

Mr. President, I hope that we soon will sign the free trade agreement and will continue working for the approval of that free trade agreement in our respective Congress.

I went through a tough time, but I'm stubborn. I'm a believer, a strong believer in my convictions. And I'm sure that the wisdom of Peruvians will, on April 9th—or May—will elect someone that believes in democracy, that believes in the stability to continue on, to build on our accomplishment, but correct our mistakes; that we cannot go back and forth, because the poor people cannot afford to wait so much.

Thank you very, very much for receiving us today. It has been a very productive

meeting. I want to thank my collaborators. I'm not going away yet; I still have 5 more months. [*Laughter*] And we will continue working. We have done a good job, I think, of exchanging productive ideas in the meetings of APEC. APEC represents around 57 percent of the world economy, 46 percent of the world trade. And so in 2008, the next Peruvian President, he or she will receive you in Peru as a President of the APEC.

Thank you very, very much.

President Bush. *Mi amigo, gracias.* Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Resignation of Gale Norton as Secretary of the Interior *March 10, 2006*

Gale Norton has been a strong advocate for the wise use and protection of our Nation's natural resources and a valuable member of my administration for more than 5 years. As the first woman Secretary of the Interior, she served the Nation well with her vision for cooperative conservation, protection and improvement of our national parks and public lands, and environmentally responsible energy development on public lands and waters. She was instrumental in establishing my Healthy Forests Initiative that has helped make communities safer from catastrophic fire, while improving wildlife habitat. Gale played an influential role in shaping the

Nation's offshore and onshore energy policies to help enhance America's domestic production. When Hurricane Katrina devastated the gulf coast region, she played a leading role in my administration's efforts to restore badly needed offshore energy production to avoid further supply disruption and higher energy costs for consumers. Because of her leadership and thoughtful attention to management, repairs, and maintenance issues, Americans will be able to better enjoy our great national parks and wildlife refuges for generations to come. I appreciate Gale's dedicated service to our country, and I wish Gale and John all the best.

Remarks Following a Briefing by the Joint Improvised Explosive Device
Defeat Organization and an Exchange With Reporters
March 11, 2006

The President. Good morning. I want to thank General Meigs for being here to brief me about tactics on the ground in Iraq. One of the things that the Secretary and General Pace are constantly doing is briefing the Commander in Chief as to the nature of the enemy, what the enemy is trying to do to shake our will, and how we're adjusting, how we're constantly adapting our tactics on the ground to achieve a victory.

We face an enemy that will use explosive devices in order to shake our will, in order to foment violence in Iraq, in order to try to convince the American people that we can't win in Iraq. That's what they're trying to do. And the general has spent a lot of time thinking about the enemy's tactics and techniques and how our military can adjust to them.

So the briefing today was a series of briefing I get from our commanders on the ground, as well as our experts hired by the Pentagon, to let me know what we're doing, so I can let the American people know that we recognize the nature of this enemy. We're adjusting our tactics to defeat this enemy for the sake of peace, for the sake of the security of the United States of America, and for the sake of peace in the world.

And so, General, thank you for being here. I appreciate your time. I'll answer a couple of questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

*Former Assistant to the President for
Domestic Policy Claude Allen*

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us your reaction to the arrest of your former Domestic Policy Adviser, Claude Allen?

The President. If the allegations are true, Claude Allen did not tell my Chief of Staff and legal counsel the truth, and that's

deeply disappointing. If the allegations are true, something went wrong in Claude Allen's life, and that is really sad. When I heard the story last night, I was shocked. And my first reaction was one of disappointment, deep disappointment that—if it's true—that we were not fully informed. But it was also one—shortly thereafter, I felt really sad for the Allen family.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Republican Party/Dubai Ports World

Q. Sir, are you concerned about the rift that the Dubai Ports deal has opened within your own party?

The President. The Republican Party is united in our efforts to win the war on terror. The Republican Party is united in our efforts to keep this economy strong by keeping taxes low. The Republican Party is united in making us less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

I've read all the stories about this rift or that rift. That's typical Washington, it seems like to me. I am looking forward to continuing to work with the leadership in the United States Congress to pass an agenda that will keep America the economic leader of the world and will keep this country secure. And next fall, I'm looking forward to campaigning with our candidates. I'm convinced ours is the party that has got an agenda for the future, and ours is the party that has performed.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Progress in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned, with reference to the IEDs, are you concerned that the sophisticated weaponry our troops are facing now might be coming from foreign, neighboring countries? And if so, what are our courses going about—