

Statement on the Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes

April 24, 2007

The brave men and women who have volunteered to protect and defend our country deserve to receive the highest level of support from our grateful Nation. Today Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson and members of the Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes released a governmentwide action plan that sets out steps to improve our care for America's troops and veterans.

The task force has proposed specific recommendations to immediately begin addressing the problems and gaps in services that were identified across the veterans and military healthcare systems. These recommendations include directing the Department of Defense and the Department

of Veterans Affairs to develop a joint process for disability determination. Additionally, I have asked Secretary Nicholson to communicate directly with the members of the Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors to ensure that both groups exchange ideas and information that will efficiently advance reform efforts.

I commend the work of the task force, welcome its recommendations, and have directed Secretary Nicholson to work with all agencies involved on the recommendations and to report back to me within 45 days on how these measures are being implemented.

Message on Armenian Remembrance Day

April 24, 2007

Each year on this day, we pause to remember the victims of one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, when as many as 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, many of them victims of mass killings and forced exile. I join my fellow Americans and Armenian people around the world in commemorating this tragedy and honoring the memory of the innocent lives that were taken. The world must never forget this painful chapter of its history.

All who cherish freedom and value the sanctity of human life look back on these horrific events in sorrow and disbelief. Many of those who survived were forced from their ancestral home and spread across the globe. Yet, in the midst of this terrible struggle, the world witnessed the indomitable spirit and character of the Ar-

menian people. Many of the brave survivors came to America, where they have preserved a deep connection with their history and culture. Generations of Armenians in the United States have enriched our country and inspired us with their courage and conviction.

Today we remember the past and also look forward to a brighter future. We commend the individuals in Armenia and Turkey who are working to normalize the relationship between their two countries [countries].* A sincere and open examination of the historic events of the late-Ottoman period is an essential part of this process. The United States supports and encourages those in both countries who are working

* White House correction.

to build a shared understanding of history as a basis for a more hopeful future.

We value the strong and vibrant ties between the United States and Armenia. Our Nation is grateful for Armenia's contributions to the war on terror, particularly for its efforts to help build a peaceful and democratic Iraq. The United States remains committed to working with Armenia and Azerbaijan to promote a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We are also working to promote democratic

and economic reform in Armenia that will advance the cause of freedom and justice.

Laura and I express our deepest condolences to Armenian people around the world on this solemn day of remembrance. We stand together in our determination to build a more peaceful, more prosperous, and more just world.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks on the Observance of Malaria Awareness Day April 25, 2007

Thank you for coming. Welcome to the White House. The Rose Garden has witnessed many historic events. This afternoon we gather to mark something completely new, the first ever Malaria Awareness Day in the United States, and I'm glad you're here to join us.

On Malaria Awareness Day, we focus our attention on all who suffer from this terrible disease, especially the millions on the continent of Africa. We remember the millions more who've died from this entirely preventable and treatable disease. As a compassionate nation, we are called to spread awareness about malaria, and we're called to act. That's what compassionate people do: When they see a problem, they act. And that's what we're here to talk about. On this special day, we renew our commitment to lead the world toward an urgent goal, and that is to turn the tide against malaria in Africa and around the globe.

I want to thank Laura for being my wife—[laughter]—and taking the lead on this. Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us—Mike Leavitt, the Department of Health and Human Services. Ambassador Randy Tobias—he now runs USAID. Prior to this job, he led America's monumental

effort to confront and deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the continent of Africa. Thank you for your leadership. Karen P., it's good to see you; Ambassador Hughes is with us.

Admiral Ziemer—so if you want to solve a problem, you put a problem-solver in charge. And that's what Admiral Ziemer does; he's a problem-solver. It makes it easier for me, when I say to other nations—like with President Lula. He came to visit at Camp David. We were trying to figure out ways we can work together to show our hemisphere and the world that Brazil and the United States shares a compassion about people. And so I said, why don't we work together to eradicate malaria in parts of Africa? Call Ziemer—[laughter]—he'll see to it that the strategy gets implemented. To show that we're a serious nation, we have named a coordinator, somebody in charge. It's important for me and Laura to know that a good man is handling this responsibility to implementing a strategy. So, appreciate what you're doing. I know you know that we take this initiative seriously.

Mr. Chairman, Donald Payne, thank you for coming. We're proud you're here. We—I respect you, and I respect your concern