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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION. "***

CBS News

FACE THE NATION

Sunday, January 29, 2006

GUEST: PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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***FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
202-457-4481***

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

This is Bob Schieffer. We will get to our interview with the president in just a moment. But first, we want to report that our ABC news colleague Bob Woodruff and cameraman Doug Vogt have been seriously injured while traveling with the 4th Infantry Division in Iraq. They were aboard a vehicle that struck a landmine, what the military calls an IED. Both are in surgery and both are in serious condition. Our thoughts and prayers go to their families.

And now to FACE THE NATION and our interview.

Today on FACE THE NATION, more of our interview with President Bush. From the reason he believes he has the right to eavesdrop without a court order...

President GEORGE W. BUSH: I view this situation we're in as a war. And therefore, I must protect the American people with the tools available to me.

SCHIEFFER: ...to the hard line he took against Hamas.

Pres. BUSH: I don't see how you can be a partner in peace if you don't renounce violence aims.

SCHIEFFER: And you'll never guess who he touches base with from time to time.

Pres. BUSH: I check in with Bill Clinton occasionally, just see how he's going.

SCHIEFFER: An interview with President Bush on politics, Iran, Iraq and the personal side of his presidency on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: Good morning again. Well, there was no lack of things to talk about when we came to the White House, and the president talked at length about Iraq and Iran and the controversial eavesdropping program. And later as we strolled across the South Lawn, he talked candidly about the job of being president, his parents, and his dad's relationship with Bill Clinton. From the first we realized this would not be a day of ambiguous answers, especially when I asked what will he do if Hamas, the party that has just won control of the Palestinian Parliament, does not renounce its vow to destroy Israel.

Pres. BUSH: They've got to get rid of that arm of their party which is armed and violent, and secondly, they've got to get rid of that part of their platform that says they want to destroy Israel. And if they don't, we won't deal with them.

SCHIEFFER: While we're in the neighborhood, let's talk about somebody close by there, Iran.

Pres. BUSH: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: Can the United States allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon?

Pres. BUSH: The free world cannot allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. Not just the United States, but those of us who value freedom. And that is why our strategy is to present and hold together a united front, to say to the Iranians, 'Your designs to have a nuclear weapon or your desire to have the capability of making a nuclear weapon is unacceptable.' It's very important that we speak to two groups, one is the government, and also the people. And speaking of the people, my message is this, you know, 'We're not going to tell you how to live your life, but we'd like you to be free. We'd like you to be able to express yourselves in the--in the mark--in the open--in open, so without fear of reprisal. We want you to be able to vote and elect.' And--but to the government, our message is, is that 'If you want to be a part of the family of nations, give up your nuclear weapons ambitions.'

Now, one of the things we've done is they have said, 'We want to be able to have a civilian nuclear capacity. We want to be able to have our own nuclear power plants.' And we've said, 'We understand that. But because you're a nontransparent government, because you've openly just stated your desire to destroy one of our allies, that you should be able to have a plant that the uranium for running that plant will come from Russia, and Russia will provide the--provide the fuel, you'll burn the fuel, and Russia will collect the fuel under IAEA safeguards.'

SCHIEFFER: Everyone in the government says the new--the military option can never be taken off the table. Have you actually reviewed plans, if it came to exercising the military option?

Pres. BUSH: I think it's best I just leave it that all options should be on the table. And the last option is a military option. We've got to work hard to exhaust all diplomacy, and that's what your--that's what the country is seeing happening.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about Iraq.

Pres. BUSH: OK.

SCHIEFFER: You say we're going to stay there till we get the job done. But last summer, it seems to me, Mr. President, that public support for the war began to erode.

Pres. BUSH: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: Why do you think that happened?

Pres. BUSH: I think--I think that people saw death on the TV screens without a sense that we're making progress. That's why I started giving these speeches. My job is not only commander in chief, but educator in chief. And I needed to say to the people, 'You bet it's tough.' And the enemy--and the enemy is using their one weapon effectively, which is destruction of innocent

life.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you think--you brought up Katrina--do you think the fact that the government kind of got off to a slow start, at the least, in dealing with Katrina, that people lost confidence in the federal government and that might have had something to do with the loss of confidence in what was going on in Iraq?

Pres. BUSH: That's an interesting question. I don't know, I hadn't analyzed it. No question we should have done a better job on Katrina, and no question that the pictures coming out of New Orleans were, you know, affected our conscience and hit our conscience and affected things. I mean, people were wondering, in this great country of ours, how come we couldn't have responded better, and that's why we're taking a look at lessons learned so it won't happen again. But I--you know, it's hard for me to connect response to Katrina to people's concerns about our troops overseas.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk a little bit about this whole idea of eavesdropping without court orders. You said very strongly, in the strongest language I've heard you use, yesterday that you believe it is not only legal, you believe it is absolutely necessary in the war on terrorism. The question I have, Mr. President, is do you believe that there is anything that a president cannot do if he considers it necessary in an emergency like this?

Pres. BUSH: That's a--that's a great question. You know, one of the--yeah, I don't think a president can tor--get--order torture, for example. I don't think a president can order the assassination of a leader of another country with which we're not at war. Yes, there are clear red lines, and it--you just asked a very interesting constitutional question: the extent to which a president during war can exercise authorities in order to protect the American people, and that's really what the debate is about. I made the decision to listen to phone calls of al-Qaeda, or suspected al-Qaeda, from outside the country coming in, or inside the country going out, because the people, our operators, told me that this is--one of the best ways to protect the American people.

It is important that this program go on. I understand the debate, and I understand the need to make sure people discuss and debate whether or not I have got the authority to do it. But as I told the American people--and I can't tell you how strongly I feel about this--if somebody is talking to al-Qaeda inside the United States, we need to know why, and that's what this program is aimed to do.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this, Mr. President, because I just have never quite understood this, and maybe you could clear this up. As I understand the law, you have the right to wiretap or eavesdrop on anyone and then have three days to tell the court about it. How does that slow you down?

Pres. BUSH: I asked that very same question to the people designing the program. I said, 'How come we can't use the procedures which you just described?' And they said, 'It won't work. It doesn't fit in with what Mike

Hayden described as "hot pursuit." I have looked at this program from all angles, and my dilemma and my problem is I can't explain to you how it works in order to justify your question without telling the enemy what we are doing. And this debate is an interesting debate. I'm troubled by it only because the enemy listens, and they see what we are doing--and these are smart people, and they will adjust. And one of the interesting questions, Bob, about this whole debate is whether or not people think we are at war or people think this is kind of an isolated group of people that may or may not hit us, and I am--perhaps because I was a sitting president when 9/11 occurred. Perhaps because I remember my words going to Congress, just saying, 'I'm not going to ever forget what took place,' and I will use all the power and my authority within the Constitution to protect the American people, but I view this situation we're in as war, and therefore I must protect the American people with the tools available to me.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about energy independence. We remain, any way you cut it, dependent on foreign oil. I know you want to open up the Arctic Wildlife Preserve for drilling, but aren't we going to have to do more than that? And I just want to bring up one thing. Tom Friedman, the columnist in The New York Times, had a column today, and he said putting on a huge gas tax is the only way to really get Detroit's attention and get them to making other kinds of cars, and he said the only way to cause people to change their ways. He says you have to change the culture.

Pres. BUSH: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: What's your reaction to that?

Pres. BUSH: First of all, I'm against a huge gas tax. Secondly, I agree with Mr. Friedman that we have got to become independent from foreign sources of oil. In other words, we have got to wean ourselves off hydrocarbons, oil. And the best way, in my judgment, to do it is to promote and actively advance new technologies so that we can drive--have different driving habits. For example, there is--I'm trying--a little hesitant because I don't want to tell you what's in the State of the Union, let me put it to you that way.

SCHIEFFER: You are going to talk about that?

Pres. BUSH: Big time, because I agree with Mr. Friedman, and I agree with Americans who understand being hooked on foreign oil is an economic problem and a national security problem. I couldn't agree more with him.

SCHIEFFER: I want to ask you just a sort of a philosophical question, and that is, Hubert Humphrey once said that the 1964 Civil Rights Act was America's most successful foreign policy initiative because it told people who we were and what we stand for. And I just wonder, when we see some of these horror stories about torture and about things that have happened in some of these prisons, do you worry that maybe we are losing the moral high ground in some way?

Pres. BUSH: There is no question the Abu Ghraib pictures not only--we were

disgraced, and I know it caused a lot of people that want to like us to question whether they should. And equally importantly, it gave the enemy an incredible propaganda tool. No question. That's why it was important for us to investigate, to expose, and to hold people to account so people see there was a consequence for the behavior. You know, Hubert Humphrey was right. The actions we take in our own country or elsewhere help define America to others, and that's why it's important for us to constantly remind people that we have got a wonderful heart and we are a compassionate nation.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk a little bit about politics, how you think it's shaping up. Is it too early to say who you think the people are going to be that are going to be running for the job you hold right now?

Pres. BUSH: I think so, I do. The...

SCHIEFFER: Looks like Senator Clinton is running pretty hard right now for the Democratic nomination.

Pres. BUSH: She's formidable. I think my focus is 2006, and I told the press conference yesterday, and will continue to assure members of Congress, I intend to be engaged.

SCHIEFFER: Has the presidency changed you, Mr. President?

Pres. BUSH: I hope not. Well, that's not the right thing to say. I hope it--I know it hasn't changed my values. And it hasn't changed my priorities. Of course it's changed me in the--because it's--I've--you know, I've made a lot of decisions, Bob, and when you think hard and plan and make decisions it's got to change you. Nine-eleven changed me. It--yeah it's changed me to--you know, I hope I'm a better person for it. I will tell you I--if given a chance to do it again I'd have said, 'You bet.' I highly recommend this job. It's been a fantastic experience. I like making decisions. I like listening to smart people, and I'm surrounded by a lot of them. I like the give-and-take in the political front, and I truly believe we're making a difference in the world and in our own country.

SCHIEFFER: And what's been the impact on your family?

Pres. BUSH: We are as close to them now as we have ever been. Laura and I have got a great relationship. You know, there's nothing like some outside pressure to bring you closer together. Secondly, I'm incredibly proud of her. She's a, you know, partner in this job in many ways. The first lady has got a big responsibility in an administration. She can help define an administration. People look at Laura, and they can learn something about me, and when they look at her and learn something about me, they--they got to say, 'He's a pretty smart old guy to pick Laura as a wife.' She is--you know, I've got a 45-second commute home, so we spend a lot of time with each other. And our girls--I'm a little hesitant to talk about them because they don't want me to bring them out in the public arena, but they're doing just great. So, I would say this has been very a positive experience on our family.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be back with President Bush in a moment, and hear more about the personal side of the presidency.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: After the interview in the Cabinet Room we took a walk along the South Lawn. It was a beautiful winter day. We could see the Washington Monument in the distance, and we saw a side of the president not often seen. He talked about the best part of the job he clearly loves and the hardest part.

Pres. BUSH: The hardest part is knowing I made decisions that put kids in harm's way that didn't come back. That's the hardest part of--I suspect if you talk to any president that was president during war, when we were losing our kids, they would say the hardest part is knowing it was my decision that caused some kid to lose his life and the hardest part of the job is to comfort a mom or a dad or a wife. It's--it's...

SCHIEFFER: Well, I know you go out to Walter Reed and see those kids...

Pres. BUSH: I do, a lot.

SCHIEFFER: ...when they come back. That must be very difficult.

Pres. BUSH: It's difficult and inspiring. It's inspiring because our health care system is remarkably good.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: It is inspiring because I can't think of hardly any other time when a kid has just said, 'Mr. President, I'm proud of what I did and I'd do it again.' It is--you know, it's hard because you've got, you know, a kid who might have lost his leg and--but, yeah, it's--I would say every time I go I come back a better person for having been out there.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I've been there, I know what you mean.

Pres. BUSH: Yeah, you know. Yeah, you have.

SCHIEFFER: You know, when I used to cover the White House, every time I came to the White House, I mean, it--I still had some awe. It still instilled awe for me. You are the president. When you stand up there on that balcony and look out and see the Washington monument. As a president, how does that?

Pres. BUSH: I view it as an American.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: And--but I've never taken it for granted. I sure haven't. It's a--you know, a lot of times I have things on my mind and maybe not pay as close attention to the environment as I should.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: But there's always something during the day that kind of snaps you out of it.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: Where you go, 'My goodness, here I am. What an honor.'

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Pres. BUSH: And I meant what I said. I would highly recommend this job for people.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm. You don't see this as the great white presidency, as Harry Truman said.

Pres. BUSH: No. It's an inconvenience.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Pres. BUSH: But I'm a volunteer.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Pres. BUSH: Nobody made me run for president. Probably me of anybody else in the modern history knows what I was getting into.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: Because I saw a good man here and watched him carefully.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: But now I--nobody should feel sorry for me. And I certainly don't feel sorry for myself. You know, it's an inconvenience that you can't go to the Wal-Mart or something like that.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: On the other hand, the honor and the--is fantastic and the food's pretty good.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

How are your mom and dad?

Pres. BUSH: Mother's still giving advice and the old man is fretting too much over things. You know, but he's...

SCHIEFFER: How much do you talk to him? I mean, he's your dad.

Pres. BUSH: I talk to him probably--I checked in with him last night, for example.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: I like to call him just to see how he's going, an 81-year-old guy. He's doing strong. He's traveling a lot. So he's not around much. But...

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm. But he's with his friend, Bill Clinton.

Pres. BUSH: Yeah, he and my new brother.

SCHIEFFER: New brother.

Pres. BUSH: Yeah, he--and it's a good relationship. It's a fun relationship to watch. You know, I had President Clinton and dad and Laura and Condi and I flew out to the Holy Father's funeral and it was fun to see the interplay between dad and Clinton.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: One of these days I'll be a member of the ex-presidents club.

SCHIEFFER: Sure.

Pres. BUSH: I'll be looking for something to do.

SCHIEFFER: You know, if Senator Clinton becomes president...

Pres. BUSH: Yeah. Bush, Clinton, Bush, Clinton.

SCHIEFFER: ...we'll see the day when the two of you will be as close as ex-presidents.

Pres. BUSH: Yeah. I think there's--I do think there's--I think that, you know, when your time's up, that there's a kind of a kinship that you develop.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Pres. BUSH: You know, there's a lot of shared experiences and so I can understand why ex-presidents are able to put aside old differences.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm. I can, too.

Pres. BUSH: Really.

SCHIEFFER: If you hadn't done the job, how can you really understand.

Pres. BUSH: That's exactly right. I've talked--I check in with Bill Clinton occasionally, just to see how he's doing.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: And you know, he says things that makes it obvious to me that we're kind of, you know, on the same wavelength with the job of the presidency.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Pres. BUSH: It makes sense, after all.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah, yeah.

Pres. BUSH: This is kind of commonality.

SCHIEFFER: And I'll be back with a final call.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION continues and is always on cbsnews.com brought to you in part by...

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And finally, we are dispensing with our commentary this morning to bring you the latest news on our ABC News colleague Bob Woodruff and cameraman Doug Vogt. As we reported earlier this morning, Doug and Bob were seriously injured while traveling with troops of the 4th Infantry Division near Taji. That is about 12 miles north of Baghdad. As has happened so often in Iraq, their vehicle was hit by a landmine, what the military calls an IED, and improvised explosive device. About all we really know is that both are in serious condition.

Bob is a lawyer who speaks Chinese. He got his first taste of news working as a translator for Dan Rather and the CBS News team during the Tiananmen Square crisis in Beijing. He said later that when he realized there was a job that existed in this world where he could be in the middle of world events and actually get paid for it, he decided to change careers. He abandoned his law practice, moved his family to a small town to learn his craft and eventually made his way to the top rungs of journalism.

In this electronic age, war has become so familiar that it is easy to forget that it is more than just pictures on television. But the soldiers who fight it and the correspondents who cover it do not forget. They know it is a dangerous business, and yet they are willing to risk that danger.

Wars are not fought on the training ground nor can they be covered from a TV studio. They are not reality shows, they are reality. Young men and women have to fight them and correspondents have to cover them if we are to understand what they are about. Our thoughts and prayers today are with the families of both these brave men. We'll see you next week.