

we could use that kind of math during the budget process here in the Capitol. [*Laughter*] I'm afraid sometimes we do.

What that friend meant was that Norman Borlaug has lived his life with urgency. He has long understood that one of the greatest threats to global progress is the torment of human hunger, and we've seen that plague haunt history many times. Famine in the mid-1800s forced hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens to take a sad and desperate journey to America and turned the Atlantic Ocean into what an Irish poet called "a bowl of bitter tears." More than a century later, wrenching images of emaciated children in Ethiopia rallied the world to the tragedy of famine. Hunger continues to cast its miserable shadow across much of the developing world, robbing villages of children and forcing human beings to make desperate and daily searches for food and clean water.

Wealthy and prosperous nations have a moral obligation to help poor and struggling people find their own paths to progress and plenty. To whom much is given, much is required, and we've been given a lot here in America. It's the calling of our conscience, and it's a compelling national interest. A quote that Dr. Borlaug made reference to when he received the Nobel Prize says it well: "You can't build peace on empty stomachs."

In the past half-century, we have seen a glimpse of the world that is yet to come. Since the end of the World War II, the advance of trade and technology has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of pov-

erty. That's really the triumph of human liberty stretching across natural boundaries. It is a tribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. And these are the characteristics that can be found in the very best of our citizens, such as the man we honor today.

When Dr. Borlaug received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from one of my predecessors, Gerald Ford, the citation noted that Norman's work "has pushed back the shadow of hunger on this planet and given us precious time to force its final retreat." That final retreat will come only as long as we hold in our hearts the revolutionary spirit of men like Norman Borlaug, whose Green Revolution brought hope to troubled corners of the world, where grateful villagers still praise his name.

The most fitting tribute we can offer this good man is to renew ourselves to his life's work and lead a second green revolution that feeds the world. And today we'll make a pledge to do so.

Dr. Borlaug, I thank you for your vision and dedication. I thank you for leading a life of great purpose and achievement. I thank you for proving to Americans that what we learned as children is still true, that one human being can change the world. May God bless you, sir. May God continue to bless our wonderful country.

And now I ask the Speaker and Senator Reid to join me for the gold medal presentation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations

July 17, 2007

President Bush. Mr. Secretary-General, welcome. Thanks for coming. We've just had a wide-ranging and full discussion on

a lot of issues. First, Mr. Secretary-General, I appreciate you, one, taking on this job; two, working extremely hard; and, three,

doing a fine job. I admire the values you hold dear to your heart, and I appreciate the chance to share some thoughts with you.

We discussed a lot of issues. We have discussed Darfur. We discussed proliferation. We discussed the potential trial for—on the—about Hariri. The Secretary-General and I talked about the speech I gave yesterday on the Middle East. We have talked about Afghanistan and Iraq.

And one of the things I briefed the Secretary on was my views about extremism and these radicals that will do anything to disrupt the goals set by the United Nations and/or disrupt the advance of democracy in peaceful societies. Al Qaida is strong today, but they're not nearly as strong as they were prior to September the 11th, 2001. And the reason why is, is because we've been working with the world to keep the pressure on, to stay on the offense, to bring them to justice so they won't hurt us again, to defeat them where we find them.

And now we find them in Iraq. These killers in Iraq, people who will kill innocent life to stop the advent of democracy, people who are trying to get on our TV screens on a daily basis to drive us out, have got ambitions and plans. These people have sworn allegiance to the very same man who ordered the attack on September the 11th, 2001, Usama bin Laden. And they want us to leave parts of the world, like Iraq, so they can establish a safe haven from which to spread their poisonous ideology. And we are steadfast in our determination to not only protect the American people but to protect these young democracies. And I appreciate your interest in the subject.

Al Qaida is—would have been a heck of a lot stronger today had we not stayed on the offense. And it's in the interest of the United States to not only defeat them overseas so we don't have to face them here but also to spread an ideology that

will defeat their ideology every time, and that's the ideology based upon liberty.

So, Mr. Secretary-General, we're proud to have you here, and thank you for your leadership.

Secretary-General Ban. Thank you very much, Mr. President. This is my second time to have—for meeting with you in this Oval Office. I appreciate your strong support and active participation of the United States in the United Nations. And I'm very much grateful for all the strong support for peacekeeping operations.

In addition to what the President Bush has just mentioned on the issues we have covered, I'd like to mention just a few of importance, in my—from my perspective. First of all, I welcome the interest which you have announced yesterday for the comprehensive Middle East peace process. As a member of the Quartet, I am prepared to work very closely to see expedited the peace process in the Middle East.

As for Iraqi situation—and this is a problem of the whole world. And as far as the United Nations is concerned, we are prepared to contribute to Iraqi Government and people to help them overcome this difficulty, in close coordination with the MNF and including the United States. We are going to help their political facilitation as well as economic and social reconstruction. And we also are going to continue the international compact process for Iraq, as well as expanded—[inaudible]—foreign ministers meeting. This will provide good opportunity for Iraqi people and international community to work together for peace and security in Iraq.

In Darfur situations, we have made considerable progress. And we are going to step up the political process. We have made a positive development yesterday in Tripoli through the meeting chaired by United Nations and African Union. We are going to have negotiation, prenegotiation in Arusha, Tanzania, in early August. We are also going to facilitate humanitarian assistance. I'm going to step up efforts to deploy

hybrid operations as soon as possible in Darfur to resolve this issue as soon as possible. In that regard, I appreciate U.S. Government strong support in this matter.

On climate change, which is a very important issue for all humankind, I appreciate President Bush's initiative during Heiligendamm G-8 summit meeting.

President Bush. Thank you.

Secretary-General Ban. I extended an official invitation to President Bush today to attend, to participate in a high-level U.N. debate on climate change, which will be held on September 24th. Your participation will be very much appreciated, and I'm looking forward to welcoming you—

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Secretary-General Ban. —in New York.

Lastly, on North Korean nuclear issue, I appreciate the U.S. Government initiative and flexibility in promoting development of these issues. I'm encouraged and I welcome the recent development of situation. I hope that the parties concerned, including DPRK, will take necessary measures to implement this joint statement to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for your hospitality.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Resignation of R. James Nicholson as Secretary of Veterans Affairs

July 17, 2007

Jim Nicholson has served his country and his fellow veterans with distinction. I appreciate his willingness to serve and his leadership as Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

For over 2½ years, Jim has worked to improve the Federal Government's ability to care for our Nation's veterans. As our troops continue to fight in the global war on terror, Jim has led innovative efforts to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is better prepared to address the challenges facing our newest generation of heroes after they return home. He has also launched a major information technology transformation in the VA that has strength-

ened the Department's ability to protect patient health information. As a veteran, as a son of a veteran, and as a father of a veteran, Jim should be especially proud of his service to those who have worn America's uniform.

I also appreciate Jim's service as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, where he championed human dignity and freedom for people throughout the world.

I thank Jim for his friendship and his leadership during this historic time. Laura and I wish Jim and Suzanne all the best.