

the people of Afghanistan, the newly liberated Afghanistan. And I know we're all proud of the men and women who have helped liberate that country—the men and women who wear our uniform who helped liberate that country and continue to make the sacrifices necessary.

I thank you for giving me a chance to come and talk about a strategy for success, a strategy that is part of our efforts to make sure that a generation of Americans, beyond our generation, will look back and say: "They did their duty to protect the homeland, and as a result, we can live in peace."

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Christopher DeMuth, president, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, USA, commander, Combined Forces Command—Afghanistan; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; and Afghan security officer Jamal "Rambo" Udin. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Congressional Action on Fiscal Year 2007 Appropriations Legislation

February 15, 2007

I am pleased that the final bill for the Fiscal Year 2007 appropriations process complies with the overall spending limits that I set. That means for the third year in a row, domestic discretionary spending will be below inflation. However, I remain concerned that the bill, in many cases, reflects the wrong spending priorities. In particular, the bill shifts funding needed for our Armed Forces to unrequested domestic programs. The Congress should work to address these priorities without adding to the deficit.

I am pleased this legislation makes progress on earmarks, but there is more to do. As the Congress takes up the 2008 budget, it should continue to take steps to improve transparency for all earmarks, provide the option of an up-or-down vote for each earmark, and reduce the number and cost of earmarks by at least half.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.J. Res. 20, which was assigned Public Law No. 110–5.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Martin Torrijos Espino of Panama

February 16, 2007

President Bush. *Senor Presidente, bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca.* I'm glad you're here.

President Torrijos Espino. Thank you, President.

President Bush. I always enjoy my discussions with you. You're a visionary leader

who cares deeply about the people of Panama.

I can remember very fondly my visit to your country. I remember going to the Panama Canal, and I was impressed by the operations, impressed by the scope of the Canal. And you told me that, for the good of the world, "We're going to build an adjunct to the Canal." And I said, "Well, that's an ambitious agenda." And then, sure enough, as you sit here now, you tell me it's going to come to be. So I congratulate you on having a vision, and I congratulate you on being a leader.

I'm impressed by the economic statistics that we talked about. You told me that you care deeply about your people and you want them working, and they're working. The unemployment rate is down. Commerce is beginning to expand. And that's positive news for Panama, it's positive news for Central America, and it's also good news for us in America.

I appreciate so very much your desire to work out any differences we have on a free trade agreement. I am committed to a Panamanian free trade agreement because I believe it's in the interest of the United States that we have a free trade agreement with your vital country. And I assure you that we'll work in good faith to get an agreement done, and I will call upon the United States Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to support this deal that will help both nations.

We had an interesting discussion about biofuels. I reminded the President that I said in the State of the Union Address that the United States is committed to having

about 35 billion gallons of alternative fuels as a part of our fuel mix within a 10-year period of time. Biofuels means ethanol, or biofuels means fuel derived from palm.

It just so happens, Panama has got the capacity to make a lot of biofuels. And I believe your capacity to make biofuels and our desire to use biofuels will make an interesting match as we work to become less dependent on oil and better stewards of the environment.

And so I appreciate so very much your vision on that issue as well. I'm looking forward to working with you. And once again, *bienvenidos aqui*.

President Torrijos Espino. Gracias, Presidente. Thank you.

I'm very pleased and recognize your commitment for pushing the free trade agenda and trying to finish the free trade agreement with Panama and the rest of the Latin American countries. And also, I'm very satisfied to know that Latin America is still a very important part of your international agenda, with your trip that's coming next, and of course, all the cooperation that we can have in research of biofuels will help all of our countries be less dependent on oil, have more opportunity for our economies to grow.

So it's been, as always, a very sincere and a very fruitful meeting with you, President.

President Bush. Gracias, amigo. Gracias.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With United States Ambassador-Designate to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker February 16, 2007

The President. I just had a lengthy conversation with our nominee to be the Am-

bassador from the United States to Iraq. I've gotten to know Ambassador Ryan