

you to enjoy the great beauty of the National Park System.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Visitor Center.

## *Remarks Following a Briefing at the Department of Homeland Security February 8, 2007*

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for the hospitality. I appreciate you inviting me over to hear what has been a substantive briefing by your different operating entities.

First of all, I'm very proud of the hard work of the men and women of the Homeland Security Department. This vital Department is actively engaged in the war on terror. We are still a nation at risk. Part of our strategy, of course, is to stay on the offense against terrorists who would do us harm. In other words, it is important to defeat them overseas so we never have to face them here. Nevertheless, we recognize that we've got to be fully prepared here at the homeland.

Part of that preparation requires a robust budget. And we submitted the budget; you testified on the budget. It's about an 8-percent increase in the budgets of the Homeland Security Department.

This Department works to secure our borders. And I appreciate very much, Ralph, you and your department's hard work of doing a difficult job, and that is doing what the American people expect, and that is to have secure borders. But we're making good progress. We're modernizing a border that needed to be modernized, whether it be through fencing or the different types of high-tech investments.

I firmly believe that in order for your Border Patrol agents to be able to do their job, we need a guest-worker program, so that people don't have to sneak in our country, and, therefore, we can really enable your good folks to be able to focus on terrorism, drug runners, gun runners.

I appreciate so very much the fact that we've got a wise strategy to effect the security of our ports, cargo. We've got a lot of good people working hard overseas. In other words, we're inspecting cargo before it leaves a port—a foreign port—so that the first line of defense is away from our shores or away from our ports. And we've got a lot of good people working hard to achieve that.

I appreciate so very much the effort of TSA. You've got a hard job. It's a job that really was a response to 9/11, and that is, we don't want people getting on our airplanes that will terrorize our fellow citizens again. And I fully recognize that there are thousands of hard-working people that are trying to do their best to, on the one hand, accommodate our fellow citizens as they travel; on the other hand, protect our country from attack.

We also talked about the need to have effective response if there is a emergency, if there is a catastrophe. And one agency that has been under fire and that needed to be reorganized was FEMA, and I asked David Paulison to do just that. We took the lessons learned from Katrina and applied it to this vital Agency. And this Agency was recently tested through the tornadoes there in central Florida. And I want to thank you, Dave, and your team for a quick response to help the poor citizens who were affected by that natural disaster.

The Department of Homeland Security was initially melded together by organizations that tended to be stovepiped, independently run organizations that we felt needed to be brought under the central

planning, the central organizing principle of a single department.

The organization of such a vast enterprise has been difficult and complicated. Nevertheless, there is noticeable and substantial and measurable progress. And I appreciate all the hard-working folks for putting together an institute, part of our Government, all aiming to protect the American people.

And so, Secretary, thank you for the invitation. I appreciate the hard work of the people of this Department. I oftentimes say to the American people that you can go

about your business; you can run your enterprises; you can send your children to school knowing full well that there are thousands of our fellow citizens who work every day, 24 hours, to help you by protecting this homeland. And this is where it all starts. And I thank you for your hard work.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to W. Ralph Basham, Commissioner, Customs and Border Protection.

## **Statement on Senate Confirmation of National Security Leaders *February 8, 2007***

I am pleased that the Senate, with strong bipartisan support, has confirmed several key members of my national security team. America will benefit from the leadership of Mike McConnell as Director of National Intelligence, General George Casey as Chief of Staff of the United States Army, and Admiral William Fallon as commander of U.S. Central Command.

Mike McConnell is an experienced and proven leader who will continue implementing historic reforms of America's intelligence community designed to ensure we

receive timely, accurate information on threats to our country. General Casey's extensive knowledge of our military challenges and capabilities will enable him to lead our soldiers in successful pursuit of their mission. Admiral Fallon is an innovative thinker who will skillfully guide our military commanders as we confront our enemies in the war on terror.

I look forward to working with each of these strong leaders in combating terrorism and protecting the American people.

## **The President's Radio Address *February 10, 2007***

Good morning. Last Saturday, I addressed the annual retreat of Democrats from the House of Representatives. I thanked the Members of the new majority for their service in Congress, and we discussed our responsibility to work together on a wide range of issues, from fighting the global war on terror to making health

care more affordable to balancing the Federal budget.

One area with great potential for bipartisan cooperation is energy policy. The need for action is clear. Our Nation's reliance on oil leaves us vulnerable to hostile regimes and terrorists, who could damage our economy by disrupting the global oil supply. A spike in oil prices anywhere in the