

maintain good relations with Native American tribes and will play a leadership role in my cooperative conservation approach to environmental stewardship. I congratulate

Dirk and his family on today's confirmation and thank him for his continued service to our Nation.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Robert J. Portman as Director of the Office of Management and Budget
May 26, 2006

I commend the Senate for confirming Rob Portman as Director of the Office of Management and Budget. In this key position, Rob will have a leading role on my economic team and will help ensure that the Government spends the taxpayers' money wisely, or not at all. In addition, Rob will be in charge of implementing my goal of cutting the budget deficit in half

by 2009 while funding our priorities. The American people deserve results for every hard-earned dollar they send to Washington. Rob is a man of character and will perform his duties with dedication and integrity. I congratulate Rob and his family on today's confirmation and thank him for his continued service to our Nation.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom
May 26, 2006

The United States has no closer ally than the United Kingdom. U.S. and U.K. forces are fighting terror in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the globe. The Prime Minister and the President discussed ways to strengthen defense cooperation.

The two leaders are pleased to announce that the United States and United Kingdom recently signed an agreement that allows appropriately cleared British and U.S. personnel to use the same computer network to access military and intelligence information and other planning tools to support joint military operations in the defense of freedom.

Additionally, the leaders recognize that as American and British soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are right now standing together in harm's way, we must plan for the future capabilities that will enhance our

ability to cooperate. Both governments agree that the UK will have the ability to successfully operate, upgrade, employ, and maintain the Joint Strike Fighter such that the UK retains operational sovereignty over the aircraft. Further, both governments agree to protect sensitive technologies found within the Joint Strike Fighter program. Together, we are working out the details, while remaining committed to these principles.

Finally, the President and Prime Minister have a shared view that we need to continue to strengthen and deepen the relationship between our defense establishments to achieve fully interoperable forces and to leverage the respective strengths of U.S. and U.K. industries. The Prime Minister and President look forward to new ways we can achieve that goal.

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

Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York
May 27, 2006

Thank you for the warm welcome—General Lennox, Secretary Harvey, Members of the United States Congress, Academy staff and faculty, distinguished guests, proud family, and, most importantly, the class of 2006.

On the way in, General Lennox showed me what you did to his car. [*Laughter*] I told him, “That’s a fine looking vehicle”—[*laughter*]—“but you need to stay away from Marine One.” [*Laughter*]

I see a lot of “Gray Hogs” out there—a few “Century Men” too. During your 4 years at this Academy, I’m told, there are about 18,000 opportunities to be late for class, drill, march, or inspection, and many of you availed yourselves of those opportunities. [*Laughter*] Others got written up just for having bad haircuts. No matter what reason you got sluggish, help is on the way. In keeping with longstanding tradition, I hereby absolve all cadets who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. I leave it to General Lennox to define exactly what “minor” means. [*Laughter*]

It’s a privilege to stand before the future leaders of the United States Army. You have worked hard to get to this moment. You’ve survived the hardest Beast on record, the “best summer of your lives” in Buckistan, countless hours in the House of Pain. In 4 years, you’ve been transformed from “bean-heads” to “yuks” to “cows” and “Firsties.” And today you will become proud officers of the greatest army in the history of the world. Your teachers are proud of you; your parents are proud

of you; and so is your Commander in Chief. Congratulations on a fantastic achievement.

This Academy has shaped your minds and bodies for the challenges that lie ahead. You worked hard in the classroom and on the playing field to prepare for the rigors of combat. One cadet described the West Point attitude this way: “First I’ll beat Navy and Air Force, and then I’ll beat the enemies of freedom on the battlefield.”

The field of battle is where your degree and commission will take you. This is the first class to arrive at West Point after the attacks of September the 11th, 2001. Each of you came here in a time of war, knowing all the risks and dangers that come with wearing our Nation’s uniform. And I want to thank you for your patriotism, your devotion to duty, your courageous decision to serve. America is grateful and proud of the men and women of West Point.

The reality of war has surrounded you since your first moments at this Academy. More than 50 of your fellow cadets here at West Point have already seen combat in Afghanistan and Iraq. And 34 times since your class arrived, you have observed a moment of silence in Washington Hall to honor a former cadet fallen in the war on terror. Each loss is heartbreaking, and each loss has made you even more determined to pick up their mantle, to carry on their fight, and to achieve victory. We will honor the memory of those brave souls. We will finish the task for which they gave their lives. We will complete the mission.

West Point has adapted to prepare you for the war you’re about to enter. Since