

WASHINGTON DATELINE

BY TRUDE B. FELDMAN

ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT

*Special Interview With
George Bush*



GEORGE BUSH, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL, MAKES A POINT DURING EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT TRUDE B. FELDMAN AS WASHINGTON, D.C.'S JEFFERSON HOTEL. (PHOTO BY ALEX DIAMOND).

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- (Friday, Mar. 14, 1980)
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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- GEORGE BUSH, Republican presidential hopeful, differs sharply from President Carter on United States policy in the Middle East. He also sees the President as "vascillating" and "pulling back from commitments" to Israel and to America's allies around the world.

The former Texas Congressman, United Nations Ambassador and C.I.A. director has strong reservations about Jimmy Carter's concept of a "comprehensive" Middle East peace settlement.

"I oppose a comprehensive settlement," George Bush told me in an exclusive interview. "In my judgment, that would bring the Soviets back into the Middle East equation. Egypt kicked the Russians out and we don't want them back in there."

Bush is convinced that Israel is this country's staunchest ally in the Mideast. "We have not only a moral but a strategic interest in Israel's security," he said. "Unfortunately, recent actions by this Administration have made Israel uncertain about United States support."

As President of the United States, George Bush said he would reiterate support for United Nations Resolution 242, but he would "not try to redefine it, as others have attempted."

George Bush also said that the first thing he would do in the Middle East would be to make clear his conviction that American policy must be based on two main principles:

(1) We must keep our moral and strategic commitments to Israel. (2) We must protect and improve our relations with moderate Arab states.

"A strong and consistent America can do both," he observed. "One is not incompatible with the other."

Bush added: "I don't think a quick fix is possible in the Middle East. It ought to be a step - by - careful step negotiation between the parties, the United States role being that of a catalyst."

While George Bush does not favor America's having permanent naval or air bases in the Middle East, he does want to have facilities which the United States can use from time to time.

"I am opposed to permanent American bases because I am convinced that they will serve as an excuse for the Soviets to put a major permanent base of their own in the area," he stressed. "The Soviets must not get back in the Middle East with a large and permanent presence. But our country does need places where it can berth its ships and land its planes from time to time or, if needed, in an emergency."

"The best thing the U.S. can do is keep our defenses strong so we can project conventional forces into the Middle East if necessary," he said. "If you can do it, you won't have to do it."

"Most important, we must have our allies and friends know that we will keep our word."

George Bush is equally adamant on the subject of the PLO. "My view is that the PLO must renounce terrorism. There is a certain moral plateau to which the U.S. must adhere," he emphasized. "We cannot permit the PLO to enter the peace process unless and until its basic charter is changed."

It is the perception of America as "weak, always willing to back away, to vacillate, unable to shape events, unwilling to keep commitments, in short, a faithless ally" that disturbs George Bush when he looks at American foreign policy today.

He adds pointedly: "If we officially talk to the PLO, before the organization takes the fundamental step of recognizing Israel's right to exist, we add to this perception of the United States."

Bush believes the Camp David accords are only the first step on the road to a Mideast settlement. "We must build on the Camp David accords to show that negotiations can lead to stability and peace," he said. "I give President Carter credit for bringing Premier Begin and President Sadat together. Frankly, I didn't think that that would happen."



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