

NATO continues formally to review KFOR's mission at 6-month intervals. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, force structure, force reductions, and the eventual withdrawal of KFOR. NATO has adopted the Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans. KFOR has transferred full responsibility for public safety and policing to UNMIK international and local police forces throughout Kosovo except in the area of Mitrovica, where the responsibility is shared due to security concerns. The UNMIK international police and local police forces have also begun to assume

responsibility for guarding patrimonial sites and established border-crossing checkpoints.

The continued deployment of U.S. forces has been undertaken pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. I appreciate the continued support of the Congress in these actions.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

The President's Radio Address *November 15, 2003*

Good morning. This week I traveled to Florida to visit with seniors about an important goal for my administration and this Nation. After years of debate and deadlock, the Congress is finishing work on the biggest improvements in senior health care coverage in nearly 40 years.

Some important details of the Medicare legislation have to be worked out, but leaders in both the House and the Senate have already agreed to four clear-cut improvements to Medicare.

First, within 6 months of Medicare reform law, all seniors would be eligible for a Medicare-approved drug discount card. This card would give seniors an immediate 10- to 25-percent savings on the cost of their medicines. For seniors with typical drug costs of \$1,285 a year, the card would deliver annual savings of up to \$300. And for low-income seniors, the discount card would include a \$600 annual credit toward drug costs.

Second, beginning in 2006, we would establish Medicare prescription drug coverage for all seniors who want it, at a monthly

premium of about \$35. For most seniors without coverage today, the new coverage would cut their annual drug bills roughly in half.

Third, seniors with the greatest need will get the most help. Low-income seniors would pay a reduced premium or no premium at all for the new drug coverage. And low-income seniors would also have lower copayments for their medicines.

Fourth, our seniors would enjoy more choices in their health coverage, including the same kind of choices that Members of Congress and other Federal employees enjoy. If seniors have more choices, health plans will compete for their business by offering better coverage at affordable prices.

The choices we support include the choice of remaining in the traditional Medicare program. Some seniors don't want change, and if you're a senior who wants to stay in the current Medicare system, you will have that option. And with that option, you will also be able to get Medicare-approved prescription drug coverage.

Some seniors may choose a new Medicare-approved private plan that includes a drug benefit, along with other options. Such options could include coverage for extended hospital stays or protection against high out-of-pocket medical expenses. Others may prefer managed care plans. Under the approach I support, seniors would have these options as well.

American seniors are calling for these improvements. Among the seniors I met in Florida was Marge MacDonald. Marge and her husband Mac do not have prescription drug coverage, and they are frustrated. Here is what Marge says: "I'm tired of the talk. Sooner or later, somebody needs to do something." Marge is right. The time for delay and deadlock has passed. Now is the time for action.

I ask seniors and all Americans to speak up, to call and write your Representatives

and Senators and urge them to work out a final bill. Congress has an historic opportunity to give all our seniors prescription drug coverage, health care choices, and a healthier, more secure retirement. We must make these improvements this year, during this session of Congress. And with your help, we will get the job done.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:35 a.m. on November 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Announcement of a Transition Plan by the Iraqi Governing Council *November 15, 2003*

I welcome the announcement by the Iraqi Governing Council of a political timetable as called for by the United Nations in U.N. Resolution 1511. This statement is an important step toward realizing the vision of Iraq as a democratic, pluralistic country at peace with its neighbors.

The plan outlined by the Governing Council meets a key mutual objective of the coalition and the Iraqi people: the restoration of sovereignty to a body chosen

by the citizens of Iraq and based in a legal framework. It also commits Iraq to a process for drafting a permanent, democratic constitution that protects the rights of all citizens.

The U.S. stands ready to help the Governing Council and all Iraqis translate this new timeline into political reality. The American people are committed to the future of an Iraq that is democratic and prosperous.