

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Defense-Designate Robert M. Gates

December 5, 2006

The President. Good morning. I just had a breakfast with my nominee to be the Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates. Bob Gates will be a fine Secretary of Defense. I appreciate the fact that he's getting a hearing today in the United States Senate. I hope for a speedy confirmation so he can get sworn in and get to work.

Those who wear the uniform know they'll have a friend in Bob Gates in the Defense Department. He admires our military; he respects those who have volunteered to serve our country. He's going to do an excellent job for us.

Again, Bob, I thank you for agreeing to serve.

Secretary-designate Gates. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

The President. Best of luck up there on Capitol Hill. Good luck to you.

Secretary-designate Gates. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Iraq Study Group

December 6, 2006

I just received the Iraq Study Group report, prepared by a distinguished panel of our fellow citizens. I want to thank James Baker and Lee Hamilton and the panel members for spending a lot of time on this really difficult issue. And I thank you for coming into the White House today to give me a copy of this report.

I've told the members that this report, called "The Way Forward," will be taken very seriously by this administration. This report gives a very tough assessment of the situation in Iraq. It is a report that brings some really very interesting proposals, and we will take every proposal seriously, and we will act in a timely fashion.

The commission is headed up to Congress, and I urge the Members of Congress to take this report seriously. While they won't agree with every proposal—and we probably won't agree with every proposal—it, nevertheless, is an opportunity to come

together and to work together on this important issue.

The country, in my judgment, is tired of pure political bickering that happens in Washington, and they understand that on this important issue of war and peace, it is best for our country to work together. And I understand how difficult that is, but this report will give us all an opportunity to find common ground, for the good of the country, not for the good of the Republican Party or the Democrat Party, but for the good of the country.

We can achieve long-lasting peace for this country, and it requires tough work. It also requires a strategy that will be effective. And we've got men and women of both political parties around this table who spent a lot of time thinking about the way forward in Iraq and the way forward in the Middle East, and I can't thank them enough for your time. You could be doing a lot of other things. You could have had