

on September 16 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 Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan September 18, 2005

I congratulate the Afghan people and Afghan Government for today's successful parliamentary elections, which are a major step forward in Afghanistan's development as a democratic state governed by the rule of law. Braving deadly attacks and threats of violence, Afghans voted in large numbers

for representatives to their new National Assembly and Provincial Councils. We commend the tremendous progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years, and we pledge the full support of the United States as Afghanistan acts to meet the new challenges ahead.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Homeland Security Council and an Exchange With Reporters September 19, 2005

The President. I just met with my Homeland Security Council to discuss ongoing relief efforts in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. I have made it clear that I believe it's a national security matter for people to review emergency plans. And so therefore, I've instructed Secretary Chertoff and folks around this table to work with our local counterparts to make sure that we've got emergency plans in place that will deal with significant disaster. And for the local folks, I urge them to cooperate in a review of these plans. It's important.

Secondly, one of the things that I heard loud and clear on my travels down there was that people are concerned about red-tape. And one of the big concerns for the mayors and the Governor of Mississippi, in particular, and the mayors along the gulf coast, was this issue about debris removal—who's responsible, how can we get it done in an effective way. And I want to thank the Secretary for working with Governor Barbour on this issue to expedite a process by which we can start getting some of this

debris removed from a part of our country that was just wiped out by this storm; I mean, there are piles and piles of homes and buildings just in rubble. And in order to help this region get rebuilt, first things first, and that's to get rid of the debris. And so we've got a plan in place to cut through the redtape and get this done in an effective way.

On another matter, a couple of other matters—one, I want to congratulate the people of Afghanistan for showing up at the polls and defying the Taliban and those who threaten their lives and say, look, you know, these people supported democracy. It's just another step on their road toward a stable democracy, and we congratulate them.

And as well, I want to welcome the comments of the OPEC and non-OPEC nations, talking about making sure they get enough supply on the markets to help, hopefully, affect the world price of crude oil. I have been concerned about the price at the pump that our folks are paying. Part