



"I Thought It Was Terrific"

In an interview with State Department Correspondent Johanna McGeary, Secretary of State George Shultz shared his views on the U.S. action and its repercussions:

On the interception. It's true that this is an important event in the fight against terrorism, but there has been a tremendous amount accomplished in the last year or so that is not as visible as this. People tend to register the things that are visible. But the fact is that through the development of better intelligence and of very good intelligence exchange—I might say outstanding with the Italians, for example—we have uncovered, prevented or aborted some 90 terrorist incidents in the last year.

But my point is, there has been a lot happening, and at the same time, this was a dramatic example of insisting that those who engage in these criminal acts be brought to justice. You have to get the message to terrorists that the civilized community is opposed to what they are doing and prepared to take action to see that they don't succeed, and that they are brought to justice, so there is a cost. If you never apprehend and deal effectively with the terrorists, then they have a cost-free shot at everything.

On possible retaliation against the U.S. I haven't noticed any reluctance to take on the U.S., so no doubt there will be people in the terrorist ranks who are stimulated by this, but they don't seem to need very much stimulation. I don't think that we should hesitate to bring people to justice for criminal acts for fear that some other criminals may not like it and try to do something about it.

On planning the operation. I can't tell you whose idea it was. It wasn't [mine]. But the minute I heard the idea, I

thought it was terrific. Judging how these incidents are run, it was a good show. Maybe we're getting better at it.

On Egypt. The U.S.-Egyptian relationship is a strong one. There are fundamental things that will endure, and we expect and certainly want our relationship with Egypt to continue on a strong and confident basis. We had a difference of opinion with the Egyptian government on dealing with the hijackers, and we registered that. The Egyptians took steps that they felt were necessary to ensure the safety of people left on the ship, let alone the ship itself; and that apparently involved taking the hijackers off and assuring them passage to somewhere else. They did that before they knew that a murder had been committed. It's not clear to me what was known by whom in the Egyptian government after they knew that the murder had been committed, so I don't want to comment on that other than to say that we were disappointed that they were ready to let—and did let—these criminals escape from the hands of organized, civilized government.

On prosecution by Italy. I have complete confidence in the Italians. The Italian record in dealing with terrorism is superb.

On terrorism. If you plot terrorist incidents by year on a graph, it's rising. But I think that terrorism is losing ground in the sense that the organized, civilized, international community is becoming very alert to it, and more and more determined to stop it and isolate it. I think it takes a while for societies like ours to register a problem and take it in—take it into your gut as well as your head. It is significant that nobody wanted that ship to come into their harbor. It's significant that nobody wanted that plane to land on their airfield. In other words, the idea that terrorists deserve no sanctuary is gaining ground.



Shultz during interview