

Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, September 30, 2002, No. 39, Vol. 38; Pg. 1618; ISSN: 0511-4187, 1424 words, Remarks prior to discussions with president Alvaro Uribe of Colombia and an exchange with reporters; Transcript

An excerpt reads:

Q. Mr. President, a question for both. What are your reactions on the U.S. extradition request of Colombian paramilitary leader Carlos Costano? And if you would also answer, Colombia sent you a letter yesterday saying that there's no need to sign a bilateral agreement with the U.S. in terms of the ICC that you are seeking to sign with all other countries in the world. Do you think--do you still like a bilateral agreement with Colombia and those--

President Bush. Yes, we want an Article 98 with all countries, absolutely. I strongly reject the ICC. I'm not going to accept an ICC. I'm not going to put ourselves in a position where our soldiers and diplomats get hauled into a court over which we have got--the prosecutors whom we don't know, the judges--I mean, we're not going to allow ourselves to do that. And our friends shouldn't want us to be put in that position. Therefore, we're seeking Article 98s from our friends.

And we will hold people to account. If they're a terrorist, we're going to hold them to account. So the guy who got indicted yesterday made a decision to be a terrorist. We made a decision to hold him to account. And we will continue to do that. We believe that's part of our responsibility as freedom-loving people.

And I look forward to working with President Uribe to hold others to account, if they continue to terrorize the world. And terrorism--terrorists attacked our country and hurt us. If they attack Colombia and hurt them, they're still equally as guilty, as far as we're concerned. It doesn't matter who the victim is. What matters is whether or not they're practicing terrorist activities.

And we will continue to fight terror, It's our obligation, our duty. History has called us into action.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 am, in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Carlos Costano, leader of the United Self-Defense Forces, who was indicated on drug trafficking charges. The President also referred to the U.S. effort to seek a bilateral agreement with the Government of Colombia under Article 98 of the Rome Treaty, with the aim of preventing U.S. nationals from falling under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.