

President Sarkozy. —I went back to France, yes, for the Cardinal's funeral. I know that—therefore, I know very well that the distance between the U.S. and France is relatively small. [*Laughter*] And as I came back, I realized that my wife and two of my children have a sore throat. And if they—George will say that I brought them—[*laughter*].

President Bush. Thank you all. Thank you.

President Sarkozy. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. at Walker's Point. President Sarkozy referred to Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, former Archbishop of Paris, who died on August 5. President Sarkozy and a reporter spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Visit to the Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center

August 13, 2007

Thanks for coming. It's an honor for me to be here with Senator Bob Dole and Secretary Donna Shalala, Secretary Jim Nicholson and Deputy Secretary Gordon England. I appreciate the opportunity to come to a building full of compassion, a place of expertise, where people are dedicating their time and efforts to help those on active duty and those who have served before.

Any time there is any doubt in anybody's mind that our veterans are not getting excellent care, then we in Government have a duty to deal with those doubts. I have asked Secretary Gates and Secretary Nicholson to review their respective Departments and the interface of their Departments—the Defense Department and the Veterans Department—to make sure that any doubt as to whether or not a veteran or one on active duty gets the best care is—does so.

I also asked Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala to lead a nonpartisan, independent Commission to identify areas where we can do better and, more importantly, come up with solutions as to how to deal with those problems. The Commissioners conducted a very serious and lengthy review of our military and veterans health care systems, and

they submitted recommendations to me at the end of July. After Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala briefed me on their recommendations, I then directed Secretaries Gates and Nicholson to study and, more importantly, implement the recommendations, so we can ensure our severely wounded servicemembers that—and their families that they will receive the best possible care.

We've got great health care for our wounded. We just want to make sure that the system is seamless and that the families are treated with the utmost of care during these difficult moments. Secretaries Gates and Nicholson and their Departments are working hard to make sure their Agencies talk to each other and collaborate. Equally importantly, they're looking at the recommendations that the Dole-Shalala Commission put forward, and they're implementing them. In other words, the Commission did really good work. The Commission's recommendations are solid, and therefore, to the extent that we can move without congressional law, we will do so. And not only will we do so, we will keep the Commissioners abreast of the progress we are making.

Secondly, we want to work with Congress. When they come back in September, we want to work with Congress to pass that which is necessary to make sure that the Dole-Shalala Commission's recommendations are fully implemented. In other words, there are some aspects of the Commission recommendations that require congressional approval. We believe it's important for Congress to listen to the Commission. We believe the recommendations make a lot of sense, and we would ask for the Congress to pass those recommendations as quickly as possible, so I can sign them into law.

There's an amazing—there's a lot of amazing things taking place here in this facility. For example, we saw information technology, health care records that are being passed seamlessly from the Department of Defense to the VA to make sure that the care providers here have got up-to-date access for each patient. We saw volunteers helping the wounded learn to regain balance and confidence through

kayaking programs. I saw physical therapists—I heard physical therapists talk about their patients with the kind of care and compassion that obviously requires a big heart and strong commitment.

The commitment of this Government is this: Anybody who is sent into harm's way deserves the best possible care. We're dedicated to this goal. If we find problems, we'll solve the problems. For those who are providing the care, we thank you. For the soldiers who are receiving the care, we owe you the best. And for the families who stand by them, we thank you for your patience.

God bless our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Co-chairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Remarks on the Resignation of Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser Karl Rove

August 13, 2007

Karl Rove is moving on down the road. I've been talking to Karl for a while about his desire to spend more time with Darby and Andrew. This is a family that has made enormous sacrifices, not only for our beloved State of Texas but for a country we both love.

Now, we've been friends for a long time, and we're still going to be friends. I would call Karl Rove a dear friend. We've known each other as youngsters interested in serving our State. We worked together so we could be in a position to serve this country.

And so I thank my friend. I'll be on the road behind you here in a little bit. I thank Darby and I thank Karl for making a tremendous sacrifice, and I wish you all the very best.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Darby, wife, and Andrew, son, of Deputy Chief of Staff Rove. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Deputy Chief of Staff Rove.