

Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security

Kenneth Rapuano. Reporters referred to Donald E. Powell, Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, in his capacity as coordinator of Federal gulf coast relief efforts; and Mike Brown, former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Remarks Following Discussions With Parliament Member Saad Hariri of Lebanon

January 27, 2006

It's my honor to welcome a Member of the Lebanese Parliament, Saad Hariri, here to the Oval Office. We've just had a very interesting and important discussion about our mutual desire for Lebanon to be free—free of foreign influence, free of Syrian intimidation, free to chart its own course.

The American people mourn the loss of life. I know it's been hard on you and your mom, who we had the honor of meeting in Paris, and your family to think about your dad, a man who cared about Lebanon a lot. It's very important for the investigation into your dad's death to go forward. We expect there to be a full and firm investigation, and the people who are responsible for your dad's death need to be held to account.

I want to thank you for your passion for the people of Lebanon. I was telling him I was raised in west Texas, and I can remember Lebanese-American Texans being such great citizens of our State and our country. Many people of Lebanese extraction want Lebanon to flourish and

thrive, and so do I. It will be very important for the region for Lebanon's democracy to be able to reach its full potential. And there's no doubt in my mind, with the focused effort of the free world reminding Syria to uphold to U.N. Resolution 1559, we will be able to achieve the objective.

So I talked about a donors conference—he's going to work the world community to try to help organize a conference to help the Lebanese people get going. And we appreciate very much your suggestions and your advice.

In the meantime, welcome to the Oval Office. Thank you for your courage. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nazek Hariri, widow of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14, 2005, in Beirut.

The President's Radio Address

January 28, 2006

Good morning. The United States Senate is now considering my nomination of Judge Sam Alito to be an Associate Justice on

the Supreme Court. As Americans saw in his confirmation hearings, Sam Alito is a man of great character and integrity. He

has more prior judicial experience than any Supreme Court nominee in more than 70 years. He understands that the role of a judge is to strictly interpret the law, not to advance a personal or political agenda. And throughout his extraordinary career, Sam Alito has earned the tremendous respect of his colleagues and attorneys across the political spectrum.

This past Wednesday, I met with a distinguished group of 39 former law clerks to Judge Alito. During Judge Alito's 15 years on the bench, these fine men and women have worked side by side with him, providing legal research, discussing and debating pending cases, and seeing firsthand how he arrives at decisions. They are uniquely qualified to assess what kind of Supreme Court Justice Sam Alito would be, and they are united in their strong support of Judge Alito's nomination.

One of Judge Alito's former clerks, who describes herself as a left-leaning Democrat, says this about Sam Alito: "He's a man of great decency, integrity, and character. I believe very strongly he deserves to be confirmed as the Court's next Associate Justice." Another former clerk worked on Senator Kerry's Presidential campaign. She says this about Judge Alito: "His approach to judging is not about personal ideology or ambition but about hard work and devotion to law and justice." In fact, Judge Alito has the strong support of all 54 of his former clerks, regardless of their political beliefs. They know him well, and they know he'll make an outstanding Supreme Court Justice.

Judge Alito has also earned broad support from his fellow judges on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Seven of them took the extraordinary step of testifying on his behalf before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Former Chief Judge Ed Becker, who sat with Judge Alito on more than 1,000 cases, said this about his colleague: "He's a real judge, deciding each case on the facts and the law, not on his personal views." Another colleague on the Third Cir-

cuit who was appointed by President Clinton said this about Judge Alito: "He is a fair-minded man, a modest man, a humble man, and he reveres the rule of law." This judge went on to say that, if confirmed, Judge Alito "will serve as a marvelous and distinguished Associate Justice."

Judge Alito received the American Bar Association's highest possible rating, a unanimous "well-qualified." The ABA based its rating on its assessment of Judge Alito's integrity, professional competence, and judicial temperament. In the past, leading Democratic Senators have called the ABA rating the gold standard for judicial nominees.

This past week, Judge Alito gained the endorsement of Pennsylvania's Democratic Governor, Ed Rendell. Governor Rendell said he was not pleased with the partisan way some of his fellow Democrats have handled Sam Alito's nomination. Democratic Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia announced he was voting for Judge Alito, and he said that many people in his State were calling the treatment of Judge Alito by some Democrats, quote, "an outrage and a disgrace," endquote. Another Democratic Senator expressed concern that the Senate confirmation process in recent years has become, quote, "overly politicized, to the detriment of the rule of law," quote.

The Senate has a constitutional responsibility to hold an up-or-down vote on Judge Alito's nomination. Throughout its 216-year history, the Senate has held an up-or-down vote on every Supreme Court nominee with majority Senate support. Judge Alito has demonstrated that he is eminently qualified to serve on our Nation's highest Court, and America is fortunate to have a man of his integrity and intellect willing to serve.

I'm grateful to Judge Alito, his wife, Martha, and the Alito children for their patience and dignity during the process. And I look forward to the Senate voting to confirm Judge Sam Alito as the 110th Justice of the Supreme Court.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on January 27 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on

January 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Revising Budget
Amendments for the Department of Veterans Affairs
January 28, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker:

My Administration is committed to ensuring that our Nation's veterans continue to receive timely and high-quality health care.

On July 14, 2005, I submitted an FY 2006 budget amendment to the Congress of \$1.977 billion to cover increased costs in the Department of Veterans Affairs medical care system. I did not designate the funds as an emergency requirement when I submitted the FY 2006 budget amendment. While I believe this funding should be categorized as part of the VA's base budget, it is critical that this funding be made available to meet veterans' needs. As a result, to provide the needed funds to veterans in a timely manner and consistent with the 2006 Military Quality of Life and

Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, Public Law 109-114, I hereby revise that request to designate \$1.225 billion of the amount proposed in that amendment as an emergency requirement. I appreciate your cooperation in working with me to ensure the highest quality of care for our veterans.

Additional information on this action is set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The details of the FY 2006 amendment were included in the previous transmittal.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 30.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
January 30, 2006

The President. I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for being here. We just had a really good discussion about the year 2006. Tomorrow night I'm going to be speaking to the Congress, giving the country my State of the Union Address. I can't tell you how upbeat I am about our future, so long as we're willing to lead.

We talked about how to make sure that America continues to spread the peace and

to protect ourselves. I heard from the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of State about very positive initiatives, not only in the Middle East but in the Far East as well. We talked about how to make sure this economy of ours stays the strongest economy in the world and that we recognize we can't just sit back and hope for the best, that we've got to lead. And so we had a good discussion about matters