

**President Bush's Remarks on Global HIV/AIDS  
Washington, DC  
April 29, 2003**

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**MALE VOICE 1:** Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States accompanied by Secretary of State, Colin Powell and Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** Thank you all very much. Thank you. Please. Thank you all very much for the warm welcome, welcome to the people's house, The White House. It's my honor to welcome members of the United States Senate and the United States Congress, members from the Ambassadorial Corps, fellow Americans who deeply care about a neighbor in need.

HIV/AIDS is a tragedy for millions of men, women and children and a threat to stability to entire countries and of regions of our world. Our nations have the ability and therefore the duty to confront this grave public health crisis. We're here today to urge both Houses of the United States Congress to pass the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief which will dramatically expand our fight against AIDS across this globe.

I appreciate very much Secretary of State, Colin Powell's commitment to this issue. The fight against AIDS is an integral part of our nation's foreign policy. I appreciate so very much Secretary Tommy Thompson's dedication to this issue as Chairman of the Global Fund. He knows this Administration's passion about doing our duty and I want to thank these members of my Cabinet for being here today.

I also want to thank the Chairman and the ranking

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members of the committee responsible for getting this legislation moving, Senator Lugar and Senator Biden, both committed to this legislation, both working closely with our Administration to get a good bill out of the Senate, and Senator Hyde and Senator Lantos (misspelled?) have been at work already and I appreciate their leadership as well. We're honored to have you here and we're honored to have the other members of the Congress with us today who care deeply about this issue.

I also want to thank Tony Fauci. He works for the NIH. He is on the leading edge of finding the vaccines that will help those who suffer from AIDS. I love Tony's commitment to what - to humans - to what's best for mankind. Glad you're here Tony.

I also want to thank Joe O'Neill, the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy. He works closely in my Administration, appreciate his advice, appreciate his counsel.

I want to thank Gaddi Vasquez who's Director of the Peace Corps this year.

We just came from a round table discussion and somebody came up with the idea as this initiative goes forward and we get a good piece of legislation out of the Congress and when I sign it hopefully before Memorial Day, one of the things we may want to do is to convert some of our Peace Corps to helping people in Africa who've got AIDS. So Gaddi I want you to think

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carefully about that idea.

I appreciate the ambassadors who are here from the African and Caribbean nations, it's good to see you all again. I think the last time we saw each other it was in black tie. It's a lot better not being in black tie.

I appreciate those who are members of the faith-based world who've answered the call, the universal call to help a brother and sister in need. I want to thank you for being involved in the fight against AIDS.

I want to thank those who have been involved in this struggle for a long period of time. I'm confident that the progress that you have made to date would be progress that we can build upon and will build upon.

Concerning this tragedy, it's a responsibility of every nation. For the United States it is a part of the special calling that began with our founding. We believe in the dignity of life and this conviction determines our conduct around the world. We believe that everyone has a right to liberty including the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. We believe that everyone has a right to life including children in the cities and villages of Africa and the Caribbean.

Today on the continent of Africa alone nearly 30,000,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS including 3,000,000 people under the age of 15 years old. In Botswana nearly 40% of the adult population, 40%, have HIV and projected life

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expectancy has fallen by more than 30 years due to AIDS. In seven sub-Saharan African countries mortality for children under the age of five has increased by 20% to 40% because of AIDS. There are only two possible responses to suffering on this scale. We can turn our eyes away in resignation and despair or we can take decisive, historic action to turn the tide against this disease and give the hope of life to millions who need our help now. The United States of America chooses the path of action and the path of hope.

This January 2001 America has increased total spending to fight AIDS overseas by nearly 100%. We've already pledged more than \$1.6 billion dollars to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS and other infectious diseases. It is by far the most any nation in the world today and last year I launched an initiative to prevent the transmission of HIV from mothers to children in Africa and the Caribbean. These are vital efforts and they're important efforts but we must do far more.

So in January I asked the House and Senate to enact an emergency plan for AIDS relief. With the approval of Congress this plan will direct \$15 billion dollars to fight AIDS abroad over the next five years beginning with \$2 billion dollars in 2004. We'll create comprehensive systems to diagnose, to treat and to prevent AIDS in 14 African and Caribbean countries where the disease is heavily concentrated. We won't diminish our other efforts that are now ongoing. We'll continue the funding

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that is in place but we'll focus intently on 14 ravaged countries to show the world what is possible. A terrible disease but it is not a hopeless disease.

At this moment, nations around the world, governments and health officials, doctors and nurses, people living with the virus are proving that there is hope and that lives can be saved.

We know that AIDS can be prevented. In Uganda, Madame Ambassador thank you for being here, President Museveni has begun a comprehensive program in 1986 with a prevention strategy emphasizing abstinence and marital fidelity as well as condoms to prevent HIV transmission. The results are encouraging. The AIDS infection rate in Uganda has fallen dramatically since 1990 and in places throughout the country the percentage of women with HIV has been cut in half. Congress should make the Ugandan approach the model for our prevention efforts under the emergency plan.

We also know that AIDS can be treated. Anti-retro viral drugs have become much more affordable in many nations and they are extending many lives. In Africa as more AIDS patients take these drugs doctors are witnessing what they call the Lazarus effect. When one patient is rescued by medicine as if back from the dead many others with AIDS seek testing it in treatment because it is the first sign of hope they have ever seen.

Many past international efforts to (unintelligible)

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AIDS focused on prevention at the expense of treatment but people with this disease cannot be written off as expendable. Integrating care and treatment with prevention is the cornerstone of my emergency plan for AIDS relief and we know it works.

In Haiti for example, the Hef-Keough (misspelled?) clinic, where are you doc? There you are, thank you for coming. The Director of which is here with us today. It's providing care to 5,000 people with HIV. His report was optimistic about what is possible. He should be speaking up here and not me about success. He says in spite of the miserable conditions in Haiti, he is optimistic that with the right strategy and a right approach we can save lives and I appreciate you coming, sir.

In Uganda's capital a clinical research center is providing anti-retro viral therapy to 6,000 patients with HIV. Healthcare workers from other centers from Uganda travel by truck and by motorcycle to rural villages and farms a few times each week delivering critical medicine to patients who cannot reach the city for treatment. These are successful strategies and must be brought to a much larger scale.

We've seen what works. I'm asking Congress to appropriate money so we can expand what works to save lives. In sub-Saharan Africa just 1% of the more than 4,000,000 people needing immediate drug treatment are receiving medicine, that's

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about 50,000 people.

The Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is designed to put major resources behind proven methods of care and treatment and prevention and multiply these goods - good works, many times over. That's what we're going to do. The resources will be managed carefully.

Flexibility with a new Global AIDS Coordinator and this Coordinator will help us utilize and further develop successful clinical networks. These networks link urban medical centers staffed by specialist physicians and nurses with rural clinics where HIV testing can be performed and medications distributed and because so much of the healthcare in sub-Saharan Africa is provided by facilities associated with churches and religious orders, we must ensure that the legislation provides the greatest opportunity for faith-based and community organizations to fully participate in helping a neighbor in need.

Our experts believe that the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief will in this decade prevent 7,000,000 new HIV infections. (Unintelligible) 2,000,000 people with life extending drugs and provide humane care for millions of people suffering from AIDS and as importantly for children orphaned by AIDS.

Confronting the threat of AIDS is important work and it is urgent work. It is a moral imperative for our great nation. In the three months since I announced the emergency plan an

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estimated 760,000 people have died from AIDS, 1.2 million people have been infected, more than 175,000 babies have been born with the virus. Time is not on our side. So I asked Congress to move forward with speed and seriousness that this crisis requires but Africa, the Caribbean and the United States cannot succeed by ourselves. I urge all nations and will continue to urge all nations to join with us in this great effort. Fighting AIDS on a global scale is a massive and a complicated undertaking, yet this cause is rooted in the simplest of moral duties. When we see this kind of preventable suffering, when we see a plague leaving graves and orphans across a continent we must act. When we see the wounded traveler on the road to Jericho we will not, America will not pass to the other side of the road.

Thank you all. God bless. Thank you all for coming

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