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ADDRESSES GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE CONFERENCE ON IRAQ

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ALBRIGHT: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

I love this hall, and I am delighted to be here. Thank you very much, Father O'Donovan and my good friend Allan Goodman. It's wonderful to be here with all of you today.

Distinguished panelists, it is very good to be able to participate in your day of discussions regarding United States policy towards **Iraq**. I'm especially pleased because Georgetown University was long my professional home and it is the first chance that I've had to return since becoming secretary of state.

I must confess that, as I look around the room and see so many former colleagues, I feel a certain amount of envy. I am having a wonderful time in my new job, but as I recall my previous life, it occurs to me that there are certain advantages to teaching as opposed to practicing diplomacy.

REGULAR WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING

MARCH 26, 1997

SPEAKERS: MIKE MCCURRY, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

CHRIS JENNINGS, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT

FOR HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT

DAVID JOHNSON, DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY

*** Elapsed Time 00:00, Eastern Time 13:34 ***

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MCCURRY: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to today's daily briefing at the White House.

QUESTION: It's hot.

MCCURRY: You like that, huh? Spring. Spring time.

For one thing, you don't have to be as diplomatic.

(LAUGHTER)

For another, instead of spending your time with grizzled old foreign ministers, you are surrounded by fresh-faced quick-witted students who keep you young. Instead of reciting talking points that have been compressed into little bullets, you get to lecture for 50 minutes at a chop.

(LAUGHTER)

And instead of going up to Congress to get grilled, you can invite others to seminars and grill them.

(LAUGHTER)

So, I remember my years here fondly, and I am constantly bumping into former Georgetown students who are now running large chunks of foreign governments, and so have faith, despite our early exit from the basketball tournament, the master plan is still on track.

(LAUGHTER)

We do run the United States and Georgetown may yet rule the world.

(LAUGHTER)

(APPLAUSE)

I just snuck out on a meeting with our most famous graduate, and when I told him that I was coming to his alma mater to speak, he said -- Fine. Go right ahead. So here we are with his blessing.

(LAUGHTER)

I also want to thank Ambassador Suddart (ph) and Dr. Stoester (ph). As today's event illustrates the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies and the Middle East Institute are rich contributors to our public policy debate.

It is in the interests of advancing and clarifying that debate that I was pleased to accept your invitation to speak here today. My fundamental purpose is to reaffirm United States policy towards **Iraq**. That policy is part of a broad commitment to protect the security and territory of our friends and allies in the gulf.

We have a vital national interest in the security of the region's oil supplies, and we have forged strong friendships with countries in the area who agree with us that nations should respect international law, refrain from aggression and oppose those who commit or sponsor terror.

Here as elsewhere, we recognize that stability is not an import. It must be home-grown. But we also know that circumstances may arise in which active American leadership and power are required.

ALBRIGHT: A compelling example was **Iraq's** invasion of Kuwait six-and-a-half years ago. The results of that event remain with us now. So before discussing where we go from here in our policy towards **Iraq**, let me review how we got to where we are.

When President Bush launched Operation Desert Storm, he said that America had two objectives. First, to drive **Iraq** out of Kuwait; second, to cause **Iraq**, once again to, in his words, live as a peaceful and cooperative member of the family of nations.

Because of the bravery and brilliance of the U.S. military-led coalition, the first objective was quickly achieved. But despite the lessons of war, continuing international pressure, the impact of tough UN sanctions and the best interests of the Iraqi people, **Iraq's** government has continued to defy the will of the international community. Under resolutions approved by the UN Security Council, **Iraq** is required to demonstrate its peaceful intentions by meeting a series of obligations.

It must end its weapons of mass destruction programs and destroy any such weapons produced. It must cooperate with the inspection and monitoring regime established by the UN Special Commission, or UNSCOM, and it must recognize its border with Kuwait, return stolen property, account for POWs and MIAs, and end support for terrorism, and stop brutalizing its people.

Had **Iraq** complied with these obligations early on, its economy would have recovered, the oil trade would have resumed, debts would have been paid, the suffering of its people would have been avoided, and it could have resumed its rightful place among the responsible nations of the world. Instead, from the outset, Iraqi leaders chose denial, delay and deceit. Or to put it even more bluntly, they lied.

They have blocked inspections, concealed documents, falsified evidence and challenged UNSCOM's clear and legitimate authority. They have refused to account satisfactorily for Kuwaiti missing and prisoners of war. They have failed to return stolen property and weapons. They have virtually demolished the Marsh Arab community in southern **Iraq**, waged war on the minorities in the north, and accelerated repression in the center to stay in power. And their agents have crossed borders to gun down or poison Iraqi dissidents.

Throughout, their leader, **Saddam** Hussein, has bemoaned the unfairness of sanctions and the indignity of inspections. His complaints remind me of the story about the school boy who returned home, his nose bloodied and his shirt torn.

ALBRIGHT: When his mother asked him how the fight started, he said -- It started when the other guy hit me back.

(LAUGHTER)

Since 1991, the task of looking behind Iraqi deceptions to find the truth has fallen to the IAEA and to UNSCOM Chairman Rolf Ekeus and his staff. For years, they have struggled to discover and destroy **Iraq's** one extensive arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Although they have been harassed and threatened by Iraqi officials, they have made steady and at times stunning progress.

The defection in 1995 of Hussein Kamel, the official who directed many of **Iraq's** efforts at deception, marked a turning point. It led to major revelations regarding biological weapons, and appeared, for a time, as if it would cause **Iraq** finally to accept the need for full disclosure.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case. The refusal to cooperate fully continued throughout 1996 and to the present time. This tactic has not and will not work. Our resolve on this point is unwavering. Hundreds of thousands of American soldiers put their lives on the line in the Gulf War. We will not allow **Iraq** to regain by stonewalling the Security Council what it forfeited by aggression on the battlefield.

We know from experience that firmness is the only language the Iraqi government understands.

In 1993, when **Iraq** plotted the assassination of former President Bush, the United States struck back hard. In 1994, when Iraqi troops again threatened Kuwait, President Clinton's firm military and diplomatic response caused Baghdad not only to pull back its troops, but to recognize at long last its legal border with Kuwait.

ALBRIGHT: Although we oppose the lawless policies of the Iraqi regime, we have never had a quarrel with the Iraqi people. UN sanctions do not prohibit food and medical supplies. But because **Saddam** Hussein did not use his resources to meet the basic needs of his people, we supported efforts for additional relief.

For five years, Baghdad refused to accept such an arrangement. It was not until late last year that **Iraq** finally caved in to international pressure and agreed.

The food-for-oil deal now in place is designed to ease the suffering of civilians throughout **Iraq**. It is not related to the larger question of when and if the overall sanctions regime will be lifted.

Nor is the continuation of this arrangement automatic, however strongly we support its purpose. If we see evidence that the government of **Iraq** is not living up to its promises with respect to implementation, the experiment will cease.

All this brings us to the present day. From the beginning of Operation Desert Storm until now, American policy towards **Iraq** has been consistent, principled and grounded in a realistic and hard-won understanding of the nature of the Iraqi regime.

It has been bolstered by bipartisan support at home and general approval in the region. And it has achieved a great deal.

Iraq's military threat to its neighbors is greatly diminished. Most of its missiles have been destroyed. Its biological and chemical warfare production facilities have been dismantled. Nuclear materials have been removed, and an international monitoring regime to prevent the construction of nuclear weapons is in place.

Iraq has been barred from importing weapons and weapons-related materials and technology. And the area in which Iraqi military forces may operate freely has contracted.

To guard against further miscalculations on Baghdad's part, U.S. forces have been deployed to the region. And we have demonstrated our ability to reinforce those troops rapidly, if required.

Diplomatically, we have sustained an international consensus that **Iraq** should not be allowed again to threaten international peace. In statement after statement, and in 36 successive reviews, the security council has maintained its support for sanctions and its insistence upon compliance.

Meanwhile, six years of sanctions and isolation have taken their toll on the regime in Baghdad. **Saddam** Hussein has become, by far, the most divisive force in **Iraq**. And several coup attempts have been made.

Members of his own somewhat dysfunctional family have turned against him. His inner circle of advisers has been purged repeatedly. Today, his power rests on an increasingly narrow foundation of intimidation and terror.

So while **Iraq's** lawless policies are failing, our policies of law and firmness are working. As long as the apparatus of sanctions, enforcement, inspections and monitoring is in place, **Iraq** will remain trapped within a strategic box, unable to successfully threaten its neighbors and unable to realize the grandiose ambitions of its ignoble leader.

ALBRIGHT: It is essential, however, that international resolve not weaken. Containment has worked. But despite **Iraq's** present weakness, the future threat has not been erased.

Iraq's behavior and intentions must change before our policies can change. Otherwise, we will allow the scorpion that bit us once to bite us again. That would be a folly impossible to explain to our children or to the veterans of Desert Storm.

Consider that under **Saddam** Hussein, **Iraq** has started two major wars, used poison gas and committed gross violations of international humanitarian law. Consider that **Iraq** admitted producing chemical and biological warfare agents before the Gulf War that were sufficiently lethal to kill every man, woman and child on earth. Consider that **Iraq** has yet to provide convincing evidence that it has destroyed all of these weapons. Consider that **Iraq** admitted loading many of those agents into missile warheads before the war.

Consider that **Iraq** retains more than 7,500 nuclear scientists and technicians, as well as technical documents related to the production of nuclear weapons. Consider that **Iraq** has been caught trying to smuggle in missile guidance instruments.

And consider that according to Ambassador Ekeus, UNSCOM has not been able to account for all the missiles acquired over the years. In fact, Ekeus believes that it is highly likely that **Iraq** retains an operational Scud missile force, probably with chemical or biological weapons to go with it.

If past is prologue under the current government, then **Iraq** released from sanctions and scrutiny would pick up where it left off a half-a-dozen years ago, before the mother of all coalitions stopped it dead in its tracks. For these reasons, our policies will not change. It is the right policy.

To those who ask how long our determination will last, how long we will oppose Iraqi intransigence, how long we will insist that the international community standards be met, our answer is, as long as it takes.

We do not agree with the nations who argue that if **Iraq** complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction, sanctions should be lifted. Our view, which is unshakable, is that **Iraq** must prove its peaceful intentions. It can only do that by complying with all of the Security Council resolutions to which it is subjected.

Is it possible to conceive of such a government under **Saddam** Hussein?

When I was a professor, I taught that you have to consider all possibilities. As secretary of state, I have to deal in the realm of reality and probability.

ALBRIGHT: And the evidence is overwhelming that **Saddam** Hussein's intentions will never be peaceful. The United States looks forward, nevertheless, to the day when **Iraq** rejoins the family of nations as a responsible and law-abiding member.

This is in our interests and in the interests of our allies and partners within the region. Clearly, a change in **Iraq's** government could lead to a change in U.S. policy. Should that occur, we would stand ready, in coordination with our allies and friends, to enter rapidly into a dialogue with a successor regime.

That dialogue would have two principal goals. First, because we are firmly committed to **Iraq's** territorial integrity, we would want to verify that the new **Iraq** would be independent, unified and free from undue external influence -- for example, from Iran.

Second, we would require improvements in behavior. Is there cooperation with UNSCOM and compliance with the UN resolutions? Is there respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities? Is there a convincing repudiation of terrorism? Are its military ambitions limited to those of reasonable defense?

If our concerns were addressed satisfactorily, **Iraq** would no longer threaten regional security. It's isolation could end.

The international community -- including the United States -- would look for ways to ease **Iraq's** reintegration. A whole range of economic and security matters would be open for discussion in a climate of cooperation and mutual respect. **Iraq** could begin to reclaim its potential as a nation rich in resources and blessed by a talented and industrious people, and **Iraq** could become a pillar of peace and stability in the region.

But until that day comes, we must and we will maintain our watch. We will work to continue -- we will continue to work closely with our allies and friends to ensure that **Iraq** does not again attack its neighbors or put them at risk.

We will retain in the region the military capability required to deter Iraqi aggression and to enforce the no-fly and no-drive zones. We will maintain a firm commitment to the territorial sovereignty of Kuwait and our other friends in the region.

We will lend our full diplomatic support to the work of the UN special commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. We will insist, with all of the diplomatic tools at our command, that UN sanctions remain in place.

Within that context, we will do what we reasonably can to minimize the suffering of Iraqi citizens. We will continue to support the establishment of a coherent and united Iraqi opposition, which represents the

country's ethnic and confessional diversity. And we will continue helping the people of northern **Iraq** to meet their practical needs, resolve internal tensions and reject the influence of terrorists.

The Baghdad of 1,200 years ago was described as "the center of a properly regulated and well-ordered state, where schools and college abound to which philosophers, students, doctors and priests flock, and where the governors and minister are honest."

Clearly, **Saddam** Hussein has not been an agent of progress. And clearly, what is now need not always be.

ALBRIGHT: The rip in the fabric of Gulf stability that was created by **Iraq's** invasion of Kuwait has not fully mended, but the aggression has been rolled back. **Iraq's** military is contained and the path for **Iraq's** re-entry into the community of nations is clearly laid out.

This is not, to borrow Margaret Thatcher's phrase, the time to go wobbly towards **Iraq**. The United States is committed, as are our friends, to the victory of principle over expediency, and to the evolution in **Iraq** of a society based on law, exemplified by pluralism and content to live at peace.

These goals may be achieved soon. They may be achieved not so soon. But they are right. They are necessary and they will be achieved.

Thank you all very much.

(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Madeleine, I know there are a number of questions, and I promised to deliver all of them to you in a bundle, but for the moment, would those who have them pass them to the ushers at the side?

I was selected to moderate the question and answer period because of my handwriting.

(LAUGHTER)

As Madeleine knows, no one's at the school is worse, and it was thought that I could decipher the comments on the cards. While they're coming up, I'd like to say, on behalf of Dean Beluchi (ph), who is traveling and on behalf of Dean Emeritus Peter Crowe (ph) who is in the audience, how grateful we all are for your continuing commitment to want to come here and engage students and their teachers in thinking about problems in international politics.

As I heard your speech, I thought back to the lectures you gave in our course on foreign policy decision making. You have a special gift, not only to speak in 50 minute segments or less...

(LAUGHTER)

... but a special gift to define where and how America can provide a central and indispensable leadership.

As you spoke out in school on these topics, you inspired our students and none more than our women students, because I think what you demonstrated was not only that equality mattered at the top, but that the quality of their ideas mattered as they contributed to policy.

And by coming here to our school today and yesterday speaking at a school in North Carolina and tomorrow, I know you will be at another school. In coming to schools like ours to talk about foreign policy, you sustain all of us, whose mission is to prepare young people for careers in international affairs.

I'd like to say that, in fact, you've redefined the school of foreign service's mission statement. It's really to prepare young people for careers in foreign affairs, just like yours.

ALBRIGHT: This is why it's good to come home.

MODERATOR: Any time. And now I'll take the questions.

QUESTION: This question concerns the future of strategic and territorial arrangements of **Iraq**.

QUESTION: From time to time, pundits have joined or voiced the idea of dismembering **Iraq**. By saying no to them, aren't we doing **Saddam** Hussein a favor? I think the implication of the question is should we be moving to keep **Iraq** territorially intact?

ALBRIGHT: We have believed consistently that it is very important to maintain the territorial integrity of **Iraq**. It is important for the stability of the region. It is important for the people of **Iraq**. But the point is to make sure that the variety of people that live in **Iraq** in the north, center and the south are able, in fact, to have the appropriate liberties that are required of countries that have a number of minorities -- and not to have the kinds of repression of people that **Saddam** Hussein has exerted both in the north and in the south, where he has basically in the south destroyed a whole system of living that the people

there have had.

But we do believe that it is important for the stability of the region to keep repeating, and also keep insisting, that there be the territorial integrity of **Iraq**.

QUESTION: Thank you.

The next question concerns the sanctions regimes, and not only its future, but whether there are going to be alternatives to a sanctions regime in order to keep **Iraq** both militarily contained and politically stable?

ALBRIGHT: Beyond the sanctions that...

QUESTION: Beyond the sanctions.

ALBRIGHT: Well, I think that the issue -- let me just say something about the sanctions regime themselves. Having participated at many of those reviews that I discussed, there was always the issue as to what the sanctions regime had accomplished. And I think that what is important to know is -- for instance, the work that Chairman Ekeus has undertaken through UNSCOM and then with IAEA has brought about the following results.

In the chemical weapons area, there has been the destruction of 28,000 chemical munitions; 480,000 liters of chemical weapons agent; 1.8 million liters and over 1 million kilograms of 45 different precursor chemicals; and a variety of biological weapon production equipment.

In the biological area, the entire Al Hakam custom-built biological weapon factory complex has been dismantled, and a huge variety of biological weapon production equipment has also been removed.

In the nuclear area, all quantities of special nuclear material -- that is highly enriched uranium or plutonium -- found in **Iraq** have been removed, and the industrial infrastructure which **Iraq** has set up to produce and weaponize specialized nuclear materials has been destroyed.

ALBRIGHT: So I think that we should understand that the sanctions regime has, in fact, been quite successful and needs to remain in place. And what is important here for us to say, and as I said in my remarks is that we are prepared to have a dialogue with a successor regime that does, in fact, abide by what was required as a result of the Gulf War.

And that is the policy that one needs to look towards, that the sanctions regime is working. The coalition is firm, and the firmness of the security council and the coalition is what is going to keep this on track. But as I said, we are prepared to deal with a successor.

QUESTION: This question concerns the relations between the United States and a neighbor country. What do you foresee, if any, changes in U.S. relations with Iran would have to be in the continuing effort to contain **Iraq**?

ALBRIGHT: Well, we, as you know, have had a policy of dual containment. We believe that that policy is an appropriate one, and that it is important, in fact, to make sure for the stability of the region to make sure that Iran is also not involved in the creation of weapons of mass destruction, supports the peace process and does not support terrorism.

Therefore, we consider that our policy, as far as Iran and **Iraq** are concerned, are the right policies. And we will pursue in that vein.

QUESTION: I guess my final question, and perhaps the one that was asked most often in the audience, is how will your teaching be different when you return to school, having been secretary of state?

ALBRIGHT: Well, I think that -- let me just put it the other way. I think that my teaching has actually been very helpful to my job as secretary of state, because it has enabled me to probe new ideas and not be afraid to have what I call no-fault discussions where one can throw out ideas and have -- and explore the possibilities.

I think it also has enabled me to speak plainly and to understand the value of explaining foreign policy to young people and to anyone that will listen. And what it has also done is made me so very conscious of the fact that what I am doing is for the young people.

So when I come back I plan to do what Georgetown professors do -- the practitioners who come back and put their knowledge to use in seeking new answers for the next generation.

Thank you all very, very much for this wonderful homecoming.

(APPLAUSE)

END

Chris Jennings is graciously here to brief you before he briefs the president for the upcoming event. Anyone want to get into the health care commission subject before you get going?

QUESTION: What's wrong with it?

MCCURRY: What's wrong with health care? Nothing. We want to make sure it's high quality health care as we see the transformation occurring in America's health care industry as we move towards more managed care arrangements. And this commission will take a broad look at those and related issues. And further on the subjects, it is my pleasure to introduce Chris Jennings, the president's senior health care adviser.

QUESTION: There is a lot of dissatisfaction with managed care, isn't there?

MCCURRY: Have you been having some trouble getting your bills paid?

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION: No. I'm hearing a lot of stories.

MCCURRY: That's all right. We used to get -- back, long, long ago, when I worked in the U.S. Senate, I was trying to get people interested in pension reform.

*** Elapsed Time 00:01, Eastern Time 13:35 ***

And the way to do it was always to get reporters to start looking at their lousy pension arrangements that a lot of their news organizations have.

QUESTION: I'm a little more esoteric than that.

(LAUGHTER)

MCCURRY: What is esoteric?

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION: She has a world -- a world view.

MCCURRY: Chris. Chris Jennings from the domestic policy council and deputy to the president, health care expert extraordinaire, to tell you more about the commission the president will announce in a few short minutes.

QUESTION: Of course we don't (OFF-MIKE)

JENNINGS: Hi, Helen.

(LAUGHTER)

JENNINGS: Well, the president in -- I think it's about 2:15 or thereabouts, will be announcing the commission members on the advisory commission on consumer rights and quality in the health care industry.

It is something that has -- people have been waiting for for a little while. The president has announced his intentions to appoint this commission late in 1996. We have had more interest in this commission than in any other commission we've ever appointed.

We've had almost 1,000 nominations for it.

*** Elapsed Time 00:02, Eastern Time 13:36 ***

We had to go through an extraordinary clearance process. The president was firmly committed to making sure that it was broadly representative of all the health care interests and players in this country.

As such, you will note -- and some of you will have in your packets, if you don't have it already -- the representatives and where they come from. They're all over the country, but they also represent business, labor, health insurers, health plans, certainly consumers in a wide variety of capacities, state and local interests, and quality experts, every -- labor interests as well.

Every area, which helps explain why we now have 32 members of this commission rather than the initial executive order which did outline 20 members. We had so many -- so much interest and the president was so committed to have a broad based representation that we had to add 12 more members.

QUESTION: Is this a lesson from the health care plan, where you had it so narrowly defined?

JENNINGS: Well, we think that certainly the president, when he did the health security act, did reach out in a very, very broad way to all interests, and he is doing it in this way. This commission happens to

represent a much smaller group of people.

*** Elapsed Time 00:03, Eastern Time 13:37 ***

I think that the lessons learned in the health security act and with the whole congressional Republican agenda in the last Congress was that we need to reach out across bipartisan -- in a bipartisan way to all interested parties to move any type of health care agenda forward.

JENNINGS: We saw when we did that we got the Kassebaum-Kennedy legislation and enacted it into law. We think this creates the type of environment in which we can push forward on significant health care quality improvements in this country.

I would like to say for the record that one of the -- the commission will be co-chaired by Secretary Shalala and Secretary-designate Alexis Herman, assuming she is confirmed, which, of course, we assume she will be.

*** Elapsed Time 00:04, Eastern Time 13:38 ***

Secretary Shalala has been involved in the Medicare and the Medicaid programs of really pushing this quality agenda, even in the absence of private interventions in Medicare and Medicaid. You've seen us pass and -- or not pass, implement provisions on anti-gag legislation, mastectomy coverage language, and a whole host of other areas.

And you will continue to see us in this area push the Medicare programs and the Medicaid programs to really lead the way in terms of where we should be going in quality assurance in this country.

With that, I'd be happy to answer any questions you have beyond...

QUESTION: What is the agenda for this commission?

JENNINGS: Well, the agenda is to focus on how does one define quality. That's a very, very real issue that people don't completely agree on.

*** Elapsed Time 00:05, Eastern Time 13:39 ***

And then once you define quality, how do you enforce quality? And once you decide how you enforce quality, who is the person who -- or groups of people who should be enforcing quality initiatives.

For example, should the government be involved? Should it be federal government, should it be state and local? Should it be private sector? Should it be private standards with some government oversight?

We are not explicitly telling the commission where they should come out on this. We want them to come to us with explicit recommendations.

We do feel very, very strongly, however, that we do need to move in this area because there is a great deal of concern about the rapid change in the health care delivery systems and what is happening relative to quality assurance.

One last thing that I'd like to point out, too, a lot of people want to make this into, you know, HMO-bashing or managed care-bashing. That is not the intent. The president believes very, very strongly that good managed care can actually not only be cost-effective, but actually improve health care outcomes.

*** Elapsed Time 00:06, Eastern Time 13:40 ***

We've seen that in a variety of different ways across the country. And well, our focus here is to make sure that whether it's managed care or traditional health insurance, that we ensure that we have very, very high-quality health care in this country. Yes?

QUESTION: When you talk about a bill of rights that almost suggest that you're talking about some kind of legislation package.

JENNINGS: That's right.

QUESTION: What, exactly, is a bill of rights in this context?

JENNINGS: Well, actually, if you look across the states and the private sector, there's a lot of people who do have patient bill of rights, consumer bill of rights that aren't legislative at all.

Private sector entities and managed-care plans have been implementing patient bill of rights, as have state legislatures through the legislative front.

JENNINGS: It -- I don't disagree with you that when you say patient bill of rights, people think bill and legislation. That is not the intent of that. It is the intent, though, that we are committed to moving in this

area to have very, very high strong standards, wherever or however they're enforced.

*** Elapsed Time 00:07, Eastern Time 13:41 ***

Yes.

QUESTION: Congress doesn't seem particularly interested in waiting for the results of this kind of commission whether it's the gag rule or drive-by deliveries or mastectomies. The president and Congress have worked rather quickly to try to address concerns in managed care. How would that interface with this commission that supposedly isn't going to report for what? 18 months?

JENNINGS: No, the report will -- the preliminary report will be due in January and the final report in March of next year. The president believes very strongly that, where there is consensus, and there has been a good deal of consensus between Republicans and Democrats in various areas.

One area might be the anti-gag legislative areas. Another might be mastectomy legislation as well. We'll have to see where that comes down, but we don't believe this is, in any way, in competition with these legislative initiatives on Capitol Hill.

In fact, we believe that they're complementary to them. This commission can provide very realistic guidance to the Hill and to the administration as how best these and other type of legislative remedies should be pursued and written.

*** Elapsed Time 00:08, Eastern Time 13:42 ***

And moreover, where there is not consensus, it can help build broader consensus as we go through this process. So we actually feel it's very, very complementary to what's going on on Capitol Hill.

QUESTION: So you're going to set the standards. Right?

I mean, the commission will.

JENNINGS: The Quality Commission will make recommendations and the president will review them. One -- can I just -- in your press packets that you will get, there is an extraordinary, impressive array of groups -- from consumers to insurers to physicians to nurses to business to labor -- who have written in the last one and two days endorsing this commission in very, very strong ways to just illustrate the real concerns people have about what's happening in the health care delivery system, but also the broad-based support the president has.

MCCURRY: Just two quick more questions here.

QUESTION: Is Mrs. Clinton on this commission? And if not, what will her role be?

JENNINGS: No, the first lady is not on this commission. She continues to have a very active interest in health care and quality, children's coverage.

*** Elapsed Time 00:09, Eastern Time 13:43 ***

And she will continue to have that interest and to be involved.

QUESTION: What is the budget for the commission and how often will it meet?

JENNINGS: The budget is, I think, about \$1.8 million or \$1.5 million, along those areas. It comes from the secretary of health -- it comes from the Health and Human Services. It will be administered out of an office in HHS. They will determine how frequently they meet after they have their first meeting, which has yet to occur. This is just the announcement of who they are.

MCCURRY: Thanks, Chris. I promised Chris I'd let him go since he's got to brief the president and I'll continue my effort to delegate and to avoid any heavy lifting.

I talked to David Johnson from the National Security Council, deputy White House press secretary, who will give you a read-out of the meeting that the president had with Alija Izetbegovic, the president of the Bosnian Federation -- chairman of the president -- Bosnian presidency.

QUESTION: Not Billy Crystal?

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

MCCURRY: I know, I was maybe watching too much of the Academy Awards the other night.

But I don't have any good one-liners. Someone said he didn't need any.

*** Elapsed Time 00:10, Eastern Time 13:44 ***

JOHNSON: Tough group here.

JOHNSON: The president met for about 45 minutes this morning with President Itzebegovic. You all were there for about the 15 minutes. Did the half hour -- see I had a good one liner.

(LAUGHTER)

The half hour that was there...

MCCURRY: That's when they did the real work.

(LAUGHTER)

JOHNSON: Some of it was consecutive translation but some if it not. The president -- it was a good opportunity I think for President Itzebegovic to lay out his concerns and discuss them with the president. It's a very tough set of issues we're dealing with in Bosnia and a useful opportunity. As some of you might recall the last time the president met with President Itzebegovic was in January of '96 when the president visited Tuzla.

President Itzebegovic started out, I think, setting the tone by the discussion by recalling a trip that he had had yesterday to to Arlington Cemetery and paraphrasing some words that he saw at the tomb of John Kennedy from his inaugural address.

*** Elapsed Time 00:11, Eastern Time 13:45 ***

And President Itzebegovic talked about the need for Bosnians not so much to ask what a America could do for them but to ask what they could do for themselves.

President Itzebegovic thanked the president and the American people for the sacrifice and the contribution that many Americans have made to Bosnia, for the troops that have been deployed there for over -- more than a year now, for the diplomats who have been engaged in trying to help them find a peaceful solution to their problems.

He told the president he understood the need to stand up promptly the federation institutions, especially the Central Bank and the central currency. And he invited the president to send a United States representative to the April 15 ceremonies which would launch the federation police force.

*** Elapsed Time 00:12, Eastern Time 13:46 ***

He asked for help in continuing to spread up the equip and train program while expressing the thanks to the president for all the effort that had already been expended there.

He did urge the president to engage in further efforts to help on apprehension of war criminals and resettlement of refugees.

He expressed the hope for a firm stand and the implementation of the Brcko arbitration decision.

And as he talked to some of you about, on the lawn out front he requested support for Bosnia's participation in the partnership for peace.

The president did say that the United States would support Bosnian participation in the partnership for peace but that had to be on the basis of the federation working together and on greater cooperation between the federation and the Bosnian Serbs, something which doesn't currently hold.

He -- the president as I think he made clear to you during -- while you were in the room. Made clear to Itzebegovic that we didn't need to concentrate on our efforts and our thoughts on when the stabilization force troops might be leaving, but on all the work that had to be done each and every day between now and when they left in June of 98.

*** Elapsed Time 00:13, Eastern Time 13:47 ***

QUESTION: Sounds like he's pulling away from that.

JOHNSON: Not at all. But what he does believe is that we need to to everyday work on creating a civil society on economic reconstruction. Because that's the type of effort which will allow -- when the SFOR troops do leave will allow a peaceful Bosnia to continue on the work of putting the state back together.

JOHNSON: He encouraged President Izetbegovic to create a federation that fully includes representatives from both Muslim and Croat sides and urged more concentrated effort on the federation's part on economic reconstruction.

*** Elapsed Time 00:14, Eastern Time 13:48 ***

He told President Izetbegovic that a refugee return was a priority for the United States, and we needed to work together on that to have a planned and orderly program that takes place under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The president noted that apprehension of war criminals is a source of frustration, not just for the Bosnians, but also for the United States. And that while the stabilization force couldn't be a police force to apprehend these individuals, we were continuing to work on other methods where we might bring these people to justice.

The president reassured President Izetbegovic that the United States planned to fulfill all of its equip and train commitment, that we had made much progress, and he reminded President Izetbegovic of the legal requirement in our law that the military and operational intelligence links that may have once existed between Bosnia and Iran had to remain cut.

I think the president closed by reemphasizing the importance of using the time between now and SFOR's withdrawal to get the economic reconstruction part of this done. He reassured President Izetbegovic that we would do our part, and that it was up to the parties today, including the Bosnians, to do theirs as well.

*** Elapsed Time 00:15, Eastern Time 13:49 ***

And, as President Izetbegovic noted for you out on the lawn, he told the president when he departed that he hoped that he could find time and opportunity to visit Sarajevo, something he had been unable to do in the past.

QUESTION: What did Clinton mean by other methods to apprehend war criminals?

JOHNSON: I think we have said in the past that we are looking at some other options. We are trying to consider how, ways where we could assist the parties in fulfilling their commitment to turn over these war criminals to the war crimes tribunal. It's something that remains under very careful review. At this time, I think that's about all I could say about it, constructively.

QUESTION: Has the president progressed in his decisionmaking about whether there should be a police force attached to the war crimes tribunal?

*** Elapsed Time 00:16, Eastern Time 13:50 ***

JOHNSON: I don't know that we've progressed, particularly, in that direction. We're looking at a variety of options. But the focus is on something which would be effective and would allow us to help move some of these people out of the area where they continue to pose a problem.

QUESTION: David, for all of Izetbegovic's talk about self-reliance, he seemed to be implying that a whole series of conditions needed to be met before foreign troops could safely leave his country. Did the president make it clear to him that June of '98 is a drop-dead date, that there, that that's a very firm date in the U.S. mind?

JOHNSON: We fully expect to leave, then, and as the president said, what he wants to concentrate on is using each and every day between now and then to get the job done, not to...

QUESTION: Is June of '98 the final date.

JOHNSON: I think the secretary of defense has spoken to that quite clearly during his confirmation hearings on the Hill.

*** Elapsed Time 00:17, Eastern Time 13:51 ***

QUESTION: The warning on Iran -- was that occasioned by anything? Was there any reason to believe that they were starting to reestablish ties?

JOHNSON: No. It's just that -- I think that the president wanted to make clear that there was -- an element of our law, and something that we felt very strongly about. There was no...

QUESTION: Are they still getting arms?

JOHNSON: Not that we're aware of. What they have, as far as we know, cut those ties, and we just want to make sure that they remain cut.

QUESTION: David?

JOHNSON: Yes, sir?

QUESTION: Was President Izetbegovic satisfied with the pace of the economic reconstruction? It seems to have been going very slowly. Even Richard Sklar, who was sent by the president, was not quite happy with the pace of events. Has that improved, or is there any improvement in sight?

JOHNSON: I don't think any of us are satisfied with the pace. And that's something where we plan to do a lot more work. But it's up to the parties to do that work as well. It's not so much an absence of funding

but an absence of application here.

*** Elapsed Time 00:18, Eastern Time 13:52 ***

MCCURRY: All right, David.

In exchange for that, I promised David that I would tell you that Mr. Berger, Samuel R. Berger, the assistant to the president for national security affairs, will deliver remarks on Thursday entitled "Strategic Objectives: President Clinton's Second Term Foreign Policy Agenda" at 11 a.m. before the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a statesman's forum, and we can give you the address if you are so interested.

That's tomorrow. And he will reiterate those six strategic priorities the president has addressed in the past and the news will be the power of the presentation related to the six strategic objectives that you've heard before.

QUESTION: Are they also going to allow questions at this thing?

MCCURRY: Are they taking Q& A on it?

JOHNSON: Yes.

MCCURRY: Q& A, yes.

And I think -- also, I wanted just to make sure you knew that the administration has had since January a cabinet level review of issues related to **Iraq**.

*** Elapsed Time 00:19, Eastern Time 13:53 ***

Those are being discussed now in a speech that Secretary **Albright** is delivering at Georgetown at a previously scheduled forum on policy towards **Iraq**.

QUESTION: Why? What's happened lately?

MCCURRY: As the secretary says in her remarks, at the beginning of a second term, she felt it was important and the president agreed to review our long standing policy related to the international community's effort to suppress and contain any potential aggression by **Saddam** Hussein and to make clear our insistence on full compliance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and to continue our efforts to make sure that the people of **Iraq**, for whom we care a great deal, don't suffer at the hands of **Saddam** Hussein, who seems not to care one whit.

QUESTION: But was there some impetus for this, all of a sudden?

*** Elapsed Time 00:20, Eastern Time 13:54 ***

MCCURRY: Not specifically -- just a desire, you know, at the beginning of a second term, as we had been reassessing our strategic goals around the world and identifying them and now articulating them that we also take a look at policy in that region and the efforts we have made theretofore and any aggressive moves by **Saddam**.

QUESTION: Mike, during the Q& A, the president seemed to suggest that he has asked, or someone here as has asked Janet Reno to take a look at whether the FBI had appropriately supplied information to the White House.

MCCURRY: Yes, several people were of that impression. I wanted to make sure you understand that the president was referring retrospectively to the request we had made to the Justice Department for information that would help in the preparation of Secretary **Albright's** trip to China. He has not asked or initiated any review.

It's, as he said, one of the obligations of the attorney general to sort out the conflicting needs that the government might have from time to time with respect to foreign policy or law enforcement and make judgments accordingly.

QUESTION: So did he discuss this with her?

QUESTION: Or did he -- where she said at the end of it, he said -- We've asked the attorney general to look into that. That was just...

MCCURRY: No, he said that -- that we've raised this matter with the attorney general, and we believe that she'll do the best to make the right decision. I mean, this is a situation that we don't -- we encounter from time to time when there are national security needs and also on-going criminal investigations that need to be protected simultaneously.

We're very sensitive to that. In fact, as you know from the letter that the White House legal counsel sent

to the Justice Department on this very issue, we were sensitive to that question in our initial request. And the president was merely saying that he understand that the attorney general will sort those issues out and act responsibly and appropriately.

*** Elapsed Time 00:21, Eastern Time 13:55 ***

QUESTION: Is there anything he wants her to do now in the aftermath of the rough letter and the reply or not reply?

MCCURRY: Continue to exercise that judgment as she has been doing.

QUESTION: Well, he says he doesn't know whether he's being denied information. Isn't there any way the president of the United States can find out?

MCCURRY: You can't -- I mean, you can't prove a negative. I mean, he's saying we have asked...

QUESTION: He can call the attorney general in.

MCCURRY: We've asked for the information we need to conduct foreign policy, to protect this nation's national security interest and we assume that the attorney general is assuring that the president has access to that information.

*** Elapsed Time 00:22, Eastern Time 13:56 ***

QUESTION: Why do you assume that? I mean, why don't you just talk to her?

MCCURRY: It's her job.

Yes.

QUESTION: Mike, did the vice president seek any update? He left a couple of weeks after Mrs. **Albright** did, if I'm not mistaken. Did he seek any update of information pertaining to China from the different intelligence agencies or the Justice Department?

MCCURRY: I don't want to go into the preparation that the vice president made for his trip, but he obviously would have been in a position to handle any issues that he needed to address.

*** Elapsed Time 00:23, Eastern Time 13:57 ***

And he's now spoken publicly in Beijing on those subjects he did address.

QUESTION: Did you guys go back to justice at all to see if there was anything? Or you only did that in the context of the **Albright** trip?

MCCURRY: I'm not aware that there was any additional information provided by the department beyond that which they provided in response to Mr. Ruff's letter initially, prior to Secretary **Albright's** visit to Beijing.

Deborah.

QUESTION: Mike, the president's comments on Louis Freeh are something less than really overwhelming affirmation.

QUESTION: He said, on the basis of this incident, I don't have any information at this time which would call into question his confidence in Freeh. Yesterday, you were pretty terse about his confidence in Freeh as well. What's going on?

MCCURRY: It's self-evident.

QUESTION: Well, for those of us who are not bright enough this morning, perhaps you would care to -- I mean, does the president have full confidence in...

MCCURRY: I'm not going to -- I think the president's statements are pretty straightforward.

Yes. Ed.

QUESTION: Mike, it's still unclear to me as to what's the right decision Janet Reno has to make at this point...

*** Elapsed Time 00:24, Eastern Time 13:58 ***

MCCURRY: It's...

QUESTION: ... regarding this incident.

MCCURRY: It's not complicated. It's that the president obviously needs to be in a position to

appropriately conduct this nation's diplomacy. At the same time, we have to properly protect any ongoing criminal investigation. And you know that the Justice Department does have one under way.

And you have to assure that any information provided outside law enforcement channels is provided in a way that doesn't impede criminal investigations. I don't that it's that hard to understand.

Karen.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE). What a minute, excuse me. But then -- but then you said that she is not looking into this incident. So what is the decision she has to make?

MCCURRY: Oh, I -- the attorney general knows that we have very active diplomacy under way with respect to the People's Republic of China. I'm sure she knows that the vice president is there at this moment. And she knows that part of the responsibility that she has is to assure that the information that needs to be available to the White House for the conduct of foreign policy is here.

*** Elapsed Time 00:25, Eastern Time 13:59 ***

QUESTION: Are you saying she was reviewed...

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE) follow up. Is she making that decision? Is she looking at this information to determine that he has sufficient information...

MCCURRY: I think the decision was made -- there was a story about it earlier in the week, as I recall, and material was provided to the White House. It was used in connection with a diplomatic presentation that the secretary of state made in Beijing.

It is now, as you know, from the vice president -- and it's also been raised by the vice president. That's where the matter stands.

Yes.

QUESTION: But Mike, is the White House trying to send a signal to the Justice Department that you ought to take a second look at this to make sure that if you didn't the first time give us everything we needed, that we'd now get it?

MCCURRY: We don't think we need to send a signal of that nature. That's part of what they would already understand. I'm sure that's what the attorney general would already understand her responsibilities to be.

Karen.

QUESTION: You said the president raised this with her. How does he raise this with her? Does he, like, call her? Does he...

MCCURRY: No, the White House raised it with her directly in the letter that was sent by the legal counsel to the department.

QUESTION: So nothing beyond that?

MCCURRY: Nothing that I am aware of. I think most of the contact that I'm aware of has been between Mr. Ruff, the deputy attorney general, and the attorney general.

*** Elapsed Time 00:26, Eastern Time 14:00 ***

QUESTION: So Mike, if the statement of Freeh is self-evident, then what's self-evident to me is that he's trying to keep some distance between himself and Freeh. Am I wrong to think that?

MCCURRY: Look, I -- the president said what he said. And you can report it as you see fit.

QUESTION: In other words, you're not trying to say that he's...

MCCURRY: I'm not analyzing -- you know, psychoanalyzing...

QUESTION: You won't say that he's...

MCCURRY: ... the comment. I mean, the comment is the comment. You report it as you see fit.

Yes.

MCCURRY: Wolf.

QUESTION: At what point, Mike.

MCCURRY: Wolf.

QUESTION: At what point does this -- what seems to us to be some disconnected tension between the White House and the FBI begin to impact on the president's ability to conduct foreign policy and international security?

*** Elapsed Time 00:27, Eastern Time 14:01 ***

MCCURRY: If I -- if I'm not mistaken, the president went out of his way to talk about how we work cooperatively with the bureau on a range of things. We have good working relationships with the bureau at a variety of levels. And so I take some issue with the question.

QUESTION: If the White House has any beef with Louis Freeh and the FBI, doesn't he have that same beef with Attorney General Reno, because she was also involved in that decision?

MCCURRY: Your very random permutations of the hypothetical here, and I'm not going to get into that. Deborah.

QUESTION: Well, yourself said it was self-evident that this...

MCCURRY: I -- all I said was I wasn't going to elaborate on what the president said. He said what he said; you report it. You know, you'll do just fine.

QUESTION: OK.

QUESTION: Mike, on the (OFF-MIKE) -- on the question about whether Bruce Lindsey was aware whether anyone else in the White House knew about Lippo's payments to Mr. Hubbell, the answer is that he did not know if anyone else in the White House was aware of it.

Now, without getting overly concerned with verbal tense, but so I understand -- is the meaning of that response that, at the time he learned it, he was not aware, or that he is not aware that anytime up to the press reports anyone else in the White House knew?

MCCURRY: My understanding -- and let me try this, and correct me if you think I'm (ph) wrong. It was a tortured question to begin with. But the issue was, when he learned of this in fall of 1994, was he aware of whether it would be -- did he have any knowledge of whether anyone else had any knowledge of it. And the answer's no.

Correct?

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE). Did he ever know if anyone else knowing in the White House and the answer seems to deal -- just...

MCCURRY: We dealt with the question at the time. Now, obviously, once the matter became public knowledge, a great deal of people knew.

QUESTION: I'm trying to understand whether the response...

MCCURRY: Could we just have one conversation at a time? At, you know, at the time, the matter became public, and eventually, quite a number of people knew here. So we went back at the time and looked at, well, what at the time that he first learned of it -- which would have been in the fall of 1994 -- he wasn't aware of anyone else having any knowledge of the matter.

*** Elapsed Time 00:28, Eastern Time 14:02 ***

QUESTION: Does the response cover the period from 1994 to 1996?

MCCURRY: No, it covers what he knew at the point that he first learned of the information.

QUESTION: Well, the question -- I mean, my original question...

MCCURRY: If there was a reason why -- if I could understand the relevance of the question, maybe we could try to do a better job of answering.

QUESTION: The relevance of the question is simply we know that Mr. Lindsey knew.

MCCURRY: Right.

QUESTION: And we're trying to sort out who else might have known. And the assumption is that other people might have known, might have talked to Mr. Lindsey. Can I ask -- let me ask the question...

MCCURRY: Well, I can't -- Deborah, it would be an exhausting exercise to try to go back and find out what everyone at the White House knew about the hiring of Web Hubbell by Lippo.

QUESTION: All I'm trying to find out is...

MCCURRY: This is just a little bit ad absurdum.

QUESTION: But that's not the question. The original question was meant to deal with Mr. Lindsey's knowledge of anyone else knowing between '94 and '96.

MCCURRY: Right. So we went back and said: Well, did you know if anyone else knew in '94? And he said not to my knowledge.

QUESTION: How about between '94 and '96?

MCCURRY: All right. I'll -- we'll make an effort at it. But there's a point at which patience wears thin.

QUESTION: Mike, I wonder if you can help us out quickly on (OFF- MIKE) yesterday and talk about the phone calls you -- that you all went over the DNC call lists and saw that the president hadn't made any of those calls. Can we see those call lists?

MCCURRY: They're DNC documents, but I'll check and see with them, and see if they have any objection to it. I assume they may, in fact, have been produced. And if so, maybe they'll be willing to provide them.

QUESTION: You know, Mike, actually they do have an objection to them. Could you ask them to release it?

MCCURRY: I will talk to them about what's going on, and Mr. Engskov says the pool needs to gather for the East Room event.

Yes.

QUESTION: Mike, there was also a report yesterday that you guys are about ready with the Air Force One list as well. Do you know where that matter stands?

*** Elapsed Time 00:31, Eastern Time 14:05 ***

MCCURRY: I'm -- it's news to me. I would hope so. But that's news to me.

QUESTION: The reports out of Beijing indicated that Vice President Gore was a little discomforted by the champagne toast, that he was taken aback by it. Does the White House share that same sort of concern with the images of that champagne toast?

MCCURRY: We have been delighted with the success the vice president has had on his trip. And I'm happy to see that the efforts to promote commercial engagement with the People's Republic are bearing some important fruit that will be significant to American workers. And he's doing a good job on his trip.

Yes.

QUESTION: When you inquire with the DNC, Mike, would you also ask them about the vice president's call list, as well as the president's call list?

MCCURRY: I will just see where they are on those matters. I'm not making promises I can't fulfill, obviously.

Anything else? Yes.

*** Elapsed Time 00:32, Eastern Time 14:06 ***

QUESTION: Mike, on the (OFF-MIKE) fund investigation, do you know anything about where it stands right now as far as subpoenas sent and issued? Is the White House still trying to collect information to send over to that committee?

MCCURRY: That's correct. They've got very broad ranging requests for information, and we're working very hard to respond. And they've got -- I think they are preparing materials that will eventually go to that committee and also to Senator Thompson's committee.

Yes.

QUESTION: Do you know when that will be finished?

MCCURRY: Probably never, at the rate we're going.

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION: The president said before going away, he talked about the budget and the ongoing work that would occur during the recess. Could you give us an idea of what, if anything, is going on in the amendment?

MCCURRY: There have been some good staff-to-staff contacts. Congress is in recess, so it's mostly staffers who are available. But those staff-level discussions have been ongoing, and they've been productive. And they'll be good foundation laid for work that the leaders can do upon their return after the recess.

*** Elapsed Time 00:33, Eastern Time 14:07 ***

QUESTION: Do you have any idea of any kinds of problems that have been solved or any (OFF-MIKE)?

MCCURRY: They have been addressing all the appropriate issues.

QUESTION: Do you know the subjects (OFF-MIKE)?

MCCURRY: Say it again.

QUESTION: Can you describe the subjects they tackled?

MCCURRY: I'm not going to attempt to, no. I think they've been working quietly, and that's probably the best way for them to work.

Yes.

QUESTION: On the book that Ruff and Berger are doing at the NSC, when they get done with that, if they make any change in procedures, will you be telling us?

QUESTION: Will there be a report that will be public? Or...

MCCURRY: It won't be a report. But if we make any changes in procedure, I'll let you know.

*** Elapsed Time 00:34, Eastern Time 14:08 ***

Yes, sir.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE) will the membership of the Health Quality Commission be (OFF-MIKE)?

Three more members of the Health Quality Commission (OFF-MIKE)

MCCURRY: I think they were filling the last remaining vacancies, and we expect to be done in a matter of days with that.

Yes.

QUESTION: Mike, on another subject of presidential concern, there was this presidential commission on critical technology, which was appointed. General Marsh, I believe, was in charge of setting this up. But the president still has to appoint the actual members of the commission, and he hasn't done so yet. Do you have any idea when that would occur and...

MCCURRY: Sid, I drew a blank on that one. I'll have to check into that. Don't know.

All righty. See you tomorrow.

END

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