torched the oil fields.

MR. SIEWERT: I find it hard to believe that this could be characterized as damage. What we are doing is protecting a great deal of pristine wilderness area from logging and from other exploitative uses. We're actually protecting that land for the American people, for their enjoyment. And we've consulted very heavily on this process.

I know there's been a lot of comments from people who opposed this move on the merits, saying that there's been no process here -- we have had over 600 public meetings, 25,000 people came to those meetings. We've received a million comments on this rule, predominantly favorable ones, urging the President to take action. And so we've had a very open process. The President announced this originally October 1999, so he spent more than a year discussing with the public. Everyone has known what the parameters of the discussion were. And so what we're moving to do is to try to protect wilderness from commercial exploitation.

Q -- are particularly upset because Tongas was not included in that original rule, and they think that this is unfair because it wasn't part of the rule-making process.

MR. SIEWERT: We indicated some time ago that was part of the process. There were some people who were upset when we issued the first rule that Tongas was not included, and we actually went out of our way to listen to commentary that we received from a number of different people urging us to protect that land. And we tried to -- now we're treating it the way we treat every other national forest, with a little bit more leeway for some of the logging there, given that it was included in the rule later.

But it's been an open process, and we've had commentary from a lot of different people urging us, actually, to protect that land in Alaska. And that's actually part of what came out of the public review process.

Q What about concerns of the economic impact, the

timber industry fearing a loss of jobs? Any sense of how many jobs would be eliminated and how these communities would be compensated?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, the logging that's under contract now that people have already completed contracts for will go forward. And there is -- remember, this only covers land that's protected in the national forest system. Logging that has been signed on and contracted for will be completed and those jobs will be supported as those contracts are carried out.

Q Jake, with respect to this action and the other actions the President has taken in recent weeks with executive orders or other administration initiatives, how worried is he that the new administration is going to make an effort to undo them when it comes in?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, those are decisions that are best left to them. He understands that they have a different point of view on this. But the President is the President until January 20th and he's going to use his executive authority to protect the environment and to do everything he can to protect worker safety and people safety.

So through this rule-making process on this particular rule, we've tried to be as open as possible and listen to as many concerns as possible. If they have a different point of view, they're welcome to it and they can go through a similar process when they take office. But that's up to them.

On the monuments, I know, particularly, no administration has ever undertaken to undo a monument designation. And Democratic and Republican administrations have both used those to protect wilderness areas. And no administration has ever tried to do that. So it would be unprecedented in that case if they were to try to do that. I've heard some talk about that. But I don't -- we obviously wouldn't think that was wise, because we thought these lands were worth protecting. But those are decisions that a future administration will have to undertake for their --

Q Jake, you're not saying the rules haven't been reversed -- rules have been reversed, haven't they?

MR. SIEWERT: Rules have been reversed and modified, but there's a process that has to be undertaken.

Q -- the monuments, right?

MR. SIEWERT: The monuments has never been undone by

another administration. Obviously, both -- Teddy Roosevelt started that process, a Republican President, and both Democrats and Republican Presidents have used it.

Q Jake, have you written these actions in such a way as to make it difficult to reverse them?

MR. SIEWERT: I think in any rule, it's a relatively difficult process to undo it, because you need to go through the entire process again. But it's fairly arcane, and they're not written in any particular way that makes it difficult to reverse, other than that the process itself is a cumbersome one. And it's a lengthy one.

Q In spite of that, and the fact that you're protecting 78 million acres, or thereabout, this is a very sweeping proposal. Why not just leave it to the next administration? This is a fairly controversial decision that you're doing unilaterally.

MR. SIEWERT: Well, but we made -- first of all, I think one thing is very clear. We would have done this one way or the other, whether the President was President Gore or President Bush. We made this proposal in October of 1999, and we've moved forward with it in a public way -- a million comments, 600 hearings. We've moved forward in a way that was very public, and that allowed people to comment and, in fact, took a great deal of time, over a year, that we spent putting this together.

And we had every intention, and we said so at the time, in October of 1999, of getting this work done before the President left office. He said that when we announced this initiative in the first place. So he's keeping his commitment, that he made then, to finish this up. We would have done this one way or the other.

Q What do you say to critics, though, who say the President, in all this flurry of activity over the past several weeks, is doing too much, too fast, trying to shore up a --

MR. SIEWERT: It's all work that we had promised to do at some point or another. And the President, as I've said before, the President's one of the hardest working Presidents in recent memory. He's going to stay busy, working right up to the last day. That's the way the Constitution envisioned it, and that's the way we're going to conduct our business here.

Q President-elect Bush the other day commented on the Fed's decision to reduce rates by half a point. Could you

comment on that and explain what your policy has been toward commenting on Fed actions?

MR. SIEWERT: I won't comment on his comment, because I don't see any utility in that. It is our policy to respect the independence of the Fed. And throughout this administration, we've been very careful not to comment on the Fed's actions, and generally not to comment on any movements in the market, as well.

That's something that Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin, former NEC Director Bob Rubin, thought was very important. It was something that Larry Summers and Lloyd Bentsen and Gene Sperling and others enforced with a great deal of discipline throughout the administration because we find that comments one way or the other don't do a whole lot of good.

Q Let me ask you about the one other thing the President-elect said earlier this week, about the economy needing a recovery. Can I construe from your remarks earlier about the jobless rate that you don't think the economy needs a recovery?

MR. SIEWERT: Look, the economy was growing at a torrid pace early last year, around 5 percent. It is now growing at a lower pace. Most private economists -- not administration economists, but private-sector economists surveyed by the blue chips, surveyed by the Wall Street Journal -- think the economy will continue to grow this year, it will continue to grow. That does not constitute a recovery. It constitutes a slowdown in a economic growth rate that many thought was unsustainable.

So the reality here is the economy is growing. It is something that's just an indisputable fact and most economists project that it will continue to grow.

Q Well, is 2 to 2.5 percent growth a good thing?

MR. SIEWERT: It's higher than it was during the previous Bush administration. We have had a higher rate of growth. We have averaged about 4 percent growth --

Q -- the Reagan administration, 2 to 2.5 growth --

MR. SIEWERT: Our growth rate is higher overall than under the Reagan. But the bottom line -- growth has averaged, throughout the Clinton administration, around 4 percent, which is a very strong rate and it's been sustained over eight years.

And I'll remind you that we're in the longest expansion -- economic expansion in the history of the United States. It's somewhat unprecedented. But there's no reason why it can't

continue if policymakers and economic decision-makers make the right choices.

Q Jake, with respect, if the President-elect uses the word "recovery," he's wrong?

MR. SIEWERT: It's just not an accurate statement of the current reality of today's economy. The economy -- unemployment is at 4 percent, something that was unthinkable in the past. And the economy, even in a slightly slower growth rate, is continuing to generate jobs. We generated over 100,000 jobs just last month.

Q So this growth rate, 2 to 2.5 percent, is that an acceptable rate of growth or not?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not going to get into acceptable rates of growth -- this isn't the Soviet economy here, we don't project growth rates. (Laughter.) We have averaged about a 4-percent growth rate -- we don't do 10-year plans with 4-percent projections and things like that.

Q It's becoming the Soviet economy.

MR. SIEWERT: Oh, please. (Laughter.) This debate has been clouded by some rather silly rhetoric coming out of the other side, in that, as I said the other day, the tax cuts that they have proposed do not offer stimulus in the near term. And yet, they're talking about them as though they do. They simply do not. Their stimulus occurs in 2002, which is, as you all know, a little ways away. And dealing with the slower rate of growth is something that's a challenge that confronts policymakers today.

So that charge is largely exaggerated. And when the economy was growing at 5 percent, last spring, they said then that they wanted a tax cut. They wanted a tax cut when the economy was growing at 5 percent, and now they want one when it's growing at 2.5 percent. It's not about the growth rate, it's about the tax cut itself, which is debatable on its merits. But it's not about increasing the economy's rate of growth in the near term.

Q Jake, is the President going to invite Governor Davis and the representatives of the California utilities to the White House to talk about energy in California?

MR. SIEWERT: Not exactly, no. The President's economic team, Gene Sperling, Larry Summers and Bill Richardson will meet with California utility executives and the FERC

Commissioner, sometime next week, along with Governor Davis, in Washington, at a place TBD. I don't expect it will be at the White House. But the idea there is to try to create some sort of framework that could help to alleviate the supply crunch that California is experiencing now in energy.

Q Is the President inclined to ask regulators to cap wholesale power prices?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't think that we -- the FERC is independent, and I don't think that I would -- I don't want to get in to that.

Q What role should the federal government play in this crisis in California?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, Bill Richardson has already taken some moves that have helped, and that the Governor requested, and that the utility companies have recognized. The FERC is obviously very critical, but it's an independent agency. But they'll be involved in some of these discussions. But the President's economic team thought it might be useful to sit down with the regulators and with the industry and with the Governor to sort of check in and see what the lay of the land was, and see if we could maybe coordinate and agree upon some sort of framework that could help alleviate the supply crunch.

Q Are there proposals that you're going to review at this meeting? Anything concrete that we could talk about now?

MR. SIEWERT: I think I'll leave that for the parties that are involved in that discussion.

Q The Israeli media is reporting that there's going to be a scaled-back plan, as opposed to the plans that have been talked about. Do you have any response to that declaration of principle?

MR. SIEWERT: I haven't seen that report.

Q What does the California crisis crunch say about the future of electrical deregulation in America?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I don't -- there are obviously -- I think it may offer some lessons, but it -- we have supported nationwide electricity deregulation, and I think that a nationwide deregulation could very much increase the efficiency in the system, maximize efficiency in the system, and lower costs for consumers over the long term. But it may work -- a lesson that one state undertook may not have applicability for a broader

nationwide reform, because some of the problems that crop up in one state when they're trying to do it on their own may not apply as easily to a nationwide effort.

Q -- thinks that deregulation in California has been a colossal failure. Do you all agree with that assessment?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not going to get into that. Obviously, there's a problem now and we're trying to do what we can to help solve it.

Q Will this problem in California make it politically more difficult to pursue deregulation on a nationwide basis? I mean, who's going to want to volunteer their --

MR. SIEWERT: Well, look, we put a proposal up, Congress didn't act on it. We thought it would have helped save consumers money and create a more efficient distribution of energy around the country, bring more market incentives to bear on the process. But Congress didn't act on it. It's up for a new Congress, a new administration to decide how to move forward.

Q Jake, what's the goal of this new counter-intelligence board and why does the President think it's needed?

MR. SIEWERT: It's needed because the world has changed a little bit and we've moved away from a system where -- we've moved into a world in which threats are more diverse and diffuse and we need a counter-intelligence capacity that recognizes the realities of the changing world. As I was telling some of you this morning, a threat today can as easily come from a laptop as it could from an old cloak-and-dagger spy, and we need a counter-intelligence capability that matches that new globalized reality.

Just for example, in the wake of some of the viruses that struck last year, the President met with high-tech officials and talked to them about the problems of cyber security. That's a new threat and one that we need to address, one we need to have an ability to work across agencies in a collaborative process to address. And that's something that the President heard directly from high-tech CEOs when they were here.

Because the virus that was spread, I believe, in Southeast Asia ended up affecting the private sector, but in a way that had an impact on national security by taking down the on-line capabilities of a lot of the nation's leading financial providers.

Q Jake, does the President envision a board or an individual czar of intelligence --

MR. SIEWERT: This is a little bit of both. There will be a new counter-intelligence executive. There will also be a board. But the idea, primarily, is to create a process through which the agencies that are charged with the responsibilities for counter-intelligence -- primarily the CIA, Department of Defense and the FBI -- can work together in a way that's more coordinated and looks at new threats, assesses them and decides how to protect our secrets.

Q When will this executive be picked?

MR. SIEWERT: I assume he'll be picked by the next administration.

Q In response to the Wen Ho Lee case and the lack of sharing of information between agencies --

MR. SIEWERT: I think this work was well underway before that particular case came to the public eye. But, obviously, this reflects the work of a lot of different agencies and 18 months of work. I'm sure they took a look at that case and made an assessment about what they could do to improve their system.

Q Jake, going back to rule-making. Other Presidents, as they've gone out the door, have pushed through rules. Jimmy Carter was famous for that in the late '80s. But no one has had pushed through so many sweeping changes, rules, as this President has, and people who count these things say no President throughout his administration has ever put as many rule pages into the federal register as President Clinton has.

Is this a record he's sort of proud of?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I can't speak to whether it's a record or not. I'll let you do your own research, I'm not a historian of rules.

But the President is proud of the record that we've done to protect the environment, certainly. And he's proud of the work that we've done to protect worker safety. And he's proud of the work we've done to improve food safety, the new organic labeling requirements.

So the work we've done, it's not about making rules for rules sake. This is about making rules that protect the environment, protect worker's safety, and protect Americans on the job and at home. So it's not about creating paper for the sake of having more paper, it's about what the rules will do, and who they'll protect, and protecting pristine wilderness land.

Q Sources are telling our folks that at least two senior Clinton advisors advised Secretary Mineta not to take the Secretary of Transportation job in the Bush administration. Do you know of these objections, and why would they object?

MR. SIEWERT: I do not, and for eight years here, people have been saying a lot of different things in the administration on background, and it's not going to change, I assume, in the last 14 or 15 or what is it -- 15 days, I guess, and counting. But the reality is that the President talked to Norm Mineta, who is a friend of his, before he took the job, several days before he took the job. Vice President talked to Norm Mineta before he took the job. Both of them could not have been more encouraging about at least exploring the idea of taking this job. They said ultimately the choice is his, but they said that he should do what he thought was right, and they said that they thought it would be good if he could serve in some capacity. But it was a decision that was his to make.

Q So you're not aware of any --

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not aware of anyone, and the President and Vice President encouraged him to make his own decision, but certainly didn't discourage him from going ahead.

Q Any reaction to the independent counsel saying he will decide within weeks of Mr. Clinton leaving office whether he should be indicted?

MR. SIEWERT: No. He's been saying that for some time now, so I don't have any further comment on that.

Q Any idea where the President's going to go the afternoon of January 20th?

MR. SIEWERT: To --

Q Andrews. (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: He will leave the east front of the Capitol in a helicopter and we'll go to Andrews and we'll take off and --

Q We've got him to Andrews. Now where is he going?

MR. SIEWERT: Where next? (Laughter.) We'll let you know. I actually think we have a better idea than maybe we did yesterday or the day before that, but we're not prepared to announce anything yet.

Q He is not staying in town, right?

MR. SIEWERT: He is not seeing it. No, we'll leave on January 20th. He'll be back from time to time, but his primary residence, as I've said before, will be in Chappaqua.

Q Will the First Lady wave good-bye to him as he leaves?

MR. SIEWERT: I expect they'll leave together.

Q Is the radio address taped this week?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, it has been taped.

Q And it is on?

MR. SIEWERT: Health care.

Q Might the President make two stops after leaving? I mean like go to a couple of states in the same day?

MR. SIEWERT: He'll go to Maryland, and then -- no, I'm kidding. No, I don't think so. I think he'll go --

Q He wouldn't go to Arkansas and New York in the same day or something?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't think so, I don't think so. I'll let you know if that changes, but that's not what we're planning.

Q Thank you.

MR. SIEWERT: Thank you. Do we need a week ahead? We don't even need a week -- the week ahead is really just the travel that I announced. I guess there's a little bit in here, so I should probably do it. Tape the radio address -- we'll put that on paper as soon as we can.

He goes to New York on Sunday and will attend the celebration of the swearing-in of Senate Hillary Rodham Clinton at Madison Square Garden. That is a thank-you to the volunteers and people who helped on her campaign. It's sponsored by the New York State Democratic Party. He will also speak at the Israeli Policy Foreign Tribute Dinner at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel; spending the night in Chappaqua, returning the next day.

On Monday, he will speak at the dedication ceremony for the new or refurbished AFL-CIO building in Washington. D.C. and give the Presidential Citizens Medal to 20 prominent Americans,

including some journalists, for their lifetime of service and contributions to society. We'll put a list out today so you can get working on that. That is the second highest honor the President can bestow on a civilian after the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

He goes to Michigan and another Midwest stop on Tuesday. Wednesday he'll be here and speak at the dedication of the completion of the FDR Memorial. As you remember, they were doing some more work on that memorial, and the President wants to go down there on Wednesday, and will do so. And he will also speak at a lunch honoring Senator Max Baucus. And travel to New Hampshire and Boston on Thursday. And that's it.

Q Will he have a news conference before he leaves office?

MR. SIEWERT: Possibly. Possibly. We've actually been discussing that very possibility. But I don't have anything locked down yet.

Q When is he going to try to get back up to Camp David, since the snow stopped him today?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know, actually. He may go next weekend.

Q What's he got up there? (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: He left his toothbrush. (Laughter.)

END

12:52 P.M. EST

#32-01/05

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 10, 2001

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
JAKE SIEWERT

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

1:25 A.M. EST

MR. SIEWERT: I'll start with a quick travel announcement and move on from there. The President, on January 17th, will travel to Little Rock, Arkansas, and he will, in Little Rock, address a joint session of the Arkansas General Assembly, and the rest of that schedule is TBD. But he will be returning to Washington that evening.

I think this will give him a chance to thank the people of Arkansas who have supported him throughout the years, and to look forward to the work that he'll be doing down there in conjunction with his Presidential Library, which the plans are underway for. And he'll probably see some old friends.

That means that the President and Mrs. Clinton will travel to New York, following the Inauguration on January 20th, and they will remain overnight that evening in Chappaqua. We'll provide you with more details as those become available.

Q Both of them will leave?

MR. SIEWERT: Both of them will leave, yes.

The President is also making an announcement today regarding export controls on high performance computers. There is actually a call underway shortly -- for those of you who want to rush back to your booths and get on that -- with John Podesta, Bill Reinsch and others, to run through the details of that -- Rudy DeLeon.

But the overall importance of that announcement is that we are revising our rules on a regular basis now -- this is the sixth time we've done that -- to reflect the realities of a

-MORE-

#033 - 1/10/01

rapidly changing marketplace. And the President has asked Congress to actually make it easier to do that. We've had some success in changing the way in which that's done, but we want to ensure that American companies are not left behind by controls that belong to another era.

At the same time, we want to ensure that we protect the national security of the United States and ensure that we are not putting high-performance computers in the hands of companies that might misuse them. So that call is under way shortly. You can call Ms. Engebretsen, "the Tiger," up in Upper Press if you want to get on that.

Thirdly, we are pleased -- and we don't get to say this every day -- that Senator Jesse Helms, Senator Biden and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have indicated their willingness to release the next payment of arrears that were authorized under the Helms-Biden legislation. That payment of \$582 million will allow the U.N. to pay the bulk of the funds owed to other countries for troop contributions to peacekeeping.

This move builds on the fine work that Ambassador Holbrooke has done, along with Secretary Albright and others, at the United Nations, and it will go a long way to putting the U.S.-U.N. relationship back on track.

I think that's it in terms of announcements. Oh, Sandy is speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m. That's in New York City. And you can contact either Don Mitchell at the NSC or the Council on Foreign Relations in New York to get more of the details of that speech; but that will be an opportunity for him to discuss his recent article in Foreign Affairs: "A Foreign Policy For The Global Age." And Mr. Gelb will preside over those events.

Q This is the President's speech?

MR. SIEWERT: No, Sandy Berger's speech -- will be speaking in New York at the Council on Foreign Relations, and give an opportunity to sum up some of the success we've had here in the Clinton administration on managing new global challenges in a new Information Age.

Q What's the latest on Dennis Ross? When is he going?

MR. SIEWERT: That trip -- he initially delayed that trip for one day for scheduling reasons. Chairman Arafat is in Tunis today for a meeting of Arab foreign ministers. He has now put the trip on hold, given security meetings that are happening now at various levels in the region.

As you know, the CIA Director was in Cairo over the weekend, met with security officials from both sides to discuss how to improve the situation on the ground. At this point, Dennis still plans to travel to the region, but we have not set a revised date.

Q Isn't that a sign, though, that it's not looking very hopeful that anything can be accomplished before the end of the Clinton term?

MR. SIEWERT: We're looking right now at whether we can see some reduction in the level of violence. It's going to be important. It's very hard to imagine, as we've said before, that we could see any serious negotiation, let alone a conclusion, to some of these discussions with the serious level of violence in the region.

Q That's what caused the postponement?

MR. SIEWERT: Initially, it was scheduling. But now, given that there are security talks going on in the wake of Mr. Tenet's visit, we are looking to those security meetings and seeing how we proceed based on our analysis of those.

Q But, Jake, effectively, you've given up any hope of any sort of an agreement and any sort of a statement of principles, even?

MR. SIEWERT: We will make a judgment based on where we are at the end of those discussions. But the President has said he's committed to working until the very last day. We, I think, have 10 or so days left to continue our work on this and the President is committed to doing everything he can to help narrow the gaps between the parties. And as he said in his speech on Sunday, it beats packing up. So he'll keep working at it and until the last day, we'll do what we can. He'll make a judgment after seeing how some of the discussions go on security matters about what our next step is.

Q Barak has said that there might be a Presidential statement that he would welcome and the Palestinians said they would welcome that as well, just to get a blueprint down that could be something to move forward from in the Bush administration.

MR. SIEWERT: Honestly, we're going to do everything we can to move the process forward, but I don't want to get into the hows and wherefores of that right now. Dennis has put the trip on hold, but we are looking at how the security discussions move forward before making any decision about what our next steps are.

Q The President put the trip on hold, didn't he? I mean, it wasn't Dennis, he didn't make --

MR. SIEWERT: Obviously, we've been consulting. The President talked to the Prime Minister and the Chairman in the last couple days and we'll make a decision when we see how those security discussions play out.

Q Jake, the President has said now -- said privately, and his negotiations -- and he said it publicly, I believe, Sunday night, that when he goes, his proposals go with him. Is he simply accepting a fact of life there, or does he think it's just simply a good idea that they disappear with him?

MR. SIEWERT: I think that's simply the reality. A new administration will have to make new decisions and new -- make their own assessment of how to proceed, and the President is just indicating what common sense tells all of us -- that when the President leaves, he takes with him the discussions that he's made. It's up to a new administration to make steps -- make any overtures after that.

Q There's no continuity in American foreign policy?

MR. SIEWERT: No, certainly there's a lot of continuity. We've been consulting heavily with --

Q -- picking up the ball, didn't he, from the --

MR. SIEWERT: We don't want to prejudge how the next administration will proceed -- that we've been consulting with them all along, I think they understand where we are. They have a lot of opportunities to build on some of the work that has been done. But that's a decision that they will make. But I think that people in the region understand that the President is involved in these discussions intensely himself, and that a new administration will have to decide how they want to treat the ideas that the President shared with the parties and with the public on Sunday.

MR. CROWLEY: It's also the rules that we've had at Camp David that if there is an agreement, fine; if not, then the parties are not bound to what they have put on the table at any particular time.

Q Jake, regarding the President's comments in Chicago last night. Does he truly believe that "the only way they" -- the Republicans -- "would win the election was to stop the voting in Florida"?

MR. SIEWERT: I think, yes, the President said what he believed, that when all the votes are counted, now by the press, that it will show that Al Gore may, in fact, have received more votes there. I think that's relatively an uncontroversial statement at some level. At the same time, the President said that he accepts the court's ruling and he understands the importance of the rule of law and that we are all going to accept what the Supreme Court said and move on.

Q But the comment last night was about Republicans. Does the President believe Republicans stole the election from Al Gore?

MR. SIEWERT: I think the President said that he disagreed with the court's ruling, but that he understood the wisdom of accepting it.

Q The only way they could have won is by stopping the vote count and then --

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I guess we'll see what the facts are. I mean, that's up to the media now at this point to sort through what the ballots that weren't counted said and whether that statement is true. But I'll let you assess that on your own.

Q Does he think that the election was -- that Bush's election was thus, invalid or illegitimate?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think he said that we have to accept what the court ruled and, obviously, a new President will be sworn in. He also said that -- you know, we've met with President Bush and we're working very hard to ensure that he has every opportunity to succeed in the job.

Q Does he think that should be the admonition to the American people, to accept what may have a dubious --

MR. SIEWERT: He thinks it's very important that while he disagreed with the court's decision -- and he said so publicly a number of times, he told the pool that on the way back from Ireland -- that it was important to accept it.

Q But, Jake, what he said was that the only way they won the election was by stopping the voting counting. And also Ari Fleischer has just said that there is a time-honored tradition of President's leaving office to be respectful to their successors and that he hopes that President Clinton will follow that tradition. Do you think he broke with that tradition last night?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I don't think so. I think there are very strong feelings about the way in which the aftermath of this election was conducted. There was obviously a very strong legal effort made by the Bush legal team to stop the count. And that was their prerogative, to fight that in court. The court ruled in their favor and the President said he accepted that.

At the same time, he thinks that, obviously, if all the votes had been counted, we might have seen a very different result. I'll leave that up to you to assess as you look at those votes yourself, in Florida -- I know a lot of media organizations are doing that.

But the President has met President-elect Bush and wished him well, and given him advice. He's instructed all of us to cooperate in the transition. At the same time, he made perfectly clear he disagreed with that court's decision.

Q On this big decision that he has on whether to take Socks and Buddy --

MR. SIEWERT: There are no developments on the Socks-Buddy peace process today.

Q What is the story here? Why can't he take them both?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I think the President -- I'm not going to say much beyond what I said yesterday. The President has tried, worked pretty hard on this, and there's nothing new on that today. But I'll let you know if we --

Q They get along here, don't they?

MR. SIEWERT: We've got a lot of space here, and maybe that makes it easier.

Q Could we just ask you for on-camera purposes, what are the parameters of this peace process? (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: It's a family matter, probably best not discussed on camera. But the President said he's worked to try to get them to get along, and we'll let you know if we succeed in that effort.

Q But is there a discussion of a separation, perhaps a Socks stays in New York and --

MR. SIEWERT: There are a lot of different options, a lot of different options. We haven't made a final decision.

Q Does he have a preference of a pet?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I'm not going to get into that here. I don't think so.

Q They fight like dogs and cats.

MR. SIEWERT: I was instructed that the pet peace process was moribund today.

Q Yes, but there's little doubt that Buddy is his favorite these days. (Laughter.) I mean, he's not even-handed on this, is he?

MR. SIEWERT: We're not playing favorites here. I mean, the dog is a regular here in the West Wing. You've probably seen him. I understand he wanders back here from time to time in search of God knows what.

Q Why doesn't Chelsea take her own cat?

Q If Dennis Ross isn't doing anything -- (laughter.)

Q Chelsea can't have a cat at Stanford?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know, actually don't know what the rules of the dorm are there. But, look, they'll work this out one way or another. We'll let you know.

Q -- hopeful?

MR. SIEWERT: We are very hopeful. (Laughter.)

Q -- to the last day of the administration? (Laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: To the last day of the administration, we're going to keep working on it and see what we can do.

Q Jake, is there some decision by the U.S. to sell F-16 fighters to Chile?

MR. SIEWERT: The Chilean Air Force has awarded the F-16 first place in a technical evaluation, and the Chilean government and Lockheed Martin have begun negotiations to arrive at a final contract. Negotiations of that type generally take two to six months, and cover topics such as final purchase price and the like. So we will work during that time period, through the Department of State and Defense, to comply with congressional notification requirements specified by the Arms Control Export Act.

So we've been -- the Speaker of the House, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee must be notified before the sale. But Congress has an opportunity to weigh in here, and the NSC will review and approve the proposed notification to Congress.

Q Is any of this new?

MR. CROWLEY: It was the Arms Export Control Act.

MR. SIEWERT: Arms Export Control Act, AECA.

Q Is any of this new? Like, is it recent that they just approved this, or is there --

MR. SIEWERT: I think the negotiations are underway, in the wake of the first round of what the Chilean government has decided.

Q But it's not like it just happened yesterday?

MR. SIEWERT: The agreement was on December 27th, yes, that the Chileans entered into.

Q Jake, on clemencies, do we expect anything this week? Or maybe next week?

MR. SIEWERT: I wouldn't expect anything this week. We may have something next week. The President has promised to review additional clemency proceedings and we'll let you know when we have anything new to say on that. But I don't expect anything this week.

Q There have been some published reports about possible sites to be dedicated as national monuments. Can you rule any in or out at this point?

MR. SIEWERT: At this point, we have received seven recommendations from Secretary Babbitt. He forwarded two more recommendations just yesterday, one in Arizona and one in New Mexico. The President will make decisions on those shortly, obviously, in the next 10 days. And we'll let you know how those play out.

At the same time, he is considering one additional one that we've developed on our own, which is a monument in Idaho that covers an internment camp, a Japanese internment camp, one of 10 that we'd like to work with the congressional delegation and local officials on.

For those of you who asked about the Arctic refuge, the President does not intend to designate that as a national monument. We oppose efforts to drill in ANWR and he vetoed a budget bill in 1995, in part because it would have opened the refuge to oil drilling. But we believe, actually, after consulting with our environmental team, that the -- ANWR has something that some of the other areas we looked at does not have, which is legislative protected status, which is actually higher than that conferred by the monuments.

So, unlike those that we've already moved to protect, there is specific legislation that was passed, I believe, and signed into law at the end of the Carter administration, which confers a higher degree of status, a wilderness status, to that land and specifically prevents oil drilling there.

So we're not convinced that giving it a monument status would give it any additional legal protection. So Congress is going to have to act on that and Congress has steadfastly opposed efforts to open ANWR throughout Democratic and Republican control in the Senate. So we think it's very unlikely that Congress will allow the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to be opened for drilling. They defeated it in the '80s and '90s and we think they'll continue to oppose that and we think that's the right course of action. This is a very pristine wilderness area and shouldn't be an area where there is new oil drilling.

Q And, yet, Jimmy Carter seemed to think that monument status would go a long way to protect ANWR.

MR. SIEWERT: We've taken a close look at that. I mean, we take that argument seriously, but we've taken a close look at it and decided that the wilderness status that's conferred by the legislation that was passed in the '80s, the Alaska Lands Act, actually confers a higher degree of status, according to our analysis of it than a monument would.

A monument is, after all, an executive action that could potentially be reversed by a new administration; whereas the congressional designation is legislation that has to be reopened and subject to a full congressional debate, subject to filibuster, and it would be very hard to open it up to drilling, given the narrow split between -- that exists in Congress today.

Q Does the incoming administration -- have they indicated they do want --

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, they have said that they're interested, at least exploring it. We strongly oppose that. Obviously,

that's something that they will be free to try to do. But they're going to have to go through Congress to do it, and we don't think Congress would be wise to open that area to drilling.

Q Jake, as the President leaves office, there still looms the possibility of the IOC bringing indictment. Is the President preparing for this or have -- thinking this may happen? Is he doing anything to prepare?

MR. SIEWERT: I think you should probably check with his lawyers on that. I don't know that he, personally, is involved in that effort. But you should check with his outside counsel on that.

Q What did -- I came in late -- what happened to Linda Chavez yesterday, through this whole process, what does that say to you about Bush's governing style, if anything?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know. I mean, there are plenty of pundits on TV to discuss that. I don't know that we're necessary to weigh-in on that. There are lots of other people well-qualified to discuss that, and I don't want to do that from this podium.

Q Is there a decision yet on whether there will be a State of the Union or a farewell address?

MR. SIEWERT: We're getting there. We thought we had one piece of business for you today, the decision to travel to New York on the 20th, and we're going to drip this out in bits and pieces. (Laughter.) But that's all I've got today, at least. So we're going to New York, and that's one decision that I'm ready to share with you. But we're considering some options there for next week.

Q Has he decided not to have a news conference?

MR. SIEWERT: No, we haven't made a decision not to have a news conference. But that's another thing that's kicking around somewhere in the decision-making process. We'll let you know if we have something final.

Q Have they signed a deal yet? I mean, have they closed on the house?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I don't believe so, but I'll double-check on that. I think they were planning on doing it sometime before the 20th, but I don't think it's been concluded yet.

Q Would you let us know?

MR. SIEWERT: Absolutely.

Q And on the office space up in New York, as well?

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, we'll let you know on that. I don't know what the time line is on that. He obviously looked at some places that he liked. He's got to make a decision, and then there's a legal process, bidding process.

Q Thank you.

MR. SIEWERT: Thank you. We'll be back on Friday.

END

1:47 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 16, 2001

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
JAKE SIEWERT

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

1:45 P.M. EST

MR. SIEWERT: A couple things to start. Just wanted to detail for you the efforts that we're making in El Salvador, to help respond to the earthquake there. The President called President Flores on Sunday to express our sympathies and offer assistance as necessary. Disaster personnel from USAID were in San Salvador at the time of the earthquake, coincidentally, and so they immediately began coordinating with the National Emergency Committee, the Salvadoran Red Cross and the U.S. Embassy to assess the extent of the damage.

Teams of U.S. specialists from Costa Rica and Miami, including specialists from the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department, U.S. military personnel from the U.S. Southern Command arrived on Sunday, right away, to assist in the relief efforts. That was a USAID plane that flew down to San Salvador with the team and relief supplies.

So the combined U.S. personnel in the area are assisting the government of El Salvador in improving relief coordination, establishing a command and control system for a search and extraction, and helping the government of El Salvador institute a system to prioritize and task air lift missions.

The President spoke to President Flores. Secretary Albright has been in touch with her counterpart, too, about what we can do to help. And we are working with them on an ongoing basis to deal with this problem. The ongoing assistance at the moment is valued at about a quarter of a million dollars.

An update from the President's exam, physical exam on Friday. During that exam last Friday, January 12th, as we told

-MORE-

#034 - 1/16/01

you then, a lesion on his back, suspicious for skin cancer, was excised. The pathology results that were read this morning confirm that the lesion was a superficial, basal cell skin cancer. Pathologists noted that the margin of the lesion appeared clean, which indicates that the lesion had been totally removed.

In addition, at the time of the biopsy, the President elected to have the tissue around the lesion treated superficially with a technique called scraping and burning, in the event that the lesion was to be confirmed as skin cancer.

The risk of recurrence of basal cell skin cancer is low; but the risk of developing a new lesion in the future is increased over the rest of the population, due to the fair skin years of sun exposure. So he'll be seen again in four to six months by a dermatologist, and if there's no evidence of new lesions at that time, he'll be followed up on an annual basis.

As I think Dr. Connie, or one of the dermatologists told you on Friday, this is a relatively common form of skin cancer -- 800,000 to a million cases a year. The lesion was removed, so while the President, I guess it could be said, had skin cancer, that has been removed and he no longer has it. So that is that.

We're also issuing a statement shortly on the report on Persian Gulf -- the analysis of -- the health consequences of the Gulf War, which will come out shortly. PJ has a copy there, that he's modeling, as well. That provides an overview of background, clinical programs, research and investigations that we've undertaken in that regard to help understand some of the consequences of health problems that have been associated with that.

And that is all I have for you.

Q What is the President's speech about tomorrow, in Little Rock?

MR. SIEWERT: The President will talk tomorrow about -- he wants to thank the people of Arkansas for supporting him over the years and talk to the legislature, in particular, about the good work that he had done with them before he left, and now as President, to help the state of Arkansas.

But, obviously, the President has a deep and abiding commitment to Arkansas -- his home state and he wanted to thank the people there for helping make it possible for him to be the President of the United States and serve his country over the last eight years.

Q Jake, to any extent does the President believe that his presidency has been a double-edged sword for the people and state of Arkansas?

MR. SIEWERT: I think the President feels as though Arkansas has benefitted tremendously during his administration. The economy of Arkansas, which was like the rest of the United States -- in a bit of a slump in the late '80s and early '90s -- is doing dramatically better. And more people in Arkansas work than ever before, the incomes have risen there and there's been a great deal of economic development. We were able to secure funding for some of the key priorities, including transportation priorities, thanks to the work that Rodney Slater has done. And a lot of the Arkansans that he brought with him to Washington -- James Lee Witt, Rodney Slater and others -- have excelled in their jobs here.

Q If the presidency has been so helpful for Arkansas, what is the White House explanation of why they didn't vote for Al Gore?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not going to get back into an analysis of who voted for whom, when, but the people of Arkansas obviously made their own decisions about who they wanted to support in the election. But they overwhelmingly supported President Clinton in '92, again in '96. They elected him Governor a number of times, elected him Attorney General. He appreciates their commitment, their sticking with him throughout the years.

Q Jake, did President Clinton act on Governor Davis's request that three natural gas firms be ordered to supply natural gas to PG&E?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not going to comment on the specifics of any proposal. The parties in the California electricity situation have at several times asked us to play a convening role, and the White House, Treasury and Energy have done that. Now the parties are looking at a proposal that's on the table. They're working through the details. It's a serious situation, and they themselves have to come up with some sort of solution. To the extent that we can facilitate that, we're available to do so, but we see this mainly as a discussion between the parties to the dispute, which I told the NSC sounds suspiciously like an answer about the Mid East peace process. (Laughter.)

Q Speaking of which -- (laughter.)

MR. SIEWERT: But I think the reality is that the parties have a great deal of work to do amongst themselves. The federal government has a limited role. Obviously, the FERC has a role,

but that's an independent agency, and Secretary Richardson has taken some steps to ease the crunch there. But we are basically in the role of convening the parties to come up with some sort of solution amongst themselves.

Q So he hasn't answered the request by the Governor, asking him to intercede, or is that --

MR. SIEWERT: No, we've not.

Q How do you see Saturday morning?

MR. SIEWERT: We're still working on some of the details with the President-elect's team, but I think that the President will have an opportunity to see the President-elect before the ceremony here. We'll work out some of those details, and then they'll proceed to the Capitol. The new President will be sworn in, and we'll head off into the sunset.

Q Are you all packed?

MR. SIEWERT: I am packed. You're welcome to come up and inspect my office. I think after yesterday, I'm ahead of the curve.

Q Have you got a job?

MR. SIEWERT: You know, thinking about it. I have some ideas, but --

Q Which plane is he going to take from Andrews? Has that been determined yet? The big 747 or something smaller going into White Plains?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know, actually. I assume that we'll take whatever plane is traditional for ex-Presidents to take, but that's something we'll work out with the Bush team.

Q Do you know if President Clinton will be making a live radio address on Saturday?

MR. SIEWERT: That's an issue we're still discussing. I expect he will deliver a radio address. Whether it's taped or live is something we haven't quite decided yet -- on the rest of the schedule that day

Q Does the White House have any insight into what's going on into the Congo? There have been reports that Laurent Kabila has been shot during a coup attempt.

MR. SIEWERT: We've seen those reports, but I can't confirm them. You'll have to -- I can't confirm those reports. We've obviously seen them.

Q Jake, can you give me a sense of what the meeting between George W. Bush and President Clinton will be like on Saturday morning? Where might it be, what will they be talking about?

MR. SIEWERT: I think this is traditionally a relatively -- it's not a working meeting, by any measure. This is a relatively informal social event where the First Family welcomes the new First Family, and they have a chance to see each other at the White House before the ceremony itself up at the Congress. But it's not meant to be substantive in any way, shape or form. That's what the meeting that was held last month was designed to do.

Q Will the President be going back to Arkansas when he leaves?

MR. SIEWERT: No, I've already made pretty clear the President is going to Chappaqua that day, flying probably to JFK and then continuing from there.

Q Is it your understanding that they drive up to the Capitol together in the same limo?

MR. SIEWERT: I understand that's the tradition.

Q The new one?

MR. SIEWERT: I don't know, actually, whether we'll get a chance to use the new limo. But I guess we've been using it already, so no reason why we shouldn't.

Q As long as you raised the Middle East, is it your understanding that Dennis Ross won't be going back any more, and that he is pretty much off the radar screen now, in administration efforts?

MR. SIEWERT: Dennis is never off the radar screen. (Laughter.) No, we're continuing to consult with the parties, through the various channels that we have available to us. The parties, themselves, are in direct contact, and they met today to discuss both security issues and the political process. We think it's important for them to continue these discussions.

As you said, travel by Dennis Ross remains on hold. We believe it's important for the process to continue. The issues

are well known by both sides, and we expect that the President's parameters that were put forward has helped narrow the differences somewhat, and narrow the debate. Although they -- ultimately, they, themselves, need to decide whether they want a bridge and how to bridge those differences.

But we believe it's critical that they do so. The United States, whether under this President or the next one, will remain engaged in that process. And it's important that they do so because, ultimately, a just and comprehensive peace is critical to resolving tension in that region. And that's in the U.S. interest. The incoming team will obviously have to make it's own decisions about how to proceed, but for the moment, we remain engaged, and we'll continue to discuss with the parties -- their own discussions amongst themselves.

Q Has he been getting a lot of farewell messages, and is he going to leave his successor some sort of note?

MR. SIEWERT: I actually haven't asked him. I expect he will leave some sort of note. But he has been getting an overwhelming number of last-minute notices, gifts and a lot of heart-felt notes from his staff, people who have seen him over the years. It's making packing up even harder, because the gifts and notes keep flowing in, just as we're trying to pack them up.

Q What kind of gifts?

MR. SIEWERT: Oh, he's got some very nice photos and things. But he's gotten a number of different things. We usually keep those fairly private.

Q Jake, Stephen Colbert, Senior White House Correspondent for the Daily Show. Will the President be making any more statements today?

MR. SIEWERT: The President I expect will be making a statement this afternoon, and you're invited to attend that.

Q Will he be available for one-on-ones?

MR. SIEWERT: He will not be available for a one-on-one with the Daily Show.

Q Could you at least ask?

MR. SIEWERT: We could check. (Laughter.) I don't know -- unfortunately, you know, D.C. Cable -- and I'm a long-time subscriber to D.C. Cable -- doesn't carry the Daily Show, as you may or may not be aware. So he may not be familiar with the show.

Q Make sure he knows it's Stephen Colbert, not Stephen Carell, okay? That's C-o-l-b-e-r-t. He'll see me.

MR. SIEWERT: Okay.

Q Can you talk about what exactly happens on Saturday? Is there ever a point in which the staff of both your administration and the Bush administration is here, overlaps at all? How does that work?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, I don't know how many of their staff -- you might want to ask Mr. Hunt or someone else who's witnessed one of these in the past. (Laughter.) It's just a factual statement, nothing intended by it. (Laughter.)

I expect that their staff -- some of their staff probably comes with them for this visit, but I think it's a very limited amount. Most people will be at the Capitol. There's a very small number of staff here that will be on hand just to help with that event, and the press's interest in covering the comings and goings here that morning.

But most of the staff, of our staff, will have checked out at that point and be on their way home or out to Andrews.

Q You're going with the President?

MR. SIEWERT: I expect to accompany him as he leaves town.

Q What will you do in New York, when you get there?

MR. SIEWERT: What do I do in New York? (Laughter.) That's a good question. I don't know, maybe go to the city.

Q Get on a train.

MR. SIEWERT: Yes, come home --

Q Does he go anywhere -- from JFK, does he go directly to Chappaqua?

MR. SIEWERT: I expect that he will go directly from New York to Chappaqua.

Q From the airport, or is he going into Manhattan to do any --

MR. SIEWERT: I think he's planning on just going straight -- we'll let you know all the final details. But the plans at the moment call for him to go from JFK to Chappaqua, directly.

Q Could I ask you, also, on pardons, that issue is still up in the air. Do you anticipate now, as we get closer -- have you gotten a better idea of what he's going to do, in terms of pardons? Are there a lot of pardons he's going to -- is he going to put it until the very last minute? What can we expect?

MR. SIEWERT: I think he's looked at a lot of pardons, at a lot of petitions. Whether we actually grant a number of them and what number we grant is something that I'll have to leave until we actually make the announcement. I would not expect anything today, but it could come at any time after that, up until Friday.

Q Has he ruled out pardons for the Whitewater figures, specifically?

MR. SIEWERT: I'm not going to comment on any of the specific cases until we make a final decision.

Q What about monuments?

MR. SIEWERT: We are reviewing a number of monuments that were recommended by Secretary Babbitt, including Pompeys Pillar, in Montana; one in Arizona; a couple in the Virgin Islands. Most prominently, the Missouri Breaks, which figured very importantly in the Lewis and Clark expedition.

So I think we'll have something to say on that before we leave. It could be any day now, but I wouldn't expect that we'll announce that officially today.

Q The staff that he's taking, will they go into the Washington office, or New York?

MR. SIEWERT: The President will have an office in Washington for just a short transition period, over on Jackson Place, as President Reagan did. He will also have a staff in New York. I expect that there will be some people in both offices, but we have not signed on the dotted line on office space in New York. So in the short-term, people will probably be working out of Washington. Although, they're trying to arrange some temporary space in New York.

Q A lot has been written about the President's environmental legacy. And some recent reports have sort of suggested that early on in his administration he wasn't as engaged on that issue. Do you acknowledge that and what can explain sort of his --

MR. SIEWERT: I think anyone who looked at -- I mean, first of all, the President has from day one spent a lot of time with

Vice President Gore talking about issues that were critical on the environment. The speech he gave at the State Department, early on in this administration, about climate change was a very thoughtful speech and one he could have given today, it's worth looking at. He made that remark to an event that Ted Turner sponsored, I believe, in late '93 or early '94. And it's worthwhile to look back at that, because it's some of the same challenges we're talking about today.

Also, he, from the very beginning of this administration -- whether it was the work out in the spotted owl and the very difficult work that went around -- that summit that we had out in Oregon, has been committed to finding a way to protect the environment and protect economic growth. That was something he talked about throughout the campaign and something we worked very hard on in the early days, particularly around the northwest forest plan.

Q The employees that former President Clinton will have, will they all be employees that he will get as a result of -- that a certain amount of staff that a former President gets? Or does he plan to form a company of his own and just employ them personally?

MR. SIEWERT: Actually, I'll refer you to his new team on that when they get in place. But I think that you can expect that there will be some people who work at the library, which is a separate entity, some people will work at the office of the former President and some people may work for him in different capacities one way or the other.

Q Can I ask you about the procedure on Saturday? Is he actually going to leave from the White House to the airport? Or what is he --

MR. SIEWERT: No, he attends the inaugural ceremony.

Q From there to --

MR. SIEWERT: He leaves from the Capitol, traditionally, and then proceeds to Andrews for his final flight.

Q He's not coming back to the White House?

MR. SIEWERT: No, after he leaves it's not -- it's really his to occupy.

Q How long does he stay in New York?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, he lives there now, so I assume he'll

stay as long as he wants. (Laughter.) No, he expects to take up residence there, and live there. That will be his permanent residence, and after that, you'll have to check with someone else about his comings and goings. But I'm not in a position to comment on those now.

Q Jake, anything you can tell us about his sayonara message on Thursday, and has a final press conference been ruled out and, if so, why?

MR. SIEWERT: I think the address on Thursday night will be relatively short. The draft I looked at ran about six or seven minutes. He wanted to take this opportunity to thank the American people for their support over the years, for helping him become the first Democrat since FDR to serve two terms, and for giving him a chance to serve the country. And he'll comment on some of the good work that he's been able to do, along with the American people.

He'll also take an opportunity to look a little bit forward, some of the challenges we face in the new globalized world, one that really has become more interdependent in the last 10 years, and probably comment a bit on the importance of America remaining engaged in the world and continuing to play a leadership role.

Q And a press conference is ruled out?

MR. SIEWERT: A press conference. We had kicked around the idea of a press conference, but the President is awfully busy -- it's a huge commitment of time. And he's been regularly available, here and there, including last week. I think he took about 10 questions, more than I would have liked, behind the Oval. But we did not really have the time, given that he's packing up, trying to do a lot of meetings, and trying to finish up some work.

Q Jake, if I could just return to the Middle East one last time. Are you saying that the clock has now run out on even the prospect of a framework signing?

MR. SIEWERT: Well, the parties -- in the end, the parties will make a decision about what they want to agree with -- agree to or not to agree to, on their own time frame. They continue to talk, and I'm not going to rule anything out, as long as they continue to talk. But that's up to them to make that decision. We remain available to help them in the process, and we continue to talk to them about the President's parameters, and what we could do to narrow the differences between the parties.

But they're focused on their discussions right now, and

we'll do -- I'm not going to try to limit those discussions in any way. But obviously, there's a very short timetable, and that makes it exceedingly difficult. But, ultimately, that's their decision, not ours.

Q Will there be anything resembling a State of the Union in these final days, a message?

MR. SIEWERT: I would not expect a State of the Union.

Q There's no obligation to send one up?

MR. SIEWERT: There's no obligation in the Constitution. I believe it says from time to time that the President shall provide information. He's obviously not planning a full-scale address, and I don't know of any written address that's in the works.

Q Jake, the spokesman for the President-elect George Bush has said that any final days deal the President signs -- executive orders or makes any deals -- will be under -- will be reviewed by the new administration -- under the law legally or politically can be possible?

MR. SIEWERT: Sure, they can review everything that we did, but the reality is I think that they'll find that there's a good public policy underlying most of the decisions we've made here over the last couple of years, some of which were finalized in the last month or so.

But whether it's the rule to protect workers in the work place or the rules to protect national forests from new road building, we think that those are worthy public policy objectives, and should be allowed to stand on the merits.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

2:07 P.M. EST



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION
Washington, D.C. 20503

January 17, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR TERRY GOOD
DIRECTOR, RECORDS MANAGEMENT

FROM: KAREN L. BARBUSCHAK *KLB*
TECHNICAL INFORMATION SPECIALIST
EOP PUBLICATIONS SERVICES

SUBJECT: White House Press Briefings

The daily White House Press Briefings for November and December 2000 are enclosed with this memorandum. They have been filed sequentially. I also have enclosed the January 2001 Press Briefings up until January 16, 2001. I will send the rest, if any, at a later date.

White House Press Office