

Remarks Following a Meeting With Military Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

April 23, 2007

The President. It's my high honor to welcome General David Petraeus back to the Oval Office, and I appreciate Deputy Secretary England and General Pace joining us. General Petraeus has taken on a very important assignment for the security of our country and for the peace of the world, and that is to help this young Iraqi democracy become stable, evolve into a country that can defend itself and govern itself, and serve as an ally in this war against extremists and radicals who wish to do us harm.

General Petraeus has been there for a brief period of time, on his second tour. About a little over half of the troops, around half of the troops he's requested have arrived on the scene. These troops are all aimed at helping the Iraqi Government find the breathing space necessary to do what the people want them to do, and that is to reconcile and move forward with a government of and by and for the Iraqi people. So, General Petraeus, we welcome you here.

Gen. David H. Petraeus. Thank you.

The President. It's a tough time there, as the General will tell the Congress. He's here not only to check in with me and other members of my team, but, also, he'll be going up to the Hill, going up to the joint session of the Congress to brief the Members, both Republican and Democrat, about what's going right and what's not going right. He's a straightforward man who is implementing a very good plan to achieve our strategic objectives.

As the General will tell the folks on Capitol Hill, there's been some progress. There's been some horrific bombings, of course. There's also a decline in sectarian violence. And I appreciate you coming, and I really thank you and your family for your service to our country.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations

Q. Mr. President, Senator Reid says you're in denial about Iraq and that Congress is going to pass a bill that includes a fair and reasonable timetable for withdrawal. Could you compromise? Could you accept anything that looks like that at all?

The President. I believe strongly that politicians in Washington shouldn't be telling generals how to do their job, and I believe artificial timetables of withdrawal would be a mistake. A artificial timetable of withdrawal would say to an enemy, just wait them out. It would say to the Iraqis, don't do hard things necessary to achieve our objectives. And it would be discouraging for our troops. And therefore, I will strongly reject a artificial timetable withdrawal and/or Washington politicians trying to tell those who wear the uniform how to do their job.

I will, of course, be willing to work with the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, on a way forward. That's what I said during the Cabinet Room. But I also made it clear that no matter how tough it may look, that for the Congress to micromanage this process is a mistake.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales

Q. The Attorney General is still getting a lot of criticism over the U.S. attorneys situation. Was his explanation sufficient, or is there more he needs to do to try to turn things around?

The President. The Attorney General went up and gave a very candid assessment and answered every question he could possibly answer, honestly answer, in a way that

increased my confidence in his ability to do the job.

One of the things that's important for the American people to understand is that the Attorney General has a right to recommend to me to replace U.S. attorneys; U.S. attorneys serve at the pleasure of the President. In other words, we have named them, and I have the right to replace them with somebody else. And as the investigation, the hearings went forward, it was clear that the Attorney General broke no law, did no wrongdoing. And some Senators didn't like his explanation, but he answered

as honestly as he could. This is an honest, honorable man, in whom I have confidence.

Thank you all for coming. General, it's good to have you here.

Gen. Petraeus. Great to be here, Mr. President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the meeting were Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England; and Gen. Peter Pace, USMC, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru April 23, 2007

President Bush. *Que es mi honor para recibir el Presidente de Peru.* It's my honor to receive the President of Peru. I appreciate very much the President's time. I thank you for coming to visit the United States. *Es hombre muy amable.* He talks—he gives good advice.

We talked about the neighborhood. As we discussed, the United States wants the people of South America to fully understand, we care about their future, that we want there to be prosperity in the region, that we respect leaders who provide basic education and health care. So we had a very constructive conversation.

The President is here to urge the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to pass the free trade agreement with Peru, and I urge them to vote yes. We talked about our mutual desire to succeed in preventing drugs from coming to the United States and preventing U.S. citizens from using drugs in the first place.

The President's got a very clear vision of South America, and I really appreciated

his advice and his counsel. It always helps for a person sitting here in the United States to get a clarity of what the environment is like.

And finally, I expressed our country's deepest condolence to the student, the Peruvian student who lost his life on the campus at Virginia Tech. And our prayers go to this person's family, and we ask for God's blessings on the family.

Bienvenidos, hombre.

President Garcia. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, we would like to express our deepest condolences to the United States and to you, Mr. President, for all the victims that died in Virginia Tech. A Peruvian student lost his life there, and our prayers and our thoughts are with their families.

Second of all, I am here in the United States to promote the FTA between the United States and Peru. It is vital for our country. It is fundamental to continue this path of growth and social redistribution that we have started in my country.