

Statement on the Helicopter Crash in Vietnam April 7, 2001

Laura and I were deeply saddened to learn of the crash this morning in central Vietnam of a helicopter carrying 16 people, including 7 U.S. military personnel, who were on an important mission to find and recover the remains of servicemen missing from the Vietnam war. The families of the service personnel lost in today's tragic accident know better than most the contribution their loved ones made in bringing clo-

sure to scores of families across America. Today's loss is a terrible one for our Nation. Although not lost in a hostile act, like those for whom they search, they too have lived lives of great consequence, answering a calling of service to their fellow citizens. As we enter a period of religious holidays across America, may we remember their sacrifice and keep them and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters April 9, 2001

Federal Budget

The President. Good morning. I'm discussing the budget we're sending to the Hill today with my Cabinet. It's a budget that protects taxpayers, protects children, protects our surplus. It represents compassionate conservatism. It's a budget that sets priorities. It's a budget that recognizes there are some good programs here in Washington that need to be funded.

For example, the budget provides a \$21 million increase for food safety programs, \$1 billion increase for Pell grants for low-income students, \$350 million increase for childcare. We help children whose parents are in prison with a \$67 million mentoring program. We increase funding available to prevent child abuse by 66 percent. We fight crime—\$87 million increase for front-line prosecutors. We give \$75 million for Project Child Safe, which is a program that provides gun safety locks for families. It fights corporate subsidies. It eliminates thousands of one-time earmarked projects.

Washington is known for pork. This budget funds our needs without the fat. It also represents a new way of doing business in Washington and a new way of

thinking. The budget puts the taxpayers first, and that's exactly where they belong.

I'll be glad to answer questions.

U.S. Navy Aircraft Incident

Q. Mr. President, members of your administration expected the crew to be freed over the weekend. At this point, how can you not agree with Chairman Hyde that they are hostages?

The President. First, I just talked to General Sealock, who had a good visit with all 24 crewmembers. His report is that their spirits are very high, that they're doing well, and that's good news. Secondly, all of us around this table understand diplomacy takes time. But there is a point—the longer it goes—there's a point at which our relations with China could become damaged.

Q. Is there any more that you can do or say, sir?

The President. Every day that goes by increases the potential that our relations with China could be damaged. And our hope is that this matter gets resolved quickly.

Q. Is there anything else you can do? You said a week ago that it's time for them to come home. They're still not home.

What else can the President of the United States do to bring our people home?

The President. We're working behind the scenes. We've got every diplomatic channel open. We're in discussions with the Chinese. It is now time for our troops to come home so that our relationship does not become damaged.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Neal Sealock, USA, U.S. Embassy Defense Attache in Beijing. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters

April 10, 2001

President Bush. I'm going to have an opening statement. His Majesty will have an opening statement. I'll be glad to take a couple of questions from the American press. His Majesty will take a couple of questions from the Jordanian press, and we'll alternate.

It's my honor to welcome the Majesty to the Oval Office, to our country. We had a very good lunch. We discussed a lot of subjects, starting with how best to work together to lay the foundation for peace in the Middle East. We had a very good discussion about trade, and I explained to His Majesty that ours is a country that believes in free trade.

We look forward to working to get an agreement, one way or the other, out of our Congress that encourages free trade with Jordan. We will be discussing strategies as how best to achieve that objective, but the objective is for there to be a free trade agreement between our countries.

His Majesty is one of the young leaders of the Middle East who has got a good vision for peace. And I look forward to his advice and counsel and working closely together to achieve peace. So welcome, Your Majesty.

King Abdullah. Thank you very much, sir. Mr. President, as you said, we had a very warm and constructive discussions today about not only bilateral relations but

that of the region. And I believe that we're both committed to finding peace and stability in our part of the world. We're very grateful for all the support that we've had from your country over the years. And I look forward to working with you, sir, and with your administration to try and bring peace and stability to the Middle East.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

U.S. Navy Aircraft Incident

Q. Your Majesty, with apologies, because there's another subject on everybody's mind—Mr. President—

President Bush. What might that be?

Q. Well, it's the China problem. What is it going to take to resolve that? Have you considered dealing directly with the President of China?

President Bush. We are working hard to resolve the situation. The first piece of news I have to report is, I talked to the General, Sealock, again. He met with our folks in Hainan Island. He reported that spirits are high, that the troops are patient. He informed us that there is an exchange of e-mails between the—our troops and their families, which is—I found to be an important piece of news, that the families will be able to talk to each other.

Diplomacy sometimes takes a little longer than people would like. I urge the