

support the people of Iraq will be for the long term.

We call upon the international community to join with us in helping to realize a better future for the Iraqi people.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this joint statement.

Statement on the 2003 Report of the Social Security Trustees *March 17, 2003*

I commend the Social Security Board of Trustees for their hard work on their annual report.

As in last year's report, the Trustees confirmed that benefits for today's seniors are safe and secure. Promises made can and will be kept. The Trustees also once again have delivered a sobering message—Social Security, in its present form, is unsustainable for the long term. I share the Trustees' view that we need to explore new ways to ensure that Social Security remains strong and financially secure for America's children and grandchildren.

I am encouraged by the unprecedented level of bipartisan interest in Social Security modernization. Many comprehensive proposals have been put forward to strengthen Social Security for the long term. Although these proposals differ in details, they are consistent in showing that if we give workers the opportunity to invest a portion of their wages in personal accounts, Social Se-

curity will be able to offer higher benefits than would otherwise be the case.

To repeat what I told Congress in the State of the Union Address this year: "As we continue to work together to keep Social Security strong and reliable, we must offer younger workers a chance to invest in retirement accounts that they will control and they will own."

Social Security protects beneficiaries with disabilities, retirees, widows, and widowers. It also affects the lives of millions of tax-paying workers, the beneficiaries of tomorrow. As the report makes clear, Social Security faces long-term problems that demand bipartisan solutions.

I hope that Members of Congress will join with the Social Security Administration and other interested parties in a national dialog about how best to strengthen and protect Social Security. I look forward to working with Congress to see that Social Security remains sound and strong for today's and tomorrow's retirees.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 2003 *March 17, 2003*

I send greetings to those celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

On this day, we honor the life of Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, and celebrate the rich history of the Emerald Isle. St. Patrick escaped from slavery and dedicated his life

to helping others through his words and actions. His example of courage, determination, and faith captured the hearts of the Irish and continues to inspire countless people around the world.

In the United States, this day gives us an opportunity to recognize the vital contributions of Irish Americans. Throughout our history, America has welcomed millions of Irish immigrants to our country. These individuals have transformed our national identity and strengthened our families, our communities, and our national character.

Today, approximately one in four Americans can trace their ancestry in part to Ire-

land's green shores. We are proud of our deep and lasting ties to Ireland and are grateful for the many Irish Americans who continue to enrich our Nation.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a happy St. Patrick's Day.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Address to the Nation on Iraq *March 17, 2003*

My fellow citizens, events in Iraq have now reached the final days of decision. For more than a decade, the United States and other nations have pursued patient and honorable efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime without war. That regime pledged to reveal and destroy all its weapons of mass destruction as a condition for ending the Persian Gulf war in 1991.

Since then, the world has engaged in 12 years of diplomacy. We have passed more than a dozen resolutions in the United Nations Security Council. We have sent hundreds of weapons inspectors to oversee the disarmament of Iraq. Our good faith has not been returned.

The Iraqi regime has used diplomacy as a ploy to gain time and advantage. It has uniformly defied Security Council resolutions demanding full disarmament. Over the years, U.N. weapon inspectors have been threatened by Iraqi officials, electronically bugged, and systematically deceived. Peaceful efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime have failed again and again because we are not dealing with peaceful men.

Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised. This regime has already used weap-

ons of mass destruction against Iraq's neighbors and against Iraq's people.

The regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East. It has a deep hatred of America and our friends. And it has aided, trained, and harbored terrorists, including operatives of Al Qaida.

The danger is clear: Using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country or any other.

The United States and other nations did nothing to deserve or invite this threat. But we will do everything to defeat it. Instead of drifting along toward tragedy, we will set a course toward safety. Before the day of horror can come, before it is too late to act, this danger will be removed.

The United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security. That duty falls to me as Commander in Chief, by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep.

Recognizing the threat to our country, the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly last year to support the use of force against Iraq. America tried to work with the United Nations to address this threat because we wanted to resolve the issue peacefully. We believe in the mission