

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Import Safety Working Group *November 6, 2007*

Good afternoon. I just had an important briefing from Secretary Leavitt and other members of the Interagency Working Group on Import Safety. The United States is one of the most open markets in the world, and our consumers are better off because they have a wide variety of products from across the world to choose from. And while we have strong food and product safety standards, we need to do more to ensure that American families have confidence in what they find on our store shelves. They have the right to expect the food they eat or the medicines they take or the toys they buy for their children to be safe.

Last year, the United States imported nearly \$2 trillion of goods through more than 825,000 importers, and the vast majority of these imports are safe. Unfortunately, in recent months, Americans have seen imports from toys to toothpaste to pet food recalled because of safety concerns. My administration takes this problem seriously. So in July, I issued an Executive order establishing the Interagency Working Group on Import Safety. I asked this group to review the problem and to make recommendations for actions that we can take to address it.

In September, this working group issued a report recommending that we change our strategy to ensure the safety of our imports. For many years, we have relied on a strategy based on identifying unsafe products at the border. The problem is that the growing volume of products coming into our country makes this approach increasingly unreliable. The working group recommended that we adopt a smarter and more effective approach that focuses on prevention, building safety into products from the very beginning of the supply chain. Under this approach, we will focus on stopping dangerous products from reaching our border in the first place, for

example, by ensuring that food and consumer products meet our standards for safety before they leave their home countries.

Today the working group presented me with 14 recommendations for areas where we can begin implementing such an approach. And I appreciate your hard work. For example, we will establish new incentives for importers that follow strong safety practices and demonstrate a good track record. We will increase our training of inspectors in foreign countries, so they can stop dangerous goods at their borders instead of ours. We will work for higher and more uniform standards for high-risk foods and consumer goods. And we will work to increase penalties for those who violate U.S. import laws and regulations. Secretary Leavitt will provide you with a more detailed briefing on these recommendations in a few moments.

In conjunction with these import safety measures, the Food and Drug Administration is today unveiling a Food Protection Plan. This plan addresses both imported and domestically produced food and will strengthen the FDA's ability to coordinate with other Federal Agencies to protect our food supply. By identifying risks all along the food supply chain, this plan will help prevent the problems from arising, respond effectively if they do, and improve communication with industry and our public.

A key feature of both our Import Safety Plan and our Food Protection Plan is a recommendation that the FDA be granted new authority to recall the unsafe food products. Specifically, the FDA would be empowered to order a recall when a company refuses to recall their product voluntarily or moves too slowly in removing the unsafe product from the market. With this authority, the FDA will be in a better position to act quickly if any problem occurs.

The steps I have announced today will require wide-ranging cooperation between Federal Agencies, foreign governments, the private sector, and consumer safety organizations. Some steps can be implemented by the executive branch, and we will move forward with these measures. Others will require legislation, and we will work with Congress to enact the appropriate laws. And all these steps will require a commitment by all involved to make the safety of our children and our families the highest priority.

I thank the members of the working group for their continued efforts on this important issue. The American people expect our system of import safety to be strong and effective, and we will continue to work to make sure it is.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Executive Order 13439.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice *November 6, 2007*

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to my FY 2008 requests for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice. These amendments, when combined with funding enacted earlier this year for the FBI (Public Law 110–28), would provide \$436 million to take important steps to enhance ongoing efforts for protecting the homeland. The amendments will enhance the security of the Gov-

ernment's civilian cyber networks and will further address emerging threats.

Overall, the discretionary budget authority proposed in my FY 2008 Budget would not be increased. The details of these amendments proposal are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President Nicolas Sarkozy of France *November 6, 2007*

Mr. President, distinguished guests: Laura and I offer you a warm welcome to the White House, or should I say, “*Bienvenue a la Maison Blanche.*” [*Laughter*]

In 1777, another George W. welcomed to America another Frenchman. His name was Lafayette. The two leaders built a strong friendship based on common values and common virtues. They both recognized

the power of human freedom. They both served with courage in freedom's cause, and they both anticipated that freedom would advance in other lands following its victory here in America.

Two centuries later, our two nations are honoring the legacy of Lafayette by helping others resist tyranny and terror. French and American troops are helping to defend a young democracy in Afghanistan. Our two