

THE TEXAS GOVERNOR

## Bush Says He Is Reagan's Heir and Candidate of Future

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

RICHMOND, Va., Feb. 25 — Coming out of a break back home in Texas, Gov. George W. Bush returned to the campaign trail today and seemed to veer a bit toward the political middle ground, talking warmly about compassion and the Internet rather than about potentially divisive issues like religion or abortion.

In an Internet interview on America Online and elsewhere, Mr. Bush portrayed himself as the high-tech candidate of the future while also vigorously insisting that he was the real heir of Reagan Republicanism. He sharply criticized his main rival for the presidential nomination, Senator John McCain of Arizona, in effect calling him a hypocrite.

"It is not Reaganesque to say one thing and do another," Mr. Bush scoffed, speaking of Mr. McCain.

While Mr. Reagan may have proclaimed what he called the 11th commandment (Republicans should not speak ill of one another), Governor Bush and Senator McCain are eagerly claiming every aspect of Mr. Reagan's legacy except that. Today's appearances in Virginia, after Mr. Bush's break in Texas — his first chance to reflect and retool since losing the Michigan and Arizona primaries on Tuesday — gave a hint of what adjustments in his message he may make in the run-up to March 7, when 12 states will hold Republican primaries.

Judging from today's events, Mr. Bush will speak glowingly about the politics of compassion, while showing little to Mr. McCain. After ignoring his rival as much as he could in Michigan, Mr. Bush repeatedly criticized him today and sharpened accusations of unfair campaigning.

"I reject the politics of a candidate calling me an anti-Catholic bigot over the phone waves and then telling the press corps that he didn't do it, until after the polls had closed in Michigan," Mr. Bush said.

He was referring to phone calls to voters that criticized Mr. Bush for appearing at Bob Jones University in South Carolina, whose leaders have made anti-Catholic statements (although Mr. Bush was not called a bigot in the phone calls). The McCain campaign initially denied making the calls but later acknowledged them, blaming a mix-up.

Mr. Bush defended his attacks on Mr. McCain as simply truth-telling. Referring to Mr. McCain, Mr. Bush said, "If a man says, for example, that there's an iron triangle in Washington, D.C., of lobbyists and special interests, and he's ringing it like a dinner bell to raise money for his campaign, I think that I have a right to point out that he says one thing and does another."

Rick Davis, Mr. McCain's campaign manager, said of Mr. Bush, "Maybe if he'd been involved in campaign finance reform for longer than since the New Hampshire primary, he'd have a better sense of how people lined up in the past."

This afternoon in San Diego, Mr. McCain addressed some 3,000 cheering, chanting, flag-waving people.

The heart of his address was aimed at the city's large military population. Mr. McCain was embraced on the stage by Vice Adm. James Stockdale, Ross Perot's running mate in 1992 and a former prisoner of war in Vietnam.

Mr. McCain introduced the retired admiral as "my hero, the most courageous man I've ever known," and welcomed him to "McCain's Navy."

At one point the crowd interrupted his speech with the chant, "Beat Al Gore! Beat Al Gore!"

Although Mr. Bush has tried to demonstrate his grasp of international affairs, he managed to underscore his own weakness in that field today. After he had failed a reporter's pop quiz last fall about foreign leaders, including the name of the Indian prime minister, Mr. Bush winced today when a moderator mentioned the words "pop quiz." Jokingly, Mr. Bush dared the moderator to ask him the name of the Indian president.

"Do you know who the president of India is?" the moderator asked obligingly.

"Vajpayee," Mr. Bush said, grinning and looking pleased with himself. But Atal Behari Vajpayee is the prime minister of India; the president is K. R. Narayanan.

Answering another question on foreign affairs, Mr. Bush signaled his intention to break a long-standing policy by stating that the United States would help Taiwan if it were attacked by China. Previous presidents, including Mr. Bush's father, have adopted a policy called "strategic ambiguity," which does not specify how the United States would respond to an attack on Taiwan.

Although the Taiwan Relations Act suggests that the United States would help Taiwan, successive administrations have preserved this deliberate ambiguity so as not to encourage Taiwan to be bolder, making a war more likely.

But Mr. Bush said today, "It's important for the Chinese to understand that if there's a military action, we will help Taiwan defend itself." He would not say whether this meant the United States would send troops.

Richard L. Armitage, a former Reagan and Bush aide and now a foreign policy adviser to the governor, said Mr. Bush was moving away from strategic ambiguity partly because Taiwan has become a democracy and partly because the policy has been poorly implemented in the Clinton administration.

Guns - Imports

## Canada Screening Licenses For Gun Imports From U.S.

By RAYMOND BONNER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 — The Canadian government said today that it was reviewing all licenses issued for the import of firearms from the United States to be sure that they were for valid business or sporting purposes.

A senior government official said that the review was being done at the request of the United States, which was alarmed by a huge volume of import applications for firearms since last April. The official said the review was being conducted on an "urgent basis."

On Wednesday, the Clinton administration suspended issuing any future licenses for the export of firearms to Canada. The White House said today that exports themselves had not been suspended, which means that guns can be shipped if they were the subject of past import certificates. It is these certificates that are under review.

The Canadian officials confirmed that new licenses had been issued for 115,000 handguns since last April. But they said today that only 1,500 of those had so far entered Canada. Nevertheless, the Canadians said the United States was concerned by the volume of guns that had been licensed for export to Canada, a concern the Canadians share.

In response to a question, a Canadian official said that one license was for 89,000 handguns. He described it as "an extremely unusual application," but he declined to name the company.

The company in question is a sporting goods store, Sportèque, in Quebec, according to the owner, Anthony Ward. Last November, Mr. Ward said, he got an import license to buy 44,500 9-millimeter pistols and 44,500 .40-caliber pistols with night sights. The total contract price is \$33 million. The seller is a Georgia gun manufacturer, Glock.

Glock declined to comment.

Mr. Ward said that Sportèque was a retail store that specialized in hunting and skiing, and that he had sought the license for so many handguns because he was hoping to make sales to the Royal Canadian Mounted

Police and to municipal police departments.

This was one of the import licenses that alarmed the Clinton administration.

Canadian officials said today that dealers often got licenses for more guns than they might import just so they would be in a position to bid on contracts with police forces, and to fulfill those contracts should they prevail.

"The United States imposed this on us," a Canadian official said. That happened, he said, when the Clinton administration last April imposed export requirements on firearms going to Canada.

The Clinton administration imposed the stricter export controls because it found that American military equipment shipped to Canada was then being resold to countries such as Iraq, Iran and Libya. In recent years, individuals have been prosecuted in the United States for selling military equipment to Cana-

### Concern over one 'unusual' order for 89,000 pistols.

da, which was then diverted, such as gyroscopes (to China), helicopters (to Iraq) and armored personnel carriers (to Iraq).

It was still unclear today which country — Canada or the United States — was responsible for suspending the processing of Canadian import applications for firearms.

The White House spokesman, Joe Lockhart, said the Canadian government had expressed concern and had made a request to put the licensing process on hold.

At the Ottawa news briefing, reporters barraged the officials with questions about who initiated the action. Beyond saying that Canada began the review after the United States notified it that there had been an increase in applications, the officials avoided saying directly what had caused Canada to send a letter to Washington on Wednesday asking for a suspension of the licensing process.

Outside the briefing, an official said that the Clinton administration had made clear that it intended to act even without a request from Canada, and that Canada and the United States had mutual interests in having Canada send the letter.

It saved Canada from having the suspension appear imposed by its big southern neighbor. And by having it appear that Canada initiated the action, the Clinton administration could avoid criticism by the American gun lobby.

### Protest Halts Grain Ship

LONDON, Feb. 25 (Reuters) — Members of Greenpeace climbed on the anchor chain of a ship that was carrying genetically modified soybeans off Wales today. The environmental advocates pledged to remain until the cargo was returned to the United States.

A spokesman for the group said two members were on the chain to make it too dangerous to draw it up. Three members were on the ship, which is carrying soybeans from Cargill, the American grain giant, to a processing plant in Liverpool.