

now, with the spotlight on you as champions, to make a difference in the communities in which you live. Here's a chance—a chance to be more than just an athlete. It's a chance to be a hero to somebody who needs a role model, somebody who—like when you go to visit the children in the hospital—and I know you do—somebody, when you touch their life—you go in as a champ, and you touch a life, and somebody feels better as a result of a little love and compassion, or serving food, or helping with toy drives. All of it matters, see. All of it counts.

And now that you've got the spotlight on you, I hope you continue to seize that moment and make America a better place, by changing a heart and a soul, one person at a time. See, true champs are those that show courage and work hard to win, but they're also people who show compassion and love and decency when given the chance.

We're welcoming true champs here to the White House, and it's my high honor to do so. Congratulations for what you have done. May God continue to bless you all, your schools, and your families. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Phillip E. Austin, president, Geno Auriemma, women's basketball head coach, Jim Calhoun, men's basketball head coach, and Diana Taurasi, former player, University of Connecticut; Marc Holtzman, president, and George Gwozdecky, men's hockey head coach, University of Denver; and Drenda Wendell, mother of Krissy Wendell. The President honored the University of Connecticut men's and women's basketball teams, the University of Denver men's hockey team, and the University of Minnesota women's hockey team.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Implement Project BioShield

May 19, 2004

I commend the Senate for passing legislation that will bolster the Nation's defenses against biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear threats. Project BioShield will speed the development of new vaccines and treatments that would help prevent harm to Americans in a terrorist attack. This legislation carries out my proposal to encourage accelerated research and development of medical countermeasures based on the

latest scientific discoveries, provides for rapid stockpiling of critical new drugs and vaccines, and makes these treatments available quickly in emergency situations. America is more secure today because we have placed a strong emphasis on homeland defense, and initiatives like Project BioShield are another important step in winning the war on terror.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

May 19, 2004

President Bush. Thank you for coming. You just interrupted a conversation about how we're working on a strategy to help the Iraqis become a free nation.

First, I want to thank my friend Silvio Berlusconi for being here this evening. He's a man of good judgment, good advice, and he's a good friend. And after we have dinner, we're going to go to the Sons of Italy banquet tonight.

I also want to thank the Italian people for the great humanitarian mission that they're undertaking in Iraq. I appreciate their contribution to a free society in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom.

The Prime Minister and I have spent time working on a strategy that's based upon the following points: One, there will be a full transfer of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government on June the 30th. That will be accompanied by a United Nations Security Council resolution. He had some very good ideas about what should be in that resolution. I, of course, listened to his good ideas.

We also talked about the need to make sure there is a security force to help the Iraqis move toward elections. It's tough work there now, because killers want to stop progress. It will be tough work after sovereignty is transferred, because there will still be people there trying to derail the election process. And that's why one of the discussion points we had was how to continue to broaden the coalition. And finally, we talked about how to make sure that Iraq does have free elections, as Mr. Brahimi has scheduled.

It's an easy conversation to have with Silvio, because we share values. We believe in human rights, human dignity, rule of law, and the right for people to self-govern.

And so I'm proud my friend is here. I appreciate your leadership.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you for your advice.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. As far as I'm concerned, I'm very happy to be here, and I'm very happy to have had this discussion with my friend President Bush, discussion on this plan, which is very detailed in terms of the date and is a very convincing plan.

As the President already said, within 2 weeks or even probably before, by the end of this month, the envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations will indicate the names of the members of the interim government.

And something else that President Bush did not mention right now, but we discussed, is the possibility, opportunity of convening a meeting in New York, where your President should be invited and he should meet the members of the Security Council of the United Nations and the top representatives of the countries—members of the coalition. And this in order to provide this government with an international legitimization which is not only useful for the international community but mostly for domestic purposes for this government in Iraq.

And by month—the end of July, there would be the possibility of setting up an electoral commission which will be formed and made up of—also of celebrities and personalities from United Nations which will help preparing the elections to be held in January.

And we have discussed also other issues, and over dinner we'll have the possibility of discussing additional initiatives which I think should be taken. Since I have the possibility and chance of talking to the President of the Russian Federation, Putin,