

I want to thank you all very much for sharing your thoughts not only with me but with the Vice President and Secretary Rice and Secretary Rumsfeld. It really means a lot to hear your thoughts and your concerns and your suggestions about the way forward in Iraq. We've had our disagreements in this country about whether or not we should be there in the first place. Now the fundamental question is, how do we achieve our objectives, which is a democracy which can defend itself, sustain itself, a country which is an ally in the war on terror, and a country which serves as a powerful example for others who desire to be free.

Since we last met, there has—a unity government is now in the process of becoming formed. I've got great hopes about this unity Government. We've got a Shi'a as the Prime Minister-designee, a Sunni as the Speaker, a Kurd as the President, all of whom have dedicated themselves to a country moving forward that meets the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

There are certainly challenges, and the Secretaries here discussed those challenges with us. Perhaps the main challenge is the militia that tend to take the law into their own hands. And it's going to be up for the Government to step up and take care of that militia so that the Iraqi people are confident in the security of their country. It's important to have a secure Iraq in

order for people to go about their daily lives. And we understand that.

I also assured the Secretaries here that this Government is committed to success. They've got good people on the ground. We've got brave troops that are working every day to help this country succeed and, at the same time, deny safe haven to Al Qaida.

And again, I want to thank the members for coming—the former Secretaries for coming. I think it's very useful for those of us who are helping to plot the strategies and the tactics to help secure this country, to hear from you. I'm optimistic about our successes. I know this: The only way we will not succeed is if we lose our nerve, we don't have faith in our values, and that we're constantly changing tactics on the ground to achieve our objectives.

So thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister-designate Nuri al-Maliki, Speaker of the Parliament Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, and President Jalal Talabani of Iraq. Participating in the meeting were former Secretaries of State Colin L. Powell, Madeleine K. Albright, Warren Christopher, James A. Baker III, and Alexander M. Haig, Jr.; and former Secretaries of Defense William S. Cohen, Frank C. Carlucci, James R. Schlesinger, Melvin R. Laird, and Robert S. McNamara.

## Remarks on the Observance of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and a Presentation of the President's Volunteer Service Awards

May 12, 2006

Thank you all. Welcome. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. I like to call it the People's House. I'm glad you could join us today to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. This is the month we recognize the many accomplish-

ments of Americans who trace their origins to the Asian-Pacific region, and we honor the contributions they make to our great land.

Across our country, Asian Pacific Americans are making their mark in all walks

of life, including business and law and politics and education, community service, the arts, and science. Today, more Asian Pacific Americans serve in my administration than in any other administration in history, and two of them serve in my Cabinet. And today—[applause]—and I am delighted to recognize Secretary Elaine Chao and Secretary Norm Mineta and thank them for their great work for our country.

I want to thank Ray Pamintuan—he is the Chairman of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. And I want to thank all the other Commission members who are here. I enjoyed my visit. Thank you for serving.

I want to thank the members of the 442d Regimental Combat Team who are here today. Thank you all for coming. God bless you. Veterans who have set such a fine example for those who wear the uniform today. And I would like to welcome the men and women in uniform who have joined us today. Thank you all for being here. Thank you for your service.

These men and women are on the front-line of defending the United States of America, and in so doing, they're laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. And we are really proud of your service.

Fourteen million Americans can claim ancestry from the Asian-Pacific region. Through a commitment to educational excellence, you help raise standards and show that the American Dream is within reach for all who study hard and persevere. Through your love of family and community, you help unite us as a people. Through entrepreneurship and innovation, you have strengthened our economy, creating jobs for other—and thereby contributing to the opportunity of this Nation.

In 2004, I created the President's Advisory Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islanders to improve the opportunities for small-business development. And to keep this good work moving forward, I

signed an Executive order this morning that renews the Commission for another year.

America has thrived as a nation because we've always welcomed newcomers who, in turn, embrace our values and our way of life. Every immigrant who lives by these values makes our country better and makes our future brighter as "one Nation under God."

We're grateful to the many Asian Pacific Americans who serve our Nation in many ways. I just honored those who serve our Nation by wearing the uniform, but there are all kinds of ways to serve America. The President's Volunteer Service Award is the highest honor given in recognition of those who have contributed their time and their talents to those in need.

I created this award because I understand the great strength of the United States of America is not found in our military, and it's certainly not because of the size of our wallets. It's because the strength of America is found in the hearts and souls of generous citizens who answer to a universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself.

Five folks here today have earned this award by volunteering to improve the communities in which they live and thereby helping our fellow citizens. They've heard that call to serve something greater than themselves. And by the way, by answering the call, they've inspired others to serve; you just don't know it.

Volunteers we recognize have brought care and outreach to veterans and men and women in uniform; they've helped children learn to read; they've extended food and shelter to hurricane victims in our gulf coast; they've helped underprivileged high school students prepare their SATs; and they've aided immigrants who have recently arrived in our country. They have served our Nation in distinct ways and, in so doing, have made America a better place to live.

I am proud of the achievements, the many achievements of our citizens of Asian

and Pacific Island heritage. You really have enriched America by your contributions. You've made us a better land. And the five we honor today have done so in a unique way. And so I join all Americans in congratulating you and wishing you continued success of your work. I want to thank you for what you've done. I ask God's blessings on all who are here and their families as well as our great Nation.

And now I ask the commander to please read the citations that will enable me to award the volunteer awards to you.

[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Geoff Gagnier, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the awards.]

Now you can see why I love an event such as these. [Laughter] What a great country we have. And I want to thank you all for being active citizens in the greatest land on the face of the Earth.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rudy Pamintuan, Chairman, President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month proclamation of April 28 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Statement on the Death of G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery

May 12, 2006

Laura and I and the entire Bush family are saddened by the death of a good friend and patriot, Sonny Montgomery. Sonny Montgomery served during World War II and the Korean war, and he was a tireless advocate for America's veterans throughout his three decades in the House of Representatives. He sponsored the Montgomery GI bill, which has helped make

higher education and professional training accessible to millions of our veterans. In 2005, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civil award, in recognition of his lifetime of service to the United States. We send our condolences and prayers to the Montgomery family.

## The President's Radio Address

May 13, 2006

Good morning. This week I nominated General Mike Hayden to be the next Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The work of the CIA is essential to the security of the American people. The enemies who struck our Nation on September the 11th, 2001, intend to attack us again. And to defeat them, we must have the best possible intelligence. In Mike Hayden, the

men and women of the CIA will have a strong leader who will support them as they work to disrupt terrorist attacks, penetrate closed societies, and gain information that is vital to protecting our Nation.

General Hayden is supremely qualified to lead the CIA. For the last year, he's been our Nation's first Deputy Director of