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Meet the Press interview

Max S. Baucus

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GUESTS: 

CHARLTON HESTON  
President, National Rifle Association

RAHM EMANUEL  
Senior Advisor to the President for  
Policy and Strategy

GARY BAUER  
President, Family Research Council

Senator MAX BAUCUS, (D-Mont.)  
Select Committee on Intelligence

MODERATOR/PANELIST:  
Tim Russert - NBC News

ROUNDTABLE GUESTS:  
Bob Woodward - The Washington Post  
Michael Isikoff - Newsweek  
Al Hunt - The Wall Street Journal  
Lisa Myers - NBC News

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MEET THE PRESS - NBC NEWS  
(202)885-4598  
(Sundays: (202)885-4200)
MR. RUSSERT: Welcome again to MEET THE PRESS. Our issues this Sunday morning, the National Rifle Association has a new leader, and he is talking tough.

(Videotape):

MR. HESTON: Mr. Clinton, America doesn't trust you with our 21-year-old daughters, and we sure, Lord, don't trust you with our guns!

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: Our guest, Charlton Heston.

And what does the White House have in store for the NRA? We'll ask the senior adviser to the president, Rahm Emanuel.

And we'll get the very latest Clinton White House view on charges that Ken Starr has leaked sensitive information, on the fate of the tobacco bill, and the president's trip to China. And as he prepares to visit Beijing, strong charges he has abandoned human rights, and even compromised national security. Should the president even go to China? No, says outspoken conservative Gary Bauer. Yes, says Democratic senator Max Baucus. Bauer versus Baucus, a debate about American values.

And in our roundtable, are there shades of Watergate in the legal battle between Ken Starr and Bill Clinton? We'll ask Bob Woodward of The Washington Post. And Monica Lewinsky poses for Vanity Fair, and poses and poses and poses. But will she make a deal for immunity? Insights and analysis from Al Hunt of The Wall Street Journal, Michael Isikoff of Newsweek, and Lisa Myers of NBC News.

But first, the president's senior adviser, Rahm Emanuel. Mr. Emanuel, welcome.

MR. EMANUEL: Hello, Tim.

MR. RUSSERT: As you know, a new magazine is out today, Content, making some allegations that Ken Starr has acknowledged that he sat down and briefed reporters, and his top deputy talked to reporters as well. We talked to Mr. Starr this morning as he was leaving his house. Let's take a look at his comments.

(Videotape):

MR. KEN STARR (Independent Counsel): Our statement indicates that we have not violated 6-E and that we're living up to our professional responsibilities.

Unidentified Reporter: Could you reiterate your statement, though, for us on camera?

MR. STARR: No, our statement speaks for itself, and we're going on about our work. I'm off to church. See you later.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Starr's reference to 6-E is a federal statute that prohibits prosecutors from revealing information from a grand jury. What he said to the writer in Content magazine is that he was
simply backgrounding reporters, sharing information before it was part of a grand jury proceeding, and,
therefore, entirely legal, entirely ethical. What is the White House response this morning?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, I think this article, and Steven Brill's interview, and the thoroughness of that
article, this is a bombshell. It is grave, and it is very serious. And it is now a cloud that hangs over
the office of the independent counsel, and literally hangs on the legitimacy of that office, on the methods
and motives, as in tactics and techniques in the way that office is conducted. And anything short of an
independent investigation to get to the thorough of this, because the American people will want it, they
need it and they will demand it. And there needs to be, and because of the seriousness of these charges,
there ought to be an independent investigation.

MR. RUSSERT: Who should conduct that independent investigation?

MR. EMANUEL: That's something, obviously, the Justice Department and Mr. Starr and this panel of
judges will review. That's not for us to say. But these charges are so serious and they go right to the
heart of the legitimacy of the office and the way it's been conducted and the way he has conducted the
investigation and the methods and motives he has literally embodied that they have now--this cloud exists
over that office. And until that's cleared up, that cloud will literally stay over the office and also over
Ken Starr.

MR. RUSSERT: Will the president now consider asking Janet Reno to fire Ken Starr?

MR. EMANUEL: Tim, I'm going to do something that Ken Starr has never done. I'm not going to pass
judgment and I'm not going to--before the facts. They need to have an independent investigation. They
ought to have an independent investigation. And to make any judgment prior to that would be wrong.
And you should not judge that until--I think this is very serious. It's a bombshell, and it's very grave.
After that investigation, you can make judgments.

MR. RUSSERT: Has anyone at the White House ever leaked or talked about depositions or grand jury
proceedings with any reporter?

MR. EMANUEL: Not to my knowledge in any way. I also think, Tim, that in this point, there is no
relevancy, given that Mr. Starr has the subpoena power and the office and responsibility of the
independent counsel and is bound by a court in how he's supposed to conduct himself, as well as by the
procedures recommended with the Justice Department. He has secret information, and there is no legal
or moral equivalency. To my knowledge, nobody in the White House has done that.

MR. RUSSERT: When Kathleen Willey accused the president of groping her and appeared on "60
Minutes," the next day the White House flooded the media with telephone logs and letters from Miss
Willey...

MR. EMANUEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. RUSSERT: ...all of which, I assume, are part of the grand jury proceeding. Was that not a leak?

MR. EMANUEL: No. What we did is provide information available to the press that we think gave
a full context to that relationship in that context of Ms. Willey when she worked at the White House and
we made that information available. And that was not a leak. A leak is something else. We were quite
open about what we were doing.
MR. RUSSERT: Will we have similar information provided that would give context to his relationship with Monica Lewinsky?

MR. EMANUEL: Tim, in that situation, as long as this office is going on and this investigation being headed by Mr. Starr and how he's conducting this investigation, we have a legal situation. The legal situation context will determine our actions. And we make those decisions in the full knowledge of what's going on with this office of independent counsel.

MR. RUSSERT: Finally, it has been reported that six times the independent counsel has requested that President Clinton come to the grand jury and testify under oath. Six times the president has refused to testify. Why won't the president testify under oath before the grand jury?

MR. EMANUEL: Tim, as you know, the president's attorney, Dave Kendall, handles that matter. He has handled it in the past and he'll handle it in the future. And to my knowledge, he's in discussions with the office of independent counsel.

MR. RUSSERT: Do you believe the president has an obligation to testify before the grand jury, like any other American citizen?

MR. EMANUEL: I think these decisions about how we go forward is handled by Dave Kendall, and Dave Kendall will make the recommendations on how to proceed. He has handled it in the past and he'll handle it in the future.

MR. RUSSERT: If I could ask you to stay right here with us, I now want to introduce the new president of the NRA, Charlton Heston. We're going to talk about the mission of the NRA. Good morning, sir. Mr. Heston, good morning.

MR. HESTON: Good morning. Good morning, Mr. Russert.

MR. RUSSERT: You have said that you want to bring the NRA back from the fringe of American life. What does that mean?

MR. HESTON: I think we want to return the NRA to the mainstream of American life, and I think we can do that. I think we can restore the reputation the NRA has had for 120-some years. And over the past 10 years we have, in effect, been demonized, and I'd like to stop that. We've had some internal dissent. That is entirely been dealt with now, and I'm looking forward to a successful effort.

MR. RUSSERT: Well, let me raise two issues that are very popular with mainstream America: one, mandatory trigger locks on guns so that kids would have a very hard time using them if they came across them. Will the NRA now support mandatory trigger locks on guns?

MR. HESTON: I'm in favor of trigger locks. The only problem with trigger locks is that, as every package of the various brands that are sold says on the outside, "Do not put this trigger lock on a loaded weapon. It might go off." So then you've got to take the ammunition out of the gun before you put the trigger lock on. Then you don't need the trigger lock because it's empty, right? Actually, no group in the country does more to promote child safety with firearms than the NRA.

MR. RUSSERT: But the NRA will now support legislation which will mandate trigger locks on guns?
MR. HESTON: We’re in favor of trigger locks, but they’re really not much use for the reason I just pointed out to you.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me raise another issue. As you know, in November, there will be an instant check conducted by the FBI. Anyone who wants to buy a gun will have to be given approval. Their background will be checked by the FBI computer system. The NRA is now opposing the establishment and funding of that system. Why?

MR. HESTON: From the beginning, back when they were passing the Brady Bill, which didn’t do much good, the NRA said, "What you must do is use, like, a credit card, and if you’re proven to have a clean, no felony record, then you’re allowed to buy the gun," which is, in essence, what the FBI plans to do. The only problem is they plan, also, to charge—I think it’s $30. Now, I don’t approve of that.

MR. RUSSERT: Well, in order to conduct the investigation and to pay for the computers, the FBI wants to charge about $15 per application, similar to someone who wanted to register an automobile. Why not allow the FBI to do their work with that modest fee?

MR. HESTON: It’s not a big issue there, but certainly they should have done this 10 or 15 years ago, which is what we recommended from the beginning, having a check with, like, a credit card.

MR. RUSSERT: Does the NRA believe that every American should have access to an AK-47?

MR. HESTON: I don’t like AK-47s, but I don’t have to like them to defend an American citizen’s right to own one, just as I don’t have to like Louie Farrakhan to support his First Amendment rights to speak out just as he wants, just because I don’t have to like Jerry Springer for the same reason. The Bill of Rights supports freedom of speech, freedom of religion and the freedom to own firearms.

MR. RUSSERT: What use would an AK-47 be to anyone other than to kill people?

MR. HESTON: As I told you, I don’t like AK-47s. They are a fully automatic weapon. They were manufactured and developed in the Soviet Union. They mostly come into this country smuggled in from China. I think it’s not a good thing. But there we are. We are still covered by the Second Amendment.

MR. RUSSERT: As you know, Mr. Heston, you’ve been rather outspoken in your comments. In the clip we began our program with, you said that you would not trust—America should not trust their 21-year-old daughter with President Clinton. What did you mean by that?

MR. HESTON: I’ll tell you what. I make a promise. Mr. Emanuel is on the other end of the program. We make a promise that I will never say anything bad about the president again if they will give us one city, one city in which they actually prosecute felons. We were in Philadelphia. There’s a Judge Shapiro in Philadelphia who in 18 months released 9,732 criminals without trial. They went out on release, and they committed 79 murders, 90 rapes, 701 burglaries, 959 robberies, 1,113 assaults, 2,215 drug offenses and 2,748 thefts. Judge Shapiro could have saved at least 79 lives if they’d just put those people on trial and in jail.

There’s a city in Virginia, Richmond, that started a plan called the exile plan. Cops carry this all the time. And in less than a year, they reduced deaths, murders, in the city of Richmond by half. We would like to do that in Philadelphia. The mayor of Philadelphia has said he’s in favor of it. The leadership
of both houses of Congress have said they will fund it, and I would like to see that happen. That’s my wish.

MR. RUSSERT: The mayor of Philadelphia also said he’s going to sue gun manufacturers for their negligence and creation of a public nuisance. Would you support the mayor of Philadelphia in his suit?

MR. HESTON: I’m supporting the mayor of Philadelphia in making his prosecutors, allowing them, to prosecute criminals.

MR. RUSSERT: Many have suggested, and you have used these words yourself, Mr. Heston, that there is a cultural war going on in America.

MR. HESTON: I think that’s true.

MR. RUSSERT: And yet the other day you said, "I suspect there are as many gun users in the Hollywood closet as there are homosexuals." What did that mean?

MR. HESTON: Well, it means that there are a lot more people in the Hollywood community that own and use firearms than they are willing to say. That’s OK. I don’t mind that. I just thought it was an interesting observation.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me show you and our viewers a clip of a speech you gave a few months ago, where you talked to America about some of your concerns, and then get your reaction about this cultural war and your role in it.

(Videotape, December 7, 1997):

MR. HESTON: Mainstream America is depending on you, counting on you, to draw your sword and fight for them. These people have precious little time or resources to battle misguided Cinderella attitudes: the fringe propaganda of the homosexual coalition, the feminists who preach that it’s a divine duty for women to hate men, blacks who raise a militant fist with one hand while they seek preference with the other.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: That’s a pretty broad swath, Mr. Heston--feminist and gays and blacks and, earlier, President Clinton. Is the presidency of the NRA an opportunity or forum to talk about this cultural war, or you’re going to limit your comments to guns?

MR. HESTON: No, I think the cultural war is a true war, and I think the gradual fraying of the whole culture of the country is very distressing. I share with Bill Bennett and many others those concerns. I don’t think we should be broken up into little enclaves, gypsy camps, each with its own agenda, like a Vulcan nation, for heaven’s sake. We are supposed to be one nation united.

MR. RUSSERT: Charl... 

MR. HESTON: That’s the way the country was invented, and that’s the way I’d like to see it happen again. And I think it can.
MR. RUSSERT: Charlton Heston, we thank you very much for joining us on this Sunday morning.

MR. HESTON: Thank you, Mr. Russert.

MR. RUSSERT: Rahm Emanuel, you just heard a challenge from Charlton Heston, the new president of the NRA. Will the president designate one city as an area, a laboratory if you will, to enforce all laws against people who carry guns and use guns and bring people to justice?

MR. EMANUEL: Tim, there is a city that’s working. It’s called Boston. Until recently, in fact, for two and a half years, not a single juvenile murder with a firearm. That social experiment that the NRA wants has occurred. That city, Boston, is the model the president’s used for his juvenile legislation that’s pending in front of Congress. It includes an extension of the Brady bill to juveniles, which the NRA leadership has opposed. It exp...

MR. RUSSERT: Will you expand it to Philadelphia?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, one of the things we’re trying to do is get the national legislation to every city. And it’s a comprehensive approach, Operation Cease Fire, Operation Night Light. And it involves police, law enforcement, preachers, community leaders, schoolteachers, principals, parents in a comprehensive approach from guns to gangs. And it cracks down in that effort. That’s the basis of the president’s national legislation.

And every effort, at every step of the way, whether it’s been the Brady Bill, whether it’s been the extension of the Brady Bill, whether it’s been the assault-weapon ban, whether it’s been the ban on imports from foreign countries, whether it’s a child-safety lock, which it’s new now that the NRA wants to support mandatory child-safety locks and will take them up and, hopefully, they’ll make that included in the juvenile legislation we want to pass because it’s part of our legislation. To date, the NRA’s opposed us on that every step of the way.

These laws are on the books because the president of the United States and the courage with the handgun control and law enforcement agencies in this country have made these laws over the opposition of the NRA leadership. And I welcome...

MR. RUSSERT: The...

MR. EMANUEL: …if he wants to participate in passing that comprehensive juvenile legislation, so we now would have a juvenile Brady Bill on the books. We would have a child-safety lock...

MR. RUSSERT: So the White House will have an all-out push for mandatory safety locks on gun triggers?

MR. EMANUEL: As you well know, Tim, the person that put that at the center of a part of juvenile legislation was President Clinton, in concert with every law enforcement agency in this country. And now federal law enforcement officers in this country, as a model--FBI, ATF and others--have child safety locks on their guns.

MR. RUSSERT: The Brady Law will expire sunset in November.

MR. EMANUEL: November, yeah.
MR. RUSSERT: The FBI will begin its instant check.

MR. EMANUEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. RUSSERT: Many people are concerned that the instant check system will not be in place or as comprehensive as it should be...

MR. EMANUEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. RUSSERT: ...and, therefore, are recommending that the Brady Law, a five-day waiting period between when you purchase a gun and when you actually take possession...

MR. EMANUEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. RUSSERT: ...should be kept in place and extended. Would the president extend the Brady Law?

MR. EMANUEL: Right. One of the things, Tim, that we believe in and I think that--you know, the Justice Department's done a good job in the data collection to make the instant check work. I think that if you look at the facts, and I have, with the Justice Department, there is good common sense to the five-day, cooling-off period. Why? Based on police research, 20 percent of the guns purchased that are used in murder are purchased within the week of the murder. The five-day waiting period was established for a cooling-off period for crimes of passion. And I think it has done a good job and, in fact, an effective job over the last four years the Brady Bill's been on the books, that five-day waiting period. Now, I'll give you one other stat...

MR. RUSSERT: Will the president push then for an extension to the Brady Bill?

MR. EMANUEL: We think the cooling-off period is very, very important.

MR. RUSSERT: So you're going to go to Congress and ask that the Brady bill be extended.

MR. EMANUEL: Right. That the cooling off period piece of it, the five-day waiting period, be part of that.

MR. RUSSERT: How about legislation which would say you only can buy one gun per month and that there be a national handgun ID, an ID about Congressman Chuck Schumer.

MR. EMANUEL: I think this president has--I think in '68 was the last time, prior to the president, that the nation passed any gun control laws. And under his watch, we've passed the Brady bill, the assault weapon ban and the extension of the Brady bill to domestic violence offenders.

MR. RUSSERT: But will you push for one gun per month?

MR. EMANUEL: Tim, no, what we want to push--and I just said--and having done an effective job of passing legislation, we believe the priority should be on a child safety lock on every handgun sold in America, on extending the Brady bill to juvenile offenders. We think those are one of the things that we want to get done immediately. The other things we are looking at is a parental responsibility act. We're reviewing that now.
MR. RUSSERT: But you also want to keep the five-day cooling off period, the Brady bill, in effect?

MR. EMANUEL: Right. We think that’s a priority because it has worked effectively.

MR. RUSSERT: What did you think about Mr. Heston’s comments about the president not being trusted with 21-year-old daughters, and his other comments about gays and blacks and women?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, Tim, the president’s chosen, over the last six years and when he announced he was running, the battlefield of ideas, not the battlefield of insults. Our differences with the NRA and its leadership is over the Brady bill, the assault weapon ban, child safety lock, disrupting gun trafficking. We have honest to good differences in those areas. In every one of those laws that are now a part of the books and that have helped this country with 300,000 less fugitives and felons getting access to handguns is because of the president, law enforcement officers and courageous members of Congress.

In December, Charlton Heston was awarded with the Kennedy Honors, and he was received at the White House, and the president was very gracious in his remarks, as Mr. Heston knows, towards Mr. Heston. And I think Mr. Heston—and that’s a sign of character. I think Mr. Heston understands this is the president of the United States. He can have his differences about the policies we put in place, but I think the area of personal insults is not the place when we have real concerns about fighting crime. The president showed his graciousness, regardless of the differences on policy. And I think he’s owed the same.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me turn to the issue of tobacco. Will there be a comprehensive tobacco bill passed this year which would focus on teen-age smoking?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, that is principle number one. The president’s outlined in the last principle as a comprehensive tobacco legislation that, in fact, cuts down on teen smoking and saves one million lives. We believe that’s possible. We are pushing very hard, and we believe the members of Congress, as they vote, will vote like parents and not like politicians and will, in fact, pass legislation that does exactly that.

MR. RUSSERT: So you’re confident there will be a tobacco bill passed?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, we’re going to push very hard. I think, though—and I’ll say this, Tim—I think as members look at this, they will see a piece of legislation that saves a million lives. And I have no doubt, as you know—we’re both veterans of the political process—there’s a lot of money being spent to stop that law from happening.

MR. RUSSERT: Newt Gingrich said it’s dead in the House.

MR. EMANUEL: I think people will look at this and they will look to see, and they will make a choice—$12 million in contributions, a million lives. And I have enough confidence in the members of Congress, they’ll pick a million lives to save of teen-agers and kids.

MR. RUSSERT: Before we go, as you know, the president of the United States is going to China, to Tiananmen Square, where nine years ago thousands of young Chinese students were killed, protesting in favor of democracy. Let me show you a clip of then-Governor Clinton talking about then-President Bush and his China policy.

(Videotape, August 13, 1992):
GOVERNOR BILL CLINTON: When China cracked down on pro-democracy demonstrators, exported advance weapons to radical regimes and suppressed Tibet, this administration and this president failed to stand up for our values. Instead, he sent secret emissaries to China, signaling that we would do business as usual with those who murdered freedom in Tiananmen Square.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: What a difference six years makes. The Chinese are still cracking down on democracy, still trading nuclear weapons, still not recognized the freedom of Tibet, exactly what Governor Clinton, candidate Clinton, denounced George Bush for. And now he's journeying to Tiananmen Square and toasting the Chinese leadership.

MR. EMANUEL: Tim, the president's policy and goals are the same--more open and stable China that acts responsibly and in accordance with its international status. That goal is the same. He has changed his approach, one to principal engagement. And we have made progress in the areas of human rights, we have made progress in the area of the rules of law, we've made progress in the areas of arms control, we've made progress with China in the area of security. And the president's policy is one of principal engagement to make sure that China continues to push on all those fronts. And as the president showed in the press conference that he held here when the Chinese premier was with him, and as I think NBC reported, he was unusually frank and blunt, "You can be respectful of the Chinese, but firm." And the president told the Chinese publicly as well as privately that when it came to Tiananmen Square and their crackdown of human rights, they are on the wrong side of history.

MR. RUSSERT: Will he be frank and blunt in China about human rights and about illegal Chinese campaign contributions?

MR. EMANUEL: The president of the United States, as you saw when he was here in China and you reported on NBC, was quite blunt and quite frank. And I think that you can be both respectful but forceful. And the president will be, as he has been.

MR. RUSSERT: Will he meet with pro-democracy Chinese dissidents while in China?

MR. EMANUEL: As his schedule's getting finalized, he's going to be meeting with a number of people and people from a broad perspective in China and from a diverse background, and he will be meeting with a number of people.

MR. RUSSERT: Dissidents?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, dissidents is a category. That's all being finalized. He will be meeting with a number of people from across China who have a diverse background.

MR. RUSSERT: Will he insist the Chinese stop focusing launching, in launch mode, their missiles on the United States?

MR. EMANUEL: Well, we are making, as you know--working very hard on this issue. Whether we'll be able to get it in time for the trip, I'm not sure. But it is a priority of ours and something we're working very hard on.

MR. RUSSERT: Rahm Emanuel, we thank you very much for joining us on MEET THE PRESS.
Mr. Emanuel: Thank you, Tim.

Mr. Russert: Coming next, conservative Gary Bauer, Democratic Senator Max Baucus debate. Should President Clinton go to China?

And in our roundtable, Ken Starr charged with illegal leaks. We’ll get the very latest from Bob Woodward, Al Hunt, Lisa Myers and Michael Isikoff.

(Announcements)

Mr. Russert: We’re back. Gentlemen, welcome. Mr. Bauer, let me start with you. Should President Clinton go to China?

Mr. Bauer: Well, I don’t think he should go to China. I certainly don’t think he should go to Tiananmen Square. But I tell you, Tim, the bottom line here is that this policy is a disaster. It doesn’t pass the two important tests. It doesn’t represent the values of the American people. And it doesn’t safeguard the security of the United States. We’ve lost our voice on human rights, didn’t even bring it up in Geneva this year. We praised the release of a couple of dissidents, and then we ignored the news about forced sterilization, slave labor camps, all the rest of it. And on the national security front, China is in the middle of a massive military buildup. And this is the scandal we ought to be talking about. It’s being subsidized by the United States, by corporations like Loral, by the things we’ve seen in recent weeks—Chinese missiles targeted at U.S. cities made more accurate by American technology. This is scandalous, the policy’s a failure and it needs to be changed.

Mr. Russert: Senator Baucus, should the president go to China?

Sen. Baucus: I think he should go, frankly, for most of the reasons that Gary mentioned. Namely, by the president going to China and Tiananmen Square, he can stand up for and represent the views of the dissidents, the prisoners of those in China that feel disenfranchised. In fact, the Chinese want the president to go to Tiananmen. There’s an interesting article recently in The Post outlining all the number of people who spoke freely, without fear, gave their names, saying the president should come.

In addition, other countries, our industrialized friends in Asia, believe that the president should go. The Dalai Lama thinks the president should go. Reverend Billy Graham thinks the president should go. And it’s because it’s an opportunity for the president to press the issues that are so important to the American people; that is, better treatment of political prisoners. In fact, there’s great progress there. There are fewer political prisoners today than there were several years ago. There’s great progress. It’s an opportunity for the president to build on that progress. After all, the United States and China in the next century are probably going to be the two greatest nations in dealing with each other. It’s going to be a very, very important relationship that we have between our two countries, and I think it’s important for us to get that relationship right, go to China, work on the talks and all the areas that are so important so we can get progress.

Mr. Russert: What do you think the American public thinks when it sees candidate Clinton six years ago lambasting George Bush, talking about the butchers of Beijing and kowtowing to the Chinese for selling missile technology and not recognizing human rights and clamping down on Tibet, and then his top aide says, “Well, the president has a different approach”? Basically, he has the same policy as George Bush, which he denounced six years ago trying to get elected.
SEN. BAUCUS: Well, to be candid, I think the president learned. That often happens. Candidates say a lot when they’re not in office, not realizing the complexities of the job and the realities of the job. And once they get into office, they realize that it’s much more complex and the realities are much different. And also as time goes on—for example, right now, we’re in a period of time where there’s tremendous economic instability in Asia, a tremendous pressure on China to devalue its currency, on Hong Kong to devalue, as the Japanese yen goes down. And if the United States today were to snub China, a key player, and not grant normal trading relationships with China, that would have the very serious potential consequence of additional instability in not only Asia but the world. So the times and realities right now indicate that it does make sense to negotiate with China over all these matters.

MR. BAUER: Tim, this policy is a disaster. The only place I hear the arguments that the senator is making this morning is here in Washington, D.C., among the political elite, among the foreign policy elite. I’ve been traveling all over the country. The American people are deeply disturbed by this policy. One of the few things the president had right back in 1992 was his criticism of George Bush’s policy on China. What’s happened since then is that the president’s fallen prey to this lobbying from a lot of very large corporations that want to make a fast buck in China. It is not true that the Chinese people want the president to go to Tiananmen Square. You don’t look at what the Chinese in China are saying. Look at what the Chinese that have gotten out of China are saying—Harry Wu, Wei and others. They appeared with me a couple weeks ago, with Nancy Pelosi and other leading Democrats, to suggest that the president to go to Tiananmen Square was to legitimate what had happened in that square nine years ago. It’s a terrible mistake. And this policy is detrimental to the interests of the United States.

MR. RUSSERT: And yet Sydney Jones from Human Rights Watch told Joe Klein of New Yorker magazine that, "There’s been a considerable loosening of control in terms of free speech in China."

MR. BAUER: We heard testimony before the Congress this week of women in China who are forced to register with local clinics to be checked every couple of months to make sure they’re not pregnant; that are forcibly sterilized and aborted if they happen to have more than one child. This is the conduct not of a civilized nation, but of a rogue nation.

We watched a few weeks ago while India and Pakistan began a new arms race in the subcontinent of Asia. Why did that race take place? Pakistan thanked China for their technological assistance before they exploded that atomic bomb. Our policy is making the world more dangerous. It’s failing all of the basic ways you measure a good American policy.

You know, Senator Baucus understood these things when the issue was South Africa. We knew our policy towards South Africa ignored American values. There was a nation that discriminated against its own people because of race. And yet on China, we seem to be turning a blind eye to the conditions we all know exist. I think it’s a tragedy, and I’m going to do everything I can to turn this policy around.

SEN. BAUCUS: You’re welcome--go ahead.

MR. RUSSERT: Senator Baucus, if President Clinton goes to China, Rahm Emanuel said he’ll be firm. What does he have to say in China...

SEN. BAUCUS: Well, first...

MR. RUSSERT: ...to reassure the American people that he is going to press the Chinese on human rights...
SEN. BAUCUS: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. RUSSERT: ...and find out whether they tried to influence our political campaigns?

SEN. BAUCUS: Well, first of all, I think the forced abortion is absolutely reprehensible. We have no place for forced abortions. And the real question's: How do we best influence Chinese policy? By not going? By snubbing them? Or by going and making the point very firmly that that's not the right kind of practice?

MR. RUSSERT: You expect the president to give a tough speech in China?

SEN. BAUCUS: I expect the president to give a tough speech in several locations. I don't know where it's going to be, whether it's at Tiananmen Square itself or at the university or where. But I do--and privately and publicly. And, also, it is the people in China that are asking the president to come. Wang Dan, for example, a very famous dissident exiled in the United States, wants the president to go over. And in South Africa, that's a totally separate case. That's where many countries of the world join together to encourage South Africa to...

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Bauer, let me ask you this: Many people who support the engagement of China say that look at Russia and look at Cuba.

MR. BAUER: Mm-hmm.

MR. RUSSERT: We engage the Soviet Union, and communism was torn down...

MR. BAUER: Right.

MR. RUSSERT: ...and there is some democracy now in Russia because of our engagements.

MR. BAUER: Sure.

MR. RUSSERT: We did not engage Cuba, and that continues to be a Communist state.

MR. BAUER: Oh, Tim, I'm all for engagement. This false dichotomy the president presents and others present, that some of us want isolationism and others want engagement, is totally off the mark. The question is: What are the terms of engagement? Ronald Reagan engaged the Soviet Union by always bringing up human rights, by always making America's security interest our number-one concern. That's not the policy we have toward China.

Our policy toward China is all carrot and no stick. Our desire to get into that marketplace, which, by the way, they won't let us do--I mean, they're shipping billions of dollars of goods into the United States, while keeping our goods out. Our desire to get into that marketplace is changing us. It's making us forget our most deeply held values. And I think over the long term, the American people will not support it.

One final point: Does anybody think if people gathered in Tiananmen Square today to protest any policy of the Chinese government, that the outcome would be any different than it was nine years ago? They would be shot down again today.
MR. RUSSERT: Senator Baucus, do you agree with that?

SEN. BAUCUS: No, I don't agree with that. I think you'll find that when the president is in Tiananmen, there'll be some forms of protest, whether they're banners or something. And I think we've made tremendous progress. And that's the key point here. Tremendous progress over the last 10 years the United States has made with China. And, secondly, by engaging China, not isolating--Gary says his policy is not isolation. It's truly isolation.

MR. BAUER: Absolutely not.

SEN. BAUCUS: That if we do not isolate, then we can then help China to solve the problems in Korea; help China, with America, solve the problems in India and Pakistan, Taiwan Strait; encourage China not to devalue their currency, their--it is so important that the president go to work on these problems.

MR. RUSSERT: To be continued.

MR. BAUER: Absolutely.

MR. RUSSERT: Gary Bauer, Max Baucus, thanks very much for joining us on this Sunday morning.

SEN. BAUCUS: Thank you.

MR. BAUER: Thank you, Tim.

MR. RUSSERT: Coming next: insights and analysis--Ken Starr, Bill Clinton; Bob Woodward, Al Hunt, Michael Isikoff and Lisa Myers. Lewinsky, Starr, Clinton--could this be a long, hot summer?

(Announcements)

MR. RUSSERT: Welcome back, everyone.

Jack Ford on the "Today" show just spoke with Steven Brill, the editor and publisher of Content magazine, about his interview with Ken Starr. Starr had told Mr. Brill that he, in fact, had talked to reporters, and Mr. Brill then said this to Jack Ford. Let's take a look.

(Videotape, "Today"): 

MR. STEVEN BRILL (Content Magazine): What you can't tell them is what they actually say in the grand jury. Now, that's a--you know, that's a legalism that no court that I know of--at least, no court in authority--has ever accepted. And I think you probably agree, because you know as much about this stuff as I do.

MR. JACK FORD: But didn't you make it clear to him your belief that his sharing of that information was, indeed, if not illegal, at least unethical?

MR. BRILL: I said to him--I said, "Ken," you know, "isn't that a loophole that is--that anybody could use?" And he said, "Well"--then he went into an explanation and said, "It's OK as long as what you're doing is attempting to enhance the confidence that the people have in the office of the special prosecutor."
MR. RUSSERT: Bob Woodward, make sense of all this. Can Ken Starr talk to reporters without breaking laws or violating ethics?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes. In fact, people in the Justice Department—there’ve been attorneys general who have talked to reporters about ongoing investigations, and it’s within their guidelines when it’s a public controversy, give people direction. And that’s probably what happened in this case. But it’s—I think it’s good that somebody like Brill is putting the press under the microscope on this.

MR. RUSSERT: He says in his headline cover however, "In Watergate"—something you know something about, Mr. Woodward—"reporters checked abuse of power. In the Lewinsky affair, they enabled it by lapping up Ken Starr’s leaks, which he now admits for the first time."

MR. WOODWARD: Well, that’s Brill’s conclusion in editorial in his 28-page article. I think he’s dead wrong on that. I think, basically, the reporters are doing a good job. Remember, the White House also talks, and it’s not as if they are victims in all of this and cannot put forth their information. In fact, the press collectively has been clamoring loudest for Bill Clinton and the people in the White House to put out their version.

MR. HUNT: Well, I agree with Bob. I think it’s a really interesting piece. I think he overreaches in some of his conclusions. I do think, however, that his analysis of the first week of clearly there were a number of cases where there was a rush to judgment, I think he does make that quite clear. Finally, I would say, Tim, I hardly think this is the first prosecutor who has talked to the press. However, I suspect the piece will not help Mr. Starr’s already eroded credibility.

MR. RUSSERT: Lisa Myers, what happens now? You heard Rahm Emanuel call for a new investigation to look into Ken Starr’s behavior. Is this going to distract Ken Starr, derail his investigation?

MS. MYERS: Well, you have to wonder what possessed Ken Starr to even discuss this subject, because all it does is give the White House some ammunition. I assume that the White House will continue to hammer away and say, "Look this needs to be investigated." And there’s already a mechanism in place, because of allegations that one of Ken Starr’s witnesses had been tampered with. There’s already a mechanism—Michael Shaheen is already over there beginning to look into that. It’s possible they will ask him to look into this. I suspect the White House would prefer that Janet Reno—excuse me—appoint James Carville to look into the matter. James Carville, of course, who has been Ken Starr’s leading critic.

MR. RUSSERT: Michael Isikoff, you’re a central character in this whole drama.

MS. MYERS: Spikey!

MR. RUSSERT: Aka, Spikey, the nickname one of the characters gave you. But, as you know, better than anyone, you were working on a very comprehensive piece about this story—Bill Clinton, Vernon Jordan, Monica Lewinsky, Linda Tripp—and Newsweek held your story.

MR. ISIKOFF: Mm-hmm.
MR. RUSSERT: Matt Drudge then put it on the Internet, and Newsweek raced it on to the Internet as well. However, in this article, there are strong allegations that Ken Starr's office went to Janet Reno and said, "We need authority to look into this, because Newsweek has a story that--and they're going to go with it, and we have to get this wire tap and get busy now. Otherwise, Newsweek is going to tip off everyone."

MR. ISIKOFF: Well, they had already begun the investigation before they went to Reno. It is possible that, fearing public disclosure of the investigation, they wanted to get some cover by going to Reno. Two things. I mean, first of all, as far as Newsweek's role goes, which I do have to take issue with a lot of what Brill writes, the magazine and I were exceedingly cautious about this and about handling of this. And the fact that I was pushing for publication belies one of the points Starr is trying to make, that we were somehow in league with Starr, because it was very much in Starr's interest to hold Newsweek off, and I made it clear that Newsweek intended to go forward. In the end, it didn't for other reasons, but it had nothing to do with trying to help Ken Starr's investigation. We made very strenuous efforts to keep our own role separate and distinct from what Starr was doing.

MR. RUSSERT: There is a suggestion--use of the word "lapping up" Ken Starr's leaks...

MR. ISIKOFF: Mm-hmm.

MR. RUSSERT: ...that the press was manipulated by Ken Starr in unprecedented ways. How would you respond to that?

MR. ISIKOFF: In fact, you know, look, in almost all the cases that Brill cites--and this has come up before--there are multiple sources for the information that reporters are disclosing that go beyond Starr's office. In many cases, I can state with certainty that key information isn't coming from Starr's office because we have sourced it to people outside of Starr's office. We've said in many cases, and in some cases, "sources close to the president's defense." We've made an effort to say that, and yet the White House will come on and say, "This is another leak from Ken Starr's office." And I think this is something that's completely ignored in Brill's piece.

MS. MYERS: One of my favorite days in the entire controversy over a leak is when Ann Lewis was on one morning news program attacking Starr's office for having linked something to Mikey here, and Mike was on the "Today" show saying, "Well, no, the source was actually someone close to the president's defense." One of the things that surprises me at this point is after five months that we know so little, that so little information has leaked onto the public record, certainly in terms of what has been said before the grand jury, which is the information that is illegal to leak.

MR. HUNT: Tim, let me just descend from Mike for a second, because I think it's healthy that someone looks at this, even if you disagree with some of the conclusions. Bob's colleague, Howard Kurtz, I think, did a very good job on the White House spin effort. I think that the press these days, particularly with 17 zillion different outlets today, which sometimes confuses people, I think it's healthy to have critiques like this, even if you don't agree with all the conclusions.

MR. ISIKOFF: But it's part of the standard political process. If you go back to Watergate, the Nixon White House spent literally years trying to make the conduct of the press the issue rather than their own conduct. And you see that the searchlight will go--the White House saying, "OK, let's make the issue the contact of Ken Starr's office and his investigation. Now, let's make it the issue, the press and so forth." And that's inevitable. That's proper. The question is: What is the evidence? And in Brill's
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piece, he fails to take full account that this is a very serious issue. It is deserving of scrutiny, namely, the conduct of the White House, not just the press. And that by and large, the press has been pretty careful on this.

MR. RUSSERT: Let's go to the core of this issue. This is a great press story--we all accept that--allegations about the president; allegations about Ken Starr. But, Bob Woodward, where are we in this story? What should the public know or think about this story--Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky?

MR. WOODWARD: Well, it's only part of Whitewater in the years-long investigation conducted by Starr. I actually drafted out a list of witnesses and components to the Whitewater investigation that the White House has put aside or effectively dodged. And you can come up with 12 or 14 cases: Filegate, the FBI files and the White House Travel Office. Paula Jones looked like a very serious matter for a long time; immense expectations that there was going to be a trial and this was going to finally get to the bottom of one of the Clinton scandals.

What happens in the Clinton scandals is you never get to the bottom of any of them. And there is great expectation in the Lewinsky matter that if she testifies, that somehow things are going to be clear. But as we know, anything with Bill Clinton, things don't turn out to be clear ever.

MR. RUSSERT: Albert Hunt, if Monica Lewinsky is granted immunity and she testifies under oath that she had sex with the president of the United States, and that if he didn't ask her to lie, he certainly had discussions about her testimony and upcoming proceedings, what will happen?

MR. HUNT: Well, they won't impeach a president for sex. I don't think there's any question of that. The only thing I think that could lead to a serious effort to impeach a president would be if there's compelling evidence that he obstructed justice--and I mean really compelling evidence. But, Tim, we missed one point. People say, "So, therefore, Clinton has dodged it once again." This already is an incredibly diminished president. These poll ratings are such an illusion. Sixty-two percent reflect the fact we have a great economy. This is a president who doesn't have nearly the leadership capacity he enjoyed five months ago.

MR. RUSSERT: Michael Isikoff, where are we on this story, and where do we go from here?

MR. ISIKOFF: Well, I think, at the moment, we're waiting to see whether some deal can be worked out between Monica Lewinsky's new lawyers and Starr's team. It's going to be very tough. You know, we reported last week in Newsweek that Monica Lewinsky still retains great affection and is even infatuated, according to one source, with the president and is extremely reluctant to do anything that is going to bring him down. On the other hand, she is in a great deal of legal trouble. I think her lawyers do want to try to arrange some sort of immunity deal that will get her off the hook but will avoid having to trigger some sort of constitutional crisis or impeachment hearings. And whether that can be done or not is entirely unclear.

MR. WOODWARD: But she's already a damaged witness. If she says there was some sort of sexual relationship with Clinton, she is on record under oath denying that. So in a way she's like the McDougals and like lots of other people in Clinton's past.

MR. ISIKOFF: In some ways, except that Starr's office does have a lot of evidence, and a lot of evidence has come in and a lot of evidence we know about that, if Lewinsky corroborates it and tell a story that's consistent with external evidence, it could make her a powerful witness.
MR. WOODWARD: But that’s all circumstantial and secondary evidence.

MR. RUSSERT: Lisa Myers, do you think there will be an immunity deal?

MS. MYERS: I think the odds favor that there will be a deal. I think it’s in Monica Lewinsky’s interests. I think it’s in Ken Starr’s interests. But one of the things she’ll have to do to get that deal is persuade prosecutors that she is telling the full truth. She may even have to pass a lie detector test. And one point, Tim, that prosecutors make when you start to complain about the credibility of their witnesses was, “Look, we didn’t pick these witnesses. Bill Clinton picked them.”

MR. RUSSERT: We have to take a quick break. We’ll be right back after this.

(Announcements)

MR. RUSSERT: And coming up on “Dateline” tonight...

MR. STONE PHILLIPS (“Dateline”): Thanks, Tim. Who killed John F. Kennedy? Tonight we ask Robert Oswald, Lee Harvey Oswald’s brother, and his answer may surprise you. The story tonight on “Dateline.” Tim.

MR. RUSSERT: Thank you, Stone Phillips.

And at 6 and 10 P.M. tonight on CNBC, more on Ken Starr and Bill Clinton through the eyes of former Clinton adviser George Stephanopolous. Start your day tomorrow on “Today” with Katie and Matt, then the “NBC Nightly News” with Tom Brokaw.

That’s all for today. We’ll be back next week. If it’s Sunday, it’s MEET THE PRESS.