

Statement on the “Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy”

June 13, 2007

Shortly after the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech, I directed Secretary Michael Leavitt, Secretary Margaret Spellings, and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to examine the broad and complex issues raised by this tragedy. I asked them to determine how the Federal Government could best help to support State and local efforts to ensure that our communities, including college campuses, are safe. They responded quickly, traveling to a dozen States to hear from Governors, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, educators, and other State and local officials.

They learned a great deal and today presented me with their key findings. I look forward to reviewing their recommendations in more detail, but a few points are

immediately clear: Information sharing among the health care, law enforcement, and education communities must improve; those groups must better understand the Federal laws related to information sharing; and accurate, complete information sharing between States and the Federal Government is essential in helping to keep guns out of the wrong hands and to punish those who break the law.

I thank Secretaries Leavitt and Spellings and Attorney General Gonzales for their fine work on this important report.

With the findings in this report in mind, I am closely following legislative efforts to strengthen the instant background check system. I look forward to working with Congress on this effort.

Remarks at the President’s Dinner

June 13, 2007

Thank you all. It’s good to be with you. Thank you for your warm welcome; appreciate it. Thank you. Please be seated. I remember back in 1997, when Corker hosted a deal for me. I was Governor, and he looked at me, and he said, “I don’t think you’ll ever be President.” Of course, I looked at him and said, “I don’t think you’ll ever be Senator.” [*Laughter*] But I appreciate you, Bob. Thank you for your strong friendship, and thanks for running and winning in the great State of Tennessee.

I’m proud to be with you. We have a goal, and that is to retake the House, retake the Senate, and keep the White House in 2008. And I appreciate you joining us tonight to see that that goal becomes reality.

I’m sorry Laura is not here. She is a patient woman. She’s also a fabulous First Lady. I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who’ve joined us tonight.

I want to thank my friend, Senator Mitch McConnell. The country will be better off with Mitch McConnell as leader of the United States Senate. And I thank John Boehner, the House Republican leader. And the country would be better off if he’s the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

I thank John Ensign, Senator Ensign from Nevada, Tom Cole from Oklahoma. These are the chairmen of the NRSC and NRCC. Their job is to field the candidates that are going to enable us to achieve our goal. Your job has been to make sure they

got enough money to run. And I thank you for coming, and so do they.

I want to thank my friend, Congressman Roy Blunt, who is the cochairman of this dinner, and he's here tonight with his wife Abbey. I thank Congressman Joe Wilson from South Carolina; he is the other co-chairman. He's here with Roxanne. Thank you all for working hard to make sure this dinner is a tremendous success.

I appreciate the chairman of the Republican Party, the general chairman, Mel Martinez—Senator Mel Martinez from the State of California [Florida]* and his wife Kitty. I thank Mike Duncan, chairman of the RNC. Their job is to make sure the Republican Party welcomes people from all walks of life who believe in less government, strong defense, and low taxes.

I thank you all for being up here tonight, and thanks for your leadership on this dinner. The only way to call this dinner is “an unqualified success.” I appreciate very much the entertainment that's been here. I thank all the Members of the United States Congress who have joined us and the United States Senate.

I want to talk about two subjects tonight. I want to talk about how we keep the peace and defend this country, and I want to talk about prosperity.

First, let me talk about the fact that this Nation is at war. I wish I could report to you we were not at war, but we are. And the most important job of this Government is to protect the United States from further attack.

My thinking about the world changed on September the 11th, 2001. After the enemy attacked us and killed nearly 3,000 innocent civilians, I vowed that for however long I was President, I would rally this Nation and use our resources to protect you. And that's exactly what we have done.

The danger has not passed. And it's—our job here in Washington, DC, is to always remember, always remember, the na-

ture of the enemy we face. These people are ideologically driven people. They have a vision as to how government should work. They don't believe in dissent. They don't believe in freedom of religion. They don't believe people should be able to express themselves in the public square. They have a dark vision for humanity. They have a desire to spread their ideology as far and wide as possible to reestablish what they call a caliphate. And they're willing to use murder as the tool to achieve their objective. You cannot reason with these people; you cannot negotiate with these people. The only way to protect America is, defeat them overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

And that's exactly the strategy we've been keeping on. We've reformed our intelligence services to make sure we can find the enemy before they strike. We believe we ought to deny safe haven so they can't plan and plot again. And we believe that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

This country of ours is now engaged in a global war against these extremists and radicals. It's a war that will define the 21st century. We're fighting them in Afghanistan, and we're fighting them in Iraq, and we're fighting them wherever we can find them.

I had a tough call to make, and that's what Presidents do; they make decisions. In Iraq, I saw a threat to the United States of America. After all, that country was run by an enemy of the United States; the dictator had used weapons of mass destruction; he had been paying families of suicide bombers; they had harbored terrorists. He was a threat.

The President has always got to try diplomacy before the use of military force. That's precisely what I did. I went to the United Nations, where we received a unanimous United Nations Security Council resolution that said clearly to the dictator in Iraq: Disarm or face serious consequences. The choice was his. He chose to ignore

* White House correction.

the demands of the free world. I decided to remove Saddam Hussein, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And now the task at hand is to help this young democracy stabilize so it can become an ally in the war on terror. And it's hard work, but I believe it's necessary work. I believe it is necessary to the security of the United States that we help the Iraqi Government succeed.

It is interesting that David Petraeus, our commander on the ground, has declared that Al Qaida is the number-one enemy to the people of Iraq. Well, Al Qaida also happens to be the number-one enemy to the people of the United States. And what does that tell you? It tells you that you've got to succeed.

So last fall I had a decision to make: Do we allow the sectarian violence that Al Qaida had started as a result of the bombing of religious sites to get out of control and perhaps spill out across the countryside and the region? Or do you do what's necessary to help give this Government a chance to succeed? After listening to the military commanders, I made a tough decision. And the decision was, not withdraw, but instead, reinforcements. And the reinforcements are headed in. As a matter of fact, I talked to General David Petraeus today. The final troops have just arrived: some progress and some setbacks.

But in the face of this horror on our TV screens, perpetuated by murderous ideologues who are willing to kill the innocent to achieve their objectives, I want you to remember that when given a chance, 12 million Iraqis voted for a free country. This Government of theirs has got to make more progress on benchmarks, but I believe it's in the interest of the United States to help them. Because I'm going to tell you what will happen if we don't. This enemy that attacked us on September the 11th will become emboldened. They create chaos in order to confuse the civilized world and to take advantage of security

vacuums. That chaos gets spread throughout Iraq and in the region, thereby emboldening countries like Iran. They could gain safe—new safe havens, for which they have announced they're intending to do, from which to attack America.

Fifty years from now, people will look back and say: "How come they couldn't see the impending threat? How come the United States of America forgot the lessons of September the 11th? Why weren't they willing to do the hard work necessary to help this young democracy survive?" I believe the work we're doing is necessary. I believe we will succeed. And I believe generations from now, Americans will realize the cause was just and necessary for our own security. [Applause] Thank you all.

We have done this kind of work before. We have been in ideological struggles. Our strategy is, in the short term, to take the fight to the enemy and defeat them where we find them. In the long term, the way to defeat an ideology of hate is with an ideology of hope. And there's no more hopeful ideology than an ideology based upon freedom. I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe there's an Almighty, and a great gift of the Almighty to each man and woman and child on the face of the Earth is freedom. And I think it's in the interests of the United States to spread freedom far and wide across the globe.

In the early years of my Presidency, one of my best friends in the diplomatic arena was Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. I've now established a close working relationship with his successor, Prime Minister Abe. The reason I tell you this is because the lessons of two George Bushes, relative to the Japanese, gives me great hope in the ability for us to succeed in laying a foundation for peace.

You see, young Ensign Bush was called into action against the Japanese during World War II. They were the bitter enemy of the United States of America. We fought a bloody war with the Japanese, and yet, some 60 years later, his son sits at the

table talking about how we can—with the Japanese—talking about how we can spread democracy to achieve peace. We sit at the table talking about making sure that the leader of North Korea doesn't get a nuclear weapon. We talk about peace in the world.

Isn't it interesting? My dad fought the Japanese; I'm making peace with the Japanese. Something happened. What happened was, liberty took hold in Japan. Liberty has the capacity to convert enemies into allies. Liberty has the capacity to yield the peace we all want for generations of Americans to come.

And I believe if our candidates take the message of doing what is necessary to protect the American people and take the message, the hopeful message of helping others realize the blessings of liberty, that we will retake the House and retake the Senate and hold the White House in 2008.

Ours is a party that believes that we ought to trust individuals to make the proper decisions for their families. See, we trust you. The other bunch trusts government to make the decisions for you and your families. And there's no better way to determine that trust than looking at our fiscal policies here in Washington, DC.

It wasn't all that long ago that the country was in a recession. We had corporate scandals which affected our economy, and we had to recover from a September the 11th attack. And yet because the United States Congress worked closely with the President, we cut taxes on everybody who paid taxes. We're not one of these parties that says, we'll play favorites in the Tax Codes. We said, if you pay taxes, you ought to pay less taxes because we trust you with your money, and we also understand that if you have more money in your pocket to save, spend, or invest, the economy will grow.

And our plan worked. America has created more than 8 million jobs in the past 4 years. The unemployment rate is low. Inflation is low. Real wages are rising. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. Our econ-

omy is strong, thanks to the leadership of the Republicans in the United States Congress.

And now the fundamental question is, are we going to keep taxes low? Well, if you look at the budget carefully that the Democrats proposed, they want to return to the days of spending a lot and taxing you to make sure that they can do so. Oh, they may try to run from that idea, but if you look at the budget they submitted, their blueprint for how we ought to go forward, you can't escape the fact that they're going to run up your taxes. And if our candidates remind the American voter that tax cuts have worked, that the economy is strong as a result of the tax cuts, and instead of raising taxes, we ought to make the tax cuts permanent, we will retake the House, retake the Senate, and hold the White House in 2008.

And here in Washington, you'll hear them say, no, you've got to balance the budget by raising taxes. That's not the way it works here. They'll raise your taxes, but they won't balance the budget. They'll raise the taxes and figure out new ways to spend your money.

Our candidates need to travel the country and remind them about our record when it comes to reducing the deficit. This year, Treasury recently reported that revenues are up 8 percent. Yet last year, as you might remember, we cut discretionary spending. In other words, we believe the best way to balance the budget is to keep the economy strong by keeping taxes low and by being wise about how we spend your money. The deficit has been reduced ahead of schedule, and I believe that by working together with the Congress, we can totally eliminate the deficit within 5 years.

I met with the leadership of the Congress today. We had a good discussion about spending, and I told them I submitted a top line for the budget that I believe is necessary so we can be fiscally sound here in the United States. And if the Democrats want to test us, that's why

they give the President the veto. I'm looking forward to vetoing excessive spending, and I'm looking forward to having the United States Congress support my veto.

My point to you is: We got a solid record when it comes to protecting the United States of America, and we got a solid record when it comes to growing this economy. And in most elections, you can win elections based upon strong national defense and good economic policy. And that's precisely what we're going to bring to the voters in 2008.

We also bring one other thing to the voters: We understand that many of our Nation's problems cannot be solved by government but can be solved by loving citizens who have heard the call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. We believe strongly in the power of individuals to help improve our society

one heart, one soul at a time. We believe strongly that we ought not fear faith in our society, but we ought to welcome faith-based organizations into solving some of the difficult problems our society faces.

We believe in human life and human dignity. We believe to whom much is given, much is required. We believe in principles, not polls or focus groups. We believe in doing what's right for America. We believe that the best days lay ahead for our country. And I believe that we're going to succeed in 2008, and I want to thank you for your support.

May God bless you, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:14 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea.

Memorandum on Maritime Security (Piracy) Policy June 13, 2007

Memorandum for the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Director of National Intelligence, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Counsel to the President, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Director, National Counterterrorism Center

Subject: Maritime Security (Piracy) Policy

The attached Policy for the Repression of Piracy and Other Criminal Acts of Vio-

lence at Sea (Piracy Policy) is approved for immediate implementation, consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations. The policy shall be appended to the National Strategy for Maritime Security as Annex B.

This policy responds to the emergence of high-risk maritime areas that threaten U.S. interests. Recent instances of piracy have highlighted the need for this policy in order to coordinate U.S. Government response and to promote international solutions. This policy advances our commitment to cooperate with other states, regional and international organizations, and the maritime industry in order to counter this threat. The United States has long been a leader in the protection of navigational rights and freedoms. Our objectives consistently have been to promote and facilitate peaceful international uses of the oceans.