

as well as how I think we can advance some very important issues.

I've met with the Speaker and Congressman Hoyer—Steny—quite a few times since I have been the President. We're going to—hopefully, we will—not hopefully—we will continue to meet. In my meetings I—look, we don't always agree, and that's why we're in different parties. [Laughter] But we do agree about our country, and we do agree about the desire to work together.

And so I really appreciate you letting me come by; I really do. I felt welcomed. I felt like people understood that I've got pressures on me, like I understand they have pressures on them. And I really hope that the members out there get a sense that I bear no ill will; I bring no animosity about the fact that we may not agree on every position, and that I am appreciative of the contributions they make.

And so thanks a lot for letting me come. I answered five or six questions. I was able to shake hands with a lot of members. I got to hug a few babies. [Laughter] I kind of remembered—help me remember the good old days. [Laughter]

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Still has the touch.

The President. Well, I don't know. [Laughter] One of the babies I got to hug was the Speaker's grandchild. But it was a—I would define the moment for me as relaxed, informative, and enjoyable.

So thank you very much for having me. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Burwell Ballroom at the Kingsmill Resort & Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Rahm I. Emanuel, chairman, House Democratic Caucus.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters February 5, 2007

The President. I appreciate my Cabinet joining me today as we discussed our budget. Today we submit a budget to the United States Congress that shows we can balance the budget in 5 years without raising taxes.

Our economy is strong because of good policy and because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. By keeping taxes down, we actually generate strong revenues to the Treasury.

And I appreciate Director Portman helping us devise a plan that sets priorities and, at the same time, emphasizes fiscal restraint. Our priority is to protect the American people, and our priority is to make sure our troops have what it takes to do their jobs. We also have got priorities in national parks and education and health care. But we have proven—and I strongly

believe Congress needs to listen to a budget which has no tax increase and a budget, because of fiscal discipline, that can be balanced in 5 years.

Secondly, I strongly believe that Congress needs to do something on earmarks. In order to make sure that we're fiscally responsible with the people's money, Congress needs to make sure that when they spend the people's money, there's transparency and an up-or-down vote for each item. As well, I believe the President needs to have the line-item veto. It's one thing to get the size of the budget pie right; it's another thing to make sure that the slices in that pie meet national priorities.

And so the budget that Director Portman is going to be talking about is realistic, it's achievable, and it's got good reforms in it. So thank you very much. Looking forward

to working with the Congress to get this budget passed.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Ben [Ben Feller, Associated Press].

Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, thank you. You've opposed setting timelines for troop withdrawal in Iraq; yet, your new budget plan assumes that war spending will be down to 50 billion by 2009 and none beyond that. Are you, in effect, sir, setting a timeline for the end of the war?

The President. Ben, we've had years of projections in the past. In other words, we've said to the Congress, "Here's what our anticipated expenditure is in the short term." And we've been able to manage our budgets with 5 years of war behind us, and we'll manage the budgets in the out years. There will be no timetable set. And the reason why is, is because we don't want to send mixed signals to an enemy or to a struggling democracy or to our troops.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

Progress in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, how do you respond to some criticism from the Iraqis that the reason for the recent escalation of violence in Iraq is because the United States has been too slow to implement its new strategy?

The President. Well, General Petraeus is heading to Iraq this week, early this—tomorrow. And my message is, is that both of us, the Iraqis and the U.S. and coalition forces, have got to get this plan in place as quickly as possible. Of course, we want the plan to work, and we want to make sure that the strategy we've implemented—or the strategy we've outlined is implemented properly.

I appreciate the fact that the Iraqi Government is anxious to get security inside

the capital of the country. That's a good sign. It's a good sign that there's a sense of concern and anxiety. It means that the Government understands they have a responsibility to protect their people. And we want to help them. What we're trying to do with this reinforcement of our troops is to provide enough space so that the Iraqi Government can meet certain benchmarks or certain requirements for a unity government to survive and for the country to be strong.

I had to make a decision as to whether or not we were going to allow the status quo to continue. And the status quo wasn't acceptable. I listened to a lot of people in Congress as to whether or not we ought to slowly withdraw and redeploy troops. My worry about that was that the capital would get worse, and out of that chaos would come grave danger to the United States. And so I listened to a lot of other folks, including our military, and said, "Look, we got to take care and help these Iraqis take care of the violence inside of Baghdad."

And that's why I made the decision I made, and we're in the process of implementing that plan. We'd like to do it as quickly as possible. The success of that plan is going to depend upon the capacity and willingness of the Iraqis to do hard work, and we want to help them do that work. And the fact that Government officials are now saying that it's time to start implementing the plan is a good sign. It shows that they understand that now is the time to do the things necessary to protect their people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, incoming commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report Relating to the
Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking
February 5, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with the authorities relating to official immunity in the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking (Public Law 107–108, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2291–4), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a

report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 5, 2007.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With
Respect to Cote d'Ivoire
February 5, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire are to continue in effect beyond February 7, 2007.

The situation in or in relation to Cote d'Ivoire, which has been addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1572 of November 15, 2004, and subsequent resolutions, has resulted in the

massacre of large numbers of civilians, widespread human rights abuses, significant political violence and unrest, and attacks against international peacekeeping forces leading to fatalities. This situation poses a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 5, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6. The related notice of February 5 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.