

provide Hizballah with shipments of Iranian-made weapons. Iran's regime has also repeatedly defied the international community with its ambition for nuclear weapons and aid to terrorist groups. Their actions threaten the entire Middle East and stand in the way of resolving the current crisis and bringing lasting peace to this troubled region.

We're also concerned about the impact the current conflict is having on Lebanon's young democracy. This is a difficult and trying time for the people of Lebanon. Hizballah's practice of hiding rockets in civilian neighborhoods and its efforts to undermine the democratically elected Government have shown it to be no friend of Lebanon. By its actions, Hizballah has jeopardized Lebanon's tremendous advances and betrayed the Lebanese people.

Over the past week, nations like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have stepped forward to offer humanitarian aid and assistance to the Lebanese Government. America and our allies will join these efforts. We're also working to help American citizens who wish to leave Lebanon. American military personnel and Embassy officials are working hard to ensure this operation proceeds smoothly and safely. We continue to pray for the safety of all people in Lebanon: Americans, Lebanese, and citizens of other countries.

America remains committed to lasting peace in the Middle East. The United States and our partners will continue to seek a return to the roadmap for peace

in the Middle East, which sets out the pathway to establishing a viable democratic Palestinian state that will live in peace with Israel. We will continue to support moderate leaders like Palestinian Authority President Abbas. We will continue to call on Hamas to end its acts of terror. And now, more than ever, the Palestinians need leaders who are not compromised by terror and who will help the Palestinian people provide a future for their children based on regional peace and security.

In the long term, this peace will come only by defeating the terrorist ideology of hatred and fear. The world's best hope for lasting security and stability across the Middle East is the establishment of free and just societies. America and our allies will act decisively because we know our security is at stake in this struggle and we know the cause of freedom will prevail.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on July 21 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 21 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, Israeli soldiers captured and held captive by militants in Lebanon since July 12; and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony *July 24, 2006*

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks for letting me come back, General, proud to be here. I'm really looking forward to witnessing what is going to be a very uplifting ceremony.

In a few moments, these men will swear the oath to become citizens of the United States of America. As part of the ceremony, they will promise to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United

States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic. This isn't going to be the first time these men have made such a promise. They took a similar oath when they became soldiers of the United States Army. And their presence here bears witness that they kept their word so that others might be free.

I appreciate General Farmer, and I want to thank all the folks who work here. I'm incredibly impressed by the health care and the decency and the compassion of the people who work here at Walter Reed. You bring great credit to our country. I can't tell you the number of times, when I travel around America, that I brag about Walter Reed and the health care you deliver.

I appreciate Dr. Emilio Gonzalez, who will be administering the oath of office. He's the Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. He's the head guy; he came over to deliver the oath. [Laughter]

I want to thank Colonel Deal and everybody else. I particularly want to say thanks to the families of these three men. Thank you for joining us today.

Through the generations, our Nation has remained strong and free because men and women put on our uniform and defend this country and defend our beliefs. The three men we honor today have brought honor to America. Like those who have come before, each of these men chose to protect our country because they love what America stands for.

Army Specialist Sergio Lopez had always wanted to join the Army, and in 2003, he volunteered. After basic training, he moved to Fort Hood, Texas, home of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Infantry Division. Specialist Lopez then deployed to Iraq. He put his life on the line each day, driving between observation posts and his unit's forward operating base in the Baghdad area. In January, he was injured by an improvised explosive device. Specialist Lopez says that becoming a citizen, quote, "represents being acknowledged as having done

my duty, having done my part for the country, like the oath says, defending the United States."

Today we honor Army Private First Class Eduardo Leal-Cardenas. He was injured when an IED blew up his vehicle in Iraq. Private Leal-Cardenas is a man of few words, and he's a man of action. When some questioned whether he would ever walk again, he laughed, and he began his rehab while still in his bed. When Private Leal-Cardenas is asked what citizenship in America means to him, he just said one word: Freedom.

And finally, we honor Army Specialist Lito Santos-Dilone. He was injured while serving as part of the protection detail in Iraq. I first met Specialist Santos-Dilone at this year's National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast. I was working the rope line. He grabbed my hand, and he said, "I'm not a citizen of the United States, and I want to be one." Now, here's a man who knows how to take it directly to the top. [Laughter] I'm proud to be here when he gets sworn in.

We are stronger and more dynamic when we welcome new citizens like these. More than 33,000 non-U.S. citizens currently serve in our military. Isn't that interesting—33,000 people who weren't born here serve in our military. And just like everybody else who wears the uniform, they understand the stakes of what it means to serve in the United States military, particularly after September the 11th, 2001.

After that date, I signed an Executive order making foreign-born members of our military immediately eligible for U.S. citizenship when they serve on active duty. It made sense to me. If somebody is willing to risk their lives for our country, they ought to be full participants in our country.

As our Nation debates the future of our immigration policies, we must remember the contribution of these good men and all who dream of contributing to this country's future. It says something about our country that people around the world are

willing to leave their homes and leave their families and risk everything to come to America. Their talent and hard work and love of freedom have helped make America the leader of the world. And our generation will ensure that America remains a beacon of liberty and the most hopeful society this world has ever known.

I believe this country can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time. We're going to enforce our laws, but we'll also honor our proud immigrant heritage. I support a comprehensive immigration reform that will accomplish five clear objectives. First, we'll secure our borders. Second, we must create a temporary-worker program that provides foreign workers a legal and orderly way to come into the country and do jobs Americans aren't doing. We must hold employers to account for the workers they hire. In other words, it's against the law to hire an illegal immigrant, and we're going to hold employers to account. We must resolve the status of millions of illegal immigrants who are here already. We shouldn't be granting people automatic citizenship, nor is it possible to kick people out of the country. There's got to be a rational way, and I proposed a way forward. And finally, we've got to honor the great American tradition of the melting pot by helping newcomers assimilate into our society.

Congress is now considering legislation on immigration reform; that legislation must be comprehensive. All elements of the problem must be addressed together, or none of them will be solved at all.

This is a joyful day for these men, and it's a joyful day for me to be here with them, and it's a proud day for our Nation. We gain three new citizens today, men who knew the cost of freedom and are willing to pay that cost so others can live free. It's a privilege to be their Commander in Chief, and I look forward to calling them fellow citizens.

I want to congratulate you for your achievement. I want to thank you for your service. I ask for God's blessings on you and your family and for God's blessings on the United States of America.

And now we'll have the oath of citizenship administered.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Kenneth L. Farmer, Jr., USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center; and Col. Virgil T. Deal, USA, commander, Walter Reed Health Care System. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Freedom to Display the American Flag Act of 2005

July 24, 2006

Today I was pleased to sign into law the "Freedom to Display the American Flag Act of 2005." Americans have long flown our flag at their homes as an expression of their appreciation for our freedoms and their pride in our Nation. As our brave men and women continue to fight to protect our country overseas, Congress has

passed an important measure to protect our citizens' right to express their patriotism here at home without burdensome restrictions.

NOTE: H.R. 42, approved July 24, was assigned Public Law No. 109-243.