

At Christmas, we give thanks for the gift of the birth of Christ and for the blessings that surround us every day of the year. In this great and prosperous land, we have so much to be thankful for, and Christmas reminds us of our obligation to share these blessings with others. There are many among us who are hurting and require a helping hand. In the new year, I hope Americans will look for ways to volunteer your time and talents where they are needed most. By reaching out to a neighbor in need, we make our Nation a more just and compassionate place.

This Christmas, we remember our fellow citizens who suffered from the hurricanes and other disasters that struck our Nation this past year. We pray for their strength as they continue to recover and rebuild their lives and their communities.

During the holiday season and throughout the year, we think with pride of the men and women of our Armed Forces, who are keeping our Nation safe and defending freedom around the world. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, they are protecting our liberty by spreading liberty to others, and all Americans are grateful to our troops for their courage and commitment.

We're also grateful to their families. Staying behind when a family member goes to war is a heavy burden, and it's particularly hard at Christmas. We pray for our military families; we ask Almighty God to bestow His protection and care on their

loved ones as they protect our Nation from grave dangers.

We also remember the heroic men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation's freedom. We pray that God will comfort the loved ones they left behind. The sacrifices of these brave troops have rescued millions from lives of tyranny and sorrow and made America more secure. We will always cherish the memory of each of our fallen service men and women and count it a privilege to be citizens of the country they served.

The times we live in have brought many challenges to our country. And at such times, the story of Christmas brings special comfort and confidence. Christmas reminds us that we can trust in God's promise of peace on Earth and good will toward men. On a night more than 2,000 years ago, an angel of the Lord brought good tidings of great joy: The God of Heaven had come to Earth, and He would be with us always.

Thank you for listening, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:10 a.m. on December 22 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23 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 Anniversary of the Earthquake and Tsunamis in the Indian Ocean

December 30, 2005

One year ago, an earthquake off the island of Sumatra caused a violent tsunami. The tsunami swept across the Indian Ocean and caused enormous destruction from Asia to the Horn of Africa. More than 200,000 men, women, and children lost their lives,

and entire villages were destroyed. A year later, we remember those days of sorrow, and we also recall acts of courage and kindness as America and many other nations rallied to help those in need and provide urgent relief. Our Nation is proud of the

efforts and generosity of our armed services, relief professionals, volunteers, and all those who made contributions to the relief effort. We remain committed to helping the citizens of affected nations rebuild their economies, communities, and lives. At this

time of remembrance, the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with those who suffered from this tragedy. May God comfort all those affected by the tsunami and give them strength in the years ahead.

Statement on Signing the Department of Defense, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to Address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and Pandemic Influenza Act, 2006

December 30, 2005

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2863, the "Department of Defense, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to Address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and Pandemic Influenza Act, 2006." The Act provides resources needed to fight the war on terror, help citizens of the Gulf States recover from devastating hurricanes, and protect Americans from a potential influenza pandemic.

Sections 8007, 8011, and 8093 of the Act prohibit the use of funds to initiate a special access program, a new overseas installation, or a new start program, unless the congressional defense committees receive advance notice. The Supreme Court of the United States has stated that the President's authority to classify and control access to information bearing on the national security flows from the Constitution and does not depend upon a legislative grant of authority. Although the advance notice contemplated by sections 8007, 8011, and 8093 can be provided in most situations as a matter of comity, situations may arise, especially in wartime, in which the President must act promptly under his constitutional grants of executive power and authority as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces while protecting certain extraordinarily sensitive national security information. The executive branch shall construe these sections in a manner consistent with

the constitutional authority of the President.

Section 8059 of the Act provides that, notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds available to the Department of Defense for fiscal year 2006 may be used to transfer defense articles or services, other than intelligence services, to another nation or an international organization for international peacekeeping, peace enforcement, or humanitarian assistance operations, until 15 days after the executive branch notifies six committees of the Congress of the planned transfer. To the extent that protection of the U.S. Armed Forces deployed for international peacekeeping, peace enforcement, or humanitarian assistance operations might require action of a kind covered by section 8059 sooner than 15 days after notification, the executive branch shall construe the section in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief.

A proviso in the Act's appropriation for "Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide" purports to prohibit planning for consolidation of certain offices within the Department of Defense. Also, sections 8010(b), 8032, 8037(b), and 8100 purport to specify the content of portions of future budget requests to the Congress. The executive branch shall construe these provisions relating to planning and making of budget recommendations in a manner consistent