the weekly Standard

Remember the Bush Doctrine

U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan is happy with President Bush's apparent Middle East policy switch. So is European Union president Romano Prodi, French president Jacques Chirac, and the British foreign ministry. The *New York Times* editorial page is very happy. And, really, that's what American foreign policy is all about, isn't it?

Until now, that's not how George W. Bush saw things. One of Bush's most admirable and most important qualities as president has been his Reaganesque indifference to such carping. The Europeans and the American foreign policy establishment howled for weeks after Bush gave his "Axis of Evil" speech, but Bush held his ground, soldiered on without a hint of self-doubt, and the critics more or less gave up.

Now, however, it looks like an administration tough enough to wage war in Afghanistan and target Iraq could not withstand a few days of heckling from the European Union and the *New York Times*. Alarmed by a few Arab protests, alarmed, it seems, by a carefully calibrated Egyptian downgrading of relations with Israel—Cairo didn't even expel the Israeli ambassador—Bush's advisers determined that they had to do something. So the president, after days of resisting advice to criticize a fellow democracy fighting terrorism, gave his "enough is enough" speech. It wasn't moral equivalence, but it wasn't exactly moral clarity either.

It could have been worse. Bush did not call for an immediate halt in Israel's military operations. And Secretary of State Powell won't be arriving in Israel until the end of next week, giving Israeli forces more time to round up terrorists and uncover their caches of arms and explosives. Israeli military commanders say they may well need more time to complete their mission of pulling down the terrorist network in the territories. In the wake of the Passover Massacre, Israel should be given the time it needs.

Indeed, the current Israeli military action, derided in many circles here and abroad as the mad scheme of a vengeful Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, happens to be wildly popular among the vast majority of Israelis—in a recent poll over 70 percent expressed support for continued military action. As the *Washington Post*'s Lee Hockstader reports, Sharon "has never enjoyed more political harmony at home." And for good reason. The Israeli anti-terrorist operation is not mad. It is working. No one expects it to end all further suicide bomb attacks. But, as it happens, the daily bombings paused once the tanks rolled. Meanwhile, Israeli forces have arrested or killed several dozen terrorists—remember, that is what Yasser Arafat was supposed to do under the so-called Tenet plan—and have found large amounts of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and bomb-making equipment.

Israeli forces have also found something else: evidence that suicide bomber operations and other terrorist actions were paid for by Yasser Arafat. On Thursday the Israeli government released two documents it had seized from Arafat's offices. Both authorized payments to Palestinian militants suspected of shooting and bombing attacks. Both bore the signature of Yasser Arafat. We understand that the State Department, which recently declared one organization under Arafat's control—the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades—to be a terrorist entity, is now considering adding other Arafat-controlled organizations to the list. How long before Arafat himself receives the designation he deserves?

Whatever else President Bush means to do, he should not prevent Israel from completing its anti-terrorist operation. How would the president have liked it—how would the American people have liked it—had someone stepped in after two weeks of the war in Afghanistan and said, "Enough is enough"? If the administration feels the need to engage in faux peace-process shenanigans to get the Europeans and the *New York Times* off its back, fine. But we trust the president isn't misled. It is very much in America's interest that Israel be given time to complete its current mission.

Otherwise, the lesson will be clear: Terrorism pays. Nor should anyone be under any illusion that peace talks can proceed while terrorist attacks continue, no matter how many times Colin Powell travels to the region. The fact is that only after the Israeli government finishes dismantling the terror network in the territories will it be possible to

talk seriously about making peace and achieving a lasting settlement with the Palestinian people.

The president needs to ensure that Thursday's speech does not mark a significant turn away from the straight and admirable path of the Bush Doctrine. He's given Arafat—again—one more chance. This really has to be the last one. If the secretary of state goes to the region and conveys that message, to Arafat and to the Arab governments, his trip could be helpful. If he goes to reiterate the Bush Doctrine and make clear to the Arab world that there will be no exceptions and that it's time to choose between civilization and terror, then his trip could be more than helpful. If he goes to negotiate between Sharon and Arafat—between a democracy and a terrorist—then the trip could be a worse disaster even than Vice President Cheney's failed mission last month. Everything now depends on what the president and his administration say and do.

Meanwhile, President Bush needs to stay focused on Iraq. Many of those who want him to become deeply and personally involved in the Middle East peace process also want him to do nothing about Saddam Hussein. In the Arab world, in Europe, in Washington and New York, and in some corners of the administration itself, there is the hope that Bush will become so immersed in peace-processing that he'll have neither the time, the energy, nor the inclination to tackle the more fundamental problem in the Middle East. By turning Bush into a Middle East mediator, they think they can shunt him off the road that leads to real security and peace—the road that runs through Baghdad. We trust the president will see and avoid this trap.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol