

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 22, 2006

Laura and I are honored to be here to thank the folks working here at this service project. What you're seeing is some young kids wrapping gifts for children whose families are here in Washington, DC, as a result of an injury that they've received—that their parent received in combat.

We've also just come from Walter Reed. I got to tell you, it's a remarkable experience to go through the hospital. It's remarkable because of the unbelievable compassion and care of the people who work at Walter Reed. And it's also remarkable to me, these men and women who have volunteered to serve our country, who've received terrible wounds, but whose spirits are strong; their resolve is strong; and their dedication to our country remains strong.

I want all our fellow citizens to understand that we're lucky to have men and women who have volunteered to serve our

country like those who wear our uniform. We're lucky to have their families support them so strongly. We owe them all we can give them, not only for when they're in harm's way, but when they come home, to help them adjust if they have wounds or help them adjust after their time in service. We owe a huge debt of gratitude for incredible men and women. And I—every time I come to Walter Reed, I am moved by the courage and bravery of the people I meet.

And so on behalf of a grateful nation, I want to thank our military families, thank the folks here who are wrapping gifts for the military families, and ask for God's blessings on our citizens.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m.

The President's Radio Address

December 23, 2006

Good morning. As families across our Nation gather to celebrate Christmas, Laura and I send our best wishes for the holidays. We hope that your Christmas will be blessed with family and fellowship.

At this special time of year, we give thanks for Christ's message of love and hope. Christmas reminds us that we have a duty to others, and we see that sense of duty fulfilled in the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform. America is blessed to have fine citizens who volunteer to defend us in distant lands. For many of them, this Christmas will be spent far from home, and on Christmas our Na-

tion honors their sacrifice and thanks them for all they do to defend our freedom.

At Christmas, we also recognize the sacrifice of our Nation's military families. Staying behind when a family member goes to war is a heavy burden, and it is particularly hard during the holidays. To all our military families listening today, Laura and I thank you, and we ask the Almighty to bestow His protection and care on your loved ones as they protect our Nation.

This Christmas season comes at a time of change here in our Nation's Capital, with a new Congress set to arrive, a review of our Iraq strategy underway, and a new Secretary of Defense taking office. If you're

serving on the frontlines halfway across the world, it is natural to wonder what all this means for you. I want our troops to know that while the coming year will bring change, one thing will not change, and that is our Nation's support for you and the vital work you do to achieve a victory in Iraq. The American people are keeping you in our thoughts and prayers, and we will make sure you have the resources you need to accomplish your mission.

This Christmas, millions of Americans are coming together to show our deployed forces and wounded warriors love and support. Patriotic groups and charities all across America are sending gifts and care packages to our service men and women, visiting our troops recovering at military hospitals, reaching out to children whose moms and dads are serving abroad, and going to airports to welcome our troops home and to let them know they are appreciated by a grateful nation.

One man who's making a difference this holiday season is Jim Wareing. Jim is the founder of New England Caring for Our Military. This year Jim helped organize a gift drive by thousands of students from Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Students from kindergarten to high school collected more than 20,000 gifts for our troops abroad. The gifts are being sent to troops stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Korea, Japan, and Africa. The care packages include books and puzzles, board games, phone cards, fresh socks, and T-shirts, and about 7,000 handmade holiday greeting cards and posters. Jim says, quote, "It's probably always hard for troops to be far away from home, but especially hard

on the holidays. I use this as an opportunity to try to pay them back for my freedom."

Citizens like Jim Wareing represent the true strength of our country, and they make America proud. I urge every American to find some way to thank our military this Christmas season. If you see a soldier, sailor, airman, marine, or a member of the Coast Guard, take a moment to stop and say, "Thanks for your service." And if you want to reach out to our troops or help out the military family down the street, the Department of Defense has set up a web site to help. It is americasupportsyou.mil. This web site lists more than 150 compassionate organizations that can use your help. In this season of giving, let us stand with the men and women who stand up for America.

At this special time of year, we reflect on the miraculous life that began in a humble manger 2,000 years ago. That single life changed the world and continues to change hearts today. To everyone celebrating Christmas, Laura and I wish you a day of glad tidings.

Thank you for listening, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:35 a.m. on December 22 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 22 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of James Brown *December 25, 2006*

Laura and I are saddened by the death of James Brown. For half a century, the

innovative talent of the "Godfather of Soul"