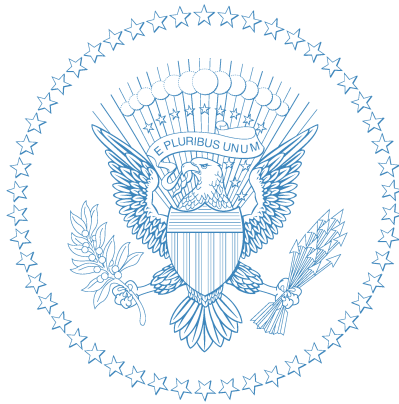


PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

George W. Bush



2007

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK II—JULY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007



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Foreword

This volume collects my speeches and papers from the second half of 2007.

As this period began, the surge of American troops to Iraq had reached full strength. This increase in forces—and the new counterinsurgency strategy led by General David Petraeus—helped bring a steady decline in the violence that had gripped Iraq. In September, I spoke to the American people from the Oval Office. I said, “One year ago, much of Baghdad was under siege. Schools were closed, markets were shuttered, and sectarian violence was spiraling out of control. Today, most of Baghdad’s neighborhoods are being patrolled by coalition and Iraqi forces who live among the people they protect. Many schools and markets are reopening. Citizens are coming forward with vital intelligence. Sectarian killings are down. And ordinary life is beginning to return.”

As these signs of hopeful progress emerged, Iraq’s leaders worked to follow security gains with political reconciliation. In September, I traveled to Iraq’s Al-Anbar Province and met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and other political leaders. While there, I saw the beginnings of political improvements, as many tribal leaders came forward to reject violence and murder in return for moderation and peace. To support this progress, I assured the people of Iraq that America would not abandon them.

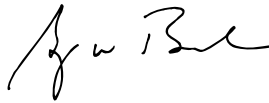
During this time, I also emphasized our Nation’s ongoing commitment to the people of Afghanistan. In August, I hosted Afghan President Hamid Karzai at Camp David, where we discussed the continuing battle against the remnants of the Taliban. After having been forced from political power, these radicals had become desperate, even killing Afghan children on their way to school in cowardly attempts to regain power. I told President Karzai that the United States would continue to stand by Afghanistan’s side.

While the War on Terror continued to be of the utmost importance to my Administration, we also remained focused on other critical issues throughout the world. In July, I hosted a Conference on the Americas, an event that emphasized the close ties between the United States and our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. In a speech at the State Department in October, I highlighted our support for one of those neighboring nations by emphasizing America’s commitment to the freedom movement in Cuba. I said “The socialist paradise is a tropical gulag. The quest for justice that once inspired the Cuban people has now become a grab for power. And as with all totalitarian systems, Cuba’s regime no doubt has other horrors still unknown to the rest of the world. Once revealed, they will shock the conscience of humanity. And they will shame the regime’s defenders and all those democracies that have been silent.”

I also engaged in wide-ranging diplomacy throughout the world. In August, I attended the North American Leaders' Summit in Canada, where I met with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Felipe Calderon to discuss an agenda of peace and prosperity for our continent. In September, I traveled to Australia for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation's annual leadership meeting. And in November, my Administration brought together the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for a historic conference in Annapolis, Maryland to encourage the expansion of freedom and peace in the Holy Land.

This was also a time of accomplishment at home. In August, I signed the Protect America Act, a piece of legislation that modernized the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This law gave our intelligence professionals the necessary legal authority to gather information about the intentions of our enemies while protecting the civil liberties of Americans. In December, I signed the Energy Independence and Security Act, a good bill that increased the supply of alternative fuel sources and increased fuel economy standards. And during this period, I welcomed two talented Americans to my cabinet—Michael Mukasey as Attorney General and Lieutenant General James Peake as Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

As the year came to a close, I signed a bill approving a vital trade agreement between the United States and Peru. This expansion of America's participation in the global marketplace was a fitting close to a year that continued a trend of strong economic results. In December, America celebrated its 52nd consecutive month of job growth—the longest such period on record. The year to come would test the strength of our longstanding prosperity—but our economy would once again prove itself resilient.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. W. Bush". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the 43d President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period July 1–December 31, 2007. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against a tape recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. At the request of the Office of the Press Secretary, the Bush property known as Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas, is referred to simply as the Bush Ranch. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed full-text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes, and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. That coverage provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of

the Press Secretary. Also included are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed full-text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and William J. Clinton are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of Michael L. White, Managing Editor, Office of the Federal Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit. The Chief Editor of this book was Stacey A. Mulligan, assisted by William K. Banks, Loretta F. Cochran, Lois Davis, Kathleen M. Fargey, Joseph G. Frankovic, Michael J. Forcina, Stephen J. Frattini, Allison M. Gavin, Gwendolyn J. Henderson, Diane Hiltabidle, Alfred Jones, Joshua H. Liberatore, Heather N. McDaniel, Ashley Merusi, Amelia E. Otovo, Jennifer M. Partridge, D. Gregory Perrin, Matthew R. Regan, Michael J. Sullivan, and Joseph K. Vetter.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Printing Office under the direction of William J. Boarman, Public Printer.

Raymond A. Mosley
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

Contents

Foreword . . . v

Preface . . . vii

Cabinet . . . xi

Public Papers of George W. Bush,
July 1–December 31, 2007 . . . 903

Appendix A

Digest of Other White House Announcements . . . 1600

Appendix B

Nominations Submitted to the Senate . . . 1625

Appendix C

Checklist of White House Press Releases . . . 1637

Appendix D

Presidential Documents Published in the Federal Register . . . 1651

Subject Index . . . A–1

Name Index . . . B–1

Document Categories List . . . C–1

Cabinet

Secretary of State	Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of the Treasury	Henry M. Paulson, Jr.
Secretary of Defense	Robert M. Gates
Attorney General	Alberto R. Gonzales (resigned 9/17) Michael B. Mukasey (appointed 11/9)
Secretary of the Interior	Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of Agriculture	Michael O. Johanns (resigned 9/19)
Secretary of Commerce	Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary of Labor	Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Alphonso R. Jackson
Secretary of Transportation	Mary E. Peters
Secretary of Energy	Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary of Education	Margaret Spellings
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	R. James Nicholson (resigned 10/1) James B. Peake (appointed 12/20)

Secretary of Homeland Security	Michael Chertoff
Chief of Staff	Joshua B. Bolten
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Stephen L. Johnson
United States Trade Representative	Susan C. Schwab
Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Robert J. Portman (resigned 9/3) James A. Nussle (appointed 9/4)
Director of National Drug Control Policy	John P. Walters

Exchange With Reporters in Kennebunkport, Maine July 1, 2007

President Bush. Welcome. Is everybody having a nice day here?

Q. Yes. The lobsters are good.

President Bush. They are good.

Visit of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia

Q. Sir, are you going to take him fishing?

President Bush. We might just do that, yes. Not sure yet, Mark.

Q. Today?

President Bush. Maybe today. It's pretty casual up here, as you know—unstructured.

Q. —the menu?

The First Lady. Lobster; what else? [Laughter]

[At this point, the exchange continued, and no transcript was provided. It resumed as follows.]

Visit to Kennebunkport, Maine

Q. How was the fishing today, sir?

President Bush. Lousy. [Laughter] Was that you, Chuck, the other day? No wonder we didn't catch any fish. They took a look at you and—[laughter]—headed out.

Terrorist Attacks in the United Kingdom

Q. Sir, while you're waiting, can you tell us what you think of those terrorist incidents in Britain and Scotland?

President Bush. We got a press conference tomorrow, Mark. But it just goes to show the war against these extremists goes on. You never know where they may try to strike. And appreciate the very strong response that the Gordon Brown Government has given to the attempts by these people.

[The exchange continued, and no transcript was provided. It resumed as follows.]

President Bush. Everybody been behaving themselves?

President's Vacation/Major League Baseball

Q. You sure you won't come back here a little more often? [Laughter]

President Bush. That's what I figured. [Laughter]

Q. I wasn't going to give you the satisfaction—[laughter].

President Bush. That's what I thought, yes. Well, the guy is counting the days in Crawford, you know. [Laughter]

Q. I'm counting your days here too—35.

Q. Are you watching any baseball?

President Bush. I watched the Ranger-Red Sox game today.

Q. Is it over? Did they win today too?

Q. I think they won today too.

Q. But the Yankees lost.

President Bush. They did?

[The exchange continued, and no transcript was provided. It resumed as follows.]

[President Putin arrived.]

President George H.W. Bush. Where did these guys all come from? When I left there was nobody here.

President Bush. Come over, Condi. Come on, Bill.

Okay? It's been real. [Laughter] Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at Walker's Point. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia
and an Exchange With Reporters in Kennebunkport

July 2, 2007

President Bush. First, I'd like to congratulate President Putin for being the only person that caught a fish today. I wanted to congratulate the President for being the only person that caught a fish. It was a fine catch. Secondly, I welcome you to my family home.

And we had a good, casual discussion on a variety of issues. You know, through the course of our relationship there have been times when we've agreed on issues, and there's been times when we haven't agreed on issues. But one thing I've found about—of Vladimir Putin is that he is consistent, transparent, honest, and is an easy man to discuss our opportunities and problems with.

We talked about nuclear security and made great strides in setting a foundation for future relations between the United States and Russia in dealing with the nuclear security issues. We talked about our bilateral relations; we talked about our—the relations with countries like Iran and North Korea. We had a very long, strategic dialog that I found to be important, necessary, and productive.

And so I welcome you, Vladimir. Thanks for coming.

President Putin. I would like to congratulate us with the good work done.

First of all, I would like to thank the hosts for their invitation and President Bush for this invitation. Indeed, we had a very nice fishing party this morning. We caught one fish, but that was a team effort—

President Bush. A team effort—

President Putin. —and we let it go to the captain of the boat—[laughter]—

President Bush. Very thoughtful of you. [Laughter]

President Putin. —the 42d President of the United States. [Laughter]

President Bush. That's right.

President Putin. As for the negotiations, negotiations were very substantial. We discussed basically the entire gamut of both bilateral issues and international issues. George listed practically all issues that we've touched upon. And I was pleased to note that we are seeking the points of coincidence in our positions and very frequently we do found them. And I'm very grateful to the Bush family for this very warm, homey atmosphere around this meeting, and we appreciate it very much.

I do believe that we have to learn something from the older generation. And the attitude shown both to me and to the members of my delegation was way beyond the official and the protocol needs. And additionally, we had an opportunity to have a look at this part of the United States, a fantastic place. We've seen the warmth and the very positive attitude of the people around here and use this opportunity to say to them that we appreciate their warmth, and we are grateful for their very warm reception of us.

Mind you, the fish that we caught, we've let it free. [Laughter]

President Bush. A couple of questions. Tony, you going to call on them? Hold on a second, please. Please. Tony.

White House Press Secretary Tony Snow. Deb Riechmann [Associated Press].

President Bush. Deb, yes.

Iran/Missile Defense System

Q. Mr. President, I have a question for either one, or both of you.

President Bush. Either one of us, okay—or both of us.

Q. Both of you. For you, sir: Were you successful in getting President Putin's support for tough sanctions, like cargo inspections, against Iran?

President Bush. We spent a lot of time talking about the Iranian issue, and we both agree—excuse me, go ahead. We spent a lot of time talking about the Iranian issue. I am concerned about the Iranians' attempt to develop the technologies, know-how, to develop a nuclear weapon. The President shares that—I'm a little hesitant to put words in his mouth, but I think he shares that same concern. After all, this is an issue we've been talking about for about 6 years.

And I have come to the conclusion that when Russia and America speaks with, you know, along the same lines, it tends to have an effect. And therefore, I appreciate very much the Russians' attitude in the United Nations. I have been counting on the Russians' support to send a clear message to the Iranians, and that support and that message is a strong message. And hopefully, we'll be able to convince the regime that we have no problems with the people in Iran, but we do have a problem with a regime that is in defiance of international norm.

Q. But are you—[inaudible].

President Bush. Hold up a second, please. You're more impatient than I was.

And so we discussed a variety of ways to continue sending a joint message.

And, by the way, one other issue that I didn't mention in my opening my—comments that I think you'll find interesting—is that President Putin proposed a regional approach to missile defense; that we ought to work together bilaterally, as well as work through the Russia-NATO Council. And I'm in strong agreement with that concept.

That's all I've got to say, Deb. Have you got something else you want to say?

Iran

Q. Well, I still would like to know—

President Bush. Oops! You just got wedged out, sorry.

Q. I still would like to know if you're far apart on how tough the sanctions should be.

President Bush. We're close on recognizing that we've got to work together to send a common message.

Q. Okay.

President Putin. So far, we have managed to work within the framework of the Security Council, and I think we will continue to be successful on this track. Recently, we've seen some signals coming from Iran with regard to interaction, cooperation with the IAEA. Mr. Solana also brings us some very—some positive data and information. I think all of this would contribute to further, substantial intercourse on this issue.

Missile Defense System

Q. Mr. Putin made a proposal for anti-ballistic missile cooperation between Russia and the United States. And you called it "interesting." In which direction your cooperation? And this question—[inaudible].

President Bush. Yes.

Q. And what role of European countries do you see in this cooperation? And if it is no breakthrough in the foreseeable future, maybe it's a time to make a pause? Thank you.

President Bush. Yes, thanks. It's more than an interesting idea, it's an idea that we're following up on through consultative meetings, which we've started. And as I told you, the President made a very—I thought—very constructive and bold strategic move, and that is: Why don't we broaden the dialog and include Europe, through NATO and the Russia-NATO Council? I don't know if you want to expand on that or not.

President Putin. Oh, I have to answer that too? As President Bush has already said, we do support the idea of the continued consultations on this score. At the same time, we do believe that the number of the parties to this consultation could be expanded through the European part—countries who are interested in resolving the issue. And the idea is to achieve this through the forum of the Russia-NATO cooperation—Council.

But our proposal is not limited to this only. We propose establishing an information exchange center in Moscow. We've agreed on that a few years back; it's time now to put this decision into practice. But this is not yet all. A similar center could be established in one of the European capitals, in particular, in Brussels, for example. This could have been a single system that would work online.

In this case, there would be no need to place any more facilities in Europe—I mean, these facilities in Czech Republic and the missile base in Poland. And if need be, we are prepared to involve in this work, not only the Gabala radar, which we rent from the Azerbaijanis—if necessary, we are prepared to modernize it. And if that is not enough, we would be prepared to engage in this system also a newly built radar, early warning system in the south of Russia.

Such cooperation, I believe, would result in raising to an entirely new level the quality of cooperation between Russia and the United States. And for all practical purposes, this would lead to a gradual development of strategic partnership in the area of security.

As for the Europeans, well, it's their choice; each and every country will have to decide whether it wants to be part of the system or not. But if it would—it would be clear to even a layman, if a country doesn't decide in a strategic partnership, this choice would determine the position of any country both in economic terms and on the political arena in the final analysis, in the long term.

Therefore, I'm confident that there will be interested partners or parties in Europe.

Mr. Snow. Caren Bohan [Reuters].

U.S.-Russia Relations/Democracy in Russia

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, 6 years ago, you seemed to have formed a bond with President Putin, when you said you had gotten a sense of his soul. Do you still feel that you trust him? And how trou-

bled are you by the political freedoms—the state of political freedoms in Russia?

And President Putin, do you appreciate advice from Washington about democracy in Russia?

President Bush. Here's the thing: When you're dealing with a world leader, you wonder whether or not he's telling the truth or not. I've never had to worry about that with Vladimir Putin. Sometimes he says things I don't want to hear, but I know he's always telling me the truth. And you don't have to guess about his opinions, which makes it a lot easier to do—to find common ground.

And so you ask, do I trust I him? Yes, I trust him. Do I like everything he says? No. And I suspect he doesn't like everything I say. But we're able to say it in a way that shows mutual respect.

Take missile defense. He just laid out a vision. I think it's very sincere. I think it's innovative. I think it's strategic. But as I told Vladimir, I think that the Czech Republic and Poland need to be an integral part of the system. And the only way I know how to find common ground on complicated issues is to share my thoughts, and that's what he does with me. And so I've had a very constructive relationship.

Obviously, you know—I'll let him talk about his view of democracy, but I will tell you, at the G-8 in St. Petersburg, he did a very interesting thing. You might remember the dinner when you said: "Anybody who has got any doubts about democracy, ask me questions." And I remember part of my discussions with him about whether or not the—you know, how—the relations between the Government and the press, you'll be amazed to hear. He strongly defends his views, and you can listen to him yourself, right now. But ours is a relationship where I feel very comfortable bringing up and asking him why he's made decisions he's made.

President Putin. Speaking of common democratic values, we are guided by the idea and principle that these are important

both for you and for us. In the last 15 years, Russia undergone a very serious transformation. It has to do with changes in the political system and in the economic system as well.

Of course, it has considerable social repercussions and consequences. All of this taken together has determined the way our transition and our society has been developing and forming. Even in the, shall we say, sustainable democracies, mature democracies, we see basically the same problems; the same issue that they have to deal with. It has to do with the relationship with the media; it has to do with human rights and the right for private life being beyond the control of the Government and the state. If you remember how Larry King tortured the former CIA Director, you would also understand that there are some other problems and issues, as well, in this world. [Laughter] And I cannot even repeat all the things that were said then.

We have common problems. And we are prepared to listen to each other. The only thing that we would never, never accept is these tools—this leverage being used to interfere into our domestic affairs to make us do things the way we would do not see fit. In our dialog, in our contacts with President Bush, we always discuss these things, and he says it frankly and straightly, and we are always constantly engaged in the dialog geared to making things better in Russia and elsewhere.

I do not always agree with him, but we never engage in paternalism. We do not assume mentors tone. We always talk as friends.

President Bush. Yes.

U.S.-Russia Relations

Q. Also, since, for you both, this is your final year in office, what do you think—

President Bush. Not mine. I got more than a year.

Q. Yes.

President Bush. Anyway, nice try. [Laughter]

Q. But since 2008—

President Bush. Yes.

Q. —elections year for both of you—

President Bush. Right.

Q. —do you believe that—are you going to meet after you are not Presidents any more? Or is this your final meeting?

President Bush. Yes, thank you.

President Putin. I do believe that our relationship developed normally—not bad—and they are being strengthened every time we meet. And the relationship between Russia and the United States is entirely different than that between the United States and the Soviet Union. And we are not—we do not look at each other through the sights of our weapons systems. And in this, I fully agree with my colleague, President Bush.

As for the future, as I already mentioned, we are now discussing a possibility of raising our relations to an entirely new level that would involve a very private and very, shall we say, sensitive dialog on all issues related to international security, including, of course, the missile defense issue.

If this is to happen, I would like to draw your attention to this: The relations between our two countries would be raised to an entirely new level. Gradually, our relations would become those of a strategic partnership nature. It would mean raising the level of our—and improving the level of our interaction in the area of international security, thus leading to improved political interaction and cooperation with a final effect being, of course, evident in our economic relations and situation.

Well, basically, we may state that the deck has been dealt, and we are here to play. And I would very much hope that we are playing one and the same game.

President Bush. I think we'll see each other in Australia. Secondly, I know we'll be talking on the phone because there's a lot of issues that we are working together on, which is part of the legacy of this relationship, and that is that it's in the U.S.

interest to keep close relations with Russia, and that when it comes to confronting real threats, such as nuclear proliferation or the threat of radicalism and extremism, Russia is a good, solid partner.

Russia has made some amazing progress in a very quick period of time. One of the first conversations I had with Vladimir Putin was about Soviet-era debt. This is a country with no debt. It's got solid reserves. It's a significant international player. It's got a growing middle class. It's—for those old Russian hands who remember what it was like, there's an amazing transformation taking place. Is it perfect in—from the eyes of Americans? Not necessarily. Is the change real? Absolutely. And it's in our interests—in the U.S. interests to have good, solid relations with Russia. And that's what Vladimir and I have worked hard to achieve.

And we're going to go continue those relations with a lunch. So thanks for coming.

President Putin. Of course, we will continue our relations in the future. Today's fishing party demonstrated that we have a very similar—we share the same passion—that is, passion.

Vice President Richard B. Cheney

Q. Is Cheney a member of the executive branch?

President Bush. I didn't hear you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:28 p.m. at Walker's Point. President Putin referred to European Union Foreign Minister Javier Solana Madariaga; Cable News Network talk show host Larry King; and former Central Intelligence Agency Director George J. Tenet. President Putin and some reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on Granting Executive Clemency to I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby July 2, 2007

The United States Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit today rejected Lewis Libby's request to remain free on bail while pursuing his appeals for the serious convictions of perjury and obstruction of justice. As a result, Mr. Libby will be required to turn himself over to the Bureau of Prisons to begin serving his prison sentence.

I have said throughout this process that it would not be appropriate to comment or intervene in this case until Mr. Libby's appeals have been exhausted. But with the denial of bail being upheld and incarceration imminent, I believe it is now important to react to that decision.

From the very beginning of the investigation into the leaking of Valerie Plame's name, I made it clear to the White House staff and anyone serving in my administra-

tion that I expected full cooperation with the Justice Department. Dozens of White House staff and administration officials dutifully cooperated.

After the investigation was underway, the Justice Department appointed United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois Patrick Fitzgerald as a special counsel in charge of the case. Mr. Fitzgerald is a highly qualified, professional prosecutor who carried out his responsibilities as charged.

This case has generated significant commentary and debate. Critics of the investigation have argued that a special counsel should not have been appointed, nor should the investigation have been pursued after the Justice Department learned who leaked Ms. Plame's name to columnist Robert

Novak. Furthermore, the critics point out that neither Mr. Libby nor anyone else has been charged with violating the Intelligence Identities Protection Act or the Espionage Act, which were the original subjects of the investigation. Finally, critics say the punishment does not fit the crime: Mr. Libby was a first-time offender with years of exceptional public service and was handed a harsh sentence based in part on allegations never presented to the jury.

Others point out that a jury of citizens weighed all the evidence and listened to all the testimony and found Mr. Libby guilty of perjury and obstructing justice. They argue, correctly, that our entire system of justice relies on people telling the truth. And if a person does not tell the truth, particularly if he serves in government and holds the public trust, he must be held accountable. They say that had Mr. Libby only told the truth, he would have never been indicted in the first place.

Both critics and defenders of this investigation have made important points. I have made my own evaluation. In preparing for the decision I am announcing today, I have carefully weighed these arguments and the circumstances surrounding this case.

Mr. Libby was sentenced to 30 months of prison, 2 years of probation, and a \$250,000 fine. In making the sentencing decision, the district court rejected the ad-

vice of the probation office, which recommended a lesser sentence, and the consideration of factors that could have led to a sentence of home confinement or probation.

I respect the jury's verdict. But I have concluded that the prison sentence given to Mr. Libby is excessive. Therefore, I am commuting the portion of Mr. Libby's sentence that required him to spend 30 months in prison.

My decision to commute his prison sentence leaves in place a harsh punishment for Mr. Libby. The reputation he gained through his years of public service and professional work in the legal community is forever damaged. His wife and young children have also suffered immensely. He will remain on probation. The significant fines imposed by the judge will remain in effect. The consequences of his felony conviction on his former life as a lawyer, public servant, and private citizen will be long-lasting.

The Constitution gives the President the power of clemency to be used when he deems it to be warranted. It is my judgment that a commutation of the prison term in Mr. Libby's case is an appropriate exercise of this power.

NOTE: The proclamation of July 2, on grant of executive clemency, is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and an Exchange With Reporters *July 3, 2007*

The President. Thank you very much. General, thank you very much for your hospitality. It's a true honor to come to Walter Reed to be able to see the docs and nurses, the physical therapists who are working with our wounded soldiers. The care here is remarkable. There has been some bureaucratic redtape issues in the past that

the military is working hard to cure. But when it comes time to healing broken bodies, this is a fabulous place.

I am constantly amazed at the character and courage of those who wear our uniform. And that's no more vividly displayed than here in this place of healing. I want to thank our soldiers, sailors, and marines,

airmen, coastguards men and women for their service to the country. I thank their families. As we head into the Fourth of July, we're a fortunate nation to have people who are willing to volunteer in the face of danger to help secure this country in the long run.

I'll be glad to answer two questions from you.

I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby

Q. Mr. President, are you willing to rule out that you will eventually pardon Scooter Libby?

The President. I—first of all, I had to make a very difficult decision. I weighed this decision carefully. I thought that the jury verdict should stand. I felt the punishment was severe, and so I made a decision that would commute his sentence but leave in place a serious fine, a—and probation. As to the future, I'm—rule nothing in, and nothing out.

Q. Mr. President, Federal sentencing guidelines call for jail time in these kinds

of cases of perjury and obstruction of justice. Why do you feel otherwise, and are you worried that this decision sends a signal that it—you won't go to jail if you lie to the FBI?

The President. I took this decision very seriously on Mr. Libby. I considered his background, his service to the country, as well as the jury verdict. I felt like the jury verdict ought to stand, and I felt like some of the punishments that the judge determined were adequate should stand. But I felt like the 30-month sentencing was severe. I made a judgment, a considered judgment that I believe is the right decision to make in this case, and I stand by it.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Eric B. Schoomaker, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Joint Declaration by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Nuclear Energy and Nonproliferation Joint Actions *July 3, 2007*

We are determined to play an active role in making the advantages of the peaceful use of nuclear energy available to a wide range of interested States, in particular developing countries, provided the common goal of prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons is achieved. To this end, we intend, together with others, to initiate a new format for enhanced cooperation.

Bearing this in mind, we acknowledge with satisfaction the initialing of the bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the United States of America for cooperation in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy. We share the view that this

Agreement will provide an essential basis for the expansion of Russian-U.S. cooperation in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy and expect this document to be signed and brought into force in accordance with existing legal requirements.

We share a common vision of growth in the use of nuclear energy, including in developing countries, to increase the supply of electricity, promote economic growth and development, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, resulting in decreased pollution and greenhouse gasses.

This expansion of nuclear energy should be conducted in a way that strengthens the

nuclear nonproliferation regime. We strongly support the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and are committed to its further strengthening. We support universal adherence to the IAEA Additional Protocol, and call on those who have not yet done so to sign and ratify it. We support the activities of the IAEA with respect to both safeguards and promotion of peaceful nuclear energy, and fully understand the need for growth of its capabilities, including its financial resources, commensurate with the expanded use of nuclear energy worldwide.

We are prepared to support expansion of nuclear energy in the following ways, consistent with national law and international legal frameworks. These efforts build on, reinforce, and complement a range of existing activities, including the work at the IAEA for reliable access to nuclear fuel, the initiative of the Russian Federation on developing Global Nuclear Infrastructure, including the nuclear fuel center in the Russian Federation, the initiative of the United States to establish the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, the IAEA International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles, and the Generation IV International Forum.

- Facilitating the supply of a range of modern, safe, and more proliferation resistant nuclear power reactors and research reactors appropriate to meet the varying energy needs of developing and developed countries.
- Arranging for participation in national and multinational programs to develop requirements for nuclear reactors for participating countries.
- Facilitating and supporting financing to aid construction of nuclear power plants through public and private national and multinational mechanisms, including international financial institutions.
- Providing assistance to states to develop the necessary infrastructure to

support nuclear energy, including development of appropriate regulatory frameworks, safety and security programs to assist states in meeting international standards, and training of personnel.

- Developing solutions to deal with the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, including options for leasing of fuel, storage of spent fuel, and over time development of technology for recycling spent fuel.
- Ensuring that the IAEA has the resources it needs to meet its safeguards responsibilities as nuclear power expands worldwide.
- Supporting expanded IAEA Technical Cooperation to help states build the necessary infrastructure for safe, secure, and reliable operations of nuclear power plants.
- Assisting development and expansion of regional electricity grids, to permit states without nuclear reactors to share in the benefits of nuclear power.
- Providing nuclear fuel services, including taking steps to ensure that the commercial nuclear fuel market remains stable and that states are assured of reliable access to nuclear fuel and fuel services for the lifetime of reactors, including through establishment of international nuclear fuel cycle centers, to provide nuclear fuel cycle services, including uranium enrichment, under IAEA safeguards.
- Supporting negotiation of long-term contracts for power reactors and research reactors, including assured supply of fuel and arrangements for management of spent fuel.

We are prepared to enter into discussions jointly and bilaterally to develop mutually beneficial approaches with states considering nuclear energy or considering expansion of existing nuclear energy programs in conformity with their rights and obligations under the NPT. The development of

economical and reliable access to nuclear energy is designed to permit states to gain the benefits of nuclear energy and to create a viable alternative to the acquisition of sensitive fuel cycle technologies.

The energy and nonproliferation challenges we face today are greater than ever before. We are convinced that this approach will permit substantial expansion of nuclear energy and at the same time strengthen nonproliferation. We welcome

the cooperation of states that share this common vision and are committed to jointly taking steps to make this vision a reality.

The President of the
United States of America

The President of the
Russian Federation

Washington, Moscow
July 3, 2007.

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

Remarks on Independence Day in Martinsburg, West Virginia July 4, 2007

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. Happy Fourth of July. I'm thrilled to be here in Martinsburg. This is the fourth Independence Day that I have spent in the great State of West Virginia since I've been your President. I appreciate General Tackett's introduction. Thank you, sir. You read it just like I wrote it. *[Laughter]*

I love coming to your State because it's a State full of decent, hard-working, patriotic Americans. And I can't think of a better way to celebrate the Fourth of July than to spend it with some of what we call the Mountain State's bravest and most dedicated citizens, the men and women of the West Virginia Air National Guard.

I am proud to stand with the 167th Air-lift Wing. I like your slogan: "Mountaineer pride, worldwide." I'm also honored to be with West Virginia's great military families. Some of you have your loved ones deployed overseas on this Fourth of July. I know that. And I know it may be hard to enjoy the fireworks and the picnics and the other celebrations while they're away on dangerous duty in a faraway land. And so I've come today to express our affection—the affection of the United States of America for the military families who stand strong in the face of the difficult struggle we face to secure the United States of America.

We're blessed to have our military families in the United States, and I'm blessed to be here with you. Thanks for letting me come by.

Speaking about Laura—speaking about families, Laura sends her love. She would be with me, but I told her to fire up the grill. *[Laughter]* Don't tell her I said that. *[Laughter]*

I thank Brigadier General Terry Butler, commander, West Virginia Air National Guard, and his wife Susan. I want to thank Eric Vollmecke—he's the 167th Wing Commander—and his wife Sigrid.

I appreciate being here today with a really fine United States Congresswoman, Shelley Moore Capito, and her husband Charlie. You don't have to worry about her supporting the military. When we've got somebody in harm's way, she understands what I understand, that that military person and his or her family deserve the very strongest support from the Federal Government at all times.

I enjoyed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with some of the children from our military families. I thought they handled their tasks quite well. I appreciate Major Dave Reynolds, chaplain, for giving the blessing. I thank the 249th Army Band of the West Virginia Army National Guard for

playing here today. But most importantly, thank you all for coming. Thanks for being here.

The Fourth of July is a day for celebration and a day for gratitude. Across America, our citizens are going to come together for parades and pyrotechnic displays and readings from our Declaration of Independence. It's a grand celebration. It's a great day to be an American.

And when we carry on these festivities, it's important you know we're carrying on a grand tradition. This isn't the first time our country has celebrated the Fourth of July. As a matter of fact, I would like to read a couple of paragraphs from a 19—1777 newspaper. And here's what it said on the first anniversary of the declaration, as it described the scene in Philadelphia: "The Fourth of July was celebrated with joy and festivity, fine performances, a number of toasts, followed by a discharge of artillery and small arms"—don't do that today. [*Laughter*] "And at night there was a grand exhibition of fireworks, and the city was beautifully illuminated."

This newspaper article from Philadelphia in 1777 went on to say: "Thus may that glorious and memorable day be celebrated through America by the sons of freedom, from age to age till time shall be no more." We're still celebrating and rightly so.

Our first Independence Day celebration took place in a midst of a war, a bloody and difficult struggle that would not end for 6 more years before America finally secured her freedom. More than two decades [centuries]* later, it is hard to imagine the Revolutionary War coming out any other way, but, at that time, America's victory was far from certain. In other words, when we celebrated the first Fourth of July celebration, our struggle for independence was far from certain. Citizens had to struggle for 6 more years to finally determine the outcome of the Revolutionary War.

We were a small band of freedom-loving patriots taking on the most powerful empire in the world. And one of those patriots was the founder of Martinsburg, West Virginia, Major General Adam Stephen. Of course, it wasn't West Virginia then, but it was Martinsburg. [*Laughter*] He crossed the Delaware with Washington. He helped secure America's victory at the Battle of Trenton, and he later went—and later, when the liberty was won, delivered stirring remarks in the Virginia House of Delegates that helped secure ratification of our Constitution.

On Independence Day, we give thanks. We give thanks for our Founders; we give thanks for all the brave citizen soldiers of our Continental Army who dropped their pitchforks and took up muskets to fight for our freedom and liberty and independence.

You're the successors of those brave men. Those who wear the uniform are the successors of those who dropped their pitchforks and picked up their muskets to fight for liberty. Like those early patriots, you're fighting a new and unprecedented war, pledging your lives and honor to defend our freedom and way of life. In this war, the weapons have changed and so have our enemies, but one thing remains the same: The men and women of the Guard stand ready to put on the uniform and fight for America.

In this war against radicals and extremists, in this war on terror, you're showing that the courage which won our independence more than two centuries ago is alive and well here in West Virginia. Since the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, every operational unit of the West Virginia National Guard has been deployed, and some are on their second and third deployments.

One member of the 167th Airlift Wing, Master Sergeant Richard Howland, has been deployed seven times since the 9/11 attacks, and this good man just volunteered to go to Baghdad for an eighth deployment in September. Our fellow citizens should listen to what Richard has said, what this

* White House correction.

volunteer has said. He said, "It is my patriotic duty to do whatever I can to help. It feels good—that I'm keeping a lot of people safe." We're an incredible nation that has produced men like Richard Howland and you, who in the face of danger wear the uniform of the United States of America and step forward in freedom's defense. And I thank you for that.

Since September the 11th, members of the West Virginia Air National Guard have earned seven Bronze Stars and four Purple Hearts. Two of those Purple Hearts were awarded to Staff Sergeants Brad Runkles and Derek Brown. They're here today. You're not related to them, are you? [Laughter]

Brad and Derek are childhood friends. They grew up right here in Martinsburg, and they signed up together to serve in the West Virginia Guard. In 2004, they were driving together in the lead gun truck of a convoy in Iraq when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. Brad and Derek made it out, but they suffered burns on their hands and faces. They recovered from their wounds, and in May of last year, they both reenlisted.

Today is the day to celebrate courage in the face of adversity. I want you to hear what Derek says. He said: "This war is something that has to be done, either over there or here. And I think it's best we fight it over there," he said. "I'm proud to serve my country like those before me for the cause of freedom." America is proud to have citizens like Derek and Brad that we call neighbors and friends and defenders of the peace.

And your service is needed. We need for people to volunteer to defend America, because in this war, we face dangerous enemies who have attacked us here at home. Oh, I know the passage of time has convinced some—maybe convinced some that there—danger doesn't exist. But that's not how I see it, and that's not how many of you see it. These people want to strike us again. We learned on September the

11th that in the age of terror, the best way to do our duty, which is to protect the American people, is to go on the offense and stay on the offense. And that's exactly what we've been doing against these radicals and extremists.

It is best that we take the fight to where the enemy lives so we don't have to face them where we live. And so, since 9/11, that's precisely the strategy we have followed. In Afghanistan, where I know some of you have been deployed and some of you are deployed, we removed a regime that gave sanctuary and support to Al Qaida as they planned the 9/11 attacks which killed nearly 3,000 citizens. They found safe haven. That's what they like. They like a place where they can plot and plan in relatively—in security, all aiming to come and harm the citizens of the greatest face for liberty in the world. Today, because we acted, the terrorist camps in Afghanistan have been shut down, 25 million people have been liberated, and the Afghan people have elected a Government that is fighting terrorists instead of harboring terrorists.

This enemy of ours, they have got an ideology. They believe in something. In other words, the attacks are just a tactic to enable them to spread their dark vision of the world. Perhaps one way to differentiate between our thoughts is, just think about religion. In the great country of the United States, we believe that you should be able to worship any way you see fit, that you're equally American regardless of your religious beliefs. They believe that if you don't worship the way they see it, then they're going to bring you harm.

We believe in an Almighty; we believe in the freedom for people to worship that Almighty. They don't. They don't believe you should worship the way you choose. They believe the only way you should worship is the way they choose. And therefore, they will do anything they can to spread that ideology. And it's our charge; it's our calling to keep the pressure on these people, to defend America, and to spread an

ideology of hope and an ideology of peace so that the kids who came up here to give the Pledge of Allegiance will be able to live in peace and security.

There's more than one front in this war against these radicals and extremists. And obviously, the toughest front of all is in Iraq. In that country, we removed a cruel dictator who harbored terrorists, paid the families of Palestinian suicide bombers, invaded his neighbors, defied the United Nations Security Council, pursued and used weapons of mass destruction. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. And today, U.S. and coalition troops are standing with the Iraqis—troops and the nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a future of peace. We're opposing ruthless enemies who want to bring down Iraq's democracy and turn that nation into a terrorist safe haven.

Earlier this year, I announced a new strategy in Iraq, under the leadership of General David Petraeus and new Ambassador Ryan Crocker. Our goal is to help the Iraqi Government protect their population so they can make progress toward reconciliation and build a free nation that respects the rights of its people and upholds the rule of law and is an ally against these extremists and terrorists and killers. And so we sent reinforcements to help the Iraqis secure their neighborhoods and go after the terrorists and insurgents and militias that are inciting sectarian violence and help get the capital under control.

It's a tough fight, but I wouldn't have asked those troops to go into harm's way if the fight was not essential to the security of the United States of America. Many of the spectacular car bombings and killings you see are as a result of Al Qaida, the very same folks that attacked us on September the 11th. A major enemy in Iraq is the same enemy that dared attack the United States on that fateful day.

Al Qaida hasn't given up its objectives inside Iraq, and that is to cause enough chaos and confusion so America would

leave, and they would be able to establish their safe haven from which to do two things: to further spread their ideology and to plan and plot attacks against the United States. If we were to quit Iraq before the job is done, the terrorists we are fighting would not declare victory and lay down their arms; they would follow us here, home. If we were to allow them to gain control of Iraq, they would have control of a nation with massive oil reserves, which they could use to fund new attacks and exhort economic blackmail on those who didn't kowtow to their wishes. However difficult the fight is in Iraq, we must win it. We must succeed for our own sake. For the security of our citizens, we must support our troops, we must support the Iraqi Government, and we must defeat Al Qaida in Iraq.

Victory in this struggle will require more patience, more courage, and more sacrifice. And we've lost some good men and women in this fight. And so on this Fourth of July, we pause to remember the fallen and the grieving families they have left behind. We hold them in our hearts, we lift them up in our prayers, and we pledge to honor their memory by finishing the work for which they have given their life.

Here at Martinsburg Air National Guard Base, you're living in a wonderful and caring community. Over the course of this struggle, you've looked out for each other, and you've given strength to each other in difficult moments. One of the community leaders making a difference on this base is Joy Enders. A couple of you heard of her.

In case you haven't ever heard of Joy, she's the president of the 167th Airlift Wing Family Readiness Group. She and other members of the group make it their mission to care for the families of our deployed guards men and women. Before one recent deployment, they took pictures of all the deploying airmen and created iron-on transfers to place on pillowcases for the

children of the deploying troops. It's a simple act, but it's an act of love and compassion that gave the children a sense that their moms and dads were nearby, even though they were deployed a thousand miles away.

Our military families miss their moms and dads and husbands and wives and sons and daughters, and they look forward to welcoming their loved ones home. And we all long for the day when there are far fewer service men and women in Iraq. The time will come when Iraq has a stable, self-sustaining government that is an ally against these extremists and killers. That time will come when the Iraqi people will not need the help of 159,000 American troops in their country. Yet withdrawing our troops prematurely based on politics, not on the advice and recommendation of our military commanders, would not be in our national interest. It would hand the enemy a victory and put America's security at risk, and that's something we're not going to do.

Our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other fronts in the war on terror are serving in a cause that is vital and just. And on this Fourth of July, I ask every American to find a way to thank the men and women who are defending our freedom and the families that support them. There are many ways to show your gratitude. There are many ways for our fellow citizens to say "thanks" to the men and women who wear the uniform and their families. You can send a care package. You can reach out to a military family in your neighborhood with a mom or dad on the frontlines. You could ask somebody: "What can I do to help you? What do you need?" You can carpool. You can be on a bended knee and pray for a soldier and their families.

To help find ways to help, the Department of Defense has set up a web site. I would hope our fellow citizens all across the United States would call up americasupportsyou.mil. At this web site, americasupportsyou.mil, you can learn

about efforts in your own community as to how you can support our troops.

As we celebrate our independence on this Fourth, we can have confidence in the enduring principles of our founding. The words of the declaration hold a promise for all mankind, and those ideals continue to inspire millions across the world.

Recently, Laura and I traveled to Prague, the Czech Republic, where I spoke to a conference of dissidents and democratic activists from 17 nations on 5 continents. I was proud to represent our country at that historic meeting. I was proud to tell those brave souls that America stands with them in their struggle for liberty because we believe in the universality of liberty. I personally believe that freedom is a gift from an Almighty to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth.

I looked out in that audience, and I saw men and women who believe in the power of freedom to transform their countries and to remake the world. And I saw that those who live in tyranny and yearn for freedom still place their hopes in the United States of America.

For the past 6½ years, it's been a privilege to be the President of such a good and decent nation that inspires and holds out hope for people all across the world. It's an awesome experience and a humbling experience to hold a powerful office like President. That brings with it the great honor of being the Commander in Chief of the finest military the world has ever known. Because of the service of our military men and women, because our Nation has got a military full of the bravest and most decent people that I've ever met, America remains a beacon of hope for all around the world; America remains the place where peace has the best chance to be encouraged. We're doing the hard work now so generations of American kids can grow up in peace. It's necessary work, it's important work, and I thank you for your sacrifices.

May God bless you, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:21 a.m. in the West Virginia Air National Guard 167th Airlift Wing C-5 Maintenance Hangar. In his

remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, USA, Adjutant General, West Virginia National Guard; and David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

The President's Radio Address *July 7, 2007*

Good morning. This week, we received more good news showing that our economy is strong and growing. Department of Labor reports that our economy has now created jobs for 46 consecutive months. America added 132,000 jobs in June, and that means our economy has added more than 8.2 million new jobs since August of 2003. Unemployment is low, consumer confidence is high, incomes are rising, and opportunity is growing across America.

Our Nation's strong economy is no accident. It is the result of the hard work of the American people and progrowth policies in Washington. Starting in 2001, my administration delivered the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was in the White House. Our tax relief has left \$1.1 trillion in the hands of citizens like you to save and spend and invest as you see fit.

Over the past 3 years, we have also held the growth of annual domestic spending close to 1 percent, well below the rate of inflation. The result is a thriving and resilient economy that is the envy of the world.

Over the past 6 years, our economy has overcome serious challenges: a stock market decline; recession; corporate scandals; an attack on our homeland; and the demands of an ongoing war on terror. Despite these obstacles, our economy recovered, and tax revenues soared, and America is now in a position to balance the Federal budget. To achieve this goal, I sent Congress a budget plan this February that would keep

taxes low, restrain Federal spending, and put us in surplus by 2012.

Next week, my administration will release a report called the Mid-Session Review, which will provide you with an update on our Nation's progress in meeting the goal of a balanced budget. We know from experience that when we pursue policies of low taxes and spending restraint, the economy grows, tax revenues go up, and the deficit goes down.

Democratic leaders in Congress want to take our country down a different track. They are working to bring back the failed tax-and-spend policies of the past. The Democrats' budget plan proposes \$205 billion in additional domestic spending over the next 5 years and includes the largest tax increase in history. No nation has ever taxed and spent its way to prosperity. And I have made it clear that I will veto any attempt to take America down this road.

Democrats in Congress are also behind schedule passing the individual spending bills needed to keep the Federal Government running. At their current pace, I will not see a single one of the 12 must-pass bills before Congress leaves Washington for the month-long August recess. The fiscal year ends September 30th. By failing to do the work necessary to pass these important bills by the end of the fiscal year, Democrats are failing in their responsibility to make tough decisions and spend the people's money wisely.

This moment is a test. Under our Constitution, Congress holds the power of the purse. Democratic leaders are in control of Congress. They set the schedule for when bills are considered. They determine when votes are held. Democrats have a chance to prove they are for open and transparent government by working to complete each spending bill independently and on time. I urge Democrats in Congress to step forward now and pass these bills one at a time.

As they do, I will insist they restrain spending so we can keep our Government running, while sustaining our growing economy and getting our budget into balance. And to help achieve these goals, I call on the Senate to act on my nomination of Jim Nussle as Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Jim is a former chairman of the House Budget Committee, and he will be a strong advocate for protecting your tax dollars here in Washington.

By setting clear budget priorities and maintaining strong fiscal discipline, we can promote economic growth and bring our budget into balance. Our Nation has the most innovative, industrious, and talented people on the face of the Earth. And when we unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of our country, there is no limit to what the American people can achieve or the hope and opportunity we can pass on to future generations.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on July 6 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 6, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to the White House Conference on the Americas in Arlington, Virginia July 9, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming today. In my recent trip down to Central and South America, I told the folks that we were going to host a conference here in Washington, a conference to promote best practices, which really says, how best can the United States help people in our neighborhood.

Laura and I had a magnificent trip to Central and South America. It reminded me of the importance of having a peaceful and prosperous neighborhood. It's in our interests, in the interests of the United States that our neighborhood be healthy and educated. And so this conference is an attempt to bring together key people of my administration and faith-based groups

and private sector groups from the United States, as well as our neighborhood, to discuss how we can work together to promote social justice, to help people realize a better life through good education and good health care.

I do thank members of my administration who have joined us. I understand after this event there's going to be a series of breakout groups, led by members of my Cabinet; Hank Paulson is here, the Secretary of the Treasury. As a matter of fact, he's heading down to, I think, Brazil tomorrow. Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Secretary of Commerce, will be leading a group. Mike Leavitt will lead a breakout session—he's the Secretary of Health and Human Services; and then Margaret Spellings, who

is the Secretary of Education. I think you're going to find these folks to be concerned, compassionate Americans who care about the lives of our citizens in our neighborhood. And I appreciate them serving.

And then you get a speech from my wife, which is, like, really smart to have her speak. [Laughter] You're stuck with the B team right now, and then the A team will be coming for—[laughter].

I want to thank all the folks who have joined us. Thanks for coming. As you can see, we've got an interesting way of making a variety of points. What I hope to accomplish at this breakout session is to, first, explain to our fellow citizens how important it is that the United States be active in the neighborhood in which we live.

Secondly—and by the way, thanks, ambassadors, for coming. I appreciate you all being here. It's very kind of you to take time out of your busy schedules to be here. We're honored you're here. Secondly, it's important for us—for me to explain to our fellow citizens some of the work we're doing in the neighborhood. I think our citizens will be pleased to know, for example, that we're working very hard to get trade agreements through our Congress, because the best way to help defeat poverty is to encourage commerce and trade.

And we've got trade agreements we've reached with Peru and Panama and Colombia. It's really important for the United States Congress to pass these trade agreements. If you're interested in prosperity in our neighborhood, if you want to help improve the lives of others, then the United States Congress must honor the agreements we've negotiated with these important countries and pass this legislation.

I'd like to see the Peruvian deal done by the beginning of August. They've got time to get the bill done. Members of Congress have got ample days on the calendar to pass this important piece of legislation so we can send the clear signal to our neighborhood that we want you to be prosperous, that we want to help you realize

your potential through trade with the United States of America. Trade agreements are good for both sides; it's good for U.S. workers, and it's good for Peruvian, Colombian, or Panamanian workers. And it's in our interest to promote trade.

Secondly, we're doing a lot to promote health. And one symbol of our commitment is the Navy medical ship called the *Comfort* that has—is traveling the region but, more importantly, is providing basic and sophisticated health care to people in need. I mean, the United States, we're strong, no question about it, but our greatest strength is our hearts. *Tenemos corazones grandes aqui en este pais*. We care deeply about the plight of other people, and when we see their suffering, we want to help. And the *Comfort* is a way for us to send a clear message that we care about the people that live in the neighborhood that we occupy together.

You know, Laura and I had an amazing experience in Guatemala. That's Maria's country. We went to the highlands. We first saw a small-business guy, who was formerly a subsistence farmer, who put together a cooperative of fellow farmers that now have got access to the U.S. markets, and they're making a living. The most important thing was, he said, "I'm saving money so my child can get a higher education."

But we also went to an outpost where the U.S. military was providing basic health care for people. Now, we've expanded on that health care initiative by setting up a nurse's training center in Panama. That's what Leavitt will be discussing, Secretary Leavitt. The reason I bring this up is that we understand how important it is for people to have good health. We understand that a healthy society is one that will—is one in which people will be more likely to realize their full, God-given potential. And we want to help, and we want to be involved. And part of our discussions today will be how best to—how best can the United States and faith-based groups and

private groups and NGOs work collaboratively to achieve important objectives.

A third objective is education. As I mentioned, Margaret Spellings will be here. She's the Secretary of Education. But the United States is deeply involved in people-to-people projects, all aimed at improving literacy. We believe strongly in helping teachers teach, and therefore, teacher schools make a lot of sense. But the purpose of the groups today—of this meeting today is to help us better focus our resources and do a better job of helping people in our neighborhood realize their potential.

I happen to be a person who does believe in an Almighty, and I believe the Almighty implants in each soul great human potential. And it's in our interest to help people realize their full potential. And two ways to do so—and two practical ways to do so is for the United States to be involved in health issues as well as education issues, and we are. And we're spending a fair amount of taxpayers' monies to achieve those objectives. And so one of my objectives is to explain to the American people, it's in your interest to help people in our neighborhood become better educated, and it's in your interest that we help people get good health care, because a healthy and educated and prosperous neighborhood is in the long-term interests of the United States.

It is also in our interest to help a neighbor in need. It renews our soul. It lifts our collective spirit. I believe to whom much is given, much is required. We've been given a lot as a nation, and therefore, I believe we're required to help people realize their potential.

So that's why I've come. I've also come to hear some of the folks on our panel. You're probably glad I'm about to quit talking so you can hear some of the folks on the panel too. We're going to start with Shannon. He's worked for me at the NSC in the White House, now is at the State Department. He is the main guy when it

comes to South and Latin America—I don't know if that's a diplomatic term, "main guy," or not. [Laughter]

Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Tom Shannon. It works for me, sir.

The President. That's right. Welcome.

[At this point, Assistant Secretary Shannon made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, thank you, Thomas.

Before I call on Maria, I do want to say something about our expectations, and that is, we expect governments to be of and by and for the people. We don't—and we expect governments to be honest and transparent and open. We reject the notion that it's okay for there to be corruption in government. We really believe that open, transparent societies are those that lead to hopeful tomorrows.

And so part of our foreign policy—for example, through the Millennium Challenge Account—is to set expectations, expectations that most people want: the expectation of a government that invests in the health and education of her people; the expectation that there will be no corruption, that there will be transparency, that people will be able to express themselves in an open forum without fear of reprisal.

And so no question, we want to be involved on the people-to-people programs, but we also have the objective of enhancing good government as well, which we believe strongly will lead to more hopeful futures.

Anyway, Maria is here. Where are you from, Maria?

Maria Pacheco. I'm from Guatemala.

The President. Que bueno. Bienvenidos.

Ms. Pacheco. Muchas gracias.

The President. And so what do you do for a living?

[*Ms. Pacheco, founder and general manager, Kiej de los Bosques, S.A., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Por favor. You speak in English, and I'll speak in Spanish. [Laughter]

Ms. Pacheco. Bueno. Esta bien.

The President. Except I'll ruin the language, and you won't. [Laughter]

[*Ms. Pacheco made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me ask you a question. So you started this group initially to—what's the name of it?

Ms. Pacheco. Kiej de los Bosques.

The President. Si. [Laughter]

Ms. Pacheco. It's a Mayan word. [Laughter]

The President. You started it when, in 2001?

Ms. Pacheco. In 2004.

The President. In 2004, good. How many members?

Ms. Pacheco. We have—well, there's 22 people in the company, but we're working now with more than a thousand women in Guatemala from different regions.

The President. Yes. So lesson one, by the way, there is such thing as social entrepreneurs. It is somebody who says, "I'm going to help somebody else," and takes time, talent, energy, and as a result, you're affecting a thousand lives—a thousand primary interfaces, which affects, no telling, how many lives.

One of the messages, I hope, that comes out of this meeting is that you can make a difference. It doesn't take much. And as a matter of fact, societies change one heart at a time, and therefore, if you're one of those persons changing hearts, you're part of societal change for the better.

And so I hope that we can inspire our fellow citizens to become involved with the NGOs or the faith-based groups or the community-based groups, all helping our neighborhood, and hopefully, inspire people, like in Guatemala, to step up and do the same thing that Maria has done.

So are you pretty upbeat? Optimistic? Pessimistic? Tell me how you're looking these days.

[*Ms. Pacheco made further remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate it. Look, it's very important for my fellow citizens to understand that when we open up markets in a fair way—in other words, we treat our producers the same as producers in other countries—it benefits us. It particularly helps lift people out of poverty. And that's what we want. We want people prosperous in your neighborhood. If you're living in a neighborhood, you want there to be prosperity in your neighborhood. So I appreciate you bringing up the importance of markets and providing—giving people just a basic opportunities in life, and it will make it—it's a transforming strategy. And so thanks for coming.

Maria, it says here you're an organic farmer.

Ms. Pacheco. Yes, I was an organic farmer for 12 years.

The President. Yes. What were you farming?

Ms. Pacheco. I was farming vegetables.

The President. Vegetables, yes. I'm not big on vegetables, but thanks. [Laughter]

Ms. Pacheco. Broccoli especially. [Laughter]

The President. Don't tell my mother that. But thank you very much for coming.

Ms. Pacheco. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, I appreciate your time.

Matthew, what do you do?

Matthew N. Clausen. I work for Partners of the Americas.

The President. And what is that?

Mr. Clausen. Partners of the Americas is an organization, we've been around for over 40 years now, and we connect people with other people in our hemisphere.

The President. Really. What does that mean, connect people with other people?

Mr. Clausen. It means we have volunteer groups in almost every State of the U.S. that are partnered with similar groups in almost every country in the region.

The President. That's great.

[*Mr. Clausen, vice president for partnership development, Partners of the Americas, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So are you looking for volunteers?

Mr. Clausen. We are always looking for volunteers.

The President. And how would one who might be interested in volunteering find information about ways to help? Do you have a web site, for example?

Mr. Clausen. We do. We have partners.net, is a great place to start.

The President. Partners.net. What would one find there?

[*Mr. Clausen made further remarks.*]

The President. So what happens if somebody wanted to become a teacher for the summer or wanted to take a trip, and part of the experience of the trip was to make an impact on somebody's life? How—can they find that kind of program on your web site?

[*Mr. Clausen made further remarks.*]

The President. And so is there a common web site? Do we have a web site, for example, as a result of the meeting? I might ask my friend Karen Hughes to think about this. She probably has already thought about it, knowing her—and that is to think maybe about a listing of different ways our fellow citizens can get involved in helping different programs, either financially or through time and effort. Maybe we ought to think about that. I know you already have.

Good, thanks. Anything else you want to say, Matthew, while you've got the floor here?

Mr. Clausen. Well, I can't pass up that opportunity.

The President. Here's your chance, man. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Clausen made further remarks.*]

The President. Thank you. A healthy society is one in which people are responsible

for their behaviors. A healthy capitalist society is one in which corporate America, in this case, is responsible for—becomes a responsible citizen. And we have got such a soul here in Vivian Alegria. She is from Mexico.

Vivian Alegria. Yes.

The President. Welcome. You work for?

Ms. Alegria. For the Coca-Cola Foundation in Mexico.

The President. Coca-Cola Foundation. And what does the Coca-Cola Foundation do?

[*Ms. Alegria, director, Coca-Cola Foundation, Mexico, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So you're building schools?

[*Ms. Alegria made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes. I think one of the things that our citizens have got to understand here, there's a lot of corporate America that are very much involved in the communities, of which they're active. And that's important. And I would encourage our companies that do business in the neighborhood to understand that it's one thing to sell a product; it's another thing to help people be able to buy the product and become involved in the communities in which they're doing business. And I'm confident a lot of our companies are. I know Microsoft, for example, is very much involved with education programs. Laura and I are working on a very important initiative to help eradicate malaria in parts of the world, and corporate America is helping there too. So for those of you who represent corporate America, thanks for coming, and thanks for being involved.

And if you're not, get involved. It will not only help your business, it will help your country, because I want to keep saying this over and over again: An objective of our country and this Government is for there to be a healthy, educated, and prosperous neighborhood. It's in our interests. America does better when people in the

neighborhood in which we live are feeling better, can read better, and are making more money. Prosperity is—and health and education are just essential to a peaceful community around us.

Anyway, so thanks for coming, Vivian. It's good to see you.

Gilberto. You are from Brazil. Great country.

Gilberto Dimenstein. Great country. Great, great country.

The President. I'm proud to report that relations with Brazil are improving a lot. I've got a very close relationship with President Lula; we've worked hard to make it that way. And one of the interesting initiatives we're working on is a alternative fuel initiative that—where the United States and Brazil can work and share technologies, not only between our two countries but in the neighborhood, so that we can all become less dependent on oil.

And anyway, so relations are good. And so what do you do for a living, Gilberto?

Mr. Dimenstein. So, I'm a journalist.

The President. A journalist? That's good. [Laughter]

Mr. Dimenstein. Very good?

The President. Yes.

Mr. Dimenstein. Or not very good?

The President. No, it's great, believe me. [Laughter] Isn't it? Yes. [Laughter]

[*Mr. Dimenstein, founder and academic director, Associacao Cidade Escola Aprendiz, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Dimenstein. And then the almost last 20 years, I've been writing about violence against kids and the lessons in Brazil—

The President. Thank you. Thank you. [*Mr. Dimenstein made further remarks.*]

The President. Fantastic. And the—when you say countrywide, first, you've got a big country. This will be promoted by the Federal Government in cooperation with the private—with your group—

[*Mr. Dimenstein made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Dimenstein. And we've learned that when we put people together, it's very easy to make the education improve. One instance, we create one model, the neighborhood that I live because I believe if you want to change the world, first try to change your neighborhood.

The President. That's right.

[*Mr. Dimenstein made further remarks.*]

The President. So part of the purpose of this gathering is to analyze best practices. And by that I mean, what works. Gilberto has just described a program that works, and, hopefully, somebody will be inspired by this idea and try it out in another part of our neighborhood.

And so I appreciate you coming. Thanks for bring something that—

Mr. Dimenstein. Thank you very much for the invitation.

The President. You're not only a social entrepreneur, you're an educational entrepreneur. And we appreciate your vision and your hard work to make your country a better place.

An individual can make a significant difference in the life—in somebody else's life. And when you can motivate and encourage millions of individuals to make a difference in somebody's life, then the impact becomes pretty profound. And here's an example of one fellow who is working hard to improve his country. Thanks for coming.

Dr. Marie. How are you, doc?

Marie Marcelle Deschamps. I'm doing fine, thank you. It's an honor to be here.

The President. What kind of doctor are you?

[*Dr. Deschamps, technical director, Haitian Study Group on Kaposi's Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So she's from Haiti, obviously. She's a doc. She's deeply concerned about HIV/AIDS and malaria.

You know, our Government and the people—the generosity of the Americans, American people can be—as manifested by

just money, spending money. Up to now we have talked about how American citizens spend time and effort to help improve lives. We also spend money. And this is an area where I feel very strongly that America should be involved and make a difference, and that is fighting the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and dealing with malaria.

And so to this end, I'm asking Congress for \$30 billion expenditure over the next 5 years. She mentioned PEPFAR. That's, like, initials for the AIDS initiative, and we're making a big difference.

The reason I bring this up again is that—I'm not bragging, I'm just telling the American taxpayer that through your hard work and your tax dollars, we're helping programs like Maria's that are saving lives. We can measure the lives being saved. We can measure the amount of antiretroviral drugs ending up in people's systems. We can measure how many different groups there are involved. This is an area, for example, where the faith-based community has made a significant difference, not only in our own hemisphere but in other affected countries as well.

Maria mentioned that it's amazing what happens when they start networking; when one group attracts another group, that attracts another group, and all of a sudden, there's a grassroots organization in place to deal with this terrible pandemic.

And so I want to thank you for going back to your country, for lending your skills to help solve a significant problem that can be—that at least we can arrest the race. At least we can help—and we save children through the mother-to-child transmission—programs that prevent that transmission of AIDS.

So good going.

Dr. Deschamps. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Yes. You upbeat? You feeling all right about things?

[*Dr. Deschamps made further remarks.*]

The President. That's one thing that Secretary Paulson's going to discuss in the break-out session that he is going to be leading, and that is, our view of the importance of microloans—microcredit as a way to help people, again, help themselves and realize their potential. So thanks for coming.

Dr. Deschamps. Thank you.

The President. Glad you're here.

Dr. Deschamps. Thank you.

The President. Our last panelist is John Howe, formerly of the great State of Texas. Once a Texan, always a Texan, John. [*Laughter*] He is the president and CEO of Project HOPE. Why don't you explain what that is and tell us what you're doing.

[*John P. Howe III, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Dr. Howe. We're legally chartered here in Washington as the People-to-People Foundation, doing business as Project HOPE.

The President. Good.

[*Dr. Howe made further remarks.*]

The President. Thanks, John. You know, it's interesting, our country has got certain images that—some are true, some aren't true. And it's very important, as part of our diplomacy—diplomatic effort on behalf of the American citizens, to remind people about some of the great generous acts that our citizens are doing. And they do it out of the goodness of their hearts. There's nothing better than being a volunteer. It's probably one of the great acts of kindness that somebody can do, is to volunteer to save somebody's life or just to add a little love in somebody's heart.

And we've got millions of our citizens who do that on a daily basis here at home. And it's in our interest that citizens who so want to can do that outside, in our neighborhood. And part of the purpose of having this gathering today is to remind our citizens of that which we're doing and to call upon our citizens, if they've got

time, to help somebody in need. As you said, the doctor from Wyoming benefited just as much as the woman in Guatemala did. And that's the beauty of giving.

And so I thank you all for joining today. Our panelists did a magnificent job, like I knew they would. I thank you all very much for your interest in coming. To my fellow citizens, I appreciate you taking time. I appreciate you being involved. Thank you for caring about the plight of our fellow human beings in the neighborhood in which we live. For those of you from other countries, welcome to America. You'll find this to be a loving country, full

of decent, caring, fine people. And it is an honor to be the President of such a country.

Que Dios les bendiga. May God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mariano Canu, cofounder, Labradores Mayas; and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Tour of GrafTech International Ltd. in Parma, Ohio July 10, 2007

Good, thanks. I'm proud to be with you all. It's great to be at GrafTech here in Cleveland. I've come to Cleveland to highlight a couple of important issues. First, energy independence is an important part of our Nation's future. And one way to achieve energy independence is to promote technologies that will enable us to drive our economy without the use of Middle Eastern oil, for example. And one such technology is hydrogen fuel cells. And GrafTech is on the leading edge of developing a technology that will work, that will be competitive with other forms of energy, and that will enable us, on the one hand, to be less dependent on oil and better stewards on—of the environment.

And so I'm glad to be with these entrepreneurs, these scientists, these thinkers. We've—as part of the hydrogen fuel cell initiative that I proposed to the Congress, this company got a grant. And I think it's a wise use of taxpayers' money to help the people in this company develop this new technology. This forklift right here is powered by a hydrogen fuel cell. Doesn't re-

quire any oil or products derived from oil, and the exhaust from this is water.

And so we're going to continue to promote these kinds of technologies. And so I want to thank you all for having me. I'm about to go to a—after lunch, go to a hospital to talk about the need for a health care system that is patient-driven. I will resist the idea of the Federal Government running the health care system. And I'm going to spend some time talking during a town hall meeting about the kinds of reforms that we ought to be promoting out of Washington that encourage there to be a consumer-driven health care system. I mean, we'll take care of the poor, and we'll help the elderly. But we believe health care is best run in the private sector, not by the government.

And finally, I'm going to spend some time talking about the war on terror and our need to succeed in Iraq. And I'm going to remind the people in the audience today that troop levels will be decided by our commanders on the ground, not by political figures in Washington, DC, and that we've got a plan to lead to victory. And I fully

understand that this is a difficult war, and it's hard on the American people. But I will once again explain the consequences of failure to the American people, and I'll explain the consequences of success as well.

And so I thank the people of Cleveland for welcoming me here. I'm glad to be in your city. Looking forward to a full day.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m.

Remarks to the Greater Cleveland Partnership and a Question-and-Answer Session in Cleveland, Ohio

July 10, 2007

The President. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Fred. Thanks for having me. Thank you, Fred. Thanks for coming. Thanks for having me. It's a smart marketing tool, you know, all the cameras. *[Laughter]* I thought for sure the largest chamber of commerce was in Texas, but I guess not. *[Laughter]*

I'm thrilled to be back in Cleveland. I've had a fascinating day. I went to a small business that is on the cutting edge of changing the way we're going to consume energy. I just came from the Cleveland Clinic, which is one of the most fabulous hospitals in America.

I do want to spend a little time talking about our economy, talking about health care and energy policy that will be an integral part of making sure the economy continues to grow. I'd like to spend a little time talking about the war against extremists and radicals. And I'd like to answer some of your questions, if you have any.

Before I do, I want to tell you, Laura sends her best. She's arguably the most patient woman in America. *[Laughter]* She's a fabulous First Lady and a great mom. I love her dearly, and she told me to say hi to you all, so, hi. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate Joe Roman, who works with Fred. Thanks for setting this deal up. Appreciate the chance to come and visit with fellow citizens here in Cleveland. I'm the Commander in Chief; I'm also the educator in chief. Part of my job is to explain the philosophy behind the decisions that I have

made. I'm honored you'd give me a chance to do so.

I'm traveling with a good man, the Congressman from this area—one of the Congressmen from this area, Steve LaTourette. Proud to be with you, Congressman. Thank you for your time. State Auditor Mary Taylor is here. Thanks for being here, Mary. I met the mayor of Cleveland across the street at the hospital. I was proud to be with him. I thank him for his time, for taking time out of his day. I thank Toby Cosgrove of—doc, thank you for being here—from the hospital there across the street. I thank the docs, by the way, for taking time to show me some amazing technology.

Let me first talk about our economy. It's—our economy is changing, and it's strong. I remember back to—early on in my administration when we were confronted with some very difficult times. There was a recession; the economy had gotten overheated, and it was correcting. And then we got hit by an enemy that killed nearly 3,000 of our citizens which—such an attack obviously would have an effect on the economy. Then there were some corporate scandals that had a psychological effect on our economy. I mean, people were beginning to worry about the system where people were not upholding the law, taking advantage of the situation, taking advantage of shareholders.

And yet we acted and cut taxes—and cut them hard because I believe—[*applause*—because one of the philosophical drivers of this administration is, is that if you have more money in your pocket to spend, save, or invest, the economy is more likely to grow. In other words, there's always a conflict in Washington about how—what's the proper amount of money in Washington and what is the proper amount of money in your pocket. I'm one of these fellows that err on the side of trusting people to spend their money more than trusting government. And therefore, we cut—[*applause*].

I'm not trying to elicit applause—thank you, but—[*laughter*—and our plan has worked. I don't know if you noticed last month that we added another 132,000 new jobs. We've added over 8 million new jobs since August of 2003. Entrepreneurship flourishes when people have got more capital in their pocket.

One of the interesting things about the tax cuts that we proposed is that a lot of the tax cuts were aimed at small businesses. One of the statistics that makes our economy interesting and, I believe, robust is that 70 percent of new jobs are created by small-business owners. And that's an important thing for our fellow citizens to remember, particularly those in Congress who are thinking about something to do with the Tax Code.

Most small businesses are subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships. In other words, they pay tax at the individual income tax rate. So therefore, when you cut income taxes on everybody who pays taxes—in other words, when you lower the rates, it affects the ability of small businesses to keep capital, in other words, keep more of what they earn. And when a small business keeps more of what they earn, it is more likely that business will expand. And therefore, when you hear me say that 8 million new jobs have been created since August of 2003, I might as well have said, as well, the small-business sector of Amer-

ica is strong. And the best way to keep it that way is to keep taxes low.

And now we're going to have a debate on that in Washington. And that's going to be the interesting philosophical argument. You'll hear people say in Washington, "Well, we need to raise taxes in order to either pay for new programs or balance the budget." I happen to believe we can balance the budget without raising taxes if we're wise about how we spend your money. And we're proving it possible.

Tomorrow I'm going to talk about the size of the deficit. I'm not going to guess what that will be, but I can predict it's going to be substantially lower than it was 3 years ago. And we didn't raise your taxes. We kept your taxes low, which caused the economy to grow, which yielded more tax revenues. And because we set priorities, the deficit is shrinking.

And the big fight in Washington is going to be whether or not the budgets that the Congress is trying to now pass is going to go through. It's not; I'll veto them if they're excessive in spending. I'm not going to let them raise your taxes. I think it would be bad for the economy. I think it would be bad for entrepreneurship.

Let me talk about health care, since it's fresh on my mind. [*Laughter*] The objective has got to be to make sure America is the best place in the world to get health care, that we're the most innovative country, that we encourage doctors to stay in practice, that we are robust in the funding of research, and that patients get good, quality care at a reasonable cost.

The immediate goal is to make sure there are more people on private insurance plans. I mean, people have access to health care in America. After all, you just go to an emergency room. The question is, will we be wise about how we pay for health care? And I believe the best way to do so is to enable more people to have private insurance. And the reason I emphasize private insurance, the best health care plans—

the best health care policy is one that emphasizes private health. In other words, the opposite of that would be government control of health care.

And there's a debate in Washington, DC, over this. It's going to be manifested here shortly by whether or not we ought to expand what's called SCHIP. SCHIP is a program designed to help poor children get insurance. I'm for it. It came in when I was the Governor of Texas. I supported that. But now there are plans to expand SCHIP to include families—some proposals are families making up to \$80,000 a year. In other words, the program is going beyond the initial intent of helping poor children. It's now aiming at encouraging more people to get on government health care. That's what that is. It's a way to encourage people to transfer from the private sector to government health care plans.

My position is, we ought to help the poor, and we do through Medicaid. My position is, we ought to have a modern medical system for the seniors, and we do through Medicare. But I strongly object to the Government providing incentives for people to leave private medicine, private health care to the public sector. And I think it's wrong, and I think it's a mistake. And therefore, I'll resist Congress's attempt to federalize medicine.

I mean, think of it this way: They're going to increase the number of folks eligible through SCHIP. Some want to lower the age for Medicare. And then all of a sudden, you begin to see a—I wouldn't call it a plot, just a strategy—[laughter]—to get more people to be a part of a federalization of health care. In my judgment, that would be—it would lead to not better medicine but worse medicine. It would lead to not more innovation but less innovation.

And so—but you got to be for something in Washington. You can't be against the federalization; you've got to be for a plan that enhances the relationship between doctor and patient, and that's what I'm for. Here's what I believe in: One, I believe

in health savings accounts as an alternative to the federalization of medicine. It gives people the opportunity to save, tax free, for routine medical costs and, at the same time, have a catastrophic health care plan to back them up.

I like the idea of people making decisions that are—that will, one, enhance their health and, two, save money. The doc told me that—we were looking at one of these brilliant heart guys working for him. You're not going to believe the technology in this hospital, by the way. If you're a Cleveland resident, you ought to be proud of this hospital. It's unbelievable.

He said something pretty wise, though. He said, "You can have all the technology that man can conceivably create, but if you continue to smoke, we're going backwards. If you're not exercising, if you're not taking care of the body yourself, all the technology isn't going to save your life." In other words, there is a certain responsibility that we have as citizens to take care of ourselves. And a health savings account actually provides a financial incentive for you to do that.

I believe in plans that enable small businesses to congregate across jurisdictional lines so they can afford insurance, afford spreading risk just the way big corporations can do. In other words, one way to control costs is to enable small businesses, many of which are having trouble affording insurance, to pool risk.

I'm a strong believer in medical liability reform. We've got a legal system which is driving up the costs of medicine because docs are practicing defensive medicine, and driving good doctors out of practice. And it makes no sense to have a legal system that punishes good medicine. And therefore, I strongly believe that the Congress ought to pass Federal medical liability insurance for our doctors and our providers.

I believe in information technology. The first time I came to Cleveland Clinic, we were talking about how to modernize our hospital systems and our doctors' offices

into the 21st century. Perhaps the best way to describe the problem is, we've got too many doctors still writing out prescriptions by hand. Most of them can't write to begin with. [*Laughter*] And then they pass the file from one person to the next. That's inefficient in this new era. I mean, technology is changing the way we live; it ought to be changing the way medicine operates. And it is at Cleveland Clinic. I envision the day, one day, when all of us will have our own medical electronic record that will be safe from snoopers. In other words, it will be private but will make health care more efficient.

Cleveland Clinic did something interesting. I went to four different stations, and after every station, they gave me an outcomes book. In other words, "We're willing to be measured," says the good doc. There ought to be transparency in medicine. How many of you have ever actually tried to price a medical service? Probably not many. How many of you have ever said, "Gosh, I wonder whether this health care quality is better than the neighbors." I doubt any of you have—many of you have done that. Why? Because the system is not geared toward that. Somebody else pays your bills. If you really think about it, and you're working, say, for a company in America, and they provide a health care plan for you, there's a third-party payer. Well, if somebody else pays the bills, why do you care what the cost is at the time of purchase?

In other words, the whole plan has got to be to bring more accountability into health care, to make the consumer more responsible for making proper and rational decisions. That's what accountability does. And I applaud you for that, Doc. That's what transparency in pricing means. In other words, you would be able to shop for price.

But the system, by the way, the tax system does not enable the individual to be incented to buy insurance in the private sector. If you work for a company and you

get insurance, you get a good tax benefit. If you're an individual and buy insurance, you don't get the same tax benefit. That doesn't make any sense. The Tax Code needs to be reformed. The Tax Code ought to treat everybody equally when it comes to health care. And therefore, one proposal, one way to deal with that is something I talked to the Congress about, and said, if you're a married person and you're working, you ought to get a \$15,000 deduction, just like a mortgage deduction, from your income whether you're working for corporate America or you're working on your own, whether you're working for a small-business owner or you're looking for a job.

And that way, you begin to make sure the Tax Code is a level playing field. And that way, an individual market begins to grow because you have got an incentive at that point in time to go out and purchase health care. As a matter of fact, you won't get your deduction unless you purchase health care if you're in the individual market.

The whole point I'm trying to make is, there's an alternative to the federalization of health care. It doesn't make a nice, neat sound bite. It's not something that's easy to sell: what do you care about making sure you expand SCHIP, which sounds nice and cozy? But nevertheless, it is an alternative that will work, and it is working right here in America today.

The technological changes in the hospital across the street have been amazing. The quality of care has been fantastic. There's just more we can do to make sure we continue to be the leader, without wrecking the health care system.

Energy—in order to keep this economy strong—and we do have a strong economy—not only have we added 8.2 million new jobs since August of 2003, interest is low; inflation is down. I mean, this thing is buzzing. There are some parts of the country that are hurting. The manufacturing sector up here isn't doing as well as other parts of the country. However, I

would remind you that the unemployment rate in Ohio is 5.8 percent. Is that perfect? No. Is it better than it has been? You bet it is.

But the—one of the issues to make sure that we continue to grow strong in the years to come is energy. I mean, we're just too dependent on oil. I know that sounds hard for a Texas guy to say. [*Laughter*] You're probably wondering whether I mean it. [*Laughter*] I do. It's a national security issue, to be dependent on oil from parts of the world where some of the folks don't like us. It's an issue that's got to be dealt with—now.

There's an economic security issue when it comes to being dependent on oil. When the demand for crude oil goes up in a place like China because of economic growth, it causes the international price of oil to go up, which affects the gasoline price here in Cleveland, Ohio. That's the way it works. High crude oil prices yield to higher gasoline prices. And therefore, there's an economic issue for being dependent on oil.

And there's an environmental cost for being dependent on oil. When we're burning carbon, it creates greenhouse gases, which is an issue that we need to deal with. So we have a fantastic opportunity to do something different for the sake of our economy, for the sake of our national security, and for the sake of the environment.

Today I went to a fascinating, little company here that is building hydrogen fuel cells. Hydrogen is the input, water is the output, and in the meantime, your car is going. Hydrogen fuel cells are coming. And there's a role for the Federal Government to—spending your money to promote new technologies to enable us to become less dependent on oil and better stewards of the environment.

Imagine one day being able to drive your car with hydrogen as its power source and water dribbles as the output of your engine. And that day is coming. Now, it's down

the road a little bit, but nevertheless, it is a part of a comprehensive plan to make sure we become less dependent on oil. In the meantime, when it comes to powering your cars, I want to tell you, I'm a big believer in having our farmers grow a product that will enable us to drive our cars. I think it makes sense to spend your money to invest in new technologies or to research new technologies, so that when a fellow grows switchgrass, for example, that grass can be processed into ethanol, which can power your automobile.

Now, I don't know if you know this or not; we're up to about 7 billion gallons of ethanol being produced and used in America. That's up from 2 billion 3 or 4 years ago. That's a good deal, if you're interested about energy independence, because that energy is coming from corn growers here in America. The problem is, we're growing a lot of corn for ethanol, which means the price of corn is going up for the pig farmer. So we've got to relieve the pressure on the pig farmer—[*laughter*—well, not all—everybody—but pig farmer is paying—use a lot of corn. And therefore, we're spending money on technologies. And I believe more and more people are going to be using ethanol to power their automobiles.

It's happening in the Midwest a lot now. Cellulosic ethanol breakthroughs will mean that we're going to be having ethanol produced from wood chips or switchgrasses, which means the market will spread across the United States, which will make us less dependent on oil. And by the way, the exhausts from ethanol are a lot cleaner than the exhaust from hydrocarbon-based fuels.

We need to be promoting nuclear power. If you're really interested in the environment, like a lot of people are, then we ought to be promoting a renewable source of energy that emits no greenhouse gases. And one of the places where your government is spending money and is part of this comprehensive plan to change our energy mix is to figure out a better way to deal

with the waste, nuclear waste. And I'm a big believer in reprocessing and fast-burner reactors, which is fancy words for, we can burn down the fuel, reuse it, burn it down to less volume and less toxicity.

We've got 250 years of coal, at least, in America. If we're interested in becoming less dependent on foreign sources of energy, we ought to be using energy here at home in a wise way. But coal can be dirty, and therefore, we're spending a lot of your money on developing clean coal technologies.

And my only point to you is, is that one of the reasons I've come to Cleveland is to herald some of the new technologies. As a matter of fact, a fellow came up to me at this place, and he said, "Now, you're a wind person." I said, "Well, yes, you know, I—a lot of hot air here." [*Laughter*] And he said, "We got a new industry evolving here: windmills." That's fine. I support that. I think it makes a lot of sense. It makes us less dependent on foreign sources of oil. And that's an—important for making sure this economy continues to grow.

So my stop here has been really aimed at heralding technology. You got to be optimistic about America's future because of some of the great technologies that are taking place. And two of the areas where technology is really going to change America for a long time coming is in the energy field and in the medical field.

I want to talk about this war we're in. First of all, I regret I have to tell you we're in war. I never wanted to be a war President. I—now that I am one, I'm going to do my—the best I can to protect America.

My mind changed on September the 11th, 2001. It changed because I realized the biggest responsibility government has is to protect the American people from further attack and that we must confront dangers before they come to hurt us again. That's one of the really valuable lessons of September the 11th, is to recognize that oceans can't protect us from an enemy that

is ideologically driven and who will use murder as a tool to achieve their political objectives.

Some in America don't believe we're at war, and that's their right. I know we are and, therefore, will spend my time as the President doing the best I can to educate people about the perils of the world in which we live and that we have an active strategy in dealing with it.

First, the enemy—these folks aren't isolated folks, you know; they just kind of randomly show up. They have an objective. They believe as strongly in their ideology as I believe in ours. They believe that they have a obligation to spread a point of view that says, for example, if you don't worship the way we tell you to worship, there will be a consequence; just like I believe we have an obligation to defend a point of view that says, what matters is the right for you to choose your religion, and you're free to do so in the United States of America.

They believe that they can use—they have no value for human life, see. That's what distinguishes them from us in another way. They will kill a Muslim, a child, or a woman in a moment's notice to achieve a political objective. They are dangerous people that need to be confronted.

And that's why, since September the 11th, our policy has been to find them and defeat them overseas so we don't have to face them here at home again. Now, that is a strong—a short-term strategy because the long-term strategy has got to be one that marginalizes these extremists and radicals by promoting an alternative ideology, I like to say, an ideology based on light, an ideology that promotes hope, an ideology, when given a chance, has worked every time to lift people's spirits. And that's the ideology based upon liberty, the chance for people to live in a free and open society.

And it's hard work. And this war is on a multiple of fronts. One front is Afghanistan. And the front that is consuming the

American people right now is Iraq. And I fully understand how tough it is on our psyche. I fully understand that when you watch the violence on TV every night, people are saying, is it worth it? Can we accomplish an objective? Well, first, I want to tell you, yes, we can accomplish and win this fight in Iraq. And secondly, I want to tell you, we must for the sake of our children and our grandchildren.

You know, I was very optimistic at the end of '05 when 12 million Iraqis went to the polls. I know it seems like a decade ago. It wasn't all that long ago that, when given a chance, 12 million people voted. I wasn't surprised, but I was pleased; let me put it to you that way. I wasn't surprised because one of the principles on which I make decisions is that I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe that freedom belongs to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth. As a matter of fact, to take it a step further, I believe it is a gift from an Almighty to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth. And therefore, I wasn't surprised when people, when given the chance, said, I want to be free. I was pleased that 12 million defied the car bombers and killers to vote.

Our policy at that point in time was to get our force posture in such a position—is that we would train the Iraqis so they would take the fight to those who would stop the advance of democracy, and that we'd be in a position to keep the territorial integrity in place and chase down the extremists. That was our policy. We didn't get there in 2006 because a thinking enemy—in this case, we believe Al Qaida, the same people that attacked us in America, incited serious sectarian violence by blowing up a holy religious site of the Shi'a. And then there was this wave of reprisal.

And I had a decision to make. Some of Steve's colleagues—good, decent, patriotic people—believed the best thing for the United States to do at that point in time was to step back and to kind of let the

violence burn out in the capital of Iraq. I thought long and hard about that. I was deeply concerned that violence in the capital would spill out into the countryside. I was deeply concerned that one of the objectives of Al Qaida—and by the way, Al Qaida is doing most of the spectacular bombings, trying to incite sectarian violence. The same people that attacked us on September the 11th is the crowd that is now bombing people, killing innocent men, women, and children, many of whom are Muslims, trying to stop the advance of a system based upon liberty.

And I was concerned that the chaos would more enable them to—more likely enable them to achieve their stated objective, which is to drive us out of Iraq so they could have a safe haven from which to launch their ideological campaign and launch attacks against America. That's what they have said. The killers who came to America have said, with clarity, "We want you out of Iraq so we can have a safe haven from which to attack again."

I think it's important for the Commander in Chief to listen carefully to what the enemy says. They thrive on chaos. They like the turmoil. It enables them to more likely achieve their objectives. What they can't stand is the advance of a alternative ideology that will end up marginalizing them.

So I looked at consequences of stepping back, the consequences not only for Iraq but the consequences for an important neighborhood, for the security of the United States of America. What would the Iranians think about America if we stepped back in the face of this extremist challenge? What would other extremists think? What would Al Qaida be able to do? They'd be able to recruit better and raise more money from which to launch their objectives. Failure in Iraq would have serious consequences for the security of your children and your grandchildren.

And so I made the decision, rather than pulling out of the capital, to send more

troops in the capital, all aimed at providing security, so that a alternative system could grow. I listened to the commanders that would be running the operation—in this case, the main man is a man named General David Petraeus, a smart, capable man who gives me his candid advice. His advice: “Mr. President, is—we must change the mission to provide security for the people in the capital city of Iraq as well as in Anbar Province in order for the progress that the 12 million people who voted can be made.” That’s why we’ve done what we’ve done.

And we just started. He got all the troops there a couple of weeks ago. He asked for 20-something thousand troops, and I said, if that’s what you need, commander, that’s what you got. And they just showed up. And they’re now beginning operations in full.

And in Washington, you got people saying, stop. And here’s my attitude about this—and I understand there’s the debate, and there ought to be a debate in our democracy, and I welcome it. I welcome a good, honest debate about the consequences of failure, the consequences of success in this war. But I believe that it’s in this Nation’s interests to give the commander a chance to fully implement his operations. And I believe Congress ought to wait for General Petraeus to come back and give his assessment of the strategy that he’s putting in place before they make any decisions. That’s what the American people expect. They expect for military people to come back and tell us how the military operations are going.

And that’s the way I’m going to play it as the Commander in Chief. I’ll be glad to discuss different options. I mean, the truth of the matter is, I felt like we could be in a different position at the end of 2005. I believe we can be in a different position in a while, and that would be to have enough troops there to guard the territorial integrity of that country, enough troops there to make sure that Al Qaida

doesn’t gain safe haven from which to be able to launch further attacks against the United States of America, enough troops to be embedded and to help train the Iraqis to do their job.

But we couldn’t get there without additional troops. And now I call upon the United States Congress to give General David Petraeus a chance to come back and tell us whether his strategy is working. And then we can work together on a way forward.

In the meantime, the Iraqis have got to do more work. This coming week, I’ll be presenting a—to the Congress a list of some of the accomplishments and some of the shortfalls of their political process. They’ve asked us to report on 18 different benchmarks. That’s what the Congress said in this last supplemental spending bill. They said, come back here in mid-July and give us an interim report as to whether or not any progress is being made in Iraq. And that’s what we’ll be doing. So at the end of this week, you’ll see a progress report on what’s been happening in Iraq—and then in September, a final report on the benchmarks that I accepted and that Congress passed.

And so that’s the challenge facing the country. And it’s a necessary—in my judgment, it’s necessary work. I wouldn’t ask a mother or a dad—I wouldn’t put their son in harm’s way if I didn’t believe this was necessary for the security of the United States and peace of the world. And I strongly believe it. And I strongly believe we will prevail. And I strongly believe that democracy will trump totalitarianism every time. That’s what I believe. And those are the belief systems on which I’m making decisions that I believe will yield the peace.

You know, it’s really interesting, in my position, I obviously have a unique view of things at times. And one of the most interesting views that I’ve been able to—of history that I’ve been able to really focus on is our relationship with Japan. I’ve told

this story a lot because I find it to be very ironic.

When my dad was a young guy, right out of high school, he joined the United States Navy, became a Navy torpedo bomber pilot and fought the Japanese. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. And he, like a lot of other young people, gave it their all. And a lot of people died on both sides of the war. As a matter of fact, it was—the Japanese, as you rightly know, was the last major attack on the United States prior to September the 11th, 2001. Some 60 years later, I'm at the table talking about the peace with the Japanese Prime Minister, Prime Minister Koizumi.

I find that to be an inspiring story and a hopeful story. It's a story about this ability of liberty to transform enemies into allies. It's a story about the ability for those who fought to become partners in peace. Prime Minister Koizumi and now Prime Minister Abe are close friends of mine in the international arena. We talk about the spread of democracy in the troubled part of the world because we both have seen the effects of democracy in our own relationship.

I've got great faith in the power of liberty to transform the world for the sake of peace. And the fundamental question facing our country is, will we keep that faith?

Thanks for letting me come and visit with you. And now I'll be glad to answer some questions.

Main guy, first question. Sure, okay. [Laughter]

National Aeronautics and Space Administration/Appropriations

Q. Well, this may seem like it was rigged, Mr. President—

The President. Okay.

Q. —but there are people—

The President. There have been a few rigged questions in my day. [Laughter] I'm not telling you which way they were rigged though. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, like this world-class health care institution, NASA Glenn is one of the crown jewels, along with the talented people there, in our new economy crown. As you know, we recently won the crew exploration vehicle contract. We're very happy about that. Given all the competing demands for resources in Washington, what kind of funding do you see for NASA and its mission going forward?

The President. Yes. That's a awkward question to ask a Texan. [Laughter] I think that NASA needed to become relevant in order to be—to justify the spending of your money, and therefore, I changed—helped changed the mission from one of orbiting in a space shuttle—in a space station to one of becoming a different kind of group of explorers. And therefore, we set a new mission, which is to go to the Moon and set up a launching station there from which to further explore space.

And the reason I did that is I do want to make sure the American people stay involved with—or understand the relevance of this exploration. I'm a big—I support exploration, whether it be the exploration of new medicine—through, like, NIH grants—the exploration of space through NASA. I can't give you the exact level of funding.

I would argue with you that we got a lot of money in Washington—not argue, I'll just tell you, we got a lot of money in Washington. [Laughter] And we need to make sure we set priorities with that money. One of the problems we have in Washington is that unlike the books I saw at the hospital—of which, you're on the board—that said “results,” we're not very good about measuring results when we spend your money. A lot of time, the program sound nice; a lot of time, the results don't match the intentions.

So one of the things I've tried to do through the OMB is to be results-oriented, and when programs don't meet results, we try to eliminate them. And that's hard to do. Isn't it, Steven? Yes. But, no—I believe

in exploration, space exploration. And we've changed the mission to make it relevant. Thanks.

Yes, sir.

Relations With the Muslim World/U.S. Foreign Policy and Diplomacy/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, I'm originally from Pakistan.

The President. Pakistan, good.

Q. When I travel there, my friends over here say that I'm crazy to go back—

The President. Yes.

Q. And when I'm there, the people over there say I'm crazy to go back. [Laughter]

The President. You're, like, in between a rock and a hard place, brother. I mean—

Q. That's right, that's right. My question for you is, what are we doing with public diplomacy to change the minds and the hearts of a billion and a half Muslims around the world?

The President. Yes. I appreciate that; great question. First, let me say that I'm confident your answer is, I love living in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, the country where you can come and ask the President a question and a country where—are you Muslim?

Q. Yes.

The President. —where you can worship your religion freely. It's a great country where you're able to do that. Go ahead and sit down. Have you made a living?

Q. Yes, I do—

The President. —a country where can come and make a living regardless of your background. [Laughter] Seriously, it's a great thing about America. If you dream and work, you can achieve. And we need to keep it that way.

His question is a good question. A lot of people in the Muslim world believe that the United States is at war with Islam, that the response to the attack on our country was one where we attacked somebody based upon their religion. And I, for one,

obviously need to battle that image because we're not facing religious people; we're facing people whose hearts are filled with hate, who have subverted a great religion.

Most Muslims reject the kind of violence perpetuated on innocent people by Al Qaida. I happen to believe—I just don't—believe they're religious people who murder the innocent to achieve political objectives.

And so step one is to make it clear that we reject radical and extremism and murderers, not reject a great religion. Step two is to encourage people like you to go to Pakistan. You're more credible than I am amongst your pals there. You can say, "You're not going to believe America. You're not going to believe the country where people from all different backgrounds, all walks of life, can live in freedom."

And I don't exaggerate to you, because the best diplomacy we have is when citizens travel overseas and/or people come here to America. One of the problems we faced when it came to diplomacy, public diplomacy, right after 9/11 is, we shut her down. You couldn't get in this country, particularly, perhaps if you were from Pakistan. I mean, this country said, "Whoa, we got a new world," and therefore, it was, stop a lot of student visas. You might remember, some of the kids that flew those airplanes were on—here as students. And we did what most Americans expected us to do—made sure we inventoried where we were so we could best protect the American people.

And we've learned a lot since then. So I'm pleased to report to you that, working with Condi—and it's her main responsibility—is that we've got now more students coming to America from other countries, but through a much better screening process. I can't think of a better way to help change people's attitudes about our America—about America than having them come here and see for themselves.

One of the big issues we have, of course, is the public airways. There's a lot of television stations in the Middle East who spread some of this propaganda. It's easy to kick America around. And Karen Hughes is now the head of public diplomacy in the State Department, and we spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to counter the false and negative message about America with the true story of our country.

And so we're on a multiple of fronts: visits, exchanges, better messaging. We've got to be careful about our language here, and I am. As a matter of fact, interestingly enough, right after September the 11th, one of the first places I went was to a mosque—or, actually, an Islamic center there in Washington, DC. I went back to the same center 50 years later—50 years after Eisenhower, Ike, dedicated it, to send a message about America.

But we've got a lot of work to do on that front. It's a great question. Pakistan, by the way, is a—Musharraf is a strong ally in the war against these extremists. I like him, and I appreciate him. I'm, of course, constantly working with him to make sure that democracy continues to advance in Pakistan. But he's been a valuable ally in rejecting extremists. And that's important, to cultivate those allies.

See, again I repeat to you—and this is hard for some Americans to understand—we are at the beginning stages of a major ideological struggle that will affect the security of the United States. And it's a struggle between moderation and extremists. It's a struggle between radicals who kill and rational people who want to live in peace.

Most Muslim mothers want their children to grow up in peace; they're just like mothers in the United States. There's some universal characteristics of people. And the fundamental question facing us as a country is, will we have wise policies that confront these extremists? And the first step toward wise policy is recognizing they exist and we're at war with them.

And it's—look, I spend a lot of time thinking about this issue. That's what you pay me to do. And I'm briefed every day about threats on the homeland. And we—you should be grateful to—the fact that there are a lot of good, good, honorable people, either at home or overseas, doing everything in their power to protect you.

I wish I could report that this thing, this threat, this struggle, is going to end shortly; it's not. That doesn't mean we have to have kinetic action all the time. But it does mean America must not lose faith in our values and lose sight of our purpose. And that's going to be the challenge facing this country.

I'm worried about isolationism. I'm worried about people saying, it's not worth it anymore; it's too hard; let it happen over there; it's not going to affect us. It will affect us. And frankly, I'm worried about protectionism, where people say, it's too hard to trade, let's just wall ourselves off from the rest of the world.

Anyway, it's a long answer to a good question.

Yes, ma'am.

Immigration Reform

Q. Mr. President, I know immigration has been a big problem in the U.S. And what is your next step with the immigration bill?

The President. Yes, thanks. [Laughter] I view it as—no, it's a great question. No, I appreciate that. Actually, I view it as a great opportunity. And thank you very much for that question. As you know, I've had a difference of opinion with people in both political parties on this issue. I felt like now is the time to address the immigration issue and not just pass it on and hope it gets better.

I believe in rule of law, and therefore, I know that the Federal Government needs to enforce law. One law is—one part of the law is, don't sneak into our country. And therefore, we have been aggressive at border security, which is making sure we

modernize our border. You've probably never been down there; I grew up down there. It's a big border. And it's really long, and in parts of it, between Arizona and Mexico, you don't know where the border is. There's no—it's like desert.

Secondly, there is a powerful force in the world, and it's called parenthood. And when you're poor and you got mouths to feed and you got an opportunity to put some money on the table—food on the table, you're going to come if you can see that opportunity. And you'll do everything you can to get here to put food on the table. I used to say, family values don't stop at the Rio Grande River.

And so you shouldn't be surprised that a whole industry has sprung up where people get stuck in the back of an 18-wheeler or—and come to work. That troubles a lot of Americans; I understand. What I'm telling you is, it's hard to enforce this border, but we're doing a better job of doing it.

I happen to believe the best way to really enforce the border, however, is to recognize that people are coming to do work Americans aren't doing, and therefore, there ought to be a way for people to do so in a rational way. That's why I supported what's called a temporary-worker plan that said, you can come and do a job an American is not doing, on a temporary basis, so you don't have to sneak across the border. In other words, one way to take pressure off the border is to have a way for people to come here on a temporary basis legally.

Now, Steve was telling me—I was telling Steve—we're doing a good job, by the way. If you notice in the papers today, the arrests are down. In other words, fewer people are coming. Last year, by the way, we arrested and sent back across over a million people. In other words, there's a lot of action down there. It may not look like it or sound like it on your radios or TVs, but there's a lot of work going on.

There's a lot of nursery people up here in this part of the world, I understand.

But one of these days, these nursery people are going to say, "We can't continue to grow our business because we can't find the workers." Americans are—I don't know what the proper terminology is for nursery worker—pruning, that's a—we'll try pruning—[laughter]—planting, planting—starts with a "P." [Laughter] The question is, can they find enough workers? I was talking to a fellow today at lunch. He said, "We need more high-skilled workers here in Cleveland, H-1B visas."

The system isn't working, is what I'm telling you. It's a great question, by the way. The system—and I'm glad you asked it—the system isn't working. And I felt it needed to be fixed and went to Congress—and, by the way, the other question is, what do you do with the 12 million people already here? There's 12 million people, they estimate, here illegally. Some of them have been here a long time. Some of them been good citizens. You may even know some of them. They've raised kids. Some of the kids were born here, went to college, good, productive citizens in America. What do you do with them? You kick them out? I mean, I didn't think that was practical. As a matter of fact, I know it's not practical. Or you make them a citizen off the bat? No, you don't do that. That's called amnesty. That says, okay, fine, you broke the law; there's—you get rewarded. You can't have that kind of system.

And so I supported a system that said, you pay a fine if you've been here that long; you show you're not a criminal; you show you paid your taxes; you go back home to touch base, to apply for the right to get in line—not ahead of somebody who has been trying to get here legally, but in line.

Anyway, it didn't work. And we'll have to see whether or not the forces that recognize we've got to do something for the sake of the economy and sake of the border continue to mount, because there wasn't

the political will in Washington to get anything done on a comprehensive basis. And that's what happens sometimes in politics.

One of the things I try to remind people in Congress is this—I've told this story a lot as well. You get stuck on a story when you're President; you generally stay on it. [Laughter] Anyway, I was at the Coast Guard Academy, giving a graduation speech there. And the number-one guy in the class, his grandfather was a migrant worker from Mexico. And he talked with such unbelievable pride about a country where a fellow can come to do jobs Americans weren't doing, to work, and here his grandson is, speaking in front of the President, talking about a bright future.

We should never lose confidence in the ability for this great country to assimilate people into our culture. I think it's healthy that people come to America with a dream. I think it's healthy that people say, "Just give me a chance, and I'll work my heart out so a next generation can succeed."

And so in my line of work, ma'am, you just lay out what you think is right. I'm not the kind of fellow to tell you—I don't run focus groups and polls to tell me what I think is right. I try to lead—[applause]—I felt it was the right thing to do. It didn't work, but I'm glad I tried because when it's all said and done, I'll be able to look in the mirror and say, you came and you did what you thought was the right thing for the country.

Yes.

Visa Waiver Program

Q. Mr. President, I have an organization that has supported the captive nations of the world for 48 years. And our members are sincerely interested in this Visa Waiver Program—

The President. Yes.

Q. —for friendly countries so people could visit their relatives and friends on a shorter basis, like 30 days, 60 days. Are you in favor of this?

The President. Great question. Are you from the Baltics? You are?

Q. Sort of. I'm of Polish decent.

The President. Polish decent. Well, that's right. Here's the thing she's talking about. In the Soviet era, we had a different visa policy with Soviet countries than we did with, say, Western European countries. And the danger—not the danger—the issue was—I take it back, not danger—issue—[laughter]—was that people would come and overstay their visas. In other words, people would say, I'm coming to travel and visit, but in fact, they were coming to stay. And therefore, there was an accountability system in place that's been around for a long time.

Fast-forward to today. Polish troops helped us liberate Iraq, and yet the citizens that supported a Government that helped us liberate Iraq aren't treated the same as citizens from other allies.

And so to answer your question, yes, I am for changing the visa waiver policy for Poland and countries like Poland. And every time I go—as you know, I was in Poland—you may not know—I was in Poland the last trip and the Czech Republic and Bulgaria and Albania. And they wanted to know—question one is, when are you going to treat us like everybody else in the European Union? And my answer was, we're working on a comprehensive immigration bill—[laughter]—to address a lot of issues. And that was one of the issues we were trying to address.

In the name of fairness, Condi and I are working on—with Congress on a new Visa Waiver Program. Great question.

Yes, sir. Why don't you go ahead and yell it out.

War on Terror/Spread of Democracy

Q. Mr. President, first of all, as a fairly conservative talk show host, I'd like you to please tell Congress to leave the fairness doctrine in the ground where it is.

The President. Thank you—yes. [Laughter]

Q. Second of all, going back to Iraq, sir, you mentioned Muslim mothers want their children to grow up in peace.

The President. Right.

Q. The children of extremists, however, are being trained right now.

The President. Correct.

Q. We've seen the videos. We have seen the indoctrination, schoolchildren being indoctrinated to hate Americans and to hate Jews.

The President. Correct.

Q. The next generations of terrorists are already being bred. Isn't it true that regardless of how long it takes to win in Iraq or Afghanistan, the war on terror will never, ever truly be ended?

The President. I think the strategy—first of all, I've read a lot of history, and I'm certainly no history expert, but I wonder what the rhetoric would have been like at the beginning of the cold war. Is it possible people might have speculated—and again, I can't tell you if this is—I'm just kind of speculating now—is it possible people speculated that, after the indoctrination of so many children about the wisdom of Marx, that this cold war would ever end?

After Korea, I suspect no one would have predicted what I'm going to tell you now, that after years and years of bloodshed in the Far East, our relations in the Far East are strong, not only with Japan, the former enemy, South Korea, ally, but an ally, by the way, that went through a troublesome march to democracy. They're now a democracy, but you might remember that during the period of that change, they went through a pretty strong-handed military government.

We got good relations with China. I don't think in the early fifties anybody would have predicted that the Chinese marketplace would more likely look like what Adam Smith envisioned rather than Karl Marx, although the political system lags, admittedly. But nevertheless, there's a lot of—my only point to you is, I don't

think people could have seen what life was like.

And so yes, it's going to be a struggle, you're right, for a lot of reasons. But is it impossible to achieve the marginalization of those who are able to radicalize people? And I think it is. I think it is. And not only I think it is; I think it's necessary.

I believe that forms of government matter. I believe that frustration and hopelessness, because people don't have a sense of future, makes it easier for radical movements and radicals to be able to recruit. That's what I believe. And therefore, that's why I'm such a strong believer in advocating the march of democracy in the Middle East.

And look, I fully understand that, and this is a very interesting ideological debate—people call me—he's a hopeless idealist, they say. But I also think it's realistic to understand, unless we change the conditions of how people live, that it's going to be hard to marginalize those who would prey upon the young. You notice, none of these guys that have given the orders are actually the suicide bombers. That's why they're still giving the orders. [Laughter] But they're able to prey upon young people. And I think a lot of it has to do with education. And no question, we're working with governments such as Musharraf's Government to address the madrassas. Education matters a lot, whether it be in helping to eradicate poverty or helping to deal with radicalism.

But if you living in a society where you have no hope, then you're going to look for another form of false hope. So I happen to think the idea of encouraging people to adopt forms of government that give people hope is in our national interest.

Now, this is a different foreign policy than what we used to espouse here. It used to be, in many ways, what mattered was calm, apparent calm. What mattered most was stability. Let's have a foreign policy that promotes stability to make sure we get plenty of cheap energy as well.

After September the 11th, I came to the conclusion that such a foreign policy promoted instability because while things might look calm on the surface, beneath the surface broiled frustration and doubt and hopelessness. And so the policy that I advocate is one that promotes democracy as an alternative in this ideological struggle, all aiming to marginalize the recruiters and give hope to the recruits. And do I believe it can work? I do. That's why I told you the Japanese story.

History has been—history—liberty prevails every time if we stay with it, if you think about history. Think about Europe. There were two major wars on the continent of Europe, and today, Europe is whole, free, and at peace. Why? Because forms of government matter. And it's in our interest—and I've said this once, and I'll say it again: It's in our interest not to lose faith in certain fundamental values.

And it's hard work, particularly hard work given the fact that we live in this world in which news and imagery travels instantly. The enemy knows that. The interesting thing, they know a lot about us in America. They know we're kind-hearted, decent people who value human life. And they understand that Americans will recoil from the violence on our TV screens. That's what they know. And I know—or I strongly believe that if we recoil and leave the region with precipitous withdrawals or withdrawals not based upon conditions on the ground, it's going to get worse, not better. And my attitude is, now is the time to do the hard work so your children can more likely grow up in peace.

That's what I believe, sir. And that's why I'm making my decisions.

Yes. A couple of more, then you're paying me a lot of money, and I've got to go back to work. *[Laughter]*

Tribal Nations

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. —Republican Presidents, going back to the Nixon administration, have strongly favored Indian self-determination.

The President. India?

Q. American Indian self-determination and first-nations communities. And it seems like the conservative Court, however, has been consistently eroding that self-determination. What has your administration—what position does your administration take with respect to sovereignty and Native American rights?

The President. Very interesting question. I believe in the sovereignty of the Indian nations. And far be it for me to second-guess Court decisions. On the other hand, I will continue to put judges who strictly interpret the Constitution and not legislate from the bench. But I do support the notion of sovereignty. It's really interesting.

Yes, sir. You're next, after him.

Disaster Preparedness and Response/ Pandemic Flu

Q. Sorry about that. Mr. President—
The President. Doc.

Q. —I'm a pediatrician at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital across the street—*[inaudible]*—Cleveland.

The President. Thank you, sir. Nutritionist?

Q. Pediatrician, yes, sir.

The President. Pediatricianist.

Q. Yes, sir. Returning to a domestic item very quickly—

The President. Must feel good to be a healer.

Q. It is, sir. Thank you. Good to serve. One of the things that we're passionate about in pediatrics now, both at Rainbow and across the Nation, is disaster preparedness and disaster response, specifically the needs of children. Could you comment, Mr. President, on how well-prepared we are as a nation for, God forbid, the next Katrina or pandemic flu or some such calamity?

The President. We learned a lot of lessons from Katrina. Lesson one is, is that we've got to make sure local governments

are better prepared to respond. Lesson two is that there's seamless decisionmaking between the State and local government. And lesson three is, is that if need be, the Federal Government needs to move troops in there, regardless of what the local people want.

We are better prepared and drill it a lot. Great question. The more difficult question is his question on pandemic flu. I asked Mike Leavitt, who is the head of HHS, and Chertoff to—he's the Homeland guy—to chair—Department of Homeland Security—[*laughter*]—Secretary of Homeland Security. [*Laughter*] In Crawford, we kind of shortcut it. [*Laughter*] Anyway, look, nobody has accused me of being Shakespeare, you know? [*Laughter*] Anyway—I just hope you can figure out what I'm saying—[*laughter*]—is we spend a lot of time on pandemic flu. One way you anticipate a crisis is you kind of war-game it.

The first—I'm going to try to see if I can remember as much to make it sound like I'm smart on the subject. But I actually spend a lot of time on it because I am concerned that if the pandemic flu, the H5N1 virus were to mutate to the point where it becomes transmittable from bird to human to human, we'll have a significant international problem on our hands. So step one is to work with countries where the virus is more likely to show up and mutate on transparent information systems.

When I went to Vietnam, one of the things we looked at was the Vietnamese reporting process of the detection of chicken viruses and whether or not that virus was mutating to the point where it could become infectious. And we've done a good job of that. As a matter of fact, at the APEC—which is the countries around the Pacific Rim—meeting, the last two meetings and this next one I'm going to in Australia, I always make it a point for—to talk about the need for all of us to be in a position where we can share information and track the mutation of the virus.

The issue, as you know, is that there is no, like, inoculation that will stop the spread. Yet we're spending a lot of money on trying to develop new vaccines based not upon eggs but on genetics. And Leavitt says we're making some pretty good progress.

Thirdly, just in case it were to hit here in the United States, we have stockpiled a lot of the spray. What's it called—anyway—Tamiflu. It may work, may not work. But just in case it does work, we got a lot of stockpile for you—[*laughter*]—we do, as a way to try to, at least, arrest somewhat the spread of the disease.

But the ultimate effect—and this is what the dangerous thing about this is—is the ultimate public policy decisions are going to be, do we shut down America? Do you say that nobody can come in and out of your city? Or do you shut down all air travel? And so we've war-gamed a lot of options. And Mike has traveled the country—Mike Leavitt—to State and local government to help them think through different procedures that would be necessary to try to halt the spread of this virus if it were to mutate.

For example, how would a local community deal with schools? We happen to believe that the local response would be a better response than the Federal Government trying to one-size-fits-all each community's response. And that, as you know—I mean, there's different responses to different hurricanes that have hit, and so it would be a little uneven. And so we're trying to train as best as we can and war-game it out. It's a very interesting question you got.

I would give us a "A" for recognizing that we need to think about it. And I—until we get this vaccine—and by the way, we do have it teed up pretty well, where the vaccine makers will be willing to go full production if we can find the proper vaccine to manufacture. We're spending a lot of money on it at NIH—through NIH. And I'd give us good marks for recognizing

the issue, good marks for doing something about it, and the only—I can't tell you what marks we'll get in response because, thankfully, we haven't had to respond, but we're watching carefully.

Yes, sir. Good question.

Education/President's Domestic Agenda

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If you talk to a lot of neighborhood folks here in Cleveland, they say that there's a war on terror brewing in our neighborhoods with an increase in crime over the past few months.

The President. Yes.

Q. What are your thoughts on how we can improve opportunity and decrease crime in urban areas to make Cleveland an international metropolis?

The President. No, thanks. Yes, great question. First of all, there is—crime is rising in some communities—under some crime, like, I think it was 1 percent last year. In other words, no question that—look, I'm an education guy; let me just put it bluntly. I don't see how you can provide a hopeful future for a child if the child can't read, write, or add and subtract. Now, that's pretty elementary. But it doesn't happen enough. And therefore, I strongly support accountability in public schools. I happen to believe that it is a huge advance in kind of providing—promoting opportunity.

See, when I was the Governor of Texas, I was appalled at the number of schools that just shuffled kids through and hoped that they learned something. And then you know what happened? We get about the 9th or 10th grade, and lo and behold, they can't read. And oops, it's a little late. Too bad, just go on through. It's much easier, by the way, to give up on a kid early and just kind of socially promote. And so I insisted, as Governor of Texas and then working with people like Steve LaTourette, to change the way the Federal Government deals with education.

Now, I believe strongly in local control of schools, okay. I believe you ought to chart the paths to excellence here. I believe that the government closest to the people governs best because you're most responsive to the needs of your particular community. That's what I believe. However, I also believe that if the Federal Government spends money, we have the right to ask whether or not certain objectives are being met.

And so inherent in No Child Left Behind is a solid demand by results-oriented people who want to know whether or not an inner-city kid can read at grade level by the third grade. I don't think that's too much to ask, to set a standard and have expectations that must be met in return for Federal money. A matter of fact, I think that is the way to make sure that—I used to call it this way: challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Let's just face it—let me finish here—let's just face it; let's be honest about our ourselves. There is a mindset at times that certain kids are too hard to educate. Maybe the mother or daddy doesn't speak English as the first language or inner-city kids, as if there's no inherent God-given talent that, if properly motivated, can enable that kid to excel.

And so I strongly believe it's in the national interests to say, we expect you to read—unless, of course, you happen to believe they can't. I'm a high expectations person. I believe if you set low expectations, you know what you're going to get? You're going to get low results. I believe every child can learn. That's what I believe. And I believe that governments ought to expect to have good results.

And so inherent in this education proposal, which is now the law—which frankly has irritated a lot of people; it just has. That's what happens when you hold people to account—that, I think, it makes sense to say, no excuses; we want you to read. And we want you to read not only at the third grade but at the fourth grade and

at the fifth grade and at the sixth grade and at the seventh grade. And we're going to test to make sure you do.

You design the test. If you believe in local control of schools, the test ought to be designed, and they ought to be rigorous. And by the way, if you're a poor inner-city student, and you can't read at grade level, we will use that diagnostic tool to provide you additional money to make sure that you get the help that you need in order to make sure you're not left behind.

And frankly, I don't care if that parent spends that money at the public school or a church or a private tutor. All I want is to make sure that that child gets the extra help he or she needs to make sure that the next time they test on reading or math, they're at grade level. And if a school—no, wait, let me finish. I'm not through yet because you got me started on something I strongly believe in. [*Laughter*]

And if the school won't change nor teach, I believe parents ought to be given different options. We shouldn't have a school system that locks people into persistent failure, if you're interested in changing the dynamics of an inner city, for example.

You know, we did something in Washington very interesting—that I found interesting, at least. We have now got a scholarship program, opportunity scholarships. See, the Federal Government funds the DC city and—a lot of the DC city and the schools, and so we can do this in Washington. So we have opportunity scholarships that go to poorer parents, where the parent can take that money and send their child to a parochial school or a private school. The line is out the door. It's amazing what happens when you give parents options.

Part of the accountability system, by the way, enables parents to understand reality as well. When I was Governor, I talked to a lot of parents, and they say, "Man, my child's school is great. I'm real happy with the school, Governor; we're doing great." And then all of a sudden, the test

scores get posted, and if the school isn't meeting expectations compared to the other schools, the parent might say, well, maybe the school is not doing so good, and they start getting involved.

I—and so step one of your question is, let's get it right early. I believe strongly in after-school programs. I believe that we've got to change the aspirational notions of some of our children that college is a good thing to do and that success is available for people who go to college. I mean that—and community colleges—I'm a big believer in community colleges. I think that's part of having a hopeful tomorrow for inner city—or not inner city—to know that college is available. That's why I'm a big, strong supporter of Pell grants as a way to encourage kids to go to college.

I am concerned about a society that has not—a part of our society that hasn't accumulated assets. It's interesting; a lot of us have grown up in a world in which asset accumulation, savings, has been an integral part of our societies. In parts of Cleveland, I suspect, people don't have assets. They haven't had the capacity or the willing—or the ability to save money. That's why I believe that when we reform Social Security, that we ought to give people the option of setting aside some of their own money they've earned in the Social Security system as a savings account that can earn compound interest, just like money that we put in our own savings account. I want people to own assets. One of the big reasons I've pushed homeownership is, I like the idea of encouraging and fostering independence by ownership.

And so—and finally, one way to help inner-city youth—this is a subject I've thought a lot about—is to encourage the involvement of faith-based and community-based programs in the compassionate delivery of love and help. And that's a different idea for a welfare system, see. I am a big believer in the ability of faith-based programs to help change people's lives. I, for one, believe that a faith-based program can

help people quit drinking—me, for starters. I believe that there is nothing more powerful than a mentor putting an arm around a child who needs love and says, I love you. Many of the faith-based programs are full of people who are in the program in the first place because they believe in the universal admonition to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And therefore, one of the initiatives that I have put forth in Washington, that is quite controversial, is that we ought to open up programs—Federal money to faith-based programs, so long as, one, they don't proselytize, and two, so long as they help meet a social objective. Why shouldn't we say that we ought to be spending your taxpayers' money on programs to help inner-city kids regardless of what the delivery system is? Why shouldn't we say, faith-based programs, that many times are able to go into neighborhoods that other programs aren't able to go into—why shouldn't we empower them to help people realize in life that there may be a better path than the path one may be tempted to go down?

So there's a comprehensive agenda. My dream is for all of us to feel that the promise of America belongs to them. And it's a great country. It is; it's a fabulous country. I know people are frustrated, and people get concerned. But I would hope we would all keep things in perspective and realize what a fantastic nation we have.

I mean, when you really compare our life here compared to the lives of others around the world, we're blessed. To that end, to whom much is given, much is required. And that's why we're in the lead when it comes to solving the pandemic of HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa and working to end malaria. These are two achievable objectives. One is to get antiretrovirals into the hands of people who

suffer. And American taxpayers have been incredibly generous. And it ought to make you feel good about a country that is willing to say, I see suffering, and I want to help. In other words, we're working on suffering at home, and we ought to work on suffering abroad as well.

I'm asking Congress for \$30 billion. It's double the HIV/AIDS initiative that we've got in place. But let me tell you an interesting statistic. When we first got going on the initiative in 2003, I think it was, 50,000 people were getting antiretrovirals in the countries that we were working in. Today, over 1.2 million people's lives have been saved because of the generosity of the American taxpayer.

And now we're on an initiative to end malaria, or cut it at least in half, in affected countries around the world. Should we be doing that as a country? The answer is, absolutely, we should be. And the reason why is, is that we're a blessed nation. And we've become even doubly blessed by helping others be able to deal with disease and realize the blessings of an Almighty. That's what I believe.

Listen, I got to hop. [*Laughter*] Thanks for your time. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:42 p.m. at the InterContinental Hotel Cleveland. In his remarks, he referred to Frederick R. Nance, chairman of the board of directors, and Joseph D. Roman, president and chief executive officer, Greater Cleveland Partnership; Mayor Frank G. Jackson of Cleveland, OH; Delos M. "Toby" Cosgrove, chief executive officer and chairman of the board of governors, the Cleveland Clinic; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Ens. Marc A. Mares, USCG.

Remarks at a Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for the Renovated James S. Brady Press Briefing Room and an Exchange With Reporters
July 11, 2007

The President. Thank you very much. Yes, thanks. I like a good, short introduction. [Laughter]

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes. [Laughter] After all, it is your room. Yes. [Laughter] Welcome back to the West Wing. We missed you—sort of. [Laughter] I can already tell this place has improved. The last time I was in here to hold a press conference, I broke out into a sweat, not because of your questions but because of the climate. The air-conditioner seems to work well. I hope the facility is—suits your needs. I really do.

The relationship between the President and the press is a unique relationship, and it's a necessary relationship. I enjoy it. I hope you do. As I say, sometimes you don't like the decisions I make, and sometimes I don't like the way you write about the decisions. But nevertheless, it's a really important part of our process. And the fact that you were working in substandard conditions just wasn't right. It really wasn't.

And so my White House worked with Steve and Ann, worked with Mark Smith to get it right. And I think it's going to benefit future Presidents and future White House press corps to be working in modern conditions, conditions where a fellow like me will feel comfortable coming in here answering a few questions without losing 20 pounds. [Laughter]

It was really hot in here. As a matter of fact, I can't imagine how Snow could handle it on a regular basis. But now it's modern, and it's going to enable you to do a better job. And I'm glad that's the case.

I want to thank Peter Doherty. Where is he? Yes, Peter, thanks for working hard here. You get a lot of credit for making sure this thing works. And one of these days Laura and I are looking forward to

coming and actually see what it's like working here. I've never toured—I've never even been able to get beyond the podium—[laughter]—if you know what I mean. As a matter of fact, I've always felt comfortable behind the podium in front of you, kind of as a shield. [Laughter] But I would like a tour.

Q. Bulletproof—

The President. Well, it's not exactly bulletproof. Some of your bullets are able to—verbal bullets—[laughter]—are able to penetrate. But you've been around a long time, see; you know what it's like to query Presidents. You've been—you're kind of an older fellow. [Laughter]

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, proudly so. Thanks for the birthday greeting too. I appreciate that thoughtful gesture.

But anyway, we're glad to join you for this ribbon-cutting, and we thank you very much for working with Hagin and the bunch to make sure this thing—deal works. And it's going to. And it's going to make your life better, and frankly, it's going to make the lives of future Presidents better as well. And so it's a good contribution that you all have left behind. And we're glad to have been a part of it. And so—

White House Press Pool

Q. What, do you think I'm going to ask a question?

The President. Yes. I do think you're going to ask me a question, yes. [Laughter]

Q. I am. [Laughter]

The President. Well, maybe some other time.

Q. Oh, but do you think you open—

The President. See what I'm saying? [Laughter]

Q. You can't come to the press room, especially a modern press room—

The President. Wait a minute, let's do this—let me cut the ribbon and——

Q. You think anything has changed?

The President. Let me cut the ribbon—are you going to cut it with me, Steve—and then why don't you all yell simultaneously? [*Laughter*] Like, really loudly—[*laughter*—and that way you might get noticed.

Q. It doesn't sound like you're going to answer——

The President. No, I will. I'll, like, listen——

Q. And leave?

The President. ——internalize, play like I'm going to answer the question, and then smile at you and just say, gosh—[*laughter*—thanks, thanks for such a solid, sound question.

Okay, here we go. Ready? I'm going to cut the ribbon. [*Laughter*] Then, would

you—no, then you yell. I cogitate—and then smile and wave. [*Laughter*]

Ready? Are you going to come, Laura? Here we go.

[*At this point, the President cut the ribbon.*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Brilliant question.

Q. [*Inaudible*—cogitating that, right?

The President. Thank you all. See you soon.

Q. We look forward to seeing you come and do a little Q & A——

The President. I will see you soon. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Scully, president, Ann Compton, vice president, and Mark Smith, former president, White House Correspondents Association; and Peter Doherty, facilities and equipment manager, ABC News.

Remarks on the Office of Management and Budget Mid-Session Review July 11, 2007

Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Good afternoon. Welcome to the White House. I'm glad you're here. There are certain traditions that all Americans look forward to: picnics with the family, Fourth of July celebrations, and the Mid-Session Review. [*Laughter*] It's the time for us to take a look at the Federal budget.

And maybe not all Americans look forward to it, but I'm looking forward to talking to the American people about the progress we have made when it comes to growing our economy and keeping their taxes low and being wise about how we spend the money. The Mid-Session Review is important. It lets the American people know how we're doing in meeting what we call "fiscal goals." And this year the message is unmistakable: America's economy

keeps growing; Government revenues keep going up; the budget deficit keeps going down. And we've done it all without raising your taxes.

And the person in charge with watching the money here in the White House is Rob Portman, Office of the Management and Budget. Thank you for being here; appreciate your service. I'm proud to be here with Senator Thad Cochran from the great State of Mississippi. Senator, thank you for joining us. Two Members from Congress, Jo Bonner and Gresham Barrett; I thank you for taking time to listen to this good news. I appreciate all the business leaders and guests who have joined us today.

The release of the Mid-Session Review is a good opportunity to take stock of the

debate over taxes and spending in Washington. At its core, the debate is between two very different economic philosophies and fiscal philosophies. One philosophy says that politicians in Washington know best, so taxes should be high and Government should decide where to spend the money. The other philosophy says that the American people know how to spend their own money better than the Government does, so Government should spend less and the taxpayer should keep more. And that's the fundamental debate here in the Nation's Capital.

For the past 6 years, my administration and our allies in Congress have pursued the second philosophy. We believe the American people can spend their money better than the Government can spend it. We believe workers and families can spend their money better than the Government, and that's why we doubled the child tax credit and reduced the marriage penalty and cut tax rates for everybody who pays income taxes.

We believe that entrepreneurs can put their money to better use than the Government can. That's what we believe, and we acted on that belief. So we reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains and created incentives for small businesses to invest and expand.

We believe ranchers and farmers and family-business owners can make better decisions about the future than the Government can. That's why we put the death tax on the road to extinction.

We also believe taxpayers' dollars should be treated with respect because Americans have worked hard to earn them. And we believe that taxpayers' dollars should be spent with restraint because Government programs are not the solution to every problem. So we've spent the money necessary to meet the highest priorities of Government, including protecting the homeland and supporting our men and women in uniform. Meanwhile, we've tightened spending in other areas. Over the past 3

years, we've held the growth of annual domestic spending close to one percent, well below the rate of inflation.

Some in Congress disagree with this approach. That's what you expect in a democracy. Not everybody agrees with what I have just described. They said it would not be possible to cut the deficit and deliver tax relief at the same time. They argued for increasing taxes. Well, events have proven them wrong. The critics can keep arguing with us, but they can't argue with the facts.

We began cutting the taxes in 2001, and America's economic growth—and America's economy has grown for more than 5 years without interruption. Real after-tax income has increased nearly by 10 percent. That's an average of about \$3,000 per person. Our economy has expanded by more than \$1.9 trillion. During the time when we cut taxes to today, our economy has grown by more than \$1.9 trillion; this amount is larger than the entire economy of Canada.

Since the tax cuts took full effect in 2003, our economy has added more than 8.2 million new jobs. The unemployment rate has fallen to 4.5 percent; exports are up; the service sector is strong; and more Americans are working today than ever before in our Nation's history.

Behind these statistics are stories of hard-working Americans who are finding more opportunity and feeling more secure about their future. And I've asked some of them to join me today, and I thank you all for being here.

First, I want to talk about Luther Russell. Luther is here; he owns a small, family fencing business. He is like millions of our fellow citizens who are small-business owners, and they're working hard. They're working hard not only to provide security for their family, they're providing employment for others. The truth of the matter is, 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners, and it's important to have fiscal policy that supports our small-business owners. We've got one

right here with us: Luther Russell, fence man.

Thanks to our tax relief, last year he filed an income tax, he saved \$27,000. That's what tax relief has done for the small business, because his business pays taxes at the individual income tax rates. See, when you cut individual income tax rates for everybody who pays taxes and your business is set up so that you pay taxes like an individual does, you're cutting taxes on this small-business owner. I like the idea of us being able to meet our spending priorities in Washington and Luther having 27,000 more dollars in his pocket to expand his business. That's good for America.

Gary and Elizabeth Comparetto are here. They've got 8 children, and they saved \$8,000 a year because of tax relief. Now, having 8 kids is an interesting challenge—[laughter]—made easier by the fact that because of our tax relief, this good family has got 8,000 additional dollars so they can do their duty as a mother and father.

Sharon Hawks is with us, serves in the National Guard. Her family is saving \$3,600 annually on their taxes. I like the idea of our families having more money to be able to set aside for education or set aside for savings or to be able to expand their home. When I say I'd rather these people be spending their money than the Government spending their money, I mean it. It's good for this country that this tax relief is substantial and real for working people.

Jennifer Zatkowski is with us. She saved more than \$2,000 a year on her taxes, and she's reinvesting the money to expand her pet shop. Tax relief makes a significant difference. Oh, I know, probably here some in Washington don't think \$27,000 is a lot for a small business or \$2,000 doesn't amount to much. Just ask these folks. It means a lot to them. And it means a lot to working people all across the United States that we cut the taxes, because men and women like these here on this stage are powering our economic resurgence. That's how the economy works. When

you've got more money in your pockets to save, spend, or invest, this causes the economy to grow. And we need to keep the Government out of their wallets and out of their way in order to keep this economic recovery strong.

Our economic resurgence has also had a positive impact on the Federal budget. A growing economy has led to growing tax revenues. Because people are making more money, they're also paying more taxes. That pie is growing. The tax rates remain the same, but the pie is growing, which has yielded more Federal revenues. Today's Mid-Session Review shows that this year's Federal tax receipts are expected to be \$167 billion higher than last year's. That's an increase of nearly 7 percent. And over the last 3 years, tax revenues have grown 37 percent. That's one of the highest jumps in revenues on record.

These growing tax revenues, combined with spending restraint, are driving down the Federal deficit. The Mid-Session Review estimates that this year's deficit will drop to \$205 billion. That's down more than \$200 billion from 2004. It's down more than \$43 billion from last year. And it's even down from last February's projections. More importantly, the size of the deficit is down to only 1.5 percent of America's economy. One way to be able to measure how we're doing with the deficit relative to other years is to measure it as a percentage of GDP. We're estimated to be at 1.5 percent of GDP. That's well below the average of the last 40 years. We've achieved all this deficit reduction without once raising the taxes on the American people.

It's good news, but there's more work to be done. A shrinking deficit is good; no deficit is better. So earlier this year, I proposed a balanced budget that will eliminate the Federal deficit by 2012. The deficit is not caused by undertaxing; it's caused by overspending. So the budget we proposed keeps us on the path to low taxes and spending restraint. And according to

the Mid-Session Review, this—that path will lead to a surplus of \$33 billion in 2012. In other words, despite the unprecedented challenges we face, the United States is going to be back in the black.

The policies of low taxes and spending restraint have produced a clear and measurable record of success. You can't argue with what I'm telling you. These are the facts. Yet, in the face of all the evidence, Democrats in Congress still want to take us down a different path. We've shown what works. They must not believe us, because they passed a budget framework that calls for \$205 billion in additional domestic spending over the next 5 years. The budget framework they passed calls for 205 billion additional dollars of Federal spending in a 5-year period. That works out to nearly \$680 per person. It's no surprise that their budget framework also includes the largest tax increase in American history.

Some of this might sound familiar to some of you older hands around here; it's the same old tax-and-spend policy that the Democrats have tried before. It would have the same bad result. Tax-and-spend would add to the burden of families and businesses. It would affect these good folks right here on the stage. Tax-and-spend would put our economic growth in jeopardy. Tax-and-spend would turn our back on the progress we've made on reducing the deficit. Tax-and-spend policies are policies of the past, and I'm going to use my veto to keep it that way.

The Democrats are also delaying the 12 basic spending bills that are needed to keep the Federal Government running. At their current pace, I am not likely to see a single one of these must-pass spending bills before Congress leaves Washington for a 4-week recess. And by the time they return, they will have less than a month before the fiscal year ends on September 30th to pass the appropriations bills.

It's important that they honor the pledges they made when they took control of the Congress, and that is they pledged

a policy of transparent government and fiscal responsibility. Well, now is the time to show that they're serious. And one way they can do so is they can pass spending bills on time, instead of creating a massive bill at the end of the process that will be so large that no one can possibly read it and anyone can hide wasteful spending in it. The Democrats should honor their commitment to fiscal discipline by passing these bills in a way that sustains our growing economy and balances the Federal budget.

I'm going to work with members of both parties to achieve these goals, and as we do, there are other budget challenges we need to take on.

First, there's the matter of earmarks. Earmarks are spending provisions that are slipped into bills by individual Members of Congress for projects in their own district or State. They're just slipped in the bill. Often, the earmarks occur at the last hour and without debate. This violates the trust of the public and often leads to unnecessary spending. The problem is growing, and over the last decade, the number of earmarks has more than tripled.

So earlier this year, I proposed reforms that would make the earmark process more transparent, end the practice of concealing earmarks in so-called report language, would eliminate wasteful earmarks, and cut the overall number and cost by at least half. Democrats and Republicans have taken a good step by agreeing to list all earmarks before bills are passed so the public can see them and lawmakers have a chance to strike them down, get rid of them. Now Congress needs to uphold the commitment, and the Senate needs to make this transparency part of its formal rules. The American people deserve to know what they're getting for the money they're sending to the Nation's Capital. There ought to be full disclosure and full transparency in the appropriations process.

The matter we need to confront, as well, is the unsustainable growth of entitlement

programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. As the Mid-Session Review makes clear, rising entitlement spending is by far the greatest long-term threat to America's fiscal health. These programs are vital to the daily life of millions of Americans. They are growing faster than the economy, faster than inflation, and faster than our ability to pay for them. This isn't going to be a Republican challenge or Democrat challenge; this is really a generational challenge. And the fundamental question facing those of us in Washington today is whether or not we have the capacity and the will to confront the challenge now.

I believe we have a moral obligation to deal with this problem, and that's why I've submitted proposals that will help deal with these programs. Matter of fact, I remember going to Congress and speaking very specifically about how to address the underlying issues of Social Security so that older guys like me could look to young Americans like some of you here and say, "We've done our duty to fix this program once and for all." And I call upon the Democrats in Congress to come forth with their ideas as how to fix it, to step forward with some concrete, specific proposals. I'll be glad to

listen to them, and I expect them to listen to mine. That's why we're in Washington. We're here to confront problems today and not pass them on so somebody else has to deal with them.

The Federal budget can be complicated, and making decisions about it can be quite contentious. Yet we know what it takes for our economy to succeed. During these budget debates, it's important to keep in mind the lessons of the past. As today's Mid-Session Review makes clear, keeping taxes low and restraining spending leads to a vibrant economy, it leads to new jobs, it leads to better opportunities, and it leads to a shrinking deficit.

Progrowth policies work, and now is not the time to turn our back on them. I'm going to work with Republicans and Democrats alike to continue these policies so we can keep our economy competitive, so we can keep our economy growing, and so we can remain the world leader for generations to come.

I'm honored you guys are here. Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Statement on the Death of Lady Bird Johnson *July 11, 2007*

Laura and I mourn the passing of our good friend and a warm and gracious woman, Lady Bird Johnson. Those who were blessed to know her remember Mrs. Johnson's lively and charming personality, and our Nation will always remember her with affection. Mrs. Johnson became First Lady on a fateful day in November 1963 and was a steady, gentle presence for a mourning nation in the days that followed.

In the White House, Mrs. Johnson shared her love of the environment and

nature with our entire country. The native wildflowers that bloom along roadsides today are part of her lasting legacy. She joined President Johnson in the struggle for civil rights, inspiring millions of Americans. Her commitment to early education gave many children a head start in life.

President Johnson once called her a woman of "ideals, principles, intelligence, and refinement." She remained so throughout their life together and in the many years given to her afterward. She was

much-loved in our home State of Texas, and the Bush family is fortunate to have known her.

Lady Bird Johnson leaves behind her devoted daughters, Lynda and Luci, their fine families, and a nation that joins them in honoring a good life of kindness and service.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement. The Death of Lady Bird Johnson proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's News Conference *July 12, 2007*

The President. Good morning. Thank you. Yesterday America lost an extraordinary First Lady and a fine Texan, Lady Bird Johnson. She brought grace to the White House and beauty to our country. On behalf of the American people, Laura and I send our condolences to her daughters, Lynda and Luci, and we offer our prayers to the Johnson family.

Before I answer some of your questions, today I'd like to provide the American people with an update on the situation in Iraq. Since America began military operations in Iraq, the conflict there has gone through four major phases. The first phase was the liberation of Iraq from Saddam Hussein. The second phase was the return of sovereignty to the Iraqi people and the holding of free elections. The third phase was the tragic escalation of sectarian violence sparked by the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra.

We've entered a fourth phase: deploying reinforcements and launching new operations to help Iraqis bring security to their people. I'm going to explain why the success of this new strategy is vital for protecting our people and bringing our troops home, which is a goal shared by all Americans. I'll brief you on the report we are sending to Congress. I'll discuss why a drawdown of forces that is not linked to the success of our operations would be a disaster.

As President, my most solemn responsibility is to keep the American people safe. So on my orders, good men and women are now fighting the terrorists on the frontlines in Iraq. I've given our troops in Iraq clear objectives. And as they risk their lives to achieve these objectives, they need to know they have the unwavering support from the Commander in Chief, and they do. And they need the enemy to know that America is not going to back down. So when I speak to the American people about Iraq, I often emphasize the importance of maintaining our resolve and meeting our objectives.

As a result, sometimes the debate over Iraq is cast as a disagreement between those who want to keep our troops in Iraq and those who want to bring our troops home. And this is not the real debate. I don't know anyone who doesn't want to see the day when our brave service men and women can start coming home.

In my address to the Nation in January, I put it this way: If we increase our support at this crucial moment, we can hasten the day our troops begin coming home. The real debate over Iraq is between those who think the fight is lost or not worth the cost and those who believe the fight can be won and that, as difficult as the fight is, the cost of defeat would be far higher.

I believe we can succeed in Iraq, and I know we must. So we're working to defeat Al Qaida and other extremists and aid the rise of an Iraqi Government that can protect its people, deliver basic services, and be an ally in the war against these extremists and radicals. By doing this, we'll create the conditions that would allow our troops to begin coming home, while securing our long-term national interest in Iraq and in the region.

When we start drawing down our forces in Iraq, it will be because our military commanders say the conditions on the ground are right, not because pollsters say it will be good politics. The strategy I announced in January is designed to seize the initiative and create those conditions. It's aimed at helping the Iraqis strengthen their Government so that it can function even amid violence. It seeks to open space for Iraq's political leaders to advance the difficult process of national reconciliation, which is essential to lasting security and stability. It is focused on applying sustained military pressure to rout out terrorist networks in Baghdad and surrounding areas. It is committed to using diplomacy to strengthen regional and international support for Iraq's democratic Government.

But doing all these things is intended to make possible a more limited role in Iraq for the United States. It's the goal outlined by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. It's the goal shared by the Iraqis and our coalition partners. It is the goal that Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus and our troops are working hard to make a reality.

Our top priority is to help the Iraqis protect their population. So we have launched an offensive in and around Baghdad to go after extremists, to buy more time for Iraqi forces to develop, and to help normal life and civil society take root in communities and neighborhoods throughout the country.

We're helping enhance the size, capabilities, and effectiveness of the Iraqi security

forces so the Iraqis can take over the defense of their own country. We're helping the Iraqis take back their neighborhoods from the extremists. In Anbar Province, Sunni tribes that were once fighting alongside Al Qaida against our coalition are now fighting alongside our coalition against Al Qaida. We're working to replicate the success in Anbar and other parts of the country.

Two months ago, in the supplemental appropriations bill funding our troops, Congress established 18 benchmarks to gauge the progress of the Iraqi Government. They required we submit a full report to Congress by September the 15th. Today my administration has submitted to Congress an interim report that requires us to assess—and I quote the bill—“whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is or is not being achieved.”

Of the 18 benchmarks Congress asked us to measure, we can report that satisfactory progress is being made in 8 areas. For example, Iraqis provided the three brigades they promised for operations in and around Baghdad. And the Iraqi Government is spending nearly \$7.3 billion from its own funds this year to train, equip, and modernize its forces. In eight other areas, the Iraqis have much more work to do. For example, they have not done enough to prepare for local elections or pass a law to share oil revenues. And in two remaining areas, progress was too mixed to be characterized one way or the other.

Those who believe that the battle in Iraq is lost will likely point to the unsatisfactory performance on some of the political benchmarks. Those of us who believe the battle in Iraq can and must be won see the satisfactory performance on several of the security benchmarks as a cause for optimism. Our strategy is built on a premise that progress on security will pave the way for political progress. So it's not surprising that political progress is lagging behind the security gains we are seeing. Economic development funds are critical to helping Iraq

make this political progress. Today I'm exercising the waiver authority granted me by Congress to release a substantial portion of those funds.

The bottom line is that this is a preliminary report, and it comes less than a month after the final reinforcements arrived in Iraq. This September, as Congress has required, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to provide a more comprehensive assessment. By that time, we hope to see further improvement in the positive areas, the beginning of improvement in the negative areas. We'll also have a clearer picture of how the new strategy is unfolding and be in a better position to judge where we need to make any adjustments.

I will rely on General Petraeus to give me his recommendations for the appropriate troop levels in Iraq. I will discuss the recommendation with the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I will continue consultations with Members of the United States Congress from both sides of the aisle, and then I'll make a decision.

I know some in Washington would like us to start leaving Iraq now. To begin withdrawing before our commanders tell us we are ready would be dangerous for Iraq, for the region, and for the United States. It would mean surrendering the future of Iraq to Al Qaida. It would mean that we'd be risking mass killings on a horrific scale. It would mean we'd allow the terrorists to establish a safe haven in Iraq to replace the one they lost in Afghanistan. It would mean increasing the probability that American troops would have to return at some later date to confront an enemy that is even more dangerous.

The fight in Iraq is part of a broader struggle that's unfolding across the region. The same region in Iran—the same regime in Iran that is pursuing nuclear weapons and threatening to wipe Israel off the map is also providing sophisticated IEDs to extremists in Iraq, who are using them to

kill American soldiers. The same Hizballah terrorists who are waging war against the forces of democracy in Lebanon are training extremists to do the same against coalition forces in Iraq. The same Syrian regime that provides support and sanctuary for Islamic Jihad and Hamas has refused to close its airport in Damascus to suicide bombers headed to Iraq. All these extremist groups would be emboldened by a precipitous American withdrawal, which would confuse and frighten friends and allies in the region.

Nations throughout the Middle East have a stake in a stable Iraq. To protect our interests and to show our commitment to our friends in the region, we are enhancing our military presence, improving our bilateral security ties, and supporting those fighting the extremists across the Middle East. We're also using the tools of diplomacy to strengthen regional and international support for Iraq's democratic Government.

So I'm sending Secretary Gates and Secretary Rice to the region in early August. They will meet with our allies, reemphasize our commitment to the International Compact of Sharm el-Sheikh, reassure our friends that the Middle East remains a vital strategic priority for the United States.

There is a conversion of visions between what Iraqi leaders want, what our partners want, and what our friends in the region want and the vision articulated by my administration, the Iraq Study Group, and others here at home. The Iraqis do not want U.S. troops patrolling their cities forever, any more than the American people do. But we need to ensure that when U.S. forces do pull back, that terrorists and extremists cannot take control.

The strategy that General Petraeus and the troops he commands are now carrying out is the best opportunity to bring us to this point. So I ask Congress to provide them with the time and resources they need. The men and women of the United States military have made enormous sacrifices in Iraq. They have achieved great

things, and the best way to begin bringing them home is to make sure our new strategy succeeds.

And now I'll be glad to answer a few questions, starting with Ms. Thomas [Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers].

Military Operations in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you started this war, a war of your choosing, and you can end it alone, today, at this point—bring in peacekeepers, U.N. peacekeepers. Two million Iraqis have fled their country as refugees. Two million more are displaced. Thousands and thousands are dead. Don't you understand, you brought the Al Qaida into Iraq.

The President. Actually, I was hoping to solve the Iraqi issue diplomatically. That's why I went to the United Nations and worked with the United Nations Security Council, which unanimously passed a resolution that said disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. That was the message, the clear message to Saddam Hussein. He chose the course.

Q. But didn't we go into Iraq—

The President. It was his decision to make. Obviously, it was a difficult decision for me to make, to send our brave troops, along with coalition troops, into Iraq. I firmly believe the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. Now the fundamental question facing America is, will we stand with this young democracy? Will we help them achieve stability? Will we help them become an ally in this war against extremists and radicals that is not only evident in Iraq, but it's evident in Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, and Afghanistan?

We're at the beginning stages of a great ideological conflict between those who yearn for peace and those who want their children to grow up in a normal, decent society and radicals and extremists who want to impose their dark vision on people throughout the world. Iraq is obviously—Helen, it's got the attention of the Amer-

ican people, as it should. This is a difficult war, and it's a tough war. But as I have consistently stated throughout this Presidency, it is a necessary war to secure our peace.

I find it interesting that as this young democracy has taken hold, radicals and extremists kill innocent people to stop its advance. And that ought to be a clear signal to the American people that these are dangerous people. And their ambition is not just contained to Iraq; their ambition is to continue to hurt the American people. So my attitude is, we ought to defeat them there so we don't have to face them here, and that we ought to defeat their ideology with a more hopeful form of government.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Congressional Opinion on Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you're facing a rebellion from Republican—key Republican Senators who want you to change course and begin reducing the U.S. combat role. Given the mixed report that you present today, how do you persuade Republicans to stick with you as they look ahead to the next elections?

The President. A couple of things—first of all, I respect those Republicans that you're referring to. I presume you're referring to friends of mine, like Lugar—or Senator Lugar, Domenici, yes. These are good, honorable people. I've spoken to them, and I listen very carefully to what they have to say.

First of all, they share my concern that a precipitous withdrawal would embolden Al Qaida. And they also understand that we can't let Al Qaida gain safe haven inside of Iraq. I appreciate their calls, and I appreciate their desire to work with the White House to be in a position where we can sustain a presence in Iraq.

What I tell them is this—just what I've told you—is that as the Commander in Chief of the greatest military ever, I have an obligation, a sincere and serious obligation, to hear out my commander on the

ground. And I will take his recommendation and—as I mentioned—to talk to Bob Gates about it, as well as the Joint Chiefs about it, as well as consult with Members of the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, as I make a decision about the way forward in Iraq.

And so I—you know, I value the advice of those Senators. I appreciate their concerns about the situation in Iraq, and I am going to continue listening to them.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

Public Opinion on Iraq/Progress in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, in addition to members of your own party, the American public is clamoring for a change of course in Iraq. Why are you so resistant to that idea, and how much longer are you willing to give the surge to work before considering a change in this policy?

The President. First, I understand why the American people are—you know, they're tired of the war. There is—people are—there is a war fatigue in America. It's affecting our psychology. I've said this before. I understand that this is an ugly war. It's a war in which an enemy will kill innocent men, women, and children in order to achieve a political objective. It doesn't surprise me that there is deep concern amongst our people.

Part of that concern is whether or not we can win, whether or not the objective is achievable. People don't want our troops in harm's way if that which we are trying to achieve can't be accomplished. I feel the same way. I cannot look a mother and father of a troop in the eye and say, "I'm sending your kid into combat, but I don't think we can achieve the objective." I wouldn't do that to a parent or a husband or a wife of a soldier.

I believe we can succeed, and I believe we are making security progress that will enable the political tract to succeed as well. And the report, by the way, which is, as accurately noted, is being submitted today,

is written a little less than a month after the full complement of troops arrived.

I went to the country in January and said, I have made this decision. I said what was happening on the ground was unsatisfactory in Iraq. In consultation with a lot of folks, I came to the conclusion that we needed to send more troops into Iraq, not less, in order to provide stability, in order to be able to enhance the security of the people there. And David asked for a certain number of troops—David Petraeus asked for a certain number—General Petraeus asked for a certain number of troops, and he just got them a couple of weeks ago.

Military—it takes a while to move our troops, as the experts know. You just can't load them all in one airplane or one big ship and get them into theater. We had to stage the arrival of our troops. And after they arrived in Iraq, it took a while to get them into their missions. Since the reinforcements arrived, things have changed.

For example, I would remind you that Anbar Province was considered lost. Maybe some of you reported on that last fall. And yet today, because of what we call bottom-up reconciliation, Anbar Province has changed dramatically. The same thing is now beginning to happen in Diyala Province. There are neighborhoods in Baghdad where violence is down. There are still car bombs, most of which have the Al Qaida signature on them, but they're declining. In other words, so there's some measurable progress.

And you asked, how long does one wait? I will repeat, as the Commander in Chief of a great military who has supported this military and will continue to support this military, not only with my—with insisting that we get resources to them but with—by respecting the command structure, I'm going to wait for David to come back—David Petraeus to come back and give us the report on what he sees. And then we'll use that data that—his report to work with the rest of the military chain of command

and Members of Congress to make another decision if need be.

Yes, Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News].

War on Terror Strategy

Q. You talk about all the troops now being in place and only in place the last 3 weeks or a month. Yet three-quarters of the troops for the surge were in place during the period when this July interim report was written. Are you willing to keep the surge going, no matter what General Petraeus says, if there is no substantial Iraqi political progress by September?

The President. Thank you. You're asking me to speculate on what my frame of mind will be in September, and I would just ask that you give General Petraeus to come back and brief me. And then, of course, I'll be glad to answer your questions along that line.

Q. But there has been no substantial political progress, even with three-quarters of the troops in there.

The President. Well, as I mentioned—

Q. So will you keep that going through September even if there isn't?

The President. Martha, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we have felt all along that the security situation needed to change in order for there to be political progress. It's very hard for a young democracy to function with the violence that was raging. Secondly, there's a lot of the past that needs to be worked through the system. I mean, there's—living under the brutal tyrant Saddam Hussein created a lot of anxiety and a lot of tensions and a lot of rivalry, and it's just—it's going to take a while to work it through. But they couldn't work through those tensions and rivalries in the midst of serious violence.

And so the strategy was, move in more troops to cause the violence to abate. And that's what David Petraeus will be reporting on.

Yes, Jim [Jim Axelrod, CBS News].

Congressional Input Into the War on Terror Strategy

Q. Thank you, Mr. Bush. A question for you about the process you're describing of your decisionmaking as Commander in Chief. Have you entertained the idea that at some point, Congress may take some of that sole decisionmaking power away through legislation? And can you tell us, are you still committed to vetoing any troop withdrawal deadline?

The President. You mean in this interim period? Yes, absolutely. I don't think Congress ought to be running the war; I think they ought to be funding our troops. I'm certainly interested in their opinion, but trying to run a war through resolution is a prescription for failure, as far as I'm concerned, and we can't afford to fail.

I'll work with Congress; I'll listen to Congress. Congress has got all the right to appropriate money. But the idea of telling our military how to conduct operations, for example, or how to deal with troop strength is—I don't think it makes sense. I don't think it makes sense today, nor do I think it's a good precedent for the future. And so the role of the Commander in Chief is, of course, to consult with Congress.

Q. So if Reed-Levin or anything like it were to pass and set a—

The President. Well, I would hope they wouldn't pass, Jim. But I—

Q. But what if they've got—

The President. Let me make sure you understand what I'm saying. Congress has all the right in the world to fund. That's their main involvement in this war, which is to provide funds for our troops. What you're asking is whether or not Congress ought to be basically determining how troops are positioned or troop strength. And I just—I don't think that would be good for the country.

David [David Gregory, NBC News].

CIA Director Michael V. Hayden/Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you've said many times this war at this stage is about the Iraqi Government creating a self-sustaining, stable government. Last November, your own CIA Director, according to the Washington Post, told you about that Government, quote, "The inability of the Government to govern seems irreversible." He could not point to any milestone or checkpoint where we can turn this thing around. And he said, in talking about the Government, that it's balanced, but it cannot function.

The President. Yes.

Q. When you heard that, since that point, you think of how many hundreds of soldiers have been killed, how much money has been spent. Why shouldn't people conclude that you are either stubborn, in denial, but certainly not realistic about the strategy that you've pursued since then?

The President. You know, it's interesting; it turns out, Mike Hayden—I think you're quoting Mike Hayden there—was in this morning to give me his weekly briefing, and I asked him about that newspaper article from which you quote. His answer was—his comments to the Iraq Study Group was a little more nuanced than the quotation you read.

He said that he made it clear the current strategy in Iraq wasn't working—this is his recollection of the briefing to the Iraq Study Group. He briefed them to the fact it wasn't working and that we needed a change of direction. He also said that those who suggest that we back away and let the Iraqi's Government do it—this is in November 2006—let the Iraqis handle it, don't understand the inability of the Iraq Government at that time to take on that responsibility.

He then went on to say—this is what he—his recollection of his conversation—was that our strategy needed to help get the violence down so that there could be

political reconciliation from the top down as well as the bottom up.

There has been political reconciliation, Martha, from the bottom up. Anbar Province is a place where the experts had—an expert had said that it was impossible for us to achieve our objective. This was the part of the country of Iraq where Al Qaida had made it clear that they would like to establish a safe haven from which to plan, plot further attacks and to spread their ideology throughout the Middle East. Since then, since this November 2006 report and since that statement to the Iraq Study Group, things have changed appreciably on the ground in Anbar Province.

And they're beginning to have the same change, because the people on the ground there are sick and tired of violence and being threatened by people like Al Qaida, who have no positive vision for the future. And there's been a significant turn, where now Sunni sheikhs and Sunni citizens are working with the coalition to bring justice to Al Qaida killers. And that same approach is being taken in Diyala.

And so there's a lot of focus, and should be frankly on oil laws or elections. But remember, there's another political reconciliation track taking place as well, and that's the one that's taking place at the grassroots level. Mike Hayden talked about that as well.

Q. But you think you've been realistic about the strategy and what's possible?

The President. Well—thank you for the followup—nothing has changed in the new room. Anyway—yes. I mean, as I told you last November, right about this time, I was part of that group of Americans who didn't approve of what was taking place in Iraq, because it looked like all the efforts that we had taken to that point in time were about to fail. In other words, sectarian violence was really raging. And I had a choice to make, and that was to pull back, as some suggested, and hope that the chaos and violence that might occur in the capital would not spill out across the country or send

more troops in to prevent the chaos and violence from happening in the first place, and that's the decision I made. So it was a realistic appraisal, by me.

What's realistic, as well, is to understand the consequences of what will happen if we fail in Iraq. In other words, it's—people aren't just going to be content with driving America out of Iraq. Al Qaida wants to hurt us here. That's their objective. That's what they would like to do. They have got an ideology that they believe that the world ought to live under, and that one way to help spread that ideology is to harm the American people, harm American interests. The same folks that are bombing innocent people in Iraq were the ones who attacked us in America on September the 11th, and that's why what happens in Iraq matters to the security here at home.

So I've been realistic about the consequences of failure. I have been realistic about what needs to happen on the ground in order for there to be success. And it's been hard work, and the American people see it as hard work. And one of the reasons it is hard work is because on our TV screens are these violent killings perpetuated by people who have done us harm in the past. And that ought to be a lesson for the American people, to understand that what happens in Iraq and overseas matters to the security of the United States of America.

Yes, ma'am.

Al Qaida in Iraq

Q. But, sir, on that point, what evidence can you present to the American people that the people who attacked the United States on September the 11th are, in fact, the same people who are responsible for the bombings taking place in Iraq? What evidence can you present? And also, are you saying, sir, that Al Qaida in Iraq is the same organization being run by Usama bin Laden himself?

The President. Al Qaida in Iraq has sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden. And

the guys who had perpetuated the attacks on America—obviously, the guys on the airplane are dead, and the commanders, many of those are either dead or in captivity, like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. But the people in Iraq, Al Qaida in Iraq, has sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden. And we need to take Al Qaida in Iraq seriously, just like we need to take Al Qaida anywhere in the world seriously.

Let's see here. Working my way around here. Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *New York Times*].

Confidence in the Iraqi Government

Q. Mr. President, in Jordan in November, you stood by Prime Minister Maliki and said, he's the right guy for Iraq. Given this report card today and given the lack of top-down political reconciliation, can you tell the American people that you still believe he's the right guy for Iraq?

The President. I believe that he understands that there needs to be serious reconciliation, and they need to get law passed; firmly believe that. I have had a series of conference calls with the Prime Minister as well as the Presidency Council. The Presidency Council, you would have the President, Talabani, you'd have the two Vice Presidents, Al-Mahdi and Hashimi, as well as the Prime Minister. And I have urged them to work together to get law passed. It's not easy to get law passed through certain legislatures, like theirs. There's a lot of work that has to be done. And I will continue to urge, but—

Q. Do you have confidence in them?

The President. Let me—I'm almost through with the first one; I'll come back to the second one.

And so I'll continue to urge the Iraqis to show us that they're capable of passing legislation. But it's not just us; it's the Iraqi people. And what really matters is whether or not life is improving for the Iraqi people on the ground.

And yes, I've got confidence in them, but I also understand how difficult it is.

I'm not making any excuses, but it is hard. It's hard work for them to get law passed. And it's—sometimes it's hard work for people to get law passed here. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't continue to work to achieve an objective, which is a government that is able to provide security for its people and to provide basic services and, as importantly, serve as an ally against these extremists and radicals.

Yes, sir.

I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby

Q. Thank you, Mr. President—

The President. No, not you. Michael [Michael Abramowitz, Washington Post].

Q. Oh. [Laughter]

The President. Okay. Was that harsh?

Q. Yes.

The President. Like the new hall, I should have been more gentle. [Laughter] Do we ever use "kinder and gentler"? No.

Go ahead, Michael. And then you're next.

Q. If I could just switch subjects for a second to another big decision you made recently, which was in the Scooter Libby case.

The President. Yes.

Q. You spoke very soberly and seriously in your statement about how you weighed different legal questions in coming to your decision on that commutation. But one issue that you did not address was the issue of the morality of your most senior advisers leaking the name of a confidential intelligence operator. Now that the case is over—it's not something you've ever spoken to—can you say whether you're at all disappointed in the behavior of those senior advisers? And have you communicated that disappointment to them in any way?

The President. Michael, I—first of all, the Scooter Libby decision was, I thought, a fair and balanced decision. Secondly, I haven't spent a lot of time talking about the testimony that people throughout my administration were forced to give as a result of the Special Prosecutor. I didn't ask

them during the time, and I haven't asked them since.

I'm aware of the fact that perhaps somebody in the administration did disclose the name of that person, and I've often thought about what would have happened had that person come forth and said, "I did it." Would we have had this, you know, endless hours of investigation and a lot of money being spent on this matter? And—but it's been a tough issue for a lot of people in the White House, and it's run its course, and now we're going to move on.

Wendell [Wendell Goler, FOX News Channel].

Military Operations in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you have spoken passionately—

The President. Oh, I'm sorry, Jon [Jon Ward, Washington Times]. Okay, yes.

Q. Are you taking it away from me?

The President. I am. This is—

Q. After doing the "fair and balanced," you're going to take it away from me. [Laughter].

Q. Ohhh. [Laughter]

Q. That was just a tease.

Q. You're going to come back to me, sir?

The President. You got the mike, then, Jon, you're next—a possession deal, you know what I'm saying? [Laughter]

Q. Thank you, sir. You have spoken passionately about the consequences of failure in Iraq. Your critics say you failed to send enough troops there at the start, failed to keep Al Qaida from stepping into the void created by the collapse of Saddam's army, failed to put enough pressure on Iraq's Government to make the political reconciliation necessary to keep the sectarian violence the country is suffering from now from occurring. So why should the American people feel you have the vision for victory in Iraq, sir?

The President. Those are all legitimate questions that I'm sure historians will analyze. I mean, one of the questions is,

should we have sent more in the beginning? Well, I asked that question, "Do you need more?" to General Tommy Franks. In the first phase of this operation, General Franks was obviously in charge—and during our discussions in the runup to the decision to remove Saddam Hussein after he ignored the Security Council resolutions. My primary question to General Franks was, do you have what it takes to succeed? And do you have what it takes to succeed after you succeed in removing Saddam Hussein? And his answer was, yes.

Now, history is going to look back to determine whether or not there might have been a different decision made. But at the time, the only thing I can tell you, Wendell, is that I relied upon our military commander to make the proper decision about troop strength. And I can remember a meeting with the Joint Chiefs, who said, "We've reviewed the plan." I remember—and seemed satisfied with it. I remember sitting in the PEOC, or the Situation Room, downstairs here at the White House, and I went to commander and commander that were all responsible of different aspects of the operation to remove Saddam. I said to each one of them, do you have what it takes? Are you satisfied with the strategy? And the answer was, yes.

We have worked hard to help this country reconcile. After all, they do have a modern Constitution, which is kind of a framework for reconciliation. And after all, there was a significant series of votes where the people were given a chance to express their desire to live in a free society. As a matter of fact, 12 million Iraqis went to the polls.

Wendell, what happened then, of course, is that the enemy, Al Qaida, attacks the Samarra mosque, which, of course, created anxiety and anger amongst the Shi'a. And then all of a sudden, the sectarian violence began to spiral. Reconciliation hadn't taken hold deep enough in society to prevent this violence from taking hold. And so I have a—you know, I've got to decide whether or not it's okay for that violence to continue

or whether or not it makes sense for us to try to send more troops in to quell the violence, to give the reconciliation process further time to advance.

My concern is, is that as a result of violence and killing, there would be chaos. Now, that's a state of affairs that thugs like Al Qaida need to survive. They like chaos. As a matter of fact, they like to create chaos in order to create conditions of fear and anxiety and doubt. And out of that chaos would come—could come a further escalation of violence in the Middle East. And this is what's important for the American people to understand: that violence and that chaos would embolden extremist groups, whether they be Shi'a or Sunni, and they would then begin into competition with each other.

Such chaos and violence would send a mixed signal to the Iranians, who have stated that they believe Israel ought to be wiped off the map. People would begin to wonder about America's resolve. Al Qaida would certainly be in a better position to raise money and recruit. And what makes all this scenario doubly dangerous is that they have proven themselves able to attack us and kill nearly 3,000 of our citizens. And they would like to do it again.

And therefore, the strategy has got to be to help this Government become an ally against these people. What happens in Iraq—and I understand how difficult it's been. It's been hard. I have received a lot of inspiration, however, from meeting with our troops, who understand the stakes of this fight, and meeting with their families. And we owe it to our troops to support our commanders, smart, capable people who are devising a strategy that will enable us to succeed and prevent the conditions I just talked about from happening.

Ed [Edwin Chen, Bloomberg News]—no, Jon. Just kidding there.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Your administration has cited Al Qaida leaders,

such as Zawahiri, as saying that if we leave prematurely, it would be a glorious victory for Al Qaida. But the reason that we can't leave or haven't been able to leave is not because we're getting defeated in any way militarily; it's because the Iraqis can't get it together so far. So why can't we counter those messages and, obviously, not withdraw precipitously, but begin some sort of gradual withdrawal that prevents ethnic cleansing, but also allows our military to get out?

The President. Well, there's a lot of discussion about a scenario in which our troop posture would be to guard the territorial integrity of the country of Iraq, to embed and train, to help the Iraqi security forces deal with violent elements in their society, as well as keep enough Special Forces there to chase down Al Qaida. As a matter of fact, that is something that I've spoken in public about, said that's a position I'd like to see us in. However, I felt like we needed to send more troops to be able to get the situation to quiet down enough to be able to end in that position.

And in terms of my own decisionmaking, as I mentioned earlier, I definitely need to be in consultation, and will be, with General David Petraeus, who asked for the additional troops in the first place, troops which have been in place—fully in place for about 3 weeks.

And so I would ask Members of Congress to give the general a chance to come back and to give us a full assessment of whether this is succeeding or not. And it's at that point in time that I will consult with Members of Congress and make a decision about the way forward, all aiming to succeed in making sure that Al Qaida and other extremists do not benefit from a decision I might have to make.

Mark [Mark Silva, Chicago Tribune].

Homeland Security/Democracy in the Middle East

Q. Yes, sir, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir—

Q. How—

The President. —Mark. [Laughter]

Q. Thank you. Thank you, sir. How comfortable are you—sir, how comfortable are you with your Homeland Security Secretary saying, in the face of no credible intelligence of an imminent threat against the United States, that he has a gut feeling that one is coming this summer? And, sir, what does your gut tell you?

The President. My gut tells me that—which my head tells me as well—is that when we find a credible threat, I'll share it with people to make sure that we protect the homeland. My head also tells me that Al Qaida is a serious threat to our homeland, and we've got to continue making sure we've got good intelligence, good response mechanisms in place; that we've got to make sure we don't embolden them with—by failing in certain theaters of war where they're confronting us; that we ought to continue to keep the pressure on them. We need to chase them down and bring them to justice before they come home to hurt us again.

And so it's a—this is a serious issue that is going to outlast my Presidency. As I say, this is the beginning stages of what I believe is a ideological conflict that—where you've got a competing visions about what the world ought to be like. What makes this more difficult than previous conflicts is that there's the asymmetrical use of power. In other words, IEDs and suicide bombers are the main tactical device used by these thugs to try to achieve strategic objectives.

Their objective is to impose their vision on the world. Their objective is to drive the United States out of parts of the world. They want safe haven. They love a society where women have no rights, just like the society that they worked to impose with the Taliban on the women of Afghanistan. That's their vision. And it's in our interests to defend ourselves by staying on the offense against them. And it's in our interest to spread an alternative ideology.

We have done this before in our Nation's history. We have helped people realize the blessings of liberty, even though they may have been our enemy. And freedom has an amazing way of helping lay the foundation for peace. And it's really important, as we head into this ideological struggle in the 21st century, that we not forget that liberty can transform societies.

Now, the interesting debate is whether or not a nation like Iraq can self-govern, whether or not these people even care about liberty. As you've heard me say before, I believe, strongly believe that freedom is a universal value, that freedom isn't just for Americans or Methodists, that freedom is universal in its application. And so when they voted in '05, I wasn't surprised; I was pleased that the numbers were as big as they were, to defy that many threats and car bombers, but I wasn't surprised.

And this is the real challenge we face. And Iraq is just a part of a broader war against these jihadists and extremists, Mark. It is a—this—we will be dealing with this issue for a while, just like we dealt with other ideologies for a while. It takes time for ideologies to take root.

I firmly believe that you'll see the democracy movement continue to advance throughout the Middle East if the United States doesn't become isolationist. That's why I've told you that I'm making sure that we continue to stay diplomatically involved in the region. Condi Rice and Bob Gates will be traveling there in early August to continue to remind our friends and allies that we're—one, we view them as strategic partners, and secondly, that we want them to work toward a freer societies and to help this Iraqi Government survive. It's in their interests that Iraq become a stable partner.

And I believe we can achieve that objective. And not only do I believe we can achieve; I know we've got to achieve the objective, so we will have done our duty. This is hard work. And one of the things I talked about in the opening comments

was, do we do it now, or basically pull back, let the Gallup Poll, or whatever poll there are, decide the fate of the country? And my view is, is that if that were to happen, we would then have to go back in with greater force in order to protect ourselves, because one of the facts of the 21st century is that what happens overseas matters to the security of our country.

Ed.

*President's Upcoming Meeting With
General David H. Petraeus*

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. Given the events on the ground in Iraq and the politics here at home, has U.S. military deployment to Iraq reached the ceiling, or can you allow any further military escalation?

The President. You're trying to do what Martha very skillfully tried to get me to do, and that was to—

Q. Can I have a followup?

The President. Yes, you can, because you're about to realize I'm not going to answer your question—[laughter]—except to say this: There's going to be great temptation to—not temptation, there would be—you won't be tempted; you will actually ask me to speculate about what David Petraeus will talk to us about when he comes home. And I just ask the American people to understand that the Commander in Chief must rely upon the wisdom and judgment of the military thinkers and planners. It's very important that there be that solid connection of trust between me and those who are in the field taking incredible risk.

And so, Ed, I'm going to wait to see what David has to say. I'm not going to prejudge what he may say. I trust David Petraeus, his judgment. He's an honest man. Those of you who have interviewed him know that he's a straight shooter; he's an innovative thinker. I was briefed by members of the CODEL that came back that said that it appeared to them that our

troops have high respect for our commanders in Baghdad, as do I.

Now, do you have a followup, perhaps another subject, another area, another—

Public Opinion/President's Decisionmaking

Q. Same subject.

The President. Same questions?

Q. Different approach.

The President. Different approach. Yes, okay. [Laughter]

Q. How hard is it for you to conduct the war without popular support? For you personally, do you ever have trouble balancing the—between doing what you think is the right thing and following the will of the majority of the public, which is really the essence of democracy?

The President. Yes, it is. And, first of all, I can fully understand why people are tired of the war. The question they have is, can we win it? And of course I'm concerned about whether or not the American people are in this fight. I believe, however, that when they really think about the consequences if we were to precipitously withdraw, they begin to say to themselves, maybe we ought to win this; maybe we ought to have a stable Iraq.

Their question, it seems like to me, is, can we succeed? And that's a very important, legitimate question for anybody to ask. I think many people understand we must succeed, and I think a lot of people understand we've got to wait for the generals to make these military decisions. I suspect—I know this, Ed, that if our troops thought that I was taking a poll to decide how to conduct this war, they would be very concerned about the mission. In other words, if our troops said, "Well, here we are in combat, and we've got a Commander in Chief who is running a focus group. In other words, politics would be—is more important to him than our safety and/or our strategy," that would dispirit our troops.

And there's a lot of constituencies in this fight. Clearly the American people, who are paying for this, is the major constituency.

And I repeat to you, Ed, I understand that there—this violence has affected them. And a lot of people don't think we can win. There's a lot of people in Congress who don't think we can win as well, and therefore, their attitude is, get out.

My concern with that strategy—something that Mike Hayden also discussed—is that just getting out may sound simple, and it may affect polls, but it would have long-term, serious security consequences for the United States. And so, Ed, sometimes you just have to make the decisions based upon what you think is right. My most important job is to help secure this country, and therefore, the decisions in Iraq are all aimed at helping do that job. And that's what I firmly believe.

A second constituency is the military. And I repeat to you: I'm pretty confident our military do not want their Commander in Chief making political decisions about their future.

A third constituency that matters to me a lot is the military families. These are good folks who are making huge sacrifices, and they support their loved ones. And I don't think they want their Commander in Chief making decisions based upon popularity.

Another constituency group that is important for me to talk to is the Iraqis. Obviously, I want the Iraqi Government to understand that we expect there to be reconciliation top down, that we want to see laws passed. I think they've got that message. They know full well that the American Government and the American people expect to see tangible evidence of working together. That's what the benchmarks are aimed to do.

But they also need to know that I am making decisions based upon our security interests, of course, but also helping them succeed, and that a poll is not going to determine the course of action by the United States. What will determine the course of actions is, will the decisions that we have made help secure our country for the long run?

And finally, another constituency is the enemy, who are wondering whether or not America has got the resolve and the determination to stay after them. And so that's what I think about, Ed.

And, you know, I guess I'm like any other political figure; everybody wants to be loved, just sometimes the decisions you make and the consequences don't enable you to be loved. And so when it's all said and done, Ed, when you've—if you ever come down and visit the old, tired me down there in Crawford, I will be able to say, I looked in the mirror and made decisions based upon principle, not based upon politics. And that's important to me.

Thank you all for your time. I loved being here at this new building. Thank you.

Resurgence of Al Qaida

Q. Can we just ask you about the Al Qaida intelligence report, please?

The President. What was that?

Q. The intelligence——

The President. This is amazing.

Q. I know, I know.

The President. The new me. [Laughter]

The Al Qaida intelligence report.

Q. The intelligence analysts are saying Al Qaida has reconstituted in areas of Pakistan, saying the threat to the West is greater than ever now, or as great as 2001. What's happening——

The President. Okay, here's——

Q. Okay, you tell us what the intelligence analysts say.

The President. I'm glad you asked; thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that opportunity to——

Q. Thank you for coming back, sir.

The President. I'm happy to do it. This is not the new me. I mean, this is just, like, an aberration. In other words——

Q. It's over next time.

The President. ——I'm not going to leave and then come back because somebody yells something at me.

Q. Like China.

The President. Yes, exactly. [Laughter] Thank you. Thank you, David. I appreciate that. Exactly.

There is a perception in the coverage that Al Qaida may be as strong today as they were prior to September the 11th. That's just simply not the case. I think the report will say, since 2001, not prior to September the 11th, 2001.

Secondly, that because of the actions we have taken, Al Qaida is weaker today than they would have been. They are still a threat. They are still dangerous. And that is why it is important that we succeed in Afghanistan and Iraq and anywhere else we find them. And that's our strategy, is to stay on the offense against Al Qaida.

Elaine [Elaine Quijano, Cable News Network] asked the question, is it Al Qaida in Iraq? Yes, it is Al Qaida, just like it's Al Qaida in parts of Pakistan. And I'm working with President Musharraf to be able to—he doesn't want them in his country; he doesn't want foreign fighters in his outposts of his country. And so we're working to make sure that we continue to keep the pressure on Al Qaida.

But no question, Al Qaida is dangerous for the American people, and that's why—as well as other people that love freedom—and that's why we're working hard with allies and friends to enhance our intelligence. That's why we need terrorist surveillance programs. That's why it's important for us to keep—another thing, I would hope Congress would modernize that bill. And that's why we're keeping on the offense.

Ultimately, the way to defeat these radicals and extremists is to offer alternative ways of life so that they're unable to recruit; that they can use—they like to use frustration and hopelessness. The societies that don't provide hope will become the societies where Al Qaida has got the capacity to convince a youngster to go blow himself up. What we need to do is help governments provide brighter futures for their people so they won't sign up.

And the fundamental question facing the world on this issue is whether or not it makes sense to try to promote an alternative ideology. I happen to think it does. They say, "He's idealistic." Yes, I'm idealistic, but I'm also realistic in understanding if there is not an alternative ideology presented, these thugs will be able to continue to recruit. They'll use hopelessness to be able to recruit. And so it's—thank you for asking that question.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:31 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Khalid

Sheikh Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan, on March 1, 2003; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq; former Chief of Staff to the Vice President I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby; Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois and Department of Justice CIA leak investigation special prosecutor; Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA (Ret.), former commander, U.S. Central Command; and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. A reporter referred to Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate. A reporter also referred to the amendment by Sens. Jack Reed and Carl Levin to H.R. 1585. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Initial Benchmark Assessment Report *July 12, 2007*

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the "Act"), attached is the report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense; Commander, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; the United States Ambassador to Iraq; and the Commander of United States Central Command.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
July 12, 2007.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism

July 12, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (the "Convention"), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on April 13, 2005, and signed on behalf of the United States of America on September 14, 2005. As of July 3, 2007, 115 countries have signed the Convention and 23 have submitted their instruments of ratification or accession. The Convention entered into force on July 7, 2007. I also transmit for the information of the Senate a report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention.

The Convention imposes binding legal obligations upon States Parties either to submit for prosecution or to extradite any person within their jurisdiction who commits terrorist acts involving radioactive material or a nuclear device as set forth in Article 2 of the Convention, threatens or attempts to commit such an act, participates as an accomplice, organizes or directs others to commit such an offense, or in any other way contributes to the commission of such an offense by a group of persons acting with a common purpose, re-

gardless of where the alleged act took place.

States Parties to the Convention will also be obligated to provide one another legal assistance in investigations or criminal or extradition proceedings brought in respect of the offenses set forth in Article 2, in conformity with any treaties or other arrangements that may exist between them or in accordance with their national law. The recommended legislation necessary to implement the Convention will be submitted to the Congress separately.

This Convention is important in the campaign against international terrorism. I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Convention, subject to the understandings and reservation that are described in the accompanying State Department report.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
July 12, 2007

NOTE: This item was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 13. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks Following a Briefing By Provincial Reconstruction Team Leaders and Brigade Combat Commanders

July 13, 2007

As part of our strategy to succeed in Iraq, I not only reinforced our military efforts with more troops, we also surged civilians to work with our military to help the reconciliation efforts in a country that is still recovering from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein.

And today my Security Council here had a opportunity not only to speak with our Ambassador in Iraq but also five members of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, three civilians and two military—colonels. They have briefed us on the grassroots effort to improve services, to improve the economy,

to encourage local government, all aiming at enhancing this concept of reconciliation from the bottom up.

We heard from the PRT leader in Anbar. I had the honor of speaking to him months ago, and now he has briefed us on the progress that he has seen. Listen, there is still a lot of work to be done. But these people at the grassroots understand that most Iraqis want to live in peace and that, with time, we'll be able to help them realize that dream.

And so I want to thank you once again for your outstanding service to our Nation in the cause of peace. What happens in Iraq matters to the United States of America. A violent, chaotic Iraq will affect our

security at home. An Iraq that can self-govern, provide basic services to its people, and be an ally in the war on terror will mean that all of us have accepted a great challenge and laid a foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

And so thank you for your service. I appreciate your—I want to thank your families who are supporting you in this just and noble cause. And may God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker.

The President's Radio Address *July 14, 2007*

Good morning. This week, my administration submitted to Congress an interim report on the situation in Iraq. This report provides an initial assessment of how the Iraqi Government is doing in meeting the 18 benchmarks that Congress asked us to measure. This is a preliminary report. In September, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to provide a more comprehensive assessment.

The interim report released this week finds that the Iraqis have made satisfactory progress in eight areas, such as providing the three brigades they promised for the surge, establishing joint security stations in Baghdad neighborhoods, and providing \$10 billion of their own money for reconstruction. In eight other areas, the progress was unsatisfactory, such as failing to prepare for local elections or pass a law to share oil revenues. In two remaining areas, the progress was too unclear to be characterized one way or the other.

Those who believe that the battle in Iraq is lost are pointing to the unsatisfactory performance on some of the political benchmarks. Those of us who believe the battle in Iraq can and must be won see the satisfactory performance on several of the security benchmarks as a cause for optimism. Our strategy is built on the premise that progress on security will pave the way for political progress. This report shows that conditions can change, progress can be made, and the fight in Iraq can be won.

The strategy we are now pursuing is markedly different from the one we were following last year. It became clear that our approach in Iraq was not working. So I consulted my national security team, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and military commanders and diplomats on the ground. I brought in outside experts to hear their ideas. And after listening to this advice, in January, I announced a new way forward: sending reinforcements to help the Iraqis protect their people, improve their security forces, and advance the difficult process of

reconciliation at both the national and local levels.

Our recent experience in Anbar Province shows what we hope to achieve throughout Iraq. As recently as last September, Anbar was held up as an example of America's failure in Iraq. Around the same time, the situation began to change. Sunni tribes that had been fighting alongside Al Qaida against our coalition came forward to fight alongside our coalition against Al Qaida. So I sent reinforcements to take advantage of this opportunity. And together we have driven Al Qaida from most of Anbar's capital city of Ramadi, and attacks there are now at a 2-year low.

We are now carrying out operations to replicate the success in Anbar in other parts of the country, especially in the regions in and around Baghdad. We are starting to take the initiative away from Al Qaida and aiding the rise of an Iraqi Government that can protect its people, deliver basic services, and be an ally in the war against extremists and radicals. By doing this, we are creating the conditions that will allow our troops to begin coming home. When America starts drawing down our forces in Iraq, it will be because our military commanders say the conditions on the ground are right, not because pollsters say it would be good politics.

Some people say the surge has been going for 6 months and that is long enough to conclude that it has failed. In fact, the final reinforcements arrived in Iraq just a month ago, and only then was General Petraeus able to launch the surge in full force. He and the troops who have begun

these dangerous operations deserve the time and resources to carry them out.

To begin to bring troops home before our commanders tell us we are ready would be dangerous for our country. It would mean surrendering the future of Iraq to Al Qaida, risking a humanitarian catastrophe, and allowing the terrorists to establish a safe haven in Iraq and gain control of vast oil resources they could use to fund new attacks on America. And it would increase the probability that American troops would have to return at some later date to confront an enemy that is even more dangerous.

Most Americans want to see two things in Iraq: They want to see our troops succeed, and they want to see our troops begin to come home. We can do both, and we will. Our troops in Iraq are serving bravely. They're making great sacrifices. Changing the conditions in Iraq is difficult, and it can be done. The best way to start bringing these good men and women home is to make sure the surge succeeds.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on July 13 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 13, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a White House Tee-Ball Game July 15, 2007

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome here to tee-ball on the South

Lawn of the White House. I'm honored to be joined here with the commissioner

for today's game, member of the Hall of Fame, the great Frank Robinson. Thanks for being here.

Frank Robinson. My pleasure.

The President. Mario, thanks, great job on the anthem. I thank the color guard, as well, for being here. Today we're going to have an outstanding contest. Laura and I are proud to be able to watch, from Los Angeles, California, the Little League Dodgers, and from Brooklyn, New York, the Little League Highlanders. And we want to welcome the players. We particularly thank the coaches for working with these youngsters. Thanks for getting them interested in baseball, America's greatest sport. We want to thank the parents who have come. Thank you for supporting the kids. And we're looking forward to a good game.

Today—every day is a special day when we play baseball at the White House, but today is particularly special since we're going to pay homage to Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson, as you know, broke the color barrier in baseball, but there were some pioneers ahead of Jackie. And today we're proud to welcome Negro League players who are here. Thank you all for coming.

Imagine what baseball would have been like had you been a part of the Major Leagues. Jackie Robinson was a pioneer, and Frank and I are going to retire his number, just like they did all over Major League parks across our country. But before we do, we're proud that members of the Brooklyn Dodger team who had the honor of playing with Jackie Robinson have joined us: Tommy Lasorda, Don Newcombe, Clyde King, and Ralph Branca.

We're honored you're here. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for being a part of this special ball game. As a matter of fact, two of you are going to end up being first and third base coach. Well, I wish you all the best out there. Looks like we've

got some good players that have come to play.

I do want to thank John Warner, Senator John Warner from the great State of Virginia, and his family for joining us. Proud you're here, Senator. I see Alphonso Jackson and Dirk Kempthorne, of my Cabinet, who have joined us. I'm proud you all are here. Dutch Morial, thanks for coming, Dutch; appreciate you coming—I mean, Marc Morial—there he is. Marc, how you doing, brother? He's the head of the Urban League. Roslyn Brock, vice chairman of the NAACP, has joined us as well. Thank you all for coming.

We want to thank the Jackie Robinson Foundation for joining us today, as well as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club of America for being here. Thank you all for coming.

I'm so honored that this game is going to be called by Karl Ravech, ESPN. Thanks for coming, Karl.

Karl Ravech. Pleasure, thank you.

The President. We really appreciate you taking—you know it's a big game when Karl Ravech comes over to lend his talents. So you players are going to have to play hard, because you've got ESPN here.

Before we—after we put—hang up the number honoring Jackie Robinson, after we retire his number here on the South Lawn, we will have Matthew Hearon; he'll be coming out; he's going to help us get the game kicked off. He's the first ball presenter. But before you come out, Matthew, the Hall of Famer and I are now going to hang up Jackie Robinson's number. Ready?

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Mario D. Barrett, who performed the national anthem. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 16.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Lech Kaczynski of Poland July 16, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome to the United States. Poland and the United States have a very unique and strong relationship. And the President and I have just had a very constructive dialog. And, by the way, Mr. President, there are a lot of my fellow citizens who trace their heritage back to Poland who are delighted to welcome you to America.

And along those lines, I fully understand a lot of Polish citizens would like to travel to the United States. And so my friend the President has once again brought up to me the visa waiver issue, which I fully understand, Mr. President, and thank you for your candor. And I will continue to work with Congress to change a law that needs to be changed.

Poland is a strong ally. And Poland has taken some very difficult decisions to help a young democracy survive in the face of extremist threats. And I want to thank you, Mr. President, and the Polish people for supporting the people of Afghanistan and Iraq.

War is never popular. But having heard from the Iraqi leaders today and their expression of gratitude, not only to the Polish Government but the Polish people and the American people for supporting this democratic experiment, Mr. President, it reminds me of how important what we're doing is.

America is, of course, pleased that the Polish economy is strong. We want our friends to prosper. Of course, the President, in all modesty, reminded me that's the purview of the Prime Minister. Of course, I reminded the President he knows the Prime Minister quite well. [*Laughter*]

And finally, we talked about how we can enhance the mutual security issues. And there's no better symbol of our desire to work for peace and security than working on a missile defense system, a missile defense system that would provide a—security

for Europe from single or dual-launch regimes that may emanate from parts of the world where leaders don't particularly care for our way of life and/or are in the process of trying to develop serious weapons of mass destruction.

And I thank you, Mr. President, for your vision and your understanding about the nature of the world in which we live. And I thank you for working on behalf of securing the security of others. And we continue to work and consult very closely with you. And so we welcome you. Thank you for coming.

President Kaczynski. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. President has already briefed you about the issues we were talking about during our meeting. And concerning visa waiver, we discussed the issue; however, it is in the hands of the Congress. We do understand that the legislative process in the U.S. is very—it is stable, and it is really hard to change that binding law, that existing law. And so we are looking forward to positive changes in this area.

Another very important issue is the issue of missile defense. And I would like to emphasize that we discussed it in terms of defensive instruments because it is aimed at defense of our democracies against the countries who might have or already do have nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. So it is really a defense instrument—missile defense instrument. And so I do hope that all this project—the whole project will be completed successfully.

And we also discussed other forums which could foster and strengthen our mutual relations and also the NATO. And this issue of strengthening our cooperation will be discussed at the level of the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America

and also our Defense Minister of the Republic of Poland and on the level of experts. And our conversation, our meeting is not over yet, and there are some issues we are going to—[inaudible].

President Bush. I've got to buy him some lunch. [Laughter]

Thank you, sir. Yes. Thank you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski of Poland. President Kaczynski referred to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; and Minister of National Defense Aleksander Szczyglo of Poland. President Kaczynski spoke in Polish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Middle East July 16, 2007

Good afternoon. In recent weeks, debate in our country has rightly focused on the situation in Iraq, yet Iraq is not the only pivotal matter in the Middle East. More than 5 years ago, I became the first American President to call for the creation of a Palestinian state. In the Rose Garden, I said that Palestinians should not have to live in poverty and occupation. I said that the Israelis should not have to live in terror and violence. And I laid out a new vision for the future: two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Since then, many changes have come, some hopeful, some dispiriting. Israel has taken difficult actions, including withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. Palestinians have held free elections and chosen a President committed to peace. Arab States have put forward a plan that recognizes Israel's place in the Middle East. And all these parties, along with most of the international community, now share the goal of a peaceful, democratic Palestinian state, a level of consensus never before seen on this crucial issue.

The past 5 years have also brought developments far too familiar in the recent history of the region. Confronted with the prospect of peace, extremists have responded with acts of aggression and terror. In Gaza, Hamas radicals betrayed the Pal-

estinian people with a lawless and violent takeover. By its actions, Hamas has demonstrated beyond all doubt that it is devoted to extremism and murder than to serving the Palestinian people.

This is a moment of clarity for all Palestinians, and now comes a moment of choice. The alternatives before the Palestinian people are stark. There is the vision of Hamas, which the world saw in Gaza, with murderers in black masks and summary executions and men thrown to their death from rooftops. By following this path, the Palestinian people would guarantee chaos and suffering and the endless perpetuation of grievance. They would surrender their future to Hamas's foreign sponsors in Syria and Iran. And they would crush the possibility of any—of a Palestinian state.

And there's another option, and that's a hopeful option. It is the vision of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad; it's the vision of their Government; it's the vision of a peaceful state called Palestine as a homeland for the Palestinian people. To realize this vision, these leaders are striving to build the institutions of a modern democracy. They're working to strengthen the Palestinian security services, so they can confront the terrorists and protect the innocent. They're acting to set up competent ministries that deliver services without corruption. They're taking steps to improve the

economy and unleash the natural enterprise of the Palestinian people. And they're ensuring that Palestinian society operates under the rule of law. By following this path, Palestinians can reclaim their dignity and their future and establish a state of their own.

Only the Palestinians can decide which of these courses to pursue. Yet all responsible nations have a duty to help clarify the way forward. By supporting the reforms of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, we can help them show the world what a Palestinian state would look like and act like. We can help them prove to the world, the region, and Israel that a Palestinian state would be a partner, not a danger. We can help them make clear to all Palestinians that rejecting violence is the surest path to security and a better life. And we can help them demonstrate to the extremists once and for all that terror will have no place in a Palestinian state.

So in consultation with our partners in the Quartet—the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations—the United States is taking a series of steps to strengthen the forces of moderation and peace among the Palestinian people.

First, we are strengthening our financial commitment. Immediately after President Abbas expelled Hamas from the Palestinian Government, the United States lifted financial restrictions on the Palestinian Authority that we had imposed. This year, we will provide the Palestinians with more than \$190 million in American assistance, including funds for humanitarian relief in Gaza. To build on this support, I recently authorized the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to join in a program that will help generate \$228 million in lending to Palestinian businesses. Today I announce our intention to make a direct contribution of \$80 million to help Palestinians reform their security services, a vital effort they're undertaking with the guidance of American General Keith Dayton. We will work with Congress and partners around the world

to provide additional resources once a plan to build Palestinian institutions is in place. With all of this assistance, we are showing the Palestinian people that a commitment to peace leads to the generous support of the United States.

Second, we're strengthening our political and diplomatic commitment. Again today President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert sat down together to discuss priorities and resolve issues. Secretary Rice and I have strongly supported these meetings, and she has worked with both parties to sketch out a political horizon for a Palestinian state. Now we will intensify these efforts, with the goal of increasing the confidence of all parties in a two-state solution. And we will continue to deliver a firm message to Hamas: You must stop Gaza from being a safe haven for attacks against Israel. You must accept the legitimate Palestinian Government, permit humanitarian aid in Gaza, and dismantle the militias. And you must reject violence, and recognize Israel's right to exist, and commit to all previous agreements between the parties. As I said in the Rose Garden 5 years ago, a Palestinian state will never be created by terror.

Third, we're strengthening our commitment to helping build the institutions of a Palestinian state. Last month, former Prime Minister—British Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed to take on a new role as Quartet representative. In this post, he will coordinate international efforts to help the Palestinians establish the institutions of a strong and lasting free society, including effective governing structures, a sound financial system, and the rule of law. He will encourage young Palestinians to participate in the political process. And America will strongly support his work to help Palestinian leaders answer their people's desire to live in peace.

All the steps I've outlined are designed to lay the foundation for a successful Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza:

a nation with functioning political institutions and capable security forces and leaders who reject terror and violence. With the proper foundation, we can soon begin serious negotiations toward the creation of a Palestinian state.

These negotiations must resolve difficult questions and uphold clear principles. They must ensure that Israel is secure. They must guarantee that a Palestinian state is viable and contiguous. And they must lead to a territorial settlement, with mutually agreed borders reflecting previous lines and current realities and mutually agreed adjustments. America is prepared to lead discussions to address these issues, but they must be resolved by Palestinians and Israelis themselves. Resolving these issues would help show Palestinians a clear way forward. And ultimately, it could lead to a final peace in the Middle East, a permanent end to the conflict, and an agreement on all issues, including refugees and Jerusalem.

To make this prospect a reality, the Palestinian people must decide that they want a future of decency and hope, not a future of terror and death. They must match their words denouncing terror with action to combat terror. The Palestinian Government must arrest terrorists, dismantle their infrastructure, and confiscate illegal weapons, as the roadmap requires. They must work to stop attacks on Israel and to free the Israeli soldier held hostage by extremists. And they must enforce the law without corruption, so they can earn the trust of their people and of the world. Taking these steps will enable the Palestinians to have a state of their own. And there's only one way to end the conflict, and nothing less is acceptable.

Israel has a clear path. Prime Minister Olmert must continue to release Palestinian tax revenues to the Government of Prime Minister Fayyad. Prime Minister Olmert has also made clear that Israel's future lies in developing areas like the Negev and Galilee, not in continuing occupation of the

West Bank. This is a reality that Prime Minister Sharon recognized as well. So unauthorized outposts should be removed and settlement expansion ended. At the same time, Israelis should find other practical ways to reduce their footprint without reducing their security so they can help President Abbas improve economic and humanitarian conditions. They should be confident that the United States will never abandon its commitment to the security of Israel as a Jewish state and homeland for the Jewish people.

The international community must rise to the moment and provide decisive support to responsible Palestinian leaders working for peace. One forum to deliver that support is the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, a group chaired by Norway that includes the United States and Japan, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and Arab States such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. Today I call for a session of this committee to gather soon, so that the world can back its words in real support for the new Palestinian Government.

The world can do more to build the conditions for peace. So I will call together an international meeting this fall of representatives from nations that support a two-state solution, reject violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and commit to all previous agreements between the parties. The key participants in this meeting will be the Israelis, the Palestinians, and their neighbors in the region. Secretary Rice will chair the meeting. She and her counterparts will review the progress that has been made toward building Palestinian institutions. They will look for innovative and effective ways to support further reform. And they will provide diplomatic support for the parties in their bilateral discussions and negotiations, so that we can move forward on a successful path to a Palestinian state.

Arab States have a pivotal role to play as well. They should show strong support

for President Abbas's Government and reject the violent extremism of Hamas. They should use their resources to provide much-needed assistance to the Palestinian people. Nations like Jordan and Egypt, which are natural gateways for Palestinian exports, should open up trade and—to create opportunities on both sides of the border.

Arab nations should also take an active part in promoting peace negotiations. Relaunching the Arab League initiative was a welcome first step. Now Arab nations should build on this initiative by ending the fiction that Israel does not exist, stopping the incitement of hatred in their official media, and sending cabinet-level visitors to Israel. With all these steps, today's Arab leaders can show themselves to be the equals of peacemakers like Anwar Sadat and King Hussein of Jordan.

The conflict in Gaza and the West Bank today is a struggle between extremists and moderates. And these are not the only places where the forces of radicalism and violence threaten freedom and peace. The struggle between extremists and moderates is also playing out in Lebanon, where Hizballah and Syria and Iran are trying to destabilize the popularly elected Government. The struggle is playing out in Afghanistan, where the Taliban and Al Qaida are trying to roll back democratic gains. And the struggle is playing out in Iraq, where Al Qaida, insurgents, and militia are trying to defy the will of nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a free future.

Ceding any of these struggles to extremists would have deadly consequences for the region and the world. So in Gaza and

the West Bank and beyond, the international community must stand with the brave men and women who are working for peace.

Recent days have brought a chapter of upheaval and uncertainty in the Middle East. But the story does not have to end that way. After the wave of killing by Hamas last month, a 16-year-old girl in Gaza City told a reporter, "The gunmen want to destroy the culture of our fathers and grandfathers. We will not allow them to do it." She went on, "I'm saying it's enough killing. Enough."

That young woman speaks for millions—in Gaza, the West Bank, in Israel, in Arab nations, and in every nation. And now the world must answer her call. We must show that in the face of extremism and violence, we stand on the side of tolerance and decency. In the face of chaos and murder, we stand on the side of law and justice. And in the face of terror and cynicism and anger, we stand on the side of peace in the Holy Land.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:09 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; Lt. Gen. Keith W. Dayton, USA, U.S. Security Coordinator to Israel and the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier captured and held captive by militants in Gaza since June 25, 2006.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

July 16, 2007

Dear _____ :

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-114) (the “Act”), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond August 1, 2007, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Joseph R. Biden, Jr., chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Robert C. Byrd, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Thomas P. Lantos, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; and David R. Obey, chairman, and Charles J. “Jerry” Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 17.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Norman E. Borlaug

July 17, 2007

Thank you all. Madam Speaker, thank you. Madam Speaker, Mr. Leader, members of the congressional leadership, members of the Iowa delegation, fighting Texas A&M Aggies, Dr. Borlaug, and his family.

All around us are testaments to our Republic’s young and storied history. Yet sometimes it takes a ceremony like this to remind us what a special place America is.

Ours is a land of hope and promise and compassion. And we see that compassion and promise in the man we honor today, a farmboy, educated in a one-room schoolhouse, who left the golden fields of Iowa to become known as “the man who fed the world.”

Many have highlighted Norman Borlaug’s achievements in turning ordinary staples such as wheat and rice into miracles that brought hope to millions. I particularly appreciated the story about a former Vice

President and fellow Iowan named Henry Wallace, who once came to observe Norman’s grain experiments up close. The Vice President looked around and then asked why a good Iowa boy like Norman wasn’t working on something to do with corn. [Laughter]

Norm Borlaug’s life has taken him from laboratories in America and Mexico to dusty villages throughout the developing world. He has consulted with Presidents and Prime Ministers in important countries like Pakistan and India. He’s helped inspire students at Texas A&M, where an institute bearing his name is dedicated to completing his life’s work. To this day Norman leads an active life—listen to a friend. He said, “Norman spends half his year in Texas, half his year in Mexico, and the other half wherever else he’s needed.” [Laughter] That is interesting math. I was going to say that I bet some of us wish

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.

Message to the Congress Transmitting an Executive Order Blocking
Property of Additional Persons in Connection With the National
Emergency With Respect to Iraq
July 17, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, as amended (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*)(IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order blocking property of persons determined to have committed, or to pose a significant risk of committing, an act or acts of violence that have the purpose or effect of threatening the peace or stability of Iraq or the Government of Iraq or undermining efforts to promote economic reconstruction and political reform in Iraq or to provide humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. I issued this order to take additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, and expanded in Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004. In these previous Executive Orders, I ordered various measures to address the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in that country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq.

My new order takes additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 and expanded in Executive Order 13315 by blocking the property and interests in property of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, to have committed, or to pose a significant risk of committing, an act or acts of vio-

lence that have the purpose or effect of threatening the peace or stability of Iraq or the Government of Iraq or undermining efforts to promote economic reconstruction and political reform in Iraq or to provide humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. The order further authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, to designate for blocking those persons determined to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, such an act or acts of violence or any person designated pursuant to this order, or to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order.

I delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, the authority to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of my order. I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

July 17, 2007.

NOTE: The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Discussion on Health Care in Landover, Maryland *July 18, 2007*

Today I've had a really good discussion about health care and health care problems with three businessowners and employees of the small businesses with Secretary Leavitt and Mark McClellan and Administrator Preston. I heard a common complaint, that health care is—the costs are too high; that small-business owners feel very pinched by these high costs; that they don't like the idea of having to make the decision between providing health care for their employees and not expanding their businesses.

And the fundamental question, given these frustrations, is, what do we do about it as a nation? There is an interesting debate taking place in Congress, and there is a philosophical divide. Some in Congress believe the best solution to solving the frustrations of uninsured and high costs for small businesses is to expand the role of government. I have a different point of view. I believe the best way to deal with the frustrations of high cost of health care and uninsured is to change the Tax Code, is to make health care in the private sector more affordable and more available.

The debate in Congress is now centering around what's called SCHIP, which is the children's health care insurance program. It was a program initially designed to help poor families afford health care for their children. I support that concept. As a matter of fact, the budget I submitted funds health care for poor children. Members of Congress have decided, however, to expand the program to include, in some cases, up to families earning \$80,000 a year, which would cause people to drop their private insurance in order to be involved with a government insurance plan.

And when you couple that with the idea that some have suggested of reducing the age at which you can be eligible for Medicare, you're beginning to get a sense of

a strategy to grow the government role in the provision of health care. I believe government cannot provide affordable health care. I believe it would cost—it would cause the quality of care to diminish. I believe there would be lines and rationing over time. If Congress continues to insist upon expanding health care through the SCHIP program, which, by the way, would entail a huge tax increase for the American people, I'll veto the bill.

Our proposal is a strategy that says to small-business owners and individuals, we want you, one, to be in charge of your health care system—health care decisions; and, two, we believe you're discriminated against in the Tax Code. You work for a large company, you get a tax break on your health care. You work for a small business and/or you're in the individual market, you don't get the same tax break. And that's unfair, and it's not right. And therefore, I have proposed to the United States Congress that we have a \$15,000 deductible for families and a \$7,500 deductible for individuals, all aimed at encouraging people to be able to afford insurance and aimed at the encouragement of the development of an individual market.

I believe strongly that small businesses ought to be afforded the chance to purchase health care across jurisdictional boundaries. Mike owns a small restaurant; he ought to be able to pool risk with restaurants in Texas or California or anywhere else, so he can better afford insurance. I want patients making decisions, not bureaucrats in Washington, DC. I want the system to benefit the individual, the small-business owner, not large insurance companies.

And I really do believe that government involvement in health care will lead to less quality care and rationing over time. And therefore, we proposed a plan. I urge the Congress to work with us on making the

Tax Code fair. I know there's different ideas as to whether or not there ought to be a \$15,000 deductible or a credit. I'm open-minded; I'm willing to listen. But what I'm not willing to listen to is a direct expansion of the Federal role in providing—a massive expansion of the Federal role in providing health care for individuals across the country.

Thank you all for having me. Cliff, thank you; you have a very interesting company here. I'm proud to be with small-business owners. I understand the role of small businesses in our society. We have worked to reduce taxes on small businesses because we want you to grow. And the fact that you are growing across the country collectively is one reason why our economy is so strong. And this economy is doing well. The unemployment rate is 4.5 percent; small businesses are growing; people are working; stock market is up; inflation is

down. And we're going to keep it that way. One way you keep it that way is to have good health care policy emanating out of Washington and another is to keep taxes low. And that's what we're going to do. So thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. at Man & Machine, Inc. Participating in the discussion were Mark B. McClellan, visiting senior fellow, AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies; Mike Kostinsky, owner, and Debbie Couch, manager, Sorrento of Arbutus; Clifton Broumand, president and chief executive officer, and Lenny Merryman, operations manager, Man & Machine, Inc.; and Phyllis Burlage, owner, and Lori Emmert, office manager, Burlage & Associates. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Import Safety Working Group *July 18, 2007*

The American people expect their Government to work tirelessly to make sure consumer products are safe. And that is precisely what my administration is doing.

I've called together key members of my Cabinet to review the procedures in place, the regulations in place, the practices in place to make sure that our food supply remains the safest in the world. The world is changing, and in order to make sure that we can continue to have the confidence of our consumers, that—we will continually review practices and procedures to assure the American consumer.

And so I've asked Mike Leavitt, the Secretary of HHS, to lead a task group that will report back to me in 60 days on a strategy that will review procedures in place and regulations in place to make sure that they're meeting the needs of a changing

world, that part of our strategy is we work with our countries from which we import goods to make sure that their procedures and practices will give us comfort. And finally, we'll be working with companies that import goods from around the world to make sure that their practices meet the high standards that we set for the United States.

This is a serious issue; food safety and consumer safety is a serious issue. We take it seriously, and we spend a lot of time on it in this administration. So, Michael, I want to thank you very much for taking on this task force. It's important for the American people to know their Government is on top of the situation and constantly reviewing procedures and practices. So thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Executive order establishing the Inter-

agency Working Group on Import Safety is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Resignation of Liza Wright as Director of Presidential Personnel

July 18, 2007

Liza Wright has served as a valuable member of my team for over 4½ years. As Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Personnel, she has been responsible for recruiting thousands of talented people to serve throughout the Fed-

eral Government. I value her judgment and appreciate her commitment to ensuring that we have the right individuals in place to serve the American people. Laura and I wish Liza, Karl, and their two daughters all the best.

Remarks on the Federal Budget and a Question-and-Answer Session in Nashville, Tennessee

July 19, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please sit down. Thank you all for coming. I'm glad you're here. Thanks, Darrell. Are you sure you want the Federal Government moving to Nashville? [*Laughter*]

Thanks for the invitation. I've got some thoughts I'd like to share with you, and then if you've got some questions, I'd love to answer some. My job is the Commander in Chief, and my job is the educator in chief. And part of being the educator in chief is to help our fellow citizens understand why I've made some of the decisions I've made that are—have affected your lives. And so thanks for letting me come.

Here we are in the Presidential ballroom—smart move, Darrell, to pick a Presidential ballroom. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry Laura is not with me. She is, first of all, a fabulous woman. She is a patient woman. And she is doing a marvelous job as the First Lady.

I want to thank Ralph Schulz, the president and CEO of the Nashville Area

Chamber. I thank the business leaders who have allowed me to come and visit with you. You do have an exciting city here. This, of course, is not my first time here. I can remember being here in the Opryland hotel complex when I was the owner of the Texas Rangers baseball team. And I can remember coming here for my mother and father's 50th wedding anniversary. They had a bunch of country and western singers sing to honor the 50th wedding anniversary, and it was a special time. And you're right: You've got a fabulous city here.

I have just come from the Harrington's company, a small business here, the Nashville Bun Company. It was a—[*applause*]. And I know that some of the employees from the Nashville Bun Company are here. Thank you for being here today. It's quite an operation. It's a—I love going to small businesses because the small-business sector of our economy is really what drives new job growth. If the small businesses are

doing well in America, America is doing well.

And so I went by to see this operation, and I want to spend a little time talking about small-business growth, if you don't mind. And so I want to thank the Harringtons; they're good, solid Tennessee citizens who are entrepreneurs, risk-takers, dreamers.

I don't intend to talk about this war against radicals and extremism in my remarks. If you've got questions, I'll be glad to answer them. I do want to, though, pay homage to those who wear the uniform. I'm honored to be with you. Thanks for serving the country.

Cordia asked me in the limousine coming over here, "Have you had any amazing experiences as the President?" And, yes. [Laughter] I told her there's no more amazing experience than to meet those who have served in harm's way and to realize the strength of spirit of American citizens who volunteer during a time of danger. And one of the young men I have met during my Presidency—I did so in my home State of Texas—who is with us today, a man who is recovering from terrible injury but has never lost the spirit of life, Kevin Downs. He's a good man. We're going to get him some new legs, and if he hurries up, he can outrun me on the South Lawn of the White House. Proud that Kevin's mom and dad are here with us too.

I want to spend a little time on the economy and, more particularly, the budget. You've got to worry about your budgets; we've got to worry about your budget too, since you're paying for it. [Laughter] There's a philosophical debate in Washington, and really it's kind of to calibrate how much money we need and how much money you need. Some say we need more of your money to expand the size and scope of government, or, they would argue, more of your money to balance the budget. Then there are those of me—like me in Washington who say, there's ample money in

Washington to meet priorities, and the more money you have in your pocket, the better off the economy is. In other words, let me put it bluntly: I think you can spend your money better than the Federal Government can spend your money.

Part of my job is to deal with problems. And I try to do so with a set of principles in mind. A principle is, you can spend your money better than the government can, but a further principle is, if you have more of your money in your pocket to save, invest, or spend, the economy is likely to—more likely to grow.

We were confronted—this administration has confronted some difficult economic times, particularly earlier in this administration. There was a recession. There were the terrorist attacks that affected the economy in a very direct way. There were corporate scandals which created some thousand—uncertainty about us—our system that needed to be corrected. And we responded to those problems by cutting taxes.

See, if you believe in the principle, the more money you have—and all of a sudden, you see some rough economic times, you act on the principle. So I worked with Congress, and we cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes. On one of these tax cuts, we said, okay, you deserve a tax cut, but you don't deserve a tax cut. It was the belief that everybody who pays taxes ought to get tax relief.

And as you can see from this chart here, this is what the tax cuts have met—meant in 2007. But ever since they have been enacted, it has got the same type of effect. So if you're a average taxpayer, you're receiving \$2,200 of tax relief. Some receive more; some receive less; but the average for all taxpayers is \$2,216.

See—and the fundamental question is, does it make sense to have the average taxpayer have that money in his or her pocket? I think it does for a lot of reasons. It encourages consumerism; it encourages investment; it enables people to be able to put money aside for a family's priorities.

You don't want the government setting your priorities; you set your own priorities. And if college happens to be a priority of yours, if you want to save for your little guys coming up, here's some money for you to put aside. That's what the tax relief meant.

There's obviously more tax relief for married families with children because there's the child credit. I thought it makes sense to say, if you've got a child, you ought to get credit for that child when it comes to the Tax Code to help you raise the children. You know, we put the—did something on the marriage penalty. Imagine a Tax Code that penalizes marriage. That's what the code did early on, and we mitigated the marriage penalty and the Tax Code. We ought to be encouraging marriage not discouraging marriage through bad tax policy.

The Nashville Bun Company folks are organized so that they pay tax at the individual income tax level. A lot of small-business owners know what I'm talking about. If you're a LLC or a subchapter S, you don't pay corporate tax; you pay tax at the individual income tax rates so that when you cut taxes on all who paid income taxes, you're really cutting taxes on small-business owners as well. And if most new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes a lot of sense if you're dealing with economic problems to cut the taxes on those who are creating new jobs.

The more money in the small business's treasury, the more likely it is they'll be able to expand. And when they expand, the more likely it is they'll be hiring new people. We also put incentives in the Tax Code that said if you purchase equipment—you're a small-business owner and you purchase equipment, like the English muffin rolling deal or whatever you want to call it—[laughter]—getting out of my lane here—[laughter]—we provide an incentive in the Tax Code to encourage you to purchase equipment. That not only helps your business become more productive and more competitive; the more productive and

competitive you become, the more likely it is you'll be able to sustain growth and, therefore, continue hiring.

But it also means that the English muffin manufacturing company—English muffin machine manufacturing company is more likely to have work. In other words, there's an effect; the Tax Code can affect commerce. And that's exactly what we did, and we cut the taxes, and it's worked. This economy is strong. Unemployment has dropped. Since April of—August of 2003, we've added over 8.2 million new jobs. Productivity is up. People are working.

People are working. And that's what we want. We want people to say, I'm making a living for my family, and I've got more money in my pocket so I can make decisions for the best of my family. And I'm going to spend a little time, if you've got any questions, on how to keep it going strong.

But I now want to talk about the budget. People say, you can't balance the budget if you cut taxes. That's one of the arguments in Washington, DC. I think all of us would like to balance the budget. But they're saying, "I'm going to raise your money—raise your taxes so we can balance the budget." There's a flaw in that argument, and that is, most of the time they raise taxes on you, they figure out new ways to spend the money, as opposed to reckon it to deficit reduction. I've got a better idea that I want to share with you and share with the American people, and that is, the best way to balance the budget is to keep taxes low, growing the economy, which will yield more tax revenue into the economy. And it works, so long as you hold spending down. And that's the most important thing, is to keep taxes low and spending down.

And I got a chart here I'm about to show you. Yes, there you go. And so I submitted a budget based upon no tax increases and being fiscally wise with your money. And here's the record of that plan. As you can see there, we had a deficit

of \$413 billion in 2004. This economy started picking up steam, kept the taxes low, and tax revenues started coming in, and then the deficit dropped to 318, and it dropped to 245, and it's anticipated it's going to be 205 in the year 2007. You can see the projection. We've done this without raising your taxes. We've done this by saying, keep taxes low; keep the economy growing; and be wise about how we spend your money.

I project—we project if we can continue to have fiscal sanity in Washington, DC, that we'll be in surplus by the year 2012. That's where we're headed. And I believe we can do so without penalizing the small-business sector—or the large-business sector, for that matter. And particularly, we can do so without penalizing the families and the individual taxpayers in the country. But that's the argument.

Now, the Democrats have submitted their budget. Put up the next chart. Oops, that's my budget. This is nondefense discretionary spending. This is what we propose, see. We go to Congress and say, here's our budget proposals. We're going to make sure our troops have what it takes to win this war against these extremists and radicals. That's what the American people expect. But this is—[*applause*].

So this is my proposal, and I'd like to show you what the Democrats have proposed. Here's their proposal. They've added billions of dollars in new spending on the budget they submitted. The reason I'm—this is not a—I'm not bashing anybody. I'm just—what I'm here to do is educate you on the different approaches to how we're dealing with your money when it comes to the Federal budget. And as you notice, there is a—quite a disparity about the different approaches of how much money ought to be spent. You can't pay for the red lines unless you're willing to raise taxes on the American people. I would call that a return to the tax-and-spend days. I have showed you our budget to get to surplus,

and it requires this level of increase in spending—the blue.

The people now in charge of the House and the Senate have submitted their own budgets, their own blueprint for how we should spend your money, and it's reflected in the red lines. Now, you can't grow the economy fast enough to get to the red lines. And therefore, the only way to do so is to run up your taxes.

I'd like you to see the next chart, if you don't mind. This is a—the tax increases inherent in a different approach. As you can see, will raise taxes 392 billion over 5 years and with a \$1.8 trillion increase in taxes in order to make the budget projections that they have spent. I would warn the Nashville Bun Company to be very careful with this kind of approach because you can't keep making buns if the Democrats take all your dough. [*Laughter*]

I don't disparage anybody; there's just a difference of opinion. Part of my job is to make it clear to people that there are choices to make. And people got to understand this budget process. You know, we're throwing around huge numbers in Washington, DC. And the reason I've come today is to clarify the difference of opinion so you can make your own choice about the right approach. I've obviously got my choice, but the American people need to know the facts so they can make up their mind as the best approach to dealing with the finances of the United States today and tomorrow and for the next decade to come. This is the tax increases that will be required under one vision of dealing with your money, and here's my view of what we ought to do on taxes—and of course, the comparison. [*Laughter*]

We don't need to raise your taxes in order to balance the budget. We shouldn't raise your taxes in order to balance the budget. As a matter of fact, we ought to keep your taxes as low as possible to make sure this economy continues to grow. So you'll watch this budget process and the appropriations process unfold here. And it's

really important for the leadership in Congress to pass the appropriations bills—that's the spending bills—as quickly as possible. There's 12 spending bills that are supposed to get to the President's desk.

And they need to be passing these things; they need to be doing the people's business in Washington, DC. They need to have an honest debate about the appropriations for the different departments that they're dealing with—an open, honest debate. They ought not to be trying to slip special spending measures in there without full transparency and full debate; those are called entitlements. And they ought to be wise about how they spend your money. And they ought to get these appropriations bills to my desk as quickly as possible and not delay.

Now, I will tell you that there's an interesting relationship between the President and the Congress. The President [Congress]* has got the right to initiate spending bills, and they do; they've got the right to decide how much money is spent. And I've got the right to accept whether or not the amount of money they spend is the right amount. That's what's called the veto. If they overspend or if they try to raise your taxes, I'm going to veto their bills.

So I'd like—that's why I appreciate you letting me come and give you a little budget discussion. And—but I thought it would be appropriate, if you don't mind, to answer some of your questions, any question; I'd be glad to answer them. I've been there for 6½ years; if I can't answer them, I can figure out how not to answer them. [Laughter]

Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman.

Health Care Reform/Energy

Q. Your administration has been pro-small business. How do we continue that philosophy in Washington?

The President. Look, here's the thing that the country—first of all, tax policy helps

small businesses. It's—if a small-business owner has got certainty in the Tax Code that taxes will remain low, it causes people to be more interested in investment.

The biggest issue I hear facing small-business owners, however, is health care. We got—a lot of small-business owners are really having problems dealing with the rising cost of health care. When I talk to risk takers and entrepreneurs, I find that people have a lot of anxiety about how to deal with health care for two reasons: one, whether they can afford it; and two, they have this great sense of obligation and—to their employees. In other words, they want their employees—really good CEOs or owners of small businesses care deeply about the life of their employees.

There is a, as you can imagine—and this is the great thing about our democracy—there tends to be differences of opinion. And we got a big difference of opinion on health care. And I would like to tell you where I'm worried—my worries and my recommendations. I'm worried that there are people in Washington who want to expand the scope of the Federal Government in making health care decisions on behalf of businesses and individuals. There is a debate in Washington, DC, now taking place on whether or not to expand what's called SCHIP, which is a health care program designed primarily for poor children. I support the concept of providing health care to help poor children, just like I support the concept of Medicaid to help provide health care for the poor.

The problem, as I see it, is this: that the people—some in Washington want to expand the eligibility for those available for SCHIP, in some instances up to \$80,000 per family, which really means, if you think about it, that there will be an incentive for people to switch from private health insurance to government health insurance. I view this as the beginning salvo of the encroachment of the Federal Government on the health care system. Now, the Federal Government has got a huge role in

* White House correction.

health care—as I say, Medicare, Veterans Affairs, Medicaid, poor children. But I am deeply worried about—further expansion will really lead to the undermining of the private health care system, which would take the greatest health care system in the world and convert it into a mediocre health care system.

Now, you can't—I am not only am I against what they're trying to do; I am for something else, and I'd like to share with you what it is. First, there is a common goal, and we all share the goal in Washington—is to make sure health care is available and affordable. If you're worried about available and affordable health care, there are some practical things you can do, like stopping these junk lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice and forcing professionals to practice defensive medicine so they can defend themselves in a court of law.

Secondly, small businesses ought to have the right to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries. If you're a restaurant owner in Nashville, Tennessee, you ought to be allowed to pool risk. In other words, you ought to be allowed to put your employees in a larger risk pool with a restaurant, say, in Texas or in Minnesota. Part of the problem small businesses have is they are unable to get the economies of purchase that big businesses are able to get because they have got such a small number of employees. And so we ought to be—encourage the pooling of asset—the pooling of risk so small businesses can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses get to do.

Thirdly, I'm a strong proponent of health savings accounts. Health savings accounts are—is an insurance product that has got high-risk deductibles or high deductibles for catastrophic illness, plus the ability for an employee to be able to put money in—with employer's help—put money into the account tax free, save tax free, and withdraw money tax free. And the reason I am is because I believe one of the real problems we have in health care is that

there is no market, in essence. In other words, somebody else pays your bills; we have a third-party payer system. I think you know what I'm talking about. You submit your claims; somebody else pays the bills.

I don't know many of you have ever asked the doc, "What's your price?" Or, you know, "How good are you?" Or, "What's your neighbor's price?" You certainly do that in most aspects of your consumer decisionmaking; you think about price and you think about quality, but not in health care. And the reason why is, is that somebody else has been paying the bills under our traditional system. What health savings accounts do—and products like it—is that it puts the consumer, the patient in charge in the decisionmaking. And in order to make that effective, there needs to be more price transparency and more quality transparency in the marketplace. In other words, when people shop, it helps affect the cost of a good, or a service in this case.

And so since we're such huge health care providers, one of the things we're working with is large corporations and entities to say, look, you've got to post your price to providers and hospitals. It creates some angst, but nevertheless, it is a much better alternative than the Federal Government making all decisions. So one of the things we're trying to do from a philosophical perspective is to encourage more consumerism in health care.

Another thing that needs to happen in health care is there needs to be better information technology in health care. The way I like to make this point is that this is an industry that still—where a lot of the paperwork is still filled out by hand. Most businesses have been able to use these fantastic new technologies to be able to make their companies more productive—but not health care. You got doctors writing prescriptions. They don't know how to write very well anyway, and secondly, it's easy to lose paperwork.

And so the health care industry lags behind when it comes to the modernization of—that a lot of other industries have been through by the advent of information technology. There's a role for the Government. Remember, we're huge providers of health care. The Veterans Affairs Department, for example, now has got electronic medical records for each person covered through Veterans Affairs. So somebody can just take your chip, show it into the—run it into the computer, and out comes the medical records. And they estimate that as we help develop a common language so that IT can take hold in the health care system, that we can save up to 30 percent of the costs in the current system.

But finally, I want to share another idea with you. They've got—those folks up there who want to spread further government into health care have got their ideas—and you've got to beat a bad idea with a good idea, in my judgment. And I want to share with you another idea that seems to make sense.

If you work for a corporation, you get your health care free. There's a tax break for you. If you're an individual, you have to pay for your health care. People are not treated the same in the Tax Code. If you're working for a big company, you come out pretty good when it comes to health care. It's a tax-free benefit. If you're out there on your own, you got to purchase your health care. It's an after-tax purchase. If you're working for a small business that has trouble affording health care and they have copayments, for example, a lot of times the employee is not treated as fairly in the Tax Code as someone who works for a larger company.

And so I propose that we change the Tax Code, we treat everybody fairly. For example, if you're a married couple—a married couple, yes, you ought to get a \$15,000 deduction, no matter where you get your health care, so long as you then use the savings to purchase health care. If you're single, you ought to get a \$7,500

tax deduction. So it's like a mortgage deduction off your income tax. But it levels the playing field. And then what ends up happening is the market starts to respond as more individual decisionmakers are now able to use the fairness in the Tax Code to demand product.

Part of the problem we have is there is no individual market that is developed. If you're out there trying to find your health care on your own, it's very difficult to find competitive—something that you can live with, something that's competitive. And we believe that changing the Tax Code will help. There are some in Congress who believe a better approach would be a tax credit. I happen to believe that deductions are a better way to go, but I know that either approach is better than the nationalization of health care. And so one of the real issues that we got—[applause]—anyway, thanks for the question.

Don't get me started on energy. If you're a small-business person, you better worry about the cost of energy. And that's why I have said that it is in our national interest to diversify away from oil. It's in our national interest to promote alternative fuels, and I believe we can do so with current technology and new technology. It's in our national security interests that we're not heavily dependent on oil. I think you know what I mean by that. I mean, there's a lot of parts of the world where we buy oil that don't like us. That's not in the national security interest of the country.

It's in our economic security interest to diversify because when the demand for crude oil goes up in a developing country, for example, it causes the price of crude oil to go up, unless there's a corresponding increase in supply. And when that price of crude goes up, it runs up the price of your gasoline. And therefore, it is interest—in our interest to promote ethanol, for example, or biodiesel as ways to power our automobiles. It also happens to be good for the environment that we diversify away from crude oil.

On the electricity side, I'm a big proponent of nuclear power. I think if you're genuinely interested in dealing with climate change, you have to be a supporter of nuclear power because nuclear power will enable us to grow our economy. And if we grow our economy, it'll mean we'll be able to afford new technologies, and at the same time, there are zero greenhouse gas emissions.

And so to answer your question—obviously, a little long-winded—[laughter]—is, good tax policy, good health care policy, and good energy policy will make it more likely that these—this small-business sector of ours will remain strong.

Yes, sir. Go ahead and scream. You don't have to—

Immigration Reform

Q. Sir, thank you very much for your service to our country so far.

The President. Thank you.

Q. We appreciate that very much.

The President. Appreciate it.

Q. My question is, in light of the immigration bill, I'm not understanding exactly how if, with the amnesty of this many people coming in and then with the still concern about the borders being somewhat porous, how do we really achieve your desired effect in this, which, you know, would be, I guess, for obviously taking care of them, but yet afford not to be a big bulk—

The President. Yes.

Q. —sort of expense and the lack of the safety of the border?

The President. Thank you for bringing that question up. It's a very important question that the Nation is confronting. You can sit down. [Laughter]

Here are the commonsense objectives that need to be addressed when it comes to immigration. First, we need to enforce the border. A sovereign state—[applause]—it is the job of a state, of a nation, to enforce its borders. That's not an easy task. I'm real familiar with the border. I was a border-State Governor. I understand how

difficult it is to fully enforce a border. But nevertheless, as a result of congressional action and the administration working with the Congress, we're making substantial progress on modernizing the border.

Now—and the—you go down to Arizona, for example; you can't like the border. Man, it's just desert. It is, like, wide open desert. And so what you're beginning to see is new infrastructure, new technologies, some fencing, berms to prevent automobiles from moving, all aimed at making the Border Patrol agency, which we are now doubling on the border, more effective, okay? And we're making progress. The number of arrests over the last 12 months are down significantly. That is one way to measure whether or not people are making it into our country illegally. Last year, we arrested and sent back 1.1 million people on the southern border. Now, you divide that by 365. There is active participation on the border to do that which the American people expect us to do.

Secondly, you're about to find—I think the country is about to find out that we're going to need hard-working, decent people to do jobs that Americans aren't doing. And it's—that is why, for the sake of the economy, I am—support a temporary-worker plan.

There are people who are coming—look, let me start over. There are people in our hemisphere whose families are really hungry, particularly compared to the lifestyle we have in America, and they want to work to feed their families. And—but they're willing to do jobs Americans don't want to do. That's just—that's reality. Some say, "Well, force Americans to do the jobs they're unwilling to do." Well, that's not the way the system works. And yet there are people willing to come, to get in the fields and the agricultural sector. There are people willing to pick apples in Washington, you know, hitting those vegetable fields in California. And they want to do so because they want to feed their families.

And the interesting problem we have, sir, is that because they're motivated by the same thing you're motivated by, I suspect—love of family and desire to provide for your family—they will go to great lengths to get into the country. You think about somebody who's willing to get stuffed in the bottom of an 18-wheeler and pay one of these thugs that are smuggling them into the country to do work Americans aren't doing. So I've always felt like a temporary-worker program will be—recognize an economic reality and also help keep pressure off the border. It's a long, hard border to enforce.

By the way, in my State of Texas, when it comes to the fencing, I would strongly urge those who advocate it not to go down there and go face to face with some of these Texas ranchers down there. They're really not interested in having the Federal Government on their property. See, most of our property down in Texas is private land. The farther you go west, it's Federal land.

And the reason I say that, it just shows how difficult it is to do what some assume can be done, which is, like, totally seal off the border. One way to make it easier for our Border Patrol is to have this temporary-worker program with verifiable identification and say, yes, you can come for a limited period of time, and then you're going home.

Now, the—I suspect I'm all right so far with some of those who worry about immigration reform. The other question is that—I'm not trying to elicit applause—[laughter]—the other question is, there are about 11 million people who have been here over time who are working—some not working—but they're here. And what do we do with them? Now, you—some would say that if you don't kick them out, that's called amnesty. I disagree.

First of all, I think it's impractical to kick somebody out. I feel like if you make a person pay a fine—in other words, a cost for having broken our law—I agree with

those who say that if you're an automatic citizen, it undermines the rule of law; I agree with that argument. I have a little problem with the argument, though, that says, if you pay a fine, if you prove you're a good citizen, if you've paid your back taxes, if you go home and reregister and come back, that you ought to be allowed to get in the back of the line. I don't think that's amnesty, but that's a lot of where the argument came.

This is a difficult subject for a lot of folks. And I understand it's difficult. I was disappointed, of course, that the Senate bill didn't get moving. I think it's incumbent upon those of us in Washington, DC, to deal with hard problems now and not pass them on to future Congresses. And so, as you know, the bill failed, and I can't make a prediction to you at this point, sir, where it's going to head. I can make you a prediction, though, that pretty shortly, people are going to be knocking on people's doors saying, "Man, we're running out of workers." This economy is strong. Remember, we've got a national unemployment rate of 4.5 percent. A lot of Americans are working, and there are still jobs Americans don't want to do. And the fundamental question is, will we be able to figure out a way to deal with the problem?

Let me say one other point. I feel strongly about this issue. I do not like a system that has encouraged predators to treat people as chattel. We have a system that has encouraged the onset of *coyotes*—those are the smugglers—and they prey upon these poor people. And they charge them a lot of money to smuggle through routes. And as a result of that system, there is innkeepers that charge exorbitant fees. There's document forgers. You're a small-business guy out here in Tennessee, and you're trying to run your nursery or whatever it is, and somebody shows up—you're not a document checker; the Government can't expect the small-business owners to be able to determine whether or not the Social Security card has been forged or not. We

need a new system. The system we've got is broken. And therefore, the fundamental question is, are we going to be able to deal with it?

Let me say one other thing, and this is important for America to remember too. We have been a fabulous country when it comes to assimilating people. You know, ours is a country that has got such a fabulous spirit to it that the newcomer can come, work hard, obey law, and realize dreams. And that's what America has been about. And in my judgment, that's what America should always be about: the idea of people realizing dreams. And that's what—so the question people say is, "Well, certain people can't assimilate." But there has been that argument throughout our history, that certain people of certain ethnicity or certain backgrounds can't assimilate. We must never lose faith in our capacity for people to assimilate. It's what has made us great in the past and what will make us great in the future.

And so thank you for bringing up a tough subject for people in Washington.

Yes, sir.

Music Industry

Q. Mr. President, Al McCree with Altissimo Records representing the music industry. Music is one of our largest exports the country has. Currently, every country in the world—except China, Iran, North Korea, Rwanda, and the United States—pay a statutory royalty to the performing artists for radio and television air play. Would your administration consider changing our laws to align it with the rest of the country—the world?

The President. Help. [Laughter] Maybe you've never had a President say this—I have, like, no earthly idea what you're talking about. [Laughter] Sounds like we're keeping interesting company, you know? [Laughter]

Look, I'll give you the old classic: Contact my office, will you? [Laughter] I really don't—I'm totally out of my lane. I like

listening to country music, if that helps. [Laughter]

You've got a question? Yes. You can yell at this thing.

War on Terror/Progress in Iraq/Spread of Democracy

Q. Mr. President, I appreciate your position on the war in Iraq. We've got a debate that's going on as much about should we stay or should we come home. Is there a way to change the tenor of the debate to determine how we win in Iraq?

The President. Thank you. The hardest decision a President makes are the decisions of war and peace, are putting kids, men and women in harm's way. And I have made two such decisions after we were attacked. And I did so because I firmly believe we're at war with ideologues who use murder as a tool to achieve political objectives, and that the most important responsibility is to protect—for the Government is to protect the American people from harm and, therefore, went on the offense against these radicals and extremists.

We went on the offense wherever we can find them; we are on the offense wherever we can find them. And of course, in two theaters in this global war, we have sent troops—a lot of troops into harm's way.

Afghanistan still is a part of this war on terror, and a lot of the debate in Washington, of course, is focused on Iraq, as it should be. But I do want our fellow citizens to understand we've still got men and women in uniform sacrificing in Afghanistan, and their families are just as worried about them as the families of those in Iraq.

The short-term solution against this enemy is to keep the pressure on them, keep them on the move, and bring them to justice overseas so we don't have to face them here. In other words, no quarter—[applause].

I would just tell you, you can't hope for the best with these people. You can't assume that if we keep the pressure off, everything will be fine. Quite the contrary. When there wasn't enough pressure on, they were able to bunch up in safe haven and plot and plan attacks that killed 3,000 of our citizens. And they have been active ever since—not here on our soil, but they've got a global reach. They have been trying to kill the innocent.

Of course, I made the decision to go in to remove Saddam Hussein. I firmly believe that this world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power, and I believe America is more secure.

The long-term solution for your grandkids' sake is to defeat their ideology of hate with an ideology of light, and that's called liberty and democracy. The fight in Iraq is evolving. We've been through several stages in this difficult theater. First was the liberation stage. Secondly was a—the nascent political movement, reflected in the fact that 12 million Iraqis went to the polls under a modern Constitution. And then a thinking enemy, primarily Al Qaida, blew up—used their violent tactics to blow up holy sites of religious people trying to incite—incite sectarian violence, and they succeeded. In other words, at the end of 2005, when the 12 million people voted, and we were training the Iraqis to take more responsibility, I felt like we would be in a much different force posture as the year went on. That's what I felt.

But the Commander in Chief always, one, listens to the military commanders on the ground, and two, remains flexible in the decisionmaking. The enemy succeeded in causing there to be murderous outrage. And so I had a decision to make, and that was, do we step back from this capital of this new democracy—remember, forums of government will ultimately determine the peace, and that a government based upon the principles of democracy and liberty is the best way to defeat those killers who incited this sectarian violence in Iraq, the

same ones—people ask me, “Are these really Al Qaida?” Well, they have sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden; what else are they? They are coldblooded killers who have declared publicly that they would like to drive us out of Iraq to develop a safe haven from which to launch further attacks. And I believe we better be taking their word seriously in order to do our duty to defend.

And so we're now watching this democracy unfold. The decision I had to make was, do we continue to stand and help this democracy grow, or do we stand back and hope that the violence that was happening in the capital doesn't spread anywhere else? I made the decision that it was in our interest, the Nation's security interest, instead of stepping back from the capital, to actually send more troops into the capital to help this young democracy have time to grow and to make hard decisions so it can become an ally in the war on terror not a safe haven from which Al Qaida could launch further attacks.

And it's hard work, and it's tough work. And it's tough work because there are ruthless people who have declared their intent to attack us again, trying to prevent success.

And I can understand why the American people are tired of this. Nobody likes war. Nobody likes to turn on their TV set and see needless death at the hands of these extremists. But I want to remind our fellow citizens that much of the violence they're seeing on their TV screens in Iraq is perpetuated by the very same people that came and killed 3,000 of our citizens. People sworn—not the exact same person; those are dead who got on the airplanes—but they have sworn allegiance to Usama, just like the killers in Iraq have sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden. And so I listen to David Petraeus, and of course, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense have made the recommendation to send more in.

Victory is—I remember a guy asking me at one of these town halls, he said, “Well,

when are you going to, like—when are they going to surrender,” or “When is this thing going to end?” He looked like an older fellow, I think, and it was like he was remembering the USS *Missouri*. This is an ideological struggle, more akin to the cold war. What makes it different is, is that we have an enemy that is murderous and is willing to use asymmetrical warfare.

And so there is not a moment of ending. But there will be a moment in Afghanistan and Iraq where these Governments will be more able to support their people, more able to provide basic services, more able to defend their neighborhoods against radical killers. It's going to be a while though. And there's a lot of debate in Washington; yes, so how do you change the debate? Just keep talking about it. Today David Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, who is our Ambassador in Iraq, are briefing Congress about the difficulties we face and the progress we're making.

Let me give you one example. I'm optimistic. We'll succeed unless we lose our nerve. We will succeed. Liberty has got the capacity to conquer tyranny every time. Every time we've tried, it has worked. It takes a while—[*applause*—here's the definition of success. The enemy, by the way, defines success as, can they pull off a car bombing. If we ever allow ourselves to get in a position where it's “no car bombings, therefore we're successful,” we've just handed these killers a great victory.

So there's a Province called Anbar Province, and this is the Province out in western Iraq, where it's mainly Sunni and where Al Qaida had declared its intention to really drive us out and establish a safe haven, with the declared intention of spreading—using it as a base to spread their ideology throughout the Middle East, as well as a safe haven from which to make sure that they inflicted enough pain on us that we actually help them by leaving. I know this is farfetched for some Americans to think that people think this way; this is the nature

of the enemy. And they are an enemy, and they're real, and they're active.

So Anbar Province was declared lost by some last November. And literally, we were—there was an intel report that came out, and the person was not very encouraging, and some of the press, it was the beginning of the end for the policy in Iraq. And we started working the issue hard. That's why I sent some more marines into Anbar Province. It turns out that people were sick and tired of Al Qaida. Al Qaida had no vision. You see, our citizens have got to remember that most mothers want their children to grow up in peace; that's universal. Most mothers want something—it's just something instinctive when it comes to motherhood and children, where they want a child to have a chance to succeed in life, to have a chance to grow up in a peaceful world.

Well, it turns out that many people in Anbar hate violence. They want something better. They may not—they may distrust their central Government because it's new. Remember, Saddam Hussein sowed great seeds of distrust during his time as a tyrant. It takes time to get over distrust and to develop trust with a citizen.

But there's something instinctive involved with people when it comes to normal life. And they got sick of this Al Qaida threat and bullying and torturing. These people don't remain in power because they're loved; they remain in power because they're feared. And all of a sudden, tribal sheikhs begin to turn on them. And Al Qaida is now on the run in Anbar Province. What's happening is there's two types of political reconciliation, one from the bottom up, where grassroots people just get sick of something, and with our help, they're dealing with the problem. And then there's reconciliation from the top down, as you watch Government wrestle with the different factions inside their legislature. And we expect progress on both fronts because the military can't do it alone. But the decision I made was that neither front

will work, neither aspect of reconciliation will work if there was violence in the country's capital. And that's what you're seeing unfold.

And so you'll see a debate in Washington, DC, here about troop levels and funding those troop levels. First, whatever the troop level is, it needs to be funded by the United States Congress. Our troops need all the support they can get when they're in harm's way. And secondly, most Americans, I hope, understand that the best way to make decisions on troop levels is based upon the sound advice of people in the field, not based upon the latest focus group or political poll.

I'd like to share a story with you, and then I'll answer some questions. I'm not attempting to have just a few questions by giving you really long answers. It's called the filibuster. [Laughter] You know what's interesting about my Presidency, another interesting aspect of the Presidency, is the friendship I had with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan and his successor, a man named Prime Minister Abe. What makes it interesting, to me at least, is the fact that my dad fought the Japanese as a young guy. I think he—I know he went in right after high school, became a Navy fighter pilot, went overseas, and fought them. They were the sworn enemy. He was willing to risk his life, like thousands of others did, because the Japanese were our bitter enemy.

And here we are, 60 years later or so, that I am at the table with the leader of the former enemy working to keep the peace, whether it be in North Korea, or—[applause]—let me finish here—or thanking the—or working with the Japanese who committed self-defense forces to help the young democracy in Iraq because they understand the power of liberty to be transformative. Liberty has got the ability to change an enemy into an ally. Liberty has got a powerful ability to transform regions from hostility and hopelessness to regions of hope. And it's hard work, and it takes

a long time, but it has been repeated throughout modern history, whether it be on the continent of Europe or in the Far East. And it can happen again if Americans don't lose faith in the great power of freedom.

And so this is an interesting time. We're in the beginning—trying to get to your question—we're in the beginning of a long ideological struggle that's going to take patience, perseverance, and faith in certain basic values. I'm a big believer in the universality of liberty. I believe deep in everybody's soul—I'll take it a step further—I believe in an Almighty, and I believe a gift from that Almighty to each man, woman, and child is the desire to be free. And I believe that exists in everybody's soul is the desire to be free. I wasn't surprised when the 12 million people showed up. I was pleased, but I wasn't surprised, because I believe, if given a chance, people will take a—will choose liberty. Now, having a form of government that reflects that is hard work, and it takes time. And not every democracy, of course, will look like us, nor should it. But there's just some basic principles inherent in free governments that will enable us to be more likely to be secure and peaceful over the next years. And that's what I've been thinking about.

Yes, sir.

Border Security/War on Terror

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. —the last, I'd say about 15 or 20 minutes about terrorism and Al Qaida, and I expect—[inaudible]—feel very bullish when it comes to that subject. But what I want to know is, this is an open society, right? It's supposed to be open society. People come from every which way, most of them very decent and stuff, but like you say, Al Qaida and the terrorists. What about the borders? I always see on TV they jumping the borders, Spanish people jumping at borders, and could it be some time—

it could be Al Qaida jumping the borders—

The President. Yes.

Q. —with—[inaudible]—or anything. Our borders are not secure, like they should be, I don't think. I mean, it's up to you; you're my President. I'm supposed to ask you.

The President. Okay, you are. [Laughter] Well, listen, thank you very much for that. Listen, the reason—one—a reason to have a verifiable temporary-worker card is to make it more likely that if Al Qaida does try to come across the border illegally, that we can catch them.

You ask a very good question. The other half of the equation, by the way, in securing the homeland, is to take measures necessary to catch people—know who's coming in and why, and catch them before they come in. It's a very legitimate question. On one hand, we stay on the offense; in the long run, defeat their ideology with a better ideology. But we got to secure the homeland, and we're working hard to do so. One of the interesting management challenges was when we merged these different Departments all into the Department of Homeland Security, and I must say, it's gone pretty well. It's hard to take separate cultures and merge them into a common culture, working for a common purpose, but—it takes time again—but we're making good progress on that, we really are. Are we perfect? No. Are there flaws? Yes. But we're making—can I say, the country is more secure than it was before 9/11? Absolutely.

Now it's interesting, sir. I have made some—I made one—a couple controversial decisions about how to better find information about who might be coming to our country so that we can anticipate. The best way to be able to protect ourselves from Al Qaida—no question, good border control, but it's through good intelligence as well. I mean, if we can learn intention before somebody begins to make a move, we're more likely to be able to say we're

a lot more—we'll be able to say we're a lot more secure.

And that's why one of the controversial programs that I suggested was that we take a known phone number from one of these Al Qaida types or affiliates—and you can find them. We get them all kinds of ways. We're picking people up off the battlefield, for example, in one of these theaters I just describe to you. They may have a laptop. On the laptop might be some phone numbers. Off the phone numbers may be somebody else's. I mean, there's ways to get information as a result of some of the operations we have taken overseas. And my attitude is, if we do have a number of a suspected Al Qaida and/or affiliate and that person is making a phone call to someone in the United States, we ought to understand why; we ought to know.

And so the reason I bring this up to you is that, yes, enforcing the border and being wise about how we enforce the border is an important of trying to detect—find out whether terrorists are coming into our country to inflict harm. Same with airports. You got to take off the shoes? Well, there's a reason. It's because we're doing our job that you expect us to do about—trying to affect the security of all ports of entry. But as well, we're beefing up our intelligence and trying to get a better handle on the actions somebody may be taking before they do so.

It requires enormous cooperation. We spend a lot of time in your Government working with other nations. Curiously enough, as a result of Al Qaida's activities in other countries, it's caused people to say, "I think we better work together more closely." And we do. There's a lot of information sharing that goes on between governments; a lot of intelligence sharing that goes on. And there's better communication now between the intelligence services and the law enforcement services. And one of

the reasons why we had to pass the PATRIOT Act was because there was a prohibition about people sharing information between intel and law, and that made no sense in this new world in which we live.

I just want to assure you that I fully understand the need to make sure assets are deployed properly to protect you, and I fully understand the need to safeguard the civil liberties of the United States of America. One of the worst things that would happen is this enemy, in trying to respond to them, would force us to lose part of our very soul. And I believe we're able to achieve the—take the necessary steps to protect you and, at the same time, protect the civil liberties that Americans hold so dearly to their heart.

Yes, ma'am.

U.S. Foreign Aid/Situation in Darfur

Q. Okay, thank you.

The President. The price is right. [Laughter]

Q. Come on down. [Laughter] I am here representing—Nashville is a strong city of lots of communities of faith, and as a part of that, there are lots of people going back and forth and caring about the people of Africa. And I want to first thank you; I know that your administration has taken lots of initiative on AIDS and malaria nets, and we really appreciate that. And then I—my hard question is, what we can we do to stop the genocide in Darfur?

The President. Thank you very much. For starters, the fact that Americans care about people in faraway lands is a great testimony to our compassion. I believe good foreign—you've heard about one aspect of our foreign policy—two aspects, really, when you think about it. One is the combination of military and diplomatic assets trying to achieve objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. Another is the working coalitions. And by the way, there are a lot of other countries in Afghanistan and Iraq. They don't get nearly the credit they deserve, but a lot of other people besides

us understand that this is the beginning of a long ideological struggle, and now is the time to make the hard decisions so little guys in the future don't have to deal with the consequences of that.

The other aspect of foreign policy is, I believe to whom much is given, much is required. And people say, "Well, we got plenty of problems in America. Why do you worry about something going on overseas?" First of all, we're wealthy. We're spending enormous sums of money. If we set proper priorities, we can not only help our own citizens, but I believe it helps our soul and our conscience, and I believe we have a moral obligation to help others.

And so when it comes to—let me talk about HIV/AIDS. A lot of people don't know what we're doing. And the United States has really taken the lead in saying to other nations, here is a problem that we can help solve, and therefore, follow us. We picked 17 of the most deeply affected nations, most of which are on the continent of Africa, and you provided \$15 billion to get antiretroviral drugs in the hands of faith givers, community givers, nurses, to save lives. And in 3 short years, the United States of America has taken the lead to getting antiretroviral to people, and it's gone from 30—50,000 people to over 1.1 million people receiving antiretroviral drugs.

It is—conditions of life matter in this struggle, by the way, against extremists and radicals. Where you find repressive forms of government, you're likely to find somebody who's frustrated. So they can become recruited by these cynical murderers and then become suiciders. Or where you find disease and pestilence or hunger, the conditions of life matter at whether or not the future of the world is going to be stable.

We're very much involved in a Malaria Initiative—Laura is really active in that—where the Government is spending \$1.6 billion aiming to get mosquito nets and sprays and information to save lives. There

are too many young babies around the world dying from something that we can prevent, and it's in the national interest to do that.

Interestingly enough, a lot of the deliverers, those who are delivering the help are the—are from the faith community, people who are volunteering their time saying, what can I do? How can I love my neighbor? And it's really heart-warming.

She asked about Darfur. First, we—as this administration has proven, it's possible to achieve some success in Sudan with the north-south agreement that we were able to achieve with Ambassador Danforth at the time. We are now making—working to make sure that holds by insisting that the revenue-sharing agreement of the oil on Sudan is effective. She's referring to Darfur.

I made the decision not to send U.S. troops unilaterally into Darfur. The threshold question was, if there is a problem, why don't you just go take care of it? And I made the decision, in consultation with allies, as well as consultation with Members of Congress and activists, that—and I came to the conclusion that it would—it just wasn't the right decision.

Therefore, what do you do? And the—if one is unwilling to take on action individually, then that requires international collaboration, and so we're now in the United Nations. And it doesn't seem—I talked to Ban Ki-moon about this, and this is a slow, tedious process, to hold a regime accountable for what only one nation in the world has called a genocide, and that is us.

Now we have taken unilateral moves other than military moves. I have—we have put serious economic sanctions on three individuals and—that are involved with—two with the Government, one with one of the rebel groups. We have sanctioned 29 companies that are involved in Sudan. In other words, we're trying to be consequential. We're trying to say that, you know, change, or there's consequences.

By the way, the same approach we're dealing with Iran on: We are going to continue to press you hard until you change your behavior. And so my challenge is to convince others to have that same sense of anxiety that you have and that I have about the genocide that's taking place.

Ban Ki-moon actually gave a pretty encouraging report when he talked about—see, the idea is that if countries aren't going to—willing to do it unilaterally, in our case, or other cases, then we try to get the AU force that's in place to get complemented by further peacekeepers to the U.N. And that's what we're working on. Good question on a tough, tough issue.

Yes, sir. There you go. Don't mean—you can sit down or stand up.

Border Security

Q. I personally admire the way you've conducted the Government, and I admire your backbone, where you just stand and take a position. I'm not happy about the influx from Mexico. Seems that far too many came over in waves. I know that during the days of San Jacinto that they were fighting, using rifles and everything, but this is the first time I've ever seen an influx like this to try to take over our country. Now then, thirdly, when they do these polls to determine how you're rated, how come, if they have 1,000 people, they call 750 Democrats and only 25 Republicans? *[Laughter]*

The President. Thank you. I thought when you started talking about Texas history, that you were going to say we couldn't have existed without Tennessee. That's where I thought you were headed, you know. *[Laughter]* You're a Texan? Where are you from?

Q. Waco.

The President. There you go. Right at Waco, Texas.

Q. This young lady in the red dress over here—*[inaudible]*.

The President. There you go. Your daddy. Well, as you know, Crawford is not very far from Waco, same county.

Let's see, yes, ma'am. You guys got—one of them uniformed guys got a question? No. Okay. I'm proud to be in there with you.

Q. Mr. President, welcome to Nashville.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And I want to thank you for the appointments or the nominations for our Supreme Court. That will be a wonderful legacy for you.

The President. Thank you.

Texas Border Patrol Agents

Q. My question to you is this. There are two border guards presently in jail. The Tennessee General Assembly passed a resolution, with 91 votes in the house and 30 in the senate, asking our Tennessee delegation to support—to go to you asking for a pardon for these two men that were tried, where information was left not with—was kept back from their trial. And there's also a resolution in the house, H.R. 40, with a number of our Tennessee delegation signed on to that. Will you pardon these men that are unjustly imprisoned?

The President. I'm not going to make you that kind of promise in a forum like this. Obviously, I am interested in facts. I know the prosecutor very well, Johnny Sutton. He's a dear friend of mine from Texas. He's a fair guy. He is an even-handed guy. And I can't imagine—well, you've got a nice smile, but you can't entice me into making a public statement—[laughter]—on something that requires a very—I know this is an emotional issue, but people need to look at the facts. These men were convicted by a jury of their peers after listening to the facts as my friend Johnny Sutton presented them. But anyway, no, I won't make you that promise.

Yes, ma'am.

President's Legacy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sorry—[inaudible]—as the mother of a 6-month-old named after Sam Houston, a great person—

The President. You've got to be kidding me, awesome, yes. Is it Houston or Sam?

Q. It's Houston—

The President. There you go.

Q. —because we wanted somebody that was a great representative of both Tennessee and Texas within our family. But while your Presidency has been important to me, personally, I want to know about your legacy, and I want to know what one policy would you hope would affect your predecessor and he would continue on what maybe you might not be able to finish by the time your term ends.

The President. Thank you. Freedom agenda—the only way to secure America in the long term is to have great faith in the spread of liberty. And it's—I really view it as the calling of our time. People have—some people have said, “Well, he is a hopeless idealist to believe that liberty is transformative in a part of the world that just seems so difficult.” But I would like to remind fellow citizens that we have had this sense of difficulty in parts of the world before, where liberty has been transformative.

And so it's—I might—look, first of all, let me talk about Presidential legacies. I'll be dead before—long gone before people fully are able to capture the essence of—the full essence of a Presidency. I'm still reading books about George Washington. My attitude is, is they're writing about 1, 43 doesn't need to worry about it. So it's—[laughter]. And so you know what the lesson is in life? Just do what you think is right. Make decisions based upon principle. And that's the only way I know to do it. I mean, I've disappointed this lady in the red, I'm confident, because I won't tell her—but I can only tell you what I think is the right thing to do. It's the only way

I know how to live my life. And it's—for youngsters here, it's just like—it's really important not to sacrifice principle to try to be the popular person. It's important to—[*applause*].

Yes, sir. Semper Fi, there you go.

Media/War on Terror

Q. Semper Fi. First of all, Mr. President, I want to thank you, personally, for your support for our veterans. My son was lost in Iraq, and I want to thank you—

The President. Well, thanks.

Q. —very much for your strength.

The President. Thanks. Thanks for sharing that.

Q. I also wish that there was some way that, as the press makes so much to do about what goes on in areas around—pretty much a 50-mile area around Baghdad, which is pretty much where everything is going on, if there was some way to offset that with all of the great things that are going on. I have had communication with a gentleman by the name of Azzam Alwash, who is from Nasiriyah area, and what's going on there, the building of water sheds and the building of new items and the fact that they're building colleges in the Kurd area.

I wish that there was some way that your administration could offset the negative press by a consistent influx of very positive press that's going on in the majority of that country. Is there some way that could be done?

The President. Well, thanks. I'm asked that a lot by people. The interesting thing about this fight in Iraq is that the families and the troops have got a really different view, in many ways, than a lot of other folks do, because they're firsthand—they see what's happening. And it's—I hear from—I talk to our people in the field a lot, talk to people who have been to the field a lot, and these stories of just incremental change that add up to something different over time, they're just—it's just—

they're prevalent. The best messengers are the people who are actually there.

What's interesting about the world in which we live is, there's no question there's the electronic media that people watch, but there's also the blogosphere. You're on it, I know; you're hearing from people, your son's comrades that are constantly e-mailing you. There's a lot of information that's taking place that is causing people to have a different picture of what they may be seeing on TV screens. See, this enemy of ours is very effective; they're smart people. They're effective about getting explosions and death on TV screens, and they know it affects Americans because we're good people; we're compassionate; we care about human life. Every life matters. And therefore, when human life is taken through a car bomb, it causes people to say, is it worth it? Does it matter what happens over there?

See, one of the interesting things about this war I forgot to tell you is, unlike, say, the Vietnam war, that if we fail in Iraq, the enemy won't be content to stay there. They will follow us here. That's what's different about this struggle than some of the others we're had. What happens overseas matters.

We ask this question a lot about how we can do a better job. As I say, Ryan Crocker and David Petraeus are briefing today. It's good to have them on TV, on these talk shows and stuff like that, but they've also got a job to do. And they're very credible people, because they see firsthand what's going on. But they've got a lot of work to do over there as they command these troops.

I hope you're doing okay. I'll tell you something interesting in meeting with the families of the fallen. I get all kinds of opinions, of course. But one of the most universal opinions I get is one, I'm proud of my son; two, he was a volunteer; and three, do not let his life be in vain, Mr. President; you complete the mission. [*Applause*] Thank you, brother.

All right, guess what? You got to get to work. [Laughter] And so do I. Thank you all for giving me a chance to come and visit with you. I found this to be an interesting exchange. I appreciate your questions. I hope you have a better sense for why and how I have made decisions that have affected the individual lives of our citizens, as well as the life of our Nation. I'm an optimistic person. I believe that those decisions were not only necessary, but I firmly believe they will yield the peace that we all want; peace of mind and peace of heart. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to

Darrell Freeman, Sr., executive committee chairman, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce; Cordia Harrington, chief executive officer, the Bun Companies; Al McCree, owner and chief executive officer, Altissimo! Recordings; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John C. Danforth; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and Johnny Sutton, U.S. District Attorney for the Western District of Texas. A participant referred to Azzam Alwash, director, Eden Again Project. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor

July 19, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency and related measures dealing with the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor are to continue in effect beyond July 22, 2007.

The actions and policies of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons, in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources, their trafficking of illegal arms, and their formation of irregular militia, continue to undermine Libe-

ria's transition to democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institutions and resources. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

July 19, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 20. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of Military Support
Organizations
July 20, 2007

Good morning. Thank you all for coming. I'm joined by veterans and military families who are here to express support for our troops and their mission in Iraq, and I want to thank you all for being here today.

We've just finished a really good meeting. In our discussions, these folks had a message that all of us in Washington need to hear: It is time to rise above partisanship, stand behind our troops in the field, and give them everything they need to succeed.

In February, I submitted to Congress a Defense Department spending bill for the upcoming fiscal year that will provide funds to upgrade our equipment for our troops in Iraq and provides a pay raise for our military. It's a comprehensive spending request that Congress has failed to act on. Instead, the Democratic leaders chose to have a political debate on a precipitous withdrawal of our troops from Iraq. The House and Senate are now scheduled to leave for their August recess before passing a bill to support our troops and their missions. Even Members of Congress who no longer support our effort in Iraq should at least be able to provide an increase in pay for our troops fighting there.

When Congress returns after Labor Day, there will be less than 1 month before the fiscal year ends and current funds for Defense Department operations run out. Congress still has an opportunity to do right by our men and women in uniform and our national security. So today I call on Congress to take action, get this vital piece of legislation to me to sign, on budget and on time.

I also ask Congress to give our troops time to carry out our new strategy in Iraq. Like all wars, the fight in Iraq has had frustrating setbacks. It's also had important successes. We've seen dramatic turnarounds

in places such as Anbar Province, which was once thought lost to the enemy. Just this week, our military forces announced the capture of one of Al Qaida's top Iraqi leaders. He helped to form what Al Qaida calls the "Islamic State in Iraq," in an attempt to replicate what the Taliban had created in Afghanistan. Today that leader is under arrest and his followers are under siege.

These successes demonstrate the gains our troops are making in Iraq and the importance of giving our military the time they need to give their new strategy a chance to work.

Earlier this year, the Senate seemed to share that view. They confirmed General David Petraeus as commander of our forces without a single dissenting vote. And now, barely a month after his strategy became fully operational, many of those same Senators are saying that that strategy has failed.

Our Nation deserves a serious debate about Iraq, because the outcome of this conflict will have enormous consequences for our country. Failure in Iraq would allow terrorists to operate from a safe haven with access to the world's third largest oil reserves. Failure in Iraq would increase the probability that at some later date, American troops would have to return to Iraq to confront an enemy more dangerous and more entrenched. Failure in Iraq would send an unmistakable signal to America's enemies that our country can be bullied into retreat.

America's involvement in Iraq does not have to end this way. A free and stable Iraq is still in reach. It has the potential to transform the Middle East and bring us closer to the day when radical regimes are replaced by peaceful allies, when terrorists have fewer places to train and operate, and when moms and dads in the Arab

world see a future of hope for their children.

One of the folks with us today is an Air Force reservist named Eric Eglund. Here's what he said: He said, "We live in the world's oldest democracy and have been blessed with the strength to protect our freedoms and to help others who seek the same."

This has always been America's mission, and today, that mission is being carried out by brave men and women who have stepped forward to keep our country se-

cure. I thank them and I thank their families for the sacrifices they're making. And I thank you all for supporting them.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Khaled Abdul-Fattah Dawoud Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, ranking leader of Al Qaida in Iraq, who was captured in Mosul on July 4; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

The President's Radio Address

July 21, 2007

Good morning. On Friday, I met with a group of veterans and military families who support our troops and our mission in Iraq. These men and women know the tremendous sacrifices that our troops and their families are making. And I appreciate the good work their organizations are doing to support our men and women in uniform in their important mission to protect the United States.

This week, Americans saw more evidence of how difficult that mission is and how central it is to our security. The Director of National Intelligence released a summary of an important document called the National Intelligence Estimate on the "Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland." This assessment brings together the analysis of our entire intelligence community and provides policymakers with an up-to-date picture of the threat we face.

I know you are hearing a lot about this document. Some of its assessments are encouraging, and others are cause for concern. Most importantly, this document reminds us that America faces "a persistent and evolving" threat from Islamic terrorist groups and cells, especially Al Qaida.

Since Al Qaida attacked us on 9/11, the United States has taken many steps to keep the American people safe. We've gone on the offense, taking the fight to the terrorists around the world. We've worked with partners overseas to monitor terrorist movements, disrupt their finances, and bring them to justice. Here at home, we've strengthened security at borders and vital infrastructure like powerplants and airports and subways. We have given intelligence and law enforcement professionals new tools like the PATRIOT Act, and we continue to work with Congress to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

The actions we and our partners around the world have taken have helped disrupt plots and save lives. Here's how the NIE report put it, quote: "We assess that greatly increased worldwide counterterrorism efforts over the past 5 years have constrained the ability of Al Qaida to attack the U.S. homeland again and have led terrorist groups to perceive the homeland as a harder target to strike than on 9/11."

The NIE report also cites some setbacks. One of the most troubling is its assessment that Al Qaida has managed to establish a safe haven in the tribal areas of Pakistan

bordering Afghanistan. Last September, President Musharraf of Pakistan reached an agreement that gave tribal leaders more responsibility for policing their own areas. Unfortunately, tribal leaders were unwilling and unable to go after Al Qaida or the Taliban.

President Musharraf recognizes the agreement has not been successful or well-enforced and is taking active steps to correct it. Earlier this month, he sent in Pakistani forces to go after radicals who seized control of a mosque, and then he delivered a speech vowing to rid all of Pakistan of extremism. Pakistani forces are in the fight, and many have given their lives. The United States supports them in these efforts. And we will work with our partners to deny safe haven to the Taliban and Al Qaida in Pakistan or anywhere else in the world.

Nearly 6 years have passed since 9/11. And as time goes by, it can be tempting to think that the threat of another attack on our homeland is behind us. The NIE report makes clear that the threat is not behind us. It states that Al Qaida will continue to, and I quote, “focus on prominent political, economic, and infrastructure targets with the goal of producing mass cas-

ualties, visually dramatic destruction, significant economic aftershocks, and/or fear among the U.S. population.” It goes on to say that Al Qaida will continue to seek chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear material to use in these attacks.

The men who run Al Qaida are determined, capable, and ruthless. They would be in a far stronger position to attack our people if America’s military, law enforcement, intelligence services, and other elements of our Government were not engaged in a worldwide effort to stop them. We will meet the responsibility that history has given us, we will adapt to changing conditions, and we will not let up until our enemies are defeated and our people are secure.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on July 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 20, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Temporary Transfer of the Powers and Duties of the President of the United States *July 21, 2007*

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

This morning I will undergo a routine medical procedure requiring sedation. In view of present circumstances, I have determined to transfer temporarily my Constitutional powers and duties to the Vice President during the brief period of the procedure and recovery.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment to

the United States Constitution, this letter shall constitute my written declaration that I am unable to discharge the Constitutional powers and duties of the office of the President of the United States. Pursuant to Section 3, the Vice President shall discharge those powers and duties as Acting President until I transmit to you a written declaration that I am able to resume the discharge of those powers and duties.

July 21 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Robert C. Byrd, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Resuming the Powers and Duties of the President of the United States

July 21, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, this letter shall constitute my written declaration that I am presently able to resume the discharge of the Constitutional powers and duties of the office of the President of the United States. With the transmittal of this letter,

I am resuming those powers and duties effective immediately.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Robert C. Byrd, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Statement on the Death of King Mohammed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan

July 23, 2007

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Mohammed Zahir Shah, who was King of Afghanistan from 1933 to 1973.

Zahir Shah was a monumental figure in Afghan history, and his life spanned vast changes in that country's political system. He returned to Afghanistan as an ordinary citizen in 2002, shortly after the Taliban regime was removed from power, and continued to play an important part in the life of his country. Zahir Shah supported the goal of a representative and freely

elected government in his homeland, and he encouraged Afghanistan toward democracy and stability. His presence in Afghanistan as a private citizen and "Father of the Nation" for the past several years has been an important factor in rebuilding Afghanistan.

On behalf of the American people, Laura and I extend our condolences to Mohammed Zahir Shah's family and to the people of Afghanistan.

Remarks to Military Personnel and Their Families at Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina

July 24, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you, Colonel. Thanks for the hospitality and kind introduction. I'm proud to be with the men and women of the Air Force, the Navy, the Marines, the Army, and the Coast Guard. Thanks for serving. Thanks for wearing the uniform of the United States of America.

I'm proud to be back here in the great State of South Carolina. I'm proud to be with some of the Palmetto State's finest citizens. I'm glad to be eating lunch with you. The food is pretty good, Colonel. *[Laughter]* I always like a good barbeque. *[Laughter]*

I also am proud to be with the military families. You know, our troops are obviously engaged in a tough struggle, tough fight, a fight that I think is noble and necessary for our peace. And so are our families. Our military families endure the separations. They worry about their loved ones. They pray for safe return. By carrying out these burdens, our military families are serving the United States of America, and this country is grateful to America's military families.

I appreciate Colonel Millander leading the 437th Airlift Wing here at the Charleston Airbase. Thank you for the tour. Nice, big airplanes carrying a lot of cargo. *[Laughter]* And it's good to see the amazing operations that take place here to keep our troops supplied.

I'm honored here to be with Deb as well. That's Red's wife. I call him Red; you call him Colonel. *[Laughter]* He did a smart thing; he married a woman from Texas. So did I. *[Laughter]* And Laura sends her very best to you all.

I'm proud to be here with Mark Bauknight—Colonel Bauknight, acting commander of the 315th Airlift Wing, and his wife Leslie.

I am traveling today with one of the true stalwarts of freedom, a man who understands the stakes of the war we're in and a man who strongly supports the military in accomplishing the mission that we've sent you to do, and that's Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. This base is represented by Congressman Henry Brown of South Carolina. He understands what I understand: When we have somebody in harm's way, that person deserves the full support of the Congress and the President. And you'll have the full support of the President of the United States during this war against these radicals and extremists.

I appreciate the Lieutenant Governor of this State, Andre Bauer. Thanks for coming, Governor. I'm proud to be here with the speaker of the house of representatives for South Carolina, State Representative Bobby Harrell. Mr. Speaker, thanks for coming.

We've got some mayors with us, and I appreciate the mayors being here today: Mayor Riley, Mayor Hallman, Mayor Summey. I'm honored that you all would take time out of your busy schedule to come by and pay tribute to these men and women who serve our Nation so ably.

I'm proud to be with Chairman Tim Scott of the Charleston County Council. I'm proud to be with other State and local officials. And I'm really glad to be with you all. Thank you for your courage.

Since the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, the airmen of Team Charleston have deployed across the globe in support in the war on terror. During the liberation of Afghanistan, aircrews from Team Charleston flew hundreds of sorties to transport troops and deliver supplies and help the liberation of 25 million people.

Team Charleston is playing a crucial role in Iraq. Every day, C-17s lift off from Charleston carrying tons of vital supplies

for our troops on the frontlines. Your efforts are saving lives, and you're bringing security to this country. Every member of Team Charleston can take pride in a great record of accomplishment. And America is grateful for your courage in the cause of freedom. And your courage is needed.

Nearly 6 years after the 9/11 attacks, America remains a nation at war. The terrorist network that attacked us that day is determined to strike our country again, and we must do everything in our power to stop them. A key lesson of September the 11th is that the best way to protect America is to go on the offense, to fight the terrorists overseas so we don't have to face them here at home. And that is exactly what our men and women in uniform are doing across the world.

The key theater in this global war is Iraq. Our troops are serving bravely in that country. They're opposing ruthless enemies, and no enemy is more ruthless in Iraq than Al Qaida. They send suicide bombers into crowded markets; they behead innocent captives; and they murder American troops. They want to bring down Iraq's democracy so they can use that nation as a terrorist safe haven for attacks against our country. So our troops are standing strong with nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a future of peace, and they do so for the security of Iraq and the safety of American citizens.

There's a debate in Washington about Iraq, and nothing wrong with a healthy debate. There's also a debate about Al Qaida's role in Iraq. Some say that Iraq is not part of the broader war on terror. They complain when I say that the Al Qaida terrorists we face in Iraq are part of the same enemy that attacked us on September the 11th, 2001. They claim that the organization called Al Qaida in Iraq is an Iraqi phenomenon, that it's independent of Usama bin Laden, and that it's not interested in attacking America.

That would be news to Usama bin Laden. He's proclaimed that the "third

world war is raging in Iraq." Usama bin Laden says, "The war is for you or for us to win. If we win it, it means your defeat and disgrace forever." I say that there will be a big defeat in Iraq, and it will be the defeat of Al Qaida.

Today I will consider the arguments of those who say that Al Qaida and Al Qaida in Iraq are separate entities. I will explain why they are both part of the same terrorist network and why they are dangerous to our country.

I'd like to start with some basic facts. Al Qaida in Iraq was founded by a Jordanian terrorist, not an Iraqi. His name was Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. Before 9/11, he ran a terrorist camp in Afghanistan. He was not yet a member of Al Qaida, but our intelligence community reports that he had longstanding relations with senior Al Qaida leaders, that he had met with Usama bin Laden and his chief deputy, Zawahiri.

In 2001, coalition forces destroyed Zarqawi's Afghan training camp, and he fled the country, and he went to Iraq, where he set up operations with terrorist associates long before the arrival of coalition forces. In the violence and instability following Saddam's fall, Zarqawi was able to expand dramatically the size, scope, and lethality of his operation. In 2004, Zarqawi and his terrorist group formally joined Al Qaida, pledged allegiance to Usama bin Laden, and he promised to "follow his orders in jihad."

Soon after, bin Laden publicly declared that Zarqawi was the "Prince of Al Qaida in Iraq," and he instructed terrorists in Iraq to "listen to him and obey him." It's hard to argue that Al Qaida in Iraq is separate from bin Laden's Al Qaida when the leader of Al Qaida in Iraq took an oath of allegiance to Usama bin Laden.

According to our intelligence community, the Zarqawi-bin Laden merger gave Al Qaida in Iraq, quote, "prestige among potential recruits and financiers." The merger also gave Al Qaida's senior leadership, quote, "a foothold in Iraq to extend its

geographic presence to plot external operations and to tout the centrality of the jihad in Iraq to solicit direct monetary support elsewhere.” The merger between Al Qaida and its Iraqi affiliate is an alliance of killers, and that is why the finest military in the world is on their trail.

Zarqawi was killed by U.S. forces in June 2006. He was replaced by another foreigner, an Egyptian named Abu Ayyub al-Masri. His ties to the Al Qaida senior leadership are deep and longstanding. He has collaborated with Zawahiri for more than two decades. And before 9/11, he spent time with Al Qaida in Afghanistan, where he taught classes indoctrinating others in Al Qaida’s radical ideology.

After Abu Ayyub took over Al Qaida’s Iraqi operations last year, Usama bin Laden sent a terrorist leader named Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi to help him. According to our intelligence community, this man was a senior adviser to bin Laden who served as his top commander in Afghanistan. Abd al-Hadi never made it to Iraq. He was captured and was recently transferred to the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay. The fact that Usama bin Laden risked sending one of his most valued commanders to Iraq shows the importance he places on success of Al Qaida’s Iraqi operations.

According to our intelligence community, many of Al Qaida in Iraq’s other senior leaders are also foreign terrorists. They include a Syrian who is Al Qaida in Iraq’s emir in Baghdad, a Saudi who is Al Qaida in Iraq’s top spiritual and legal advisor, an Egyptian who fought in Afghanistan in the 1990s and who has met with Usama bin Laden, a Tunisian who we believe plays a key role in managing foreign fighters. Last month in Iraq, we killed a senior Al Qaida facilitator named Mehmet Yilmaz, a Turkish national who fought with Al Qaida in Afghanistan and met the September the 11th mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and other Al Qaida leaders.

A few weeks ago, we captured a senior Al Qaida in Iraq leader named Mashadani.

Now, this terrorist is an Iraqi. In fact, he was the highest ranking Iraqi in the organization. Here’s what he said, here’s what he told us: The foreign leaders of Al Qaida in Iraq went to extraordinary lengths to promote the fiction that Al Qaida in Iraq is an Iraqi-led operation. He says, Al Qaida even created a figurehead whom they named Umar al-Baghdadi. The purpose was to make Iraqi fighters believe they were following the orders of an Iraqi instead of a foreigner. Yet once in custody, Mashadani revealed that al-Baghdadi is only an actor. He confirmed our intelligence that foreigners are the top echelons of Al Qaida in Iraq—they are the leaders—and that foreign leaders make most of the operational decisions, not Iraqis.

Foreign terrorists also account for most of the suicide bombings in Iraq. Our military estimates that between 80 and 90 percent of suicide attacks in Iraq are carried out by foreign-born Al Qaida terrorists. It’s true that today, most of Al Qaida in Iraq’s rank-and-file fighters and some of its leadership are Iraqi. But to focus exclusively on this single fact is to ignore the larger truth: Al Qaida in Iraq is a group founded by foreign terrorists, led largely by foreign terrorists, and loyal to a foreign terrorist leader, Usama bin Laden. They know they’re Al Qaida. The Iraqi people know they are Al Qaida. People across the Muslim world know they are Al Qaida. And there’s a good reason they are called Al Qaida in Iraq. They are Al Qaida in Iraq.

Some also assert that Al Qaida in Iraq is a separate organization because Al Qaida’s central command lacks full operational control over it. This argument reveals a lack of understanding. Here is how Al Qaida’s global terrorist network actually operates. Al Qaida and its affiliate organizations are a loose network of terrorist groups that are united by a common ideology and shared objectives and have differing levels of collaboration with Al Qaida senior leadership. In some cases, these groups have

formally merged into Al Qaida and take what's called a *bayat*, a pledge of loyalty to Usama bin Laden. In other cases, organizations are not formally merged with Al Qaida, but collaborate closely with Al Qaida leaders to plot attacks and advance their shared ideology. In still other cases, there are small cells of terrorists that are not part of Al Qaida or any other broader terrorist group, but maintain contact with Al Qaida leaders and are inspired by its ideology to conduct attacks.

Our intelligence community assesses that Al Qaida in Iraq falls into the first of these categories. They are a full member of the Al Qaida terrorist network. The Al Qaida leadership provides strategic guidance to their Iraqi operatives. Even so, there have been disagreements, important disagreements between the leaders, Usama bin Laden, and the Iraqi counterparts, including Zawahiri's criticism of Zarqawi's relentless attacks on the Shi'a. But our intelligence community reports that Al Qaida's senior leaders generally defer to their Iraqi-based commanders when it comes to internal operations because distance and security concerns preclude day-to-day command authority.

Our intelligence community concludes that, quote, "Al Qaida and its regional node in Iraq are united in their overarching strategy." And they say that Al Qaida senior leaders and their operatives in Iraq, quote, "see Al Qaida in Iraq as part of Al Qaida's decentralized chain of command, not as a separate group."

Here's the bottom line: Al Qaida in Iraq is run by foreign leaders loyal to Usama bin Laden, and like bin Laden, they are coldblooded killers who murder the innocent to achieve Al Qaida's political objectives. Yet despite all the evidence, some will tell you that Al Qaida in Iraq is not really Al Qaida and not really a threat to America. Well, that's like watching a man walk into a bank with a mask and a gun and saying he's probably just there to cash a check.

You might wonder why some in Washington insist on making this distinction about the enemy in Iraq. It's because they know that if they can convince America we're not fighting bin Laden's Al Qaida there, they can paint the battle in Iraq as a distraction from the real war on terror. If we're not fighting bin Laden's Al Qaida, they can argue that our Nation can pull out of Iraq and not undermine our efforts in the war on terror. The problem they have is with the facts. We are fighting bin Laden's Al Qaida in Iraq, Iraq is central to the war on terror, and against this enemy, America can accept nothing less than complete victory.

There are others who accept that Al Qaida is operating in Iraq but say its role is overstated. Al Qaida is one of the several Sunni jihadist groups in Iraq. But our intelligence community believes that Al Qaida is the most dangerous of these Sunni jihadist groups for several reasons. First, more than any other group, Al Qaida is behind most of the spectacular, high-casualty attacks that you see on your TV screens.

Second, these Al Qaida attacks are designed to accelerate sectarian violence by attacking Shi'a in hopes of sparking reprisal attacks that inspire Sunnis to join Al Qaida's cause.

Third, Al Qaida is the only jihadist group in Iraq with stated ambitions to make the country a base for attacks outside Iraq. For example, Al Qaida in Iraq dispatched terrorists who bombed a wedding reception in Jordan. In another case, they sent operatives to Jordan, where they attempted to launch a rocket attack on U.S. Navy ships in the Red Sea.

And most important, for the people who wonder if the fight in Iraq is worth it, Al Qaida in Iraq shares Usama bin Laden's goal of making Iraq a base for its radical Islamic empire and using it as a safe haven for attacks on America. That is why our intelligence community reports, and I quote, "compared with other leading Sunni

jihadist groups, Al Qaida in Iraq stands out for its extremism, unmatched operational strength, foreign leadership, and determination to take the jihad beyond Iraq's borders."

Our top commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, has said that Al Qaida is "public enemy number one" in Iraq. Fellow citizens, these people have sworn allegiance to the man who ordered the death of nearly 3,000 people on our soil. Al Qaida is public enemy number one for the Iraqi people; Al Qaida is public enemy number one for the American people. And that is why, for the security of our country, we will stay on the hunt, we'll deny them safe haven, and we will defeat them where they have made their stand.

Some note that Al Qaida in Iraq did not exist until the U.S. invasion and argue that it is a problem of our own making. The argument follows the flawed logic that terrorism is caused by American actions. Iraq is not the reason that the terrorists are at war with us. We were not in Iraq when the terrorists bombed the World Trade Center in 1993. We were not in Iraq when they attacked our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. We were not in Iraq when they attacked the USS *Cole* in 2000. And we were not in Iraq on September the 11th, 2001.

Our action to remove Saddam Hussein did not start the terrorist violence, and America withdrawal from Iraq would not end it. The Al Qaida terrorists now blowing themselves up in Iraq are dedicated extremists who have made killing the innocent the calling of their lives. They are part of a network that has murdered men, women, and children in London and Madrid, slaughtered fellow Muslims in Istanbul and Casablanca, Riyadh, Jakarta, and elsewhere around the world. If we were not fighting these Al Qaida extremists and terrorists in Iraq, they would not be leading productive lives of service and charity. Most would be trying to kill Americans and other civilians elsewhere, in Afghani-

stan or other foreign capitals or on the streets of our own cities.

Al Qaida is in Iraq, and they're there for a reason. And surrendering the future of Iraq to Al Qaida would be a disaster for our country. We know their intentions. Hear the words of Al Qaida's top commander in Iraq when he issued an audio statement in which he said he will not rest until he has attacked our Nation's Capital. If we were to cede Iraq to men like this, we would leave them free to operate from a safe haven which they could use to launch new attacks on our country. And Al Qaida would gain prestige amongst the extremists across the Muslim world as the terrorist network that faced down America and forced us into retreat.

If we were to allow this to happen, sectarian violence in Iraq could increase dramatically, raising the prospect of mass casualties. Fighting could engulf the entire region in chaos, and we would soon face a Middle East dominated by Islamic extremists who would pursue nuclear weapons and use their control of oil for economic blackmail or to fund new attacks on our Nation.

We've already seen how Al Qaida used a failed state thousands of miles from our shores to bring death and destruction to the streets of our cities, and we must not allow them to do so again. So however difficult the fight is in Iraq, we must win it. And we can win it.

Less than a year ago, Anbar Province was Al Qaida's base in Iraq and was written off by many as lost. Since then, U.S. and Iraqi forces have teamed with Sunni sheikhs who have turned against Al Qaida. Hundreds have been killed or captured. Terrorists have been driven from most of the population centers. Our troops are now working to replicate the success in Anbar in other parts of the country. Our brave men and women are taking risks, and they're showing courage, and we're making progress. For the security of our citizens and the peace of the world, we must give General Petraeus and his troops the time

and the resources they need so they can defeat Al Qaida in Iraq.

Thanks for letting me come by today. I've explained the connection between Al Qaida and its Iraqi affiliate. I presented intelligence that clearly establishes this connection. The facts are that Al Qaida terrorists killed Americans on 9/11, they're fighting us in Iraq and across the world, and they are plotting to kill Americans here at home again. Those who justify withdrawing our troops from Iraq by denying the threat of Al Qaida in Iraq and its ties to Usama bin Laden ignore the clear consequences of such a retreat. If we were to follow their advice, it would be dangerous for the world and disastrous for America. We will defeat Al Qaida in Iraq.

In this effort, we're counting on the brave men and women represented in this room. Every man and woman who serves at this base and around the world is playing

a vital role in this war on terror. With your selfless spirit and devotion to duty, we will confront this mortal threat to our country, and we're going to prevail.

I have confidence in our country, and I have faith in our cause because I know the character of the men and women gathered before me. I thank you for your patriotism. I thank you for your courage. You're living up to the motto, "One Family, One Mission, One Fight!" Thank you for all you do. God bless your families. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; Mayor Harry M. Hallman, Jr., of Mount Pleasant, SC; Mayor R. Keith Summey of North Charleston, SC; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks Following a Briefing by the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors

July 25, 2007

I want to thank Secretary Shalala and Senator Dole for briefing myself and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Secretary of Defense on the general recommendations they'll be making to the country about how to make sure that our wounded heroes get the best possible care from the Defense Department and the Veterans Affairs Department.

I asked these two distinguished citizens to lead an extensive search about how best for this Government to respond. We owe a wounded soldier the very best care and the very best benefits and the very easiest-to-understand system. And so they took a very interesting approach, and that they took the perspective from the patient, as the patient had to work his way through the hospitals and bureaucracies. And

they've come up with some very interesting and important suggestions that they'll be voting on later and then will be holding a press conference about afterwards.

The reason I've asked you to come in is, I do want to thank you on behalf of the Nation for doing what's right.

I also want to recognize Bob Woodruff here. He is a—he himself was wounded, severely wounded and went through the system, to a certain extent. And we welcome you back, and we're glad you're with us. And we would hope that any wounded soldier, any person in uniform would receive the kind of care and the ability to return to work, just like you have done. And so we're glad you're with us, Bob. Congratulations on the will to recover.

That will exist with our troops as well. It's amazing how courageous our men and women in uniform are, and they deserve the best. And that's the spirit in which you analyzed the system. And we welcome your recommendations, and we thank you for your service.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala and former Sen. Robert J. Dole, Co-chairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; and ABC News reporter Bob Woodruff, who was injured in Iraq on January 29, 2006. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on a Report by the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors and an Exchange With Reporters July 25, 2007

The President. I've been running with Max and Allen—I mean, Neil. I met these guys at Walter Reed. Neil lost both legs, and he told me he's going to run with me on the South Lawn of the White House. Max lost his leg, and he told me he was going to be jumping out of airplanes with the 101st Airborne. Sure enough, he's jumping out of airplanes with the 101st Airborne, and along with Neil, he's running on the South Lawn.

This is a—running with these two men is incredibly inspirational to me. And it should be inspirational to anybody who has been dealt a tough hand. Sometimes in life you get dealt a hand that you didn't expect to play. And they got dealt a tough hand, and they're playing it with all their soul. And I appreciate you guys being here. It means a lot to me.

Today Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala delivered a report to the White House. I told the press corps that they were going to go out and hold a press conference. They've held their press conference. I'd like to make some comments on that report.

First of all, the spirit of that report is, any time we have somebody hurt, they deserve the best possible care, and their fam-

ily needs strong support. We've provided that in many cases, but to the extent we haven't, we're going to adjust. In that recommendation, there are things the United States Congress should do, and I call upon them to do it.

In that report, there are a lot of things that the executive branch of Government can do, the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense. And I've instructed Secretary Gates and Secretary Nicholson to look at every one of these recommendations and to take them seriously and to implement them, so that we can say with certainty that any soldier who has been hurt will get the best possible care and treatment that this Government can offer.

I'm working with two men who have been hurt, two men who refuse to allow their current circumstances to get them down or to keep them down. I am proud to be with you guys. Neil, thank you.

Sergeant Neil Duncan. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. God bless you, Max.

Specialist Max Ramsey. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. He wanted me to jump out of airplanes with him. I respectfully declined.

President's Run

Q. How does it feel to be with the Commander in Chief running around the track?

Sgt. Duncan. Fantastic. It's an accomplishment. It's, like, the pinnacle of recovery, I think. Being a wounded vet, coming out of Afghanistan a little over a year and a half ago, and then being here, running around this track is just amazing. I couldn't ask for anything better.

The President. Don't ask him why he outran me.

Q. Why did he outrun you?

The President. Because he's a faster runner. Anyway, thank you guys. It's a proud moment for me, a proud moment.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Spc. Max Ramsey, USA, who was injured in Iraq in March 2006; Sgt. Neil Duncan, USA (Ret.), who was injured in Afghanistan in December 2005; former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala and former Sen. Robert J. Dole, Cochair, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Remarks to the American Legislative Exchange Council in Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania

July 26, 2007

Thank you very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's good to be back with my friends here at ALEC. Kenny, thanks. He was a silver-tongued devil when he was a State legislator; he still is as a United States Congressman. I appreciate Kenny Marchant coming from Washington with me today. It's not all that rough a trip when you're on Air Force One, Ken, so it's a—[laughter]. I'm glad to give him a hot cup of coffee and visit about the old days of working together in the State legislature—with the State legislature and about the challenges we face today. And I'm going to spend a little time talking to you all about those challenges. But I appreciate you coming, Ken.

I'm also proud to be with two members of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation, the United States Senator, Arlen Specter—proud you're here, Senator; thanks for coming—Congressman Jim Gerlach. When Kenny and I were reminiscing about what it was like to be in Texas worrying about

schools and budgets and criminal justice, I think they were somewhat amazed by the stories we were telling.

Speaking about the Texas legislature, I am proud to be here with the speaker of the Texas House, a friend of mine from my old hometown of Midland, Texas, Tom Craddick. Proud you're here, Tommy—and his wife Nadine and his daughter Christi.

Laura was just out in Midland, visiting her mother. That would be First Lady Laura Bush, who sends her greetings to you all. You know, I'm a really lucky guy to have a wife who is patient enough to put up with me as President of the United States, is wise enough to seize the moment, and is compassionate enough to worry about the lives of our fellow citizens. She's a fabulous First Lady, and I—[applause].

The one thing I can assure the Craddicks, we always remember where we came from. And part of making good decisions in a complex world and in a complex environment is to make decisions based

upon basic principle, is to stand for something. I believe in that old Texas adage, if you don't stand for something, you don't believe in anything. And I believe in some certain principles that I hold inviolate, such as, there is an Almighty, and a great gift of that Almighty to each man, woman, and child on the face of Earth is liberty and freedom.

I appreciate Dolores Mertz and all the leadership of ALEC. I appreciate Jerry Watson, the private sector chairman. Thank you all. Thank you for serving. Our government is only as good as the willingness of good people to serve. And it's not easy to serve in public life. Sometimes it can get a little testy. *[Laughter]* Sometimes people would rather throw a punch than put out a hand of fellowship. But that's okay. What matters is, is that our democracy flourish, that people have an opportunity to exchange ideas, that there be constructive debate. And that requires good people willing to sacrifice, to serve. And one of the reasons I wanted to come back today is to encourage you to continue serving your States, to continue representing the people.

I urge you to not rely upon the latest opinion poll to tell you what to believe. I ask you to stand strong on your beliefs, and that will continue to make you a worthy public servant.

I want to spend a little time talking about a couple of issues. I'd like to spend time talking about the budget and the economy, a little time talking about how we can educate our children, how best to educate our children. And then I'd like to spend some time talking about a serious obligation that I have and the people in Washington have, and that is to protect the American people from harm.

First, the budget—there's an interesting philosophical debate that's now playing out in the United States Congress, and it really boils down to how much money we need and who do we trust to handle the people's money. A basic principle from which I have

operated as Governor and now as President is this: I think it's wise for government and government officials to trust the people to spend their money. See, I think you can spend your money, and I think you know how to save your money better than the Federal Government knows how to spend your money.

And that's what I've acted on. That's been the basis of a lot of our fiscal policy in Washington, DC. I also acted on the belief that if there is more money circulating in the economy, if more families have more money of their own to spend, and if small businesses have more money in their treasury, it is more likely that an economy can recover from difficult times. And we have faced some difficult times since I've been your President. We had a recession right after I got in office. We had a terrorist attack that affected our economy. We had corporate scandals that sent a chill throughout the investment community and caused some citizens to wonder whether or not their savings were being treated with the respect that they should be. We had uncertainty.

But I acted. I acted with the—at that time, a Republican-controlled Congress, on the principle that if we can get more money in circulation, if we can let the people have more of their own money to save, invest, and spend, we would overcome these difficulties. And it worked. We cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes in the United States of America.

On average, our taxpayers this year will save—this is on average, now—amongst all the taxpayers, they'll save about \$2,200 on their taxes. Now, Washington, we spend—we throw out a lot of big numbers. In the statehouse, you talk millions; Washington, we talk trillions. But 2,200, it may not sound like a lot when we're talking big numbers in Washington, but you ask the family that's trying to save for a child's education whether \$2,200 means a lot, and they'll tell you, it sure does. You talk about the working family that's struggling to get

ahead, that \$2,200 means a lot. You talk about the farmer out there who's worried about making crop, that \$2,200 means a lot. It may sound small to the opiners in Washington, but you ask the average American family, would they rather have the \$2,200 to spend on their own or would they rather send it to Washington, DC, they'll say, "Let me have my money. I can do a good job with it."

Since August of 2003, when these tax cuts took full effect, we've increased new jobs by 8.2 million. In other words, people are working. Unemployment rates and—are pretty low around the United States of America. Real wages are going up; inflation is relatively stable. In other words, this economy is strong. And I would argue with the doubters and the skeptics that one of the reason is because of the tax cuts we passed. And the fundamental question facing this Congress is, will they be wise enough to keep taxes low?

Now, let me talk about the deficit and the budget. You know, there's an argument in Washington that says, well, we've got to raise the taxes in order to balance the budget. Well, you all know how government tends to work. Generally, when you raise the taxes, those monies don't go to balance the budget; they tend to go to new programs. They tend to expand the size and scope of government.

We have a different strategy in Washington, and that is, rather than raise taxes to balance the budget, we believe you ought to keep taxes low to balance the budget. And here's why. Low taxes have yielded a strong economy; a strong economy produces more tax revenues. As a matter of fact, tax revenue increase this year are—the Federal tax revenues this year are expected to rise \$167 billion higher than last year. In other words, we kept the taxes low; the economy was strong; and we're receiving about \$167 billion more tax revenues.

Then all of a sudden, you begin to get a sense of our strategy on how to handle

the deficit: Keep the economy growing by keeping taxes low, which is yielding more tax revenues. But we've got to be wise on how we spend the money. We've held the growth of domestic discretionary spending below the rate of inflation for the past 3 years, which has enabled us to report to the country that the deficit is down to \$205 billion. That is 1.5 percent of GDP; that is lower than the national average over the last 10 years.

And then we submitted another budget that showed you can keep taxes low, prioritize Federal spending, and be getting surplus by \$33 billion by 2012. The best way to balance this budget is to keep the economy strong by letting you keep your money and being wise about how we spend your money in Washington, DC.

As you know, we've had a change of leadership in Washington, DC. That was not my first choice. [Laughter] But nevertheless, it is a situation that we're dealing with. And I would remind those who are now running the Congress that they have a responsibility when it comes to leadership. They have proposed a budget—and I told you there's a debate raging in Washington, and I'd like to share with you why I said that. Earlier this year, the Democrats passed a resolution calling for \$205 billion in additional domestic spending over the next 5 years. That's what their budget resolution said. I just told you what our budget proposal was, and there's a different approach. There's a different feeling in Washington among some good people, fine people; they just have a different philosophy than I do, and they proposed 205 billion additional dollars in spending over a 5-year period.

The problem is, is that spending promises out of the Nation's Capital have a way of shrinking American wallets in the heartland because you've got to figure out how to pay for that spending increase. And so it's no surprise that their budget framework

includes the largest tax increase in American history. In order to pay for the promises they have made, their budget framework includes the largest tax increase—not the second largest or close to the largest—the largest tax increase in American history.

Here's what that would mean. It means if you have a child, your taxes would go up by \$500 per child. Remember, we cut the—we increased the child tax credit from 500 to 1,000. Their plan would reduce it to 500. I don't agree with that approach. I think it's important to help people with children by keeping taxes low. If you're a family making \$60,000 a year and you have two children, your taxes would go up by more than \$1,800. Under their plan that would increase Federal spending by over \$200 billion, the average American family making—of four making \$60,000 would see their bill go up by \$1,800.

Twenty-six million small-business owners would see their taxes increase by an average of \$4,000. You see, one of the reasons why I thought it was important to cut taxes was to stimulate the small-business sector of our economy. Now, most small businesses pay tax at the—or many small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax rate. You talk to your average small-business owner in your State, many of them will be subchapter S corporations or limited liability partnerships. In other words, they pay tax at the individual income tax rate, so when you heard me talking about reducing individual income taxes, you're really stimulating the small-business sector.

And that's important because about 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. When the small-business sector is strong, America is strong. And cutting taxes on small businesses was good policy. And the Democrats, under their budget resolution, would raise small-business taxes by about \$4,000, on average, for 26 million small businesses. And more than 5 million low-income Americans who now pay no income taxes because of our relief would once again pay.

What I'm telling you is, is that there's a philosophical debate in Washington, and the bunch now running Congress want to return to the tax-and-spend policies of the past that did not work then and will not work in the future. And that's why I plan on using my veto to keep your taxes low.

Not only has the leadership proposed their idea on the budget; they have a responsibility to set an agenda that will get the spending bills to my desk, one at a time, in a reasonable time frame. In other words, they're now in charge, and it's important that they exercise their responsibility. That's what the American people expect.

And part of that responsibility is to get the 12 basic spending bills that are needed to keep the Federal Government running to my desk in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, they've been dragging their feet on these bills. They're now getting ready to leave for their August recess without having passed a single spending bill. Look, the legislative process is complicated, no doubt. But in a time of war, one spending bill should take precedence over all the rest. And so at the very least, Members of Congress ought to finish the spending bill for the Department of Defense before they go on recess, so I can sign it into law.

We got troops in harm's way. They need to exercise their responsibility and get this defense bill passed. There's time to do it. I'll hang around if they want me to—[laughter]—to get the bill passed. And when Members come back in September, they need to pass the rest of the basic spending bills to keep the Federal Government running.

Now, I believe these bills need to be passed one at a time because the alternative is to pass a massive spending bill that no one can read and into which anyone can hide wasteful spending. They need to get the work done before the fiscal year ends on September the 30th. If they're responsible leaders, that's what they will do.

The other thing we need to do is confront this business about earmarks. You know, earmarks are these special spending projects that get stuck in these bills, that really never see the light of day. Somebody has got a good idea about how to spend your money, and they just put it in the bill. This year, I proposed reforms that would make the earmark process more transparent, that would end the practice of concealing earmarks in so-called report language, that would eliminate wasteful earmarks and cut the overall number by at least half.

There's been some agreement on this issue in Washington. Democrats and Republicans have taken a good step by agreeing to list all earmarks before the bills are passed. You see, we want the public to see them. I believe in accountability when it comes to spending your money. We want there to be transparency. We want there to be a chance for lawmakers to strike them out if they think that they're frivolous and don't meet national concerns. Congress needs to uphold its commitments, and the Senate needs to make transparency a part of its formal rules.

And then there's the issue of entitlements—in other words, I'm going through the list of the items that will make this budget process not only better and more transparent. But I want Congress to understand that I'm going to continue talking about big issues because I firmly believe that we, those of us in public office, have a responsibility to confront serious problems now and not pass them on to future Congresses or future generations. And such a serious problem is in our entitlement programs, Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid.

The programs are growing faster than our economy, faster than inflation and, therefore, faster than our ability to pay. Old guys like me will be taken care of in the system. I'm worried about younger people paying into a system that won't be around for them. And we can solve these problems.

It takes political will and political courage. And I've called on Congress to work with my administration to deal with these significant problems now, so our children know they'll be paying in a system that is not bankrupt.

Oh, there's a lot of issues we'll be working on over the next months. We'll be working hard to make sure that our economy continues to run with good energy policy. I firmly believe that we can use technologies to help change our—how we use energy. I think it's in the national interest to become less dependent on foreign sources of oil. I know it's in our national—our economic interest to become less dependent on foreign sources of oil. After all, when demand for crude oil goes up in other parts of the world, it causes the basic price of oil to go up if corresponding supply is not found, which causes the price of gasoline to go up.

We're on the verge of some unbelievable technologies in this country. And I believe that you'll be driving to work over the next couple of years in a automobile that's powered by electricity, and it won't have to look like a golf cart. In other words, Tommy, we'll be driving pickup trucks that may not be running on gasoline. I know they're going to be running on ethanol, which, by the way, I like the idea of our farmers growing energy that help us become less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

What I'm telling you is, I'm optimistic about our future when it comes to energy diversification, which, by the way, will enable us to be better stewards of the environment. Some optimistic things that are coming, and we're spending a fair amount of taxpayers' money to be a part of these new technologies, whether they be safe nuclear power or clean coal technologies or the ability to explore for oil and gas in offshore regions that, heretofore, were unimaginable for people to find energy. I mean, we've got a comprehensive plan that says, technology and free enterprise can

help us achieve energy independence. That's what we want.

Another way to make sure this economy grows is to be smart about our education system. The No Child Left Behind Act is an important piece of legislation. I'm a big believer in it, and I'll tell you why. First of all, as the speaker will tell you, I'm a strong advocate for local control of schools. I don't believe Washington ought to be telling local districts how to run their school system. I do not believe that.

But I do believe this: I believe that when you spend money, you ought to insist upon results. That's what I believe. I believe that every child can learn, and I believe that we ought to expect every school to teach. And when we spend money, I think it makes sense to ask simple questions. Can the child you're educating read, write, add, and subtract? I don't think it's too much to ask. As a matter of fact, I think it's good for society that we do ask. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. If you have low expectations, you're going to get lousy results. If you have high expectations for every child, you're not afraid to measure.

No Child Left Behind says, we're going to spend Federal money, and we want you to develop an accountability system that will show the parents and taxpayers that the schools are meeting high standards. That's what it says, and it's working.

You know, one of the real problems we have in America is an achievement gap. I guess that's a fancy word for saying that, generally, Anglo kids are doing better in the basics than African American or Latino kids. And that's not good for this country, and it's not right. And it seems like to me, we've got to focus our efforts and energies on solving that problem if we want this country to be a hopeful country with a strong economy.

See, the economy is going to demand brainpower as we head into the 21st century, and therefore, now is the time to make sure our fourth graders can read,

write, and add and subtract and our eighth graders are more proficient in math and when you graduate from high school, your diploma means something. And the best place to start is to measure. And when you see a problem, fix it, before it's too late. When you find an inner-city kid that may not have the right curriculum to get he or she up to the grade level at the fourth grade, let's solve it now; let's not wait. No Child Left Behind is working, and it needs to be reauthorized by the United States Congress.

Finally, I want to spend some time talking about securing this country. September the 11th changed my way of thinking, and it should change the way our country views the world as well. We were attacked by a group of ruthless killers who have an ideology. In other words, they believe something. These people are—it's hard for you and your constituents to imagine a frame of mind that says, "I'm going to kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve a political objective." But that's the nature of this enemy. That's exactly what they're like.

They preyed upon hopelessness to convince 19 kids to get on airplanes to come and kill nearly 3,000 of our people. And when that happened, I vowed that I would do everything in my power to protect the American people. And we've got a strategy to do that. On the one hand, we have altered how we view protecting the homeland. We've created a whole Department of Government that brought disparate parts of our Government together, with the main aim of protecting the people.

But protection requires more than just making sure we know who is coming in and out of the country and who is leaving and screening cargo and making people take off their shoes at airports. It requires more than that. I believe it requires a relentless search, relentless pressure on an enemy that wants to do us harm again. I would rather defeat them over there than

face them here. And that's why—[*ap-
plause*].

I say that because you can't negotiate with these people. You cannot hope for the best, that, oh, maybe if we don't pressure them, then they'll just retreat. These are determined adversaries that have stated their ambitions. They would like to see their point of view spread as far and wide as possible. That's—when I talk about a caliphate that stretches from Spain to Indonesia, that means that they want to impose their ideology on people.

And what would that mean? Well, I just want you to remember—think back what it—think what it would be like to be a young girl growing up in Afghanistan, when they were able to find their safe haven and impose their vision across that country. I mean, you couldn't be educated; you were forced to be a second-class citizen. If you stepped out of line, you were whipped. These people are—they're smart; they're tough. And we need to be tougher every single day. The best way to protect you is to keep them on the run, is to keep the pressure on them. And that is exactly what the United States of America is doing and will continue to do, so long as I'm the President of the United States.

But that's not enough to defeat them. I have told the American people, we're in an ideological struggle, and the best way to defeat their ideology of darkness in the long term is with an ideology of hope. The ideology of hope is based upon the universality of liberty. I told you, I believe in the universality of liberty. I don't believe there's a debate on that. I believe every man, woman, and child wants to be free. And I know that free societies yield the peace we want. And therefore, the strategy is on—the short-term strategy of defeating them is to finding them and bringing them to justice. And the long-term strategy is to help others realize the blessings of liberty.

And this is a great challenge for the United States of America. It's a different

kind of war. It's akin to the cold war in some ways, where we had an ideological struggle. But in this war, there's an enemy that uses asymmetrical warfare, and they're propagandists. They kill the innocent to affect the conscience of those of us who feel like we need to keep pressuring them. See, they understand when they fill our TV screens with death and misery, it causes a compassionate people to recoil. They know that we value human life, and therefore, when they take human life, it affects how the American people feel.

And so I understand the angst amongst the American people. I know that people are weary of war. I fully understand that these hard images that these killers get on our TV screens ask people—causes people to question whether or not the cause is worth it and whether or not we can succeed. Well, I believe the cause is worth it. I wouldn't ask a mother's child to go into combat if I didn't think it was necessary to protect the American people, to stay on the offense. And I do believe we can succeed if we don't lose our nerve, because freedom has had the capacity over time to change enemies to allies and to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

And right now what you're seeing is this global war against these extremists and radicals unfolding in two major theaters: Afghanistan, where we liberated 25 million people from the clutches of a barbaric regime that had provided safe haven for Al Qaida killers who plotted and planned and then killed 3,000 of our people, and in Iraq.

The Iraq theater has gone through several stages. The first stage was the removal of Saddam Hussein. Let me just be as blunt as I can about that. It was his choice to make as to whether or not he was able to survive in power. The free world, through the United Nations, spoke clearly to Saddam Hussein. He made the choice. We removed Saddam Hussein, and the

world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And then the society which had been traumatized by his tyranny did something remarkable, and that is, they went to the polls in three historic elections and voted for a modern Constitution and expressed their desire to have Iraqi-style freedom, Iraqi-style democracy. It was an amazing moment. It seems like several decades ago to some, but that happened in the end of 2005.

And then this enemy—and the enemy, by the way, is comprised of people who wish they were still in power, disgruntled militia that are trying to make—see if they can't take advantage of some chaos. But the enemy that is causing the biggest spectacles is Al Qaida.

Now, there's a debate in Washington—I gave a speech about this in South Carolina the other day—is, well—is the Al Qaida in Iraq have anything to do with the Al Qaida that's hiding out somewhere in the regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan? There's some actually who say, "Well, they're different; they're not to be—we don't need to worry about them. All they care about is Iraq." Well, I reminded the audience in that speech that the person who started Al Qaida in Iraq was not an Iraqi; he was from Jordan. And after we killed him, the next person was not from Iraq, that started Al Qaida in Iraq; he was from Egypt.

And they have sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden, and they agree that Iraq is the central part of this war on terror, with Usama bin Laden. And they agree with his ambition to drive us out so they could have a safe haven from which to plot further attacks. Yes, Al Qaida in Iraq is dangerous to the United States of America. They blew up the holy shrine. They saw the progress being made. They can't stand the thought of a free society that will thwart their ambitions, and they blew up the shrine.

And why did they do it? They did it because they saw that progress was being

made, that the Iraqis might be actually able to have a government of, by, and for the people, and they wanted to create sectarian violence. And they were successful. In other words, there wasn't enough security at the time—in other words, enough confidence in the security at the time amongst the Iraqi people to be able to stop people from fighting each other.

And so I had a decision to make, and I made the decision: It's rather than pulling out and hoping for the best in the capital of this new democracy, recognizing that in the long run, a system based upon liberty will be a major defeat for these radical extremists, I sent more troops in. Rather than say, let's hope for the best, I said, we can do a better job of providing security to give this young Government a chance to grow and thrive and to give the people confidence in the Constitution that they voted for.

And David Petraeus became a new general there on the ground—the new general on the ground. He's an expert in counterinsurgency. The mission is to help protect Baghdad and the people inside Baghdad and to keep relentless pressure on those extremists who are trying to stop the advance of democracy. And he's making progress. And I believe it's in the interests of this country, for our own security, for the United States Congress to fully support General Petraeus in his mission and to give him time to come back and report to the United States Congress the progress that he's making.

It's really interesting to watch this counterinsurgency strategy work. I mean, when people on the ground begin to have confidence, they, all of a sudden, start making good decisions for a state that will represent their interests. There is such thing as top-down reconciliation. That's the passage of law. And the Iraqi parliament has passed quite a few pieces of legislation, and they're working—trying to work through their differences. Sometimes legislative bodies aren't real smooth in getting out

a piece of legislation in timely fashion, as some of you might recognize. But nevertheless, they're working hard to—learning what it means to have a parliament that functions.

But there's also bottom-up reconciliation. That's when people on the ground begin to see things change and start making decisions that will lead to peace. See, I believe most Muslim mothers, for example, want their child to grow up in peace. I believe there's something universal about motherhood. I don't think mothers in America think necessarily different from mothers in Iraq. I think the mother in Iraq says, "Gosh, I hope for the day when my child can go outside and play and not fear violence. I want my child to be educated. I have hopes that my child can grow up in a peaceful world." And when people begin to see that these thugs that have a dark vision begin to get defeated, people begin to change attitudes. And that's what's happened in Anbar Province.

Last November, many experts said that Anbar Province, which Al Qaida in Iraq had stated as their—that they wanted as a safe haven—this was going to be where they were going to launch their caliphate from—they said, we can't win there. And all of a sudden, we put more marines in; the people saw things change on the ground; local leaders started turning in Al Qaida—they don't like to be—people don't like to be intimidated by thugs and murderers. And the whole situation is changing for the better. Progress is being made there.

Now, I know that the car bombs that take place tend to cloud people's vision. What I'm telling you is that we gave David Petraeus a mission—the troops just fully got there 1 month ago—and he's accomplishing that mission. And my point to you is, it's worth it and necessary, because if we were to leave before the job is done, these radicals like Al Qaida would become emboldened, there would be chaos, mass casualties in Iraq. And that chaos could

spill out across the region. And if that were to happen, there would be significant competition among radical groups, whether they be Sunni or Shi'a, all aiming to destabilize the region in order to be able to achieve power. But they would have one thing in common, and that would be to inflict harm on the United States of America.

It's in our interests that there be a stable government that is an ally against these extremists, not only in Iraq but elsewhere. It's in our long-term interest for peace and security. Failure in Iraq would undermine that long-term interests. See, unlike some wars, this enemy wouldn't be content to stay in Iraq. They would follow us here. They would use the resources of Iraq to be able to acquire additional weaponry or use economic blackmail to achieve their objectives. They're dangerous in Iraq, and they'll be dangerous here. And that is why we must defeat them in Iraq. And we can.

I have spent a lot of time sharing this story with people, so I'm going to share it with you. If you've heard me tell it, play like you hadn't heard it. [*Laughter*] One of my close friends in the international arena over the last 6½ years is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. He was such a close friend that Laura and I took him down to Elvis's place—[*laughter*—which was really fun. I'm also a close friend of his successor, Prime Minister Abe.

The reason I bring this up is that, as you know—or may not know—my dad, professionally known as 41, fought the Japanese. As a young kid, he got out of high school, went down and trained in Corpus—part of his training mission—and then fought the Japanese as the sworn enemy of the United States of America. I'm sure some of your relatives did the same thing.

And yet here, some 60-odd years later, his son is sitting down at the table with the head of the former enemy talking about keeping the peace. We were talking about—when I was visiting with Prime Minister Koizumi, and now his successor—

the fact that it's important to help these young democracies survive in the face of this radicalism and extremism that can affect our homelands. See, we share this great—same philosophical belief that liberty can prevail, and that we have a duty to help liberty to prevail if we want there to be security.

I've always found that to be very interesting. My dad fought the Japanese, and the son, one lifetime later, is talking about keeping the peace. We talk about Afghanistan and helping that young democracy. Of course, we talk about North Korea, to make sure that we deal with any weapons proliferation that might be happening. We talk about a lot of issues, but they're issues about peace. Something happened between the 18-year-old kid who joined up to be in the Navy and the 60-year-old son being the President. And what happened is, is that liberty has got the capacity to convert an enemy into an ally.

I don't know how many people would have been predicting in 1947 or '48 or after the peace treaty was signed when President Truman was the President that there would be this kind of accommodation made between two former enemies for the sake of peace. I'm not sure how many would have, particularly right after World War II. I suspect a lot of people would say this never would have happened. They were the enemy then; they'll be the enemy now.

And the reason I tell you this story is that if you really look at history, you'll find

examples where liberty has transformed regions that were warlike, where a lot of people died, into regions of peace. And that's going to happen again, so long as we have faith in that fundamental principle, so long as we don't lose our confidence in certain values that are not American values, but they're universal values.

I believe the most important priority of our Government is to protect the American people from further harm. And you just need to be reassured and so do your constituents that a lot of good people are spending every hour of every day doing just that. But I would remind you, in the long run, the best way for your children and grandchildren to be able to say that when given a tough task, this generation didn't flinch and had certain faith—had faith in certain values, is that we stay strong when it comes to liberty as a transformative agent to bring the peace we want.

Thanks for letting me come. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:11 a.m. at the Philadelphia Marriott. In his remarks, he referred to Dolores Mertz, executive board of directors national chair, and Jerry Watson, private enterprise board chairman, American Legislative Exchange Council; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at a Special Olympics Global Law Enforcement Torch Run Ceremony

July 26, 2007

Thank you all. Welcome to the Rose Garden. Thanks for that touching introduction, Laura. [*Laughter*] I am proud to salute an outstanding group of athletes, the men and women of Team USA. And I'm

pleased to announce today that Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, who is with us today, will lead the impressive delegation to the World Games in Shanghai.

Thank you, Madam Secretary. Appreciate your service.

I'd also like to extend our greetings to the representatives from Team China. You're welcome here in the Rose Garden, and I appreciate you bringing this warm weather with you. I thank Secretary Mike Leavitt for joining us. Michael, it's good to see you. Thanks for being here. We are really proud that Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the founder of the Special Olympics, took time to be here in the Rose Garden. Welcome back to the White House. Great to see you. And I'm glad you brought your boy with you—[laughter]—the chairman of the Special Olympics, Tim Shriver. Thanks for being here, Tim. These are good people.

I'm proud to be here, as well, with Liu Peng—he's the Chinese Minister of Sports—and other members of the Chinese delegation. We welcome you here. Thank you for coming, Mr. Minister. And I appreciate very much your bringing President Hu's letter on the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai. It's very kind for you to have brought his letter to me, and I'm glad to have received it.

I want to thank Hans Hickler, the CEO of DHL, who has joined us. I thank Chief LaMunyon, who Laura just talked about. He's the founder of the Law Enforcement Torch Run, and he's here with his wife Sharron. Chief, appreciate you coming. Thanks for being a visionary. Glad you brought Sharron.

I thank the Special Olympic athletes, the final leg runners, and the law enforcement officials that have joined us today. Proud of your service, and proud of your compassion.

I remember when I was the Governor of the great State of Texas being a hugger. That was during the Special Olympic games. If you've never been a hugger, I strongly advise you to be one. [Laughter] That means you stand at the end of the finish line of a race and you hug the people coming across the line. It meant a lot to

me to be a hugger. It introduced me to the Special Olympics, and I have been a big backer of the Special Olympics, primarily because then, and since then, I have been inspired by the determination and the courage of our athletes.

And so we welcome you, and we welcome your families, and we welcome your coaches and your supporters. And to the family members and coaches and supporters, I thank you for helping our fellow citizens understand that the promise of this country belongs to every citizen. Over four decades, the Special Olympics has changed the lives of millions of people across the world. And we're proud to note that this noble mission began right here in America. And let me just say, I believe it is a fitting testimony to this country, that was based upon ideals of inclusion and acceptance and hope, that the games we honor today began right here in our country.

And ours is a country that constantly needs to strive to realize that vision. Interestingly enough, it was 17 years ago today that the Americans With Disabilities Act was signed into law at the White House. I know some folks here witnessed that signature. And I know a man who played a major role in getting that done, and that was the 41st President. You call him President; I call him dad. I am proud it was my dad that signed that law into being. I firmly believe millions of disabled Americans have found more opportunities to work and to contribute to our society because of that law.

There's more work to be done, and that's why my administration is building on progress through what we have called the New Freedom Initiative. It's a good initiative, and it's an important initiative, and it's an initiative that will help all Americans realize the great blessings of this country.

That's why the message of Special Olympics is important. That's why millions have joined this cause, Eunice. It started off as an idea, and now it's a worldwide movement. And that's why we look proudly upon

the “Flame of Hope,” which symbolizes the dreams of millions.

One of the athletes who is going to carry the torch today is Karen Dickerson. Karen is a tireless advocate for her fellow athletes. She’s what we’d call a fierce competitor. In the 2003 World Games in Ireland, Karen was told that she had a stress fracture in her leg. Yet through sheer willpower, she won the bronze medal. She has since run two Marine Corps Marathons. In the Boston Marathon this April, she finished in the top 10 percent of all women.

I want to thank you for being here. Karen should serve as an inspiration for a lot of folks in our country. You’re a true champ, just like every other Special Olympian that has joined us today and the millions who will be in Shanghai later on. Your success is best measured not by the medals you win but the kind of courage you show.

You follow your dreams, you never gave up, and you’ve shown us what the Olympic spirit is all about.

And so we send you to the World Games with our love and our prayers. We ask that you carry the greetings of the American people with you when you go to Shanghai and our wish for a world—and that you remind the people that our wish for our world is a more welcoming, more hopeful, and more peaceful place.

God bless you all, and good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hu Jintao of China. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Memorandum on the 2007 Combined Federal Campaign *July 26, 2007*

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: 2007 Combined Federal Campaign

Admiral Thad W. Allen, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, has agreed to serve as the Honorary National Chairman of the 2007 Combined Federal Campaign. I ask you to enthusiastically support the CFC by personally chairing the campaign in your agency and by exhorting top agency officials around the country to do the same.

The Combined Federal Campaign is an important way for Federal employees to support thousands of worthy charities. Public servants not only contribute to the campaign but also assume leadership roles to ensure its success.

Your personal support and enthusiasm will help positively influence thousands of employees and will guarantee another successful campaign.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers on the National Economy *July 27, 2007*

I want to thank my economic advisers for joining me here in the Cabinet. Today

we’ve had wide-ranging discussions about

a lot of aspects of our economy. I appreciate the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Treasury, and others for giving me their opinions about the events of today.

And what they're saying—one of the important pieces of data that I've been briefed on is the fact that our economy grew at 3.4 percent in the second quarter of this year. Inherent in that growth is a free-enterprise system that provides incentives for people to take risk and to grow their businesses. And it's an economy that is large and flexible and resilient.

One of the interesting aspects of this economic growth is that we have benefited from increased exports. In other words, U.S. farmers and small-business owners and manufacturers have found markets overseas for our products, products grown right here or built right here in the United States. And by selling those products overseas, it's contributed to the strong second quarter growth.

And when we are able to sell products overseas or goods and services overseas, it means that Americans are more likely to find a job here in America. The job growth

has been strong, and that's what you'd expect when your economy is strong and resilient and flexible. People are working; the unemployment rate is down; wages are increasing.

And so I want the American people to take a good look at this economy of ours. The world is strong—the world economy is strong. I happen to believe one of the main reasons why is because we remain strong. And my pledge to the American people is, we will keep your taxes low to make sure the economy continues to remain strong, and we'll be wise about how we spend your money here in Washington, DC. I've submitted a budget that will be in balance by 2012, and I look forward to working with Congress to achieve that goal.

Anyway, thank you all for coming. I appreciate you briefing me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medals of Science and Technology *July 27, 2007*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Good afternoon. Welcome to the White House. It's an honor to welcome some of our country's most gifted and accomplished citizens. I appreciate your work on behalf of our Nation. I congratulate you on this achievement, and I look forward to presenting you the National Medals of Science and Technology.

I welcome your families, and I welcome your friends. I also welcome the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Madam Secretary, thank you for joining us today. Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez, Mr.

Secretary, Dr. Jack Marburger, who is the Director of Office of Science and Technology Policy, Dr. Marburger; Dr. Arden Bement, Director of the National Science Foundation—Arden, thank you for coming. I welcome the representatives from the National Science Foundation who have joined us, members of the Board from the National Science and Technology Medals Foundation. Our awardees have got to be thanking you as well. *[Laughter]* I thank Dr. Zerhouni, Director of the National Institute of Health. Thanks for coming, doc;

Dr. Bill Jeffrey, Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Appreciate all the previous recipients of the National Medals of Science and Technology who have joined us. I thank the students from Benjamin Banneker Academic High School here in Washington, DC, for being with us. I thank my friends the Barretts, who are strong supporters of basic research and good science, for bringing future scientists and engineers to the White House in the hopes that this ceremony will inspire them and others to contribute to our country like our award winners have today.

From the earliest days, we have been a nation of innovators, people who look at challenges and find creative ways to adapt and improve. There's been some interesting examples of that attitude right here in the East Room. For example, Abigail Adams needed a place to hang her clothes, so she innovated and converted the East Room into a White House laundry room. [Laughter] Or Theodore Roosevelt used the East Room as a roller skating rink for his children. [Laughter] Gerald Ford's daughter, Susan, used this very room as the site of her high school prom, which was well attended, I might add. [Laughter]

This afternoon the East Room is home to innovators of a different kind, some of our finest science and technology leaders. The men and women we salute have recognized—have been recognized with countless honors, including the Nobel Prize. They have served as leaders of major research foundations, university presidents, Directors of Government Agencies, and heads of academic departments. And now they add to their deep and remarkable resumes the highest award a President can confer in their fields, the National Medals of Science and Technology. And I congratulate you.

The intellectual achievements of these men and women are momentous. In a single room, we have thinkers who helped formulate and refine the Big Bang theory of

the universe, the bootstrap resampling technique of statistics, the algebraic K-theory of mathematics. I'm going to play like I understand what all that means. [Laughter] We have experts in fields like organometallic chemistry, atomic physics, and neurobiology. We have researchers who have drilled into glaciers, isolated the DNA of mobile genes, and pioneered the distributed feedback laser. [Laughter] In other words, we've got some smart people here. [Laughter] And we're glad you're Americans.

Each of our laureates has deepened our understanding of the world, and many have directly changed our lives. Their discoveries have led to hopeful treatments for HIV/AIDS, new vaccines to prevent childhood illnesses, safer drinking water around the world. Innovations are responsible for the CD players in our homes, the guardrails on our highways, the Stealth fighters in our Air Force. Their breakthroughs have helped make it possible for burn victims to heal with fewer scars and older people to hear more clearly, businesses to e-mail documents around the world and doctors to administer medicine without needles. That's a much welcome change for a lot of us.

Whatever their chosen field, the National Laureates in Sciences and Technology have brought great credit to themselves and to this country. And you have the gratitude of the American people. And that's what we're here to say—tell you today.

The work of these laureates demonstrates that innovation is vital to a better future for our country and the world. In America, the primary engine of innovation is the private sector. But government can help by encouraging the basic research that gives rise to promising new thought and products. And so that's why I've worked with some in this room and around our country to develop and propose the American Competitiveness Initiative. Over 10 years, this initiative will double the Federal Government's commitment to the most critical, basic research programs in physical

sciences. Last year, the Congress provided more than \$10 billion, and that's just a start. And I call on leaders of both political parties to fully fund this initiative for the good of the country.

Maintaining our global leadership also requires a first-class education system. There are many things that American schools are doing right, including insisting on accountability for every single child. There are also some areas where we need to improve. And so as Members work to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act, one of their top priorities has got to be to strengthen math and science education.

One way to do that is to create an Adjunct Teachers Corps of math and science professionals, all aiming to bring their expertise into American classrooms where—it's not really what the aim is. The aim is to make it clear to young Americans that being in science and engineering is okay; it's cool; it's a smart thing to do. And so for those of you who are involved with inspiring youngsters, thank you for what you're doing. I appreciate you encouraging the next generation to follow in your footsteps. And I ask that Congress fully fund the adjunct teacher corps, so you can have some help as you go out to inspire.

One of the many reasons that I am an optimistic fellow, and I am, is because I

understand that this country is a nation of discovery and enterprise. And that spirit is really strong in America today. I found it interesting that one of today's laureates, Dr. Leslie Geddes, is 86 years old and continues to teach and conduct research at Purdue University. Even more interesting is what he had to say. He said, "I wouldn't know what else to do. I'm not done yet." [Laughter]

He's right. He's not done yet because the promise of science and technology never runs out. With the imagination and determinations of Americans like our awardees today, our Nation will continue to discover new possibilities and to develop new innovations and build a better life for generations to come. And that's what we're here to celebrate.

And so I thank you for the many contributions to our Nation, congratulate you on your fine achievements. And now I ask the military aide to read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Col. Samuel Floyd, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Statement on the Conclusion of Negotiations With India on a Bilateral Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation

July 27, 2007

I welcome the conclusion of negotiations on a bilateral agreement between the United States and India for peaceful nuclear cooperation. I commend those from both countries who have worked hard to make this deal happen, and I look forward

to working with Congress to realize this important initiative. This marks another step in the continued progress that is deepening our strategic partnership with India, a vital world leader.

The President's Radio Address *July 28, 2007*

Good morning. This week, I visited with troops at Charleston Air Force Base. These fine men and women are serving courageously to protect our country against dangerous enemies. The terrorist network that struck America on September the 11th wants to strike our country again. To stop them, our military, law enforcement, and intelligence professionals need the best possible information about who the terrorists are, where they are, and what they are planning.

One of the most important ways we can gather that information is by monitoring terrorist communications. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, also known as FISA, provides a critical legal foundation that allows our intelligence community to collect this information while protecting the civil liberties of Americans. But this important law was written in 1978, and it addressed the technologies of that era. This law is badly out of date, and Congress must act to modernize it.

Today, we face sophisticated terrorists who use disposable cell phones and the Internet to communicate with each other, recruit operatives, and plan attacks on our country. Technologies like these were not available when FISA was passed nearly 30 years ago, and FISA has not kept up with new technological developments. As a result, our Nation is hampered in its ability to gain the vital intelligence we need to keep the American people safe. In his testimony to Congress in May, Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, put it this way: We are, quote, "significantly burdened in capturing overseas communications of foreign terrorists planning to conduct attacks inside the United States."

To fix this problem, my administration has proposed a bill that would modernize the FISA statute. This legislation is the product of months of discussion with mem-

bers of both parties in the House and the Senate, and it includes four key reforms. First, it brings FISA up to date with the changes in communications technology that have taken place over the past three decades. Second, it seeks to restore FISA to its original focus on protecting the privacy interests of people inside the United States, so we don't have to obtain court orders to effectively collect foreign intelligence about foreign targets located in foreign locations. Third, it allows the government to work more efficiently with private sector entities like communications providers, whose help is essential. And fourth, it will streamline administrative processes so our intelligence community can gather foreign intelligence more quickly and more effectively while protecting civil liberties.

Our intelligence community warns that under the current statute, we are missing a significant amount of foreign intelligence that we should be collecting to protect our country. Congress needs to act immediately to pass this bill, so that our national security professionals can close intelligence gaps and provide critical warning time for our country.

As the recent National Intelligence Estimate reported, America is in a heightened-threat environment. Reforming FISA will help our intelligence professionals address those threats, and they should not have to wait any longer. Congress will soon be leaving for its August recess. I ask Republicans and Democrats to work together to pass FISA modernization now, before they leave town. Our national security depends on it.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on July 27 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on the morning

of July 28, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press

Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom at Camp David, Maryland

July 30, 2007

President Bush. Welcome. Thank you. It's good to have you here. So everybody is wondering whether or not the Prime Minister and I were able to find common ground, to get along, to have a meaningful discussion. And the answer is, absolutely. You know, he probably wasn't sure what to expect from me, and I kind of had a sense that—of the kind of person I'd be dealing with. I would describe Gordon Brown as a principled man who really wants to get something done. In other words, in my discussions with him last night, we spent about 2 hours over dinner and—just alone. We dismissed the rest of the delegations to the bowling alley, I think. [Laughter] And as Josh Bolten said, it's the Ryder Cup of bowling. I think the trophy was left for Great Britain, if I'm not mistaken.

But we had a really casual and good discussion, and we'd be glad to share—I'll be glad to share some of the insights here and then—but the notion of America and Britain sharing values is very important—and that we have an obligation, it seems to me, to work for freedom and justice around the world. And I found a person who shares that vision and who understands the call. After all, we're writing the initial chapters of what I believe is a great ideological struggle between those of us who do believe in freedom and justice and human rights and human dignity and cold-blooded killers who will kill innocent people to achieve their objectives.

One of the great calling that we have here in the beginning of the 21st century is to protect our own people. And so we

spent a fair amount of time making sure that our systems are properly aligned so as we can share information to protect our citizens from this kind of brutal group of people who really would like to see us driven from parts of the world so they can impose their ideology. And I do congratulate the Prime Minister for his steady and quick response in the face of a significant threat to the homeland. You've proved your worthiness as a leader, and I thank you for that.

We also recognize that if you're involved with an ideological struggle, then you defeat that one ideology with a more hopeful ideology, and that's why it's very important for us to defend and stand with these young democracies in Afghanistan and Iraq. I appreciate very much the British commitment in Afghanistan and Iraq. I appreciate the bravery of the soldiers. Obviously, I mourn the loss of any life. I think it's very important for us to make it clear to those who are in harm's way that these missions will be driven not by local politics but by conditions on the ground, because success in Afghanistan and Iraq will be an integral part of defeating an enemy and helping people realize the great blessings of liberty as the alternative to an ideology of darkness that spreads its murder to achieve its objectives.

We talked about the tyranny of poverty, the tyranny of lack of education. And I appreciate the Prime Minister's strong commitment to press forward on working together dealing with disease, whether it be HIV/AIDS or malaria. He's got a strong commitment to helping people realize the

blessings of education. I thank you very much for that vision.

He also understands what I know, that if we're really interested in eradicating poverty, it's important for us to be successful in the Doha round. Gordon Brown brought some interesting suggestions on the way forward. He is optimistic that we can conclude the Doha round, as am I. And I want to thank you for strategizing as to how to get that done in a way that is beneficial for all of us.

We talked about the Holy Land. We talked about Darfur. We had a good discussion as to how to keep this world engaged in the atrocities—I've called it a genocide—taking place in Darfur, and I want to thank you for your leadership on that issue.

And so we had a good, relaxed, meaningful discussion over dinner and then picked it up at breakfast. And I'm pleased you're here, and I'm pleased to report that this relationship will be a constructive and strategic relationship for the good of our peoples.

Welcome.

Prime Minister Brown. Thank you very much. Well, can I say, Mr. President, it's a great honor for me to come, within a few weeks of becoming Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, here to Camp David, to have been invited by you to have the discussions that we've just concluded, and to be able to affirm and to celebrate the historic partnership of shared purpose between our two countries. And I believe it's a partnership that's founded on more than common interests and more than just a common history; it's a partnership founded and driven forward by our shared values—what Winston Churchill, who was the first British Prime Minister to visit Camp David, called the joint inheritance of liberty, a belief in opportunity for all, a belief in the dignity of every human being.

And I've told President Bush that it's in Britain's national interest that with all our energies we work together to address all the great challenges that we face also

together: nuclear proliferation, climate change, global poverty and prosperity, the Middle East peace process, which we've discussed, and most immediately, international terrorism. Terrorism is not a cause; it is a crime, and it is a crime against humanity. And there should be no safe haven and no hiding place for those who practice terrorist violence or preach terrorist extremism.

Ladies and gentlemen, in Iraq, we have duties to discharge and responsibilities to keep in support of the democratically elected Government and in support of the explicit will of the international community, expressed most recently through U.N. Resolution 1723.

Our aim, like the United States, is, step by step, to move control to the Iraqi authorities, to the Iraqi Government, and to its security forces as progress is made. And we've moved from combat to overwatch in three of the four Provinces for which we the British have security responsibility. We intend to move to overwatch in the fourth Province, and that decision will be made on the military advice of our commanders on the ground. Whatever happens, we will make a full statement to Parliament when it returns.

Our aim, as is the aim of the United States Government, is threefold: security for the Iraqi people, political reconciliation, and that the Iraqis have a stake in the future. And I can say also that I have proposed to the Iraqi Government the offer of new finance that—for Basra and the surrounding areas where we have responsibility, that we invite the Iraqis to set up, with our support, a Basra economic development agency, so that there are jobs, businesses, the chance of prosperity, and economic hope.

I strongly support President Bush's initiative, a bold initiative to make early progress in the Middle East peace process. Afghanistan is the frontline against terrorism, and as we have done twice in the last year, where there are more forces needed to

back up the coalition and NATO effort, they have been provided by the United Kingdom.

On Iran, we are in agreement that sanctions are working. And the next stage we are ready to move towards is to toughen the sanctions with a further U.N. resolution.

Darfur is the greatest humanitarian disaster the world faces today, and I've agreed with the President that we step up our pressure to end the violence that has displaced 2 million people, made 4 million hungry and reliant on food aid, and murdered 200,000 people. We have agreed on expediting the U.N. resolution for a joint U.N.-African Union peace force. We're agreed on encouragement for early peace talks, a call to cease violence on the ground, an end to aerial bombing of civilians, and support for economic development if this happens and further sanctions if this does not happen.

Across developing countries, 30,000 children die needlessly every day, and we support the President's pathbreaking initiatives on HIV/AIDS and on malaria. And we are agreed to support a new partnership that brings together public and private sectors, faith groups and civil society to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In a world trade agreement lies the difference between progress to a more open global trading economy and a retreat into protectionism. In recent days, I've been able to talk to Chancellor Merkel, President Barroso, Prime Minister Socrates, President Lula, President Mbeki, and Prime Minister Singh, as well as the Trade Negotiator, Pascal Lamy. And the President and I are one in seeking an early conclusion to a trade agreement. We agreed that contact between leaders will be stepped up so that we are ready to quickly finalize an agreement in the near future.

We also agreed on the importance of the issue of climate change, which needs to be tackled in the context of sustainable development and in the context of energy

security. We support the framework of meetings over the coming months to address this issue and move forward the agenda agreed at this year's G-8 in Germany.

Mr. President, we have had full and frank discussions. We've had the capacity and the ability to meet yesterday evening for 2 hours to discuss, person to person, some of the great issues of our time. You were kind enough also to arrange talks this morning where we continued the discussion on the issues that I've just talked about, and I'm very grateful to you for your hospitality and for the chance for our two countries, with our great shared histories, to continue to work together on these great issues.

I think we're agreed that all challenges can best be met when together the United Kingdom and the United States work in a partnership that I believe will strengthen in the years to come. And I thank you for both your invitation and for the chance to talk about these great issues. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Two questions a side. Ben [Ben Feller, Associated Press].

Progress in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Your own military commander suggests that in Iraq, the Iraqi forces are not nearly ready to take over security for their own country, and that U.S. troops will need to stay in the region for many months if not years. Are you prepared to pass on the fate of the war to the next President?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, if I may, what do you see as the biggest mistakes in the management of the war, and what do you propose to do to correct them?

President Bush. David Petraeus, the general on the ground, will be bringing his recommendations back to the Congress on or about September the 15th. And I think it's going to be very important for all of us to wait for him to report. And the reason it's important is, is that I believe that the

decisions on the way forward in Iraq must be made with a military recommendation as an integral part of it. And therefore, I don't want to prejudge what David is going to say.

I have said this is going to take a long time, just like this ideological—in Iraq, just like the ideological struggle is going to take a long time. And so I look forward to David's report, and then we'll respond accordingly. There has been some notable progress, Anbar Province being such a place where there's bottom-up reconciliation, where people are rejecting this Al Qaida vision of the world and saying, there's a better way forward.

There's still setbacks, obviously. We've got these suiciders that are trying to foment sectarian violence. But, Ben, I would ask you and the Congress to wait, to do what I'm doing, which is wait until David to come back and make his report. And I think you'll find it will be considered and based upon the evidence there on the ground.

Prime Minister Brown. You asked about the difficulties we've faced, and a lot has happened over the last period of time. I think the difficulties include the—getting political reconciliation within Iraq itself, moving forward the reconstruction and the time it has taken to do so.

But I think the one thing that I'm pleased about is that Iraq is now building up its own security forces, it's now building up its own military, and it's now building up its own police. So we've got to a situation where there are perhaps 300,000 people who are in the Iraqi security and policing forces.

In Basra and in the four Provinces that we're dealing with, security forces have built up over the last few years now to around 30,000 people. It's in that context where we can then achieve what we want to do, which is to pass security over to the Iraqi people themselves, to pass it over to the elected Iraqi Government, and of course, to local Provincial control.

And one of the encouraging things that's happened over the last few months, indeed the last year and more, is that we've been able to pass the control of the three of the four Provinces for which we've got responsibility back to Iraqi hands. And of course, the issue in Basra, which is the largest Province, is the point at which we can do what we want to do, which is to have local people and local army and local police in charge of the security there.

So that is the challenge that we face over this next period of time: that Iraq itself becomes more responsible for its own security; that we are able to pass control of the Province both to elected politicians and to the security services; and we're able to combine that with the people of Iraq themselves having a stake in the future.

So yes, there have been problems, but, yes, also, when you look at the four Provinces for which we've got responsibility, we can see that we're able to move control back to the Iraqi people in three. And there's a chance of being able to do that in the fourth as a result of the buildup of the security forces.

Nick [Nick Robinson, BBC News].

President Bush. Gosh, still hanging around. [Laughter]

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. [Laughter] It's very nice to be back.

President Bush. Yes, it is.

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations on Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you trusted Tony Blair not, in your phrase, to cut and run from Iraq. After your talks, do you believe you can trust Gordon Brown in the same way?

And, Prime Minister, you talked of Afghanistan being the frontline in the struggle against terror, not Iraq. Do you believe that British troops in Iraq are part of the struggle against terrorism or, as many people now believe, making that harder, not easier, to win?

Prime Minister Brown. Well, perhaps I should deal with it first and then pass on to you, President.

In Iraq, you're dealing with Sunni-Shi'a violence, you're dealing with the involvement of Iran, but you're certainly dealing with a large number of Al Qaida terrorists. And I think I described Afghanistan as the first line in the battle against the Taliban, and of course, the Taliban in Afghanistan is what we are dealing with in the Provinces for which we've got responsibility, and doing so with some success.

There is no doubt, therefore, that Al Qaida is operating in Iraq. There is no doubt that we've had to take very strong measures against them, and there is no doubt that the Iraqi security forces have got to be strong enough to be able to withstand not just the violence that has been between the Sunni and the Shi'a population and the Sunni insurgency but also Al Qaida itself.

So one of the tests that the military commanders will have on the ground, in the Province for which we've got direct responsibility now and before we move from combat to overwatch, is whether we are strong enough and they are strong enough to enable them to stand up against that threat.

President Bush. There's no doubt in my mind that Gordon Brown understands that failure in Iraq would be a disaster for the security of our own countries; that failure in Iraq would embolden extremist movements throughout the Middle East; that failure in Iraq would basically say to people sitting on the fence around the region that Al Qaida is powerful enough to drive great countries like Great Britain and America out of Iraq before the mission is done. He understands that violence could spill out across the region, that a country like Iran would become emboldened.

So there's no doubt in my mind, he understands the stakes of the struggle. And there's no doubt in my mind that he will keep me abreast of his military commanders' recommendations based upon conditions on the ground. As he accurately noted, the Brits have been involved in four of the Provinces; transfer has taken place

in three of the four. Why? Because progress was made. This is a results-oriented world, and the results are—were such that Great Britain was able to transfer responsibility. That's what we want to do. We want to be able to be in a position where we can achieve results on the ground so that we can be in a different posture.

The problem was, last fall, we weren't going to be able to transfer because conditions on the ground were getting out of control. And so I made the decision to send more troops in, understanding the consequences of failure if we did not do so. In other words, I said, I think if we don't send troops, it's more likely we'll fail. And the consequences of failure would be disaster for Great Britain and the United States, something this Prime Minister understands.

The idea of somehow achieving results, and therefore, this is a change of attitude, just simply doesn't—I just don't agree with that. I find him to be resolved and firm and understanding about the stakes in this series of initial struggles in this war against extremists and radicals. And the challenge for Gordon and me is to write a chapter, the first chapter in this struggle that will lead to success, and that's exactly what we're determined to do.

Rutenberg [Jim Rutenberg, New York Times], today's your birthday? How old are you?

Q. Thirty-eight.

Prime Minister Brown. My goodness.

President Bush. Here you are—amazing country, Gordon. The guy is under 40 years old, asking me and you questions. It's a beautiful sight. [Laughter]

Q. Forty is the new 30, Mr. President.

President Bush. It's a beautiful sight. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Brown. Six in my cabinet are under 40.

President Bush. Are they? [Laughter]

Prime Minister Brown. Yes.

Q. Or 40 is the new 20.

President Bush. You must be feeling damn old then?

Prime Minister Brown. Absolutely. [Laughter]

President Bush. Yes, Jim.

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, the Prime Minister has referred to terrorism as, quote, “a crime,” and he’s referred to it in part as a law enforcement issue. So for you, I’m wondering, does that underscore any sort of philosophical difference when your 2004 campaign took issue with somewhat similar descriptions from John Kerry?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, I’ve heard a lot about how your approach to the United States will be the same as that of your predecessor, but how will it differ?

President Bush. Yes. Look, people who kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve political objectives are evil; that’s what I think. I don’t think there’s any need to negotiate with them. I don’t think there’s any need to hope that they’ll change. They are coldblooded killers, and we better be clear eyed when we’re dealing with them.

And this Prime Minister, right in the beginning of his office, got a taste of what it means to be in a world with these people that would come and attempt to kill innocent civilians of his country. And he handled it well.

But we’re dealing with a variety of methodologies to deal with them: One is intelligence; one is law enforcement; and one is military. We got to use all assets at disposal to find them and bring them to justice before they hurt our people again.

In the long run, the way to defeat these people is through a competing ideology, see. And what’s interesting about this struggle—and this is what I was paying very careful attention to when Gordon was speaking—is, does he understand it’s an ideological struggle? And he does.

As he said to me, “It’s akin to the cold war.” And it is; except the difference this time is, we have an enemy using asymmet-

rical warfare to try to affect our vision, to try to shake our will. They’ll kill innocent women and children so it gets on the TV screens, so that we say it’s not worth it; let’s just back off. The death they cause is—makes it—maybe we just ought to let them have their way. And that’s the great danger facing the world in which we live, and he gets it.

Now, he can answer his own—your question. What’s the second half? I talked too long for—

Q. How would your approach differ from that of your predecessor? And while we’re on the subject, also—

President Bush. Wait a minute—[laughter]—it doesn’t work that way.

Q. It’s his birthday.

President Bush. Yes, Mr. Birthday Boy is taking latitude here. [Laughter]

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations/War on Terror

Q. Do you have the same philosophy as the President in terms of terrorism? So it’s a two-pronged.

Prime Minister Brown. Absolutely.

President Bush. What do you expect the answer to be—

Prime Minister Brown. Absolutely.

President Bush. —Rutenberg? Come on, man.

Prime Minister Brown. And let me just stress that we’re in a generation-long battle against terrorism, against Al Qaida-inspired terrorism, and this is a battle for which we can give no quarter. It’s a battle that’s got to be fought in military, diplomatic, intelligence, security, policing, and ideological terms. And we have to face groups of terrorists operating in Britain. And other countries around the world have seen—perhaps, in 17 countries—terrorist attacks over the last few years. When we in Britain have faced 15 of our own since September of 2001 and, of course, when America itself faced in September 2001 and showed such bravery, resilience, and courage in standing up against terrorism, then we know we are

in a common struggle. And we know we have to work together, and we know we've got to use all means to deal with it.

So we are at one in fighting the battle against terrorism. And that struggle is one that we will fight with determination and with resilience, and—right across the world.

You asked about the new Government in the United Kingdom. What I would say is this: Every generation faces new challenges, and the challenges that we face in 2007 are not the same as the challenges that we faced as a Government when Tony Blair started in 1997. Then the challenges in Britain were about stability, about employment, about public services. Then the challenges around the world were not seen at that point as the challenges against international terrorism.

Today, in 2007, we see the challenges are radically different from what they were 10 years ago. We have the climate change challenge we've just been discussing, which wasn't one that was seen in exactly the same way a few years ago. And that will lead to the work that we've got to do together—and involving China and India in particular—to deal with the energy issues and including issues of energy security that we face.

We have the challenge of security and terrorism. We have the challenge that we now know in Africa, Darfur, a challenge that we've got to meet immediately to make sure that famine does not afflict millions of people in that part of Africa. And of course, we have the challenge that we can see now, where there are opportunities as well as difficulties, in the Middle East peace process. And that, of course, is a challenge that Secretary of State Rice is—and I'm glad she is here today and has joined our discussions—is going on only today to the Middle East to take up.

So the challenges are different. We will deal with them by being a government of opportunity and security for all. But the challenges, of course, are new as we face the next decade. And these are challenges

that we will face and, I believe, America will face with exactly the same resilience, courage, and professionalism.

Adam [Adam Boulton, Sky News].

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you. A question from Sky News. Mr. Brown's new formulation for what we used to call the special relationship is Britain's single most important bilateral relationship. I wonder if I could ask him what precisely that means, whether it works the other way for the United States, in terms of their bilateral relationships. And also, Mr. President, what you think has actually changed with the arrival of Gordon Brown instead of Tony Blair?

President Bush. Besides toothpaste? [Laughter] Do you want to—I'll start. Look, I think any time you share values the way we share values, it makes it easy to have strategic conversations; it makes it easy to be able to have common ground on which to deal with these problems. You just listed off a lot of problems. I happen to view them as great opportunities to begin to put conditions in place so that the world looks fundamentally different 50 years from now.

But I would say that the relationship between Great Britain and America is our most important bilateral relationship, for a lot of reasons: trade. Great Britain has been attacked; we've been attacked, which caused us to lash up our intelligence services like never before. We have common interests throughout the world.

But it's an important relationship primarily because we think the same. We believe in freedom and justice as fundamentals of life. There's no doubt in my mind that freedom is universal, that freedom is a gift to each man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth, and that with freedom comes peace. And there's no doubt in my mind, those of us who live under the free societies have an obligation to work together to promote it.

And the man I listened to shares that same sense of morality and that same sense of obligation, not to free others, but to create the conditions so others can realize the blessings of freedom. We can't impose freedom, but we can eliminate roadblocks to freedom and to allow free societies to develop. And it's really hard work, you know? There's a lot of cynics saying, "How dare they; how dare they impose U.S. or Great British values." And what I found was a man who understands that these aren't Great British and U.S. values; these are universal values.

And so what was your question? [*Laughter*]

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations

Q. What's changed?

President Bush. Oh, what's changed? He's a Scotsman, kind of a—he's not the dour Scotsman that you described him, or the awkward Scotsman. He's actually the humorous Scotsman, the guy that—we actually were able to relax and to share some thoughts. I was very interested in his family life. He's a man who has suffered unspeakable tragedy, and instead of that weakening his soul, strengthened his soul.

I was impressed, and I am confident that we'll be able to keep our relationship strong, healthy, vibrant, and that there will be constant communications as we deal with these problems. As I said, he's a problem-solver. And that's what we need as partners. I mean, we've got a lot of problems we're dealing with, and we can reach solutions. He's a glass-half-full man, not a glass-half-empty guy, you know? Some of these world leaders say, "Oh, the problems are so significant; let us retreat; let us not take them on; they're too tough." That's not Gordon Brown. His attitude is, I see a problem; let's work together to solve it. And for that, I'm grateful.

Prime Minister Brown. What President Bush has said is both very compassionate and reflects the conversation we had about

a whole series of issues that we can deal with together.

I think your understanding, if I may say so, of Scotland was enhanced by the fact that you went to Scotland, you told me, at the age of 14, and had to sit through very long Presbyterian Church services—[*laughter*]*—*in which you didn't understand a word of what the minister was actually saying. [*Laughter*] So I think you came to a better understanding of the Scottish contribution to the United Kingdom from that.

Adam, you asked about the single most important bilateral relationship for Britain, and I think President Bush has answered that, that that is the view of the United States as well. Call it the special relationship; call it, as Churchill did, the joint inheritance; call it when we meet as a form of homecoming, as President Reagan did—then you see the strength of this relationship, as I've said, is not just built on the shared problems that we have to deal with together or on the shared history that is built, as President Bush has just said, on shared values. And these are values that he rightly says are universal. They're the belief in the dignity of the individual, the freedom and liberty that we can bring to the world, and a belief that everyone—everyone—should have the chance of opportunity.

And I do see this relationship strengthening in the years to come, because it is the values that we believe in that I think will have the most impact as we try to solve the problems that we face right across the world. And in a sense, the battle that we are facing with international terrorism is a battle between our values, which stress the dignity of every individual, and those who would maim and murder, irrespective of faith, indifferent to human life, often simply for propaganda effect, and of course, with devastating effects, both on the communities that they claim to represent and the whole world.

So I want to stress the values that we hold in common, not in an abstract way,

but in a very positive and concrete way, because I think the more we debate these issues about how the world would be organized to face international terrorism, the more we come back to the values that unite decent, hard-working people right across the world, whatever their faith, whatever their country, whatever their continent.

And it's been a privilege to be able to have these discussions with the President about how we can deal with all these challenges by applying not just our values, but applying the strength that comes from the strong relationship that exists between our two countries.

President Bush. Good job. Thank you.

Prime Minister Brown. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Glad you all are here. You'd better cover up your bald head. Getting hot out here. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:46 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. Prime Minister Brown referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission; Prime Minister Jose Socrates of Portugal; President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil; President Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki of South Africa; Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India; Director-General Pascal Lamy of the World Trade Organization; and former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Fiscal Year 2008 Department of Defense Supplemental Budget Revisions

July 31, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed revisions to the FY 2008 Budget request for Department of Defense operations in the Global War on Terror. This request would provide the additional resources necessary to maximize the production of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles and rapidly field this capability to our servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Overall, the discretionary budget authority in my FY 2008 request for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom would be increased by \$5.3 billion, for a Department of Defense total of \$147.0 billion for these operations.

I hereby designate the specific proposals in the amounts requested herein as emergency requirements. This request represents urgent and essential requirements and I encourage you to take up the FY 2008 war funding, including this critical force protection funding, as soon as possible. The details of the request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Message to the Congress on Blocking Property of Persons Undermining
the Sovereignty of Lebanon or Its Democratic Processes and Institutions
August 1, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, as amended (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order declaring a national emergency to deal with the threat in Lebanon posed by the actions of certain persons to undermine Lebanon's legitimate and democratically elected government or democratic institutions, to contribute to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Lebanon, including through politically motivated violence and intimidation, to reassert Syrian control or contribute to Syrian interference in Lebanon or to infringe upon or undermine Lebanese sovereignty, contributing to political and economic instability in that country and the region. Such actions constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

This order will block the property and interests in property of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to have taken, or to pose a significant risk of taking, actions, including acts of violence, that have the purpose or effect of undermining Lebanon's democratic processes or institutions or contributing to the breakdown of the rule of law in Lebanon, supporting the reassertion of Syrian control or contributing to Syrian interference in Lebanon, or infringing upon or undermining Lebanese sovereignty. The order further authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury,

in consultation with the Secretary of State, to block the property and interests in property of those persons determined to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financing, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, such actions or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; to be a spouse or dependent child of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or to be owned or controlled by, or to act or purport to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order.

I delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, the authority to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of my order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
August 1, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 2. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting *August 2, 2007*

Good morning. I just had a—I finished a Cabinet meeting. One of the things we discussed was the terrible situation there in Minneapolis. We talked about the fact that the bridge collapsed, and that we in the Federal Government must respond, and respond robustly, to help the people there not only recover but to make sure that life-line of activity, that bridge gets rebuilt as quickly as possible.

To that end, Secretary Peters is in Minneapolis, as well as Federal Highway Administrator Capka. I spoke to Governor Pawlenty and Mayor Rybak this morning. I told them that the Secretary would be there. I told them we would help with rescue efforts, but I also told them how much we are in prayer for those who suffered. And I thank our fellow—my fellow citizens for holding up those who are suffering right now in prayer.

We also talked about—in the Cabinet meeting—talked about the status of important pieces of legislation before the Congress. We spent a fair amount of time talking about the fact that how disappointed we are that Congress hasn't sent any spending bills to my desk. By the end of this week, Members are going to be leaving for their month-long August recess. And by the time they will return, there will be less than a month before the end of the fiscal year on September the 30th, and yet they haven't passed 1 of the 12 spending bills that they're required to pass. If Congress doesn't pass the spending bills by the end of the fiscal year, Cabinet Secretaries report that their Departments may be unable to move forward with urgent priorities for our country.

This just doesn't have to be this way. The Democrats won last year's election fair and square, and now they control the calendar for bringing up bills in Congress. They need to pass each of these spending

bills individually, on time, and in a fiscally responsible way.

The budget I've sent to Congress fully funds America's priorities. It increases discretionary spending by 6.9 percent. My Cabinet Secretaries assure me that this is adequate to meet the needs of our Nation.

Unfortunately, Democratic leaders in Congress want to spend far more. Their budget calls for nearly \$22 billion more in discretionary spending next year alone. These leaders have tried to downplay that figure. Yesterday one called this increase, and I quote, "a very small difference" from what I proposed. Only in Washington can \$22 billion be called a very small difference. And that difference will keep getting bigger. Over the next 5 years, it will total nearly \$205 billion in additional discretionary spending. That \$205 billion averages out to about \$112 million per day, \$4.7 million per hour, \$78,000 per minute.

Put another way, that's about \$1,300 in higher spending every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year for the next 5 years. That's a lot of money—even for career politicians in Washington. In fact, at that pace, Democrats in Congress would have spent an extra \$300,000 since I began these remarks.

There's only one way to pay for all this new Federal spending without running up the deficit, and that is to raise your taxes. A massive tax hike is the last thing the American people need. The plan I put forward would keep your taxes low and balance the budget within 5 years, and that is the right path for our country.

I want to thank OMB Director Rob Portman for his hard work in developing this plan. This was Rob's last Cabinet meeting. Laura and I wish him and his family well. And I call on the Senate to confirm his successor, Jim Nussle, so we can work together to keep our Government running,

to keep our economy growing, and to keep our Nation strong.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota; and Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Counterterrorism Team *August 3, 2007*

I thank you all for coming. Director Mueller, thank you for your hospitality. I'm honored to be here at the headquarters of the FBI. Just a beginning of a series of meetings today, and during those meetings, it is clear that people around that table fully understand we have no higher duty than to protect the American people. And so I'm pleased to be with my homeland security and counterterrorism teams. We've got folks in our government who spend every day working side by side with like-minded men and women in our Federal Government, all aiming to protect you, doing everything they can to protect the American people from a dangerous enemy.

I'm going to spend a little time later on this afternoon with intelligence analysts who spend every day analyzing data, attempting to track down known and suspected terrorists who either may be here or elsewhere. We've done a lot of work since September the 11th to make this country safe, and it is safer, but it's not completely safe. It's important for the American people to understand there are coldblooded killers who want to come to our homeland and wreak havoc through death. And that's what we were discussing today.

We take a clear-eyed view of the world. The people on this team, assembled in this building, see the world the way it is, not the way we hope it is. And this is a dangerous world because there's an enemy that wants to strike the homeland again. You

know, it was a year ago that I met with the counterterrorism team—that we worked with Great Britain to uncover a airline plot, a plot that had it gone forward would have caused death on a massive scale. It was a reminder that the terrorists we face are sophisticated, they are coldblooded, they are changing tactics, and we must always stay ahead of them.

In other words, we've got to do more than just keep pace with these people. We've got to be ahead of the people in order to protect the American people, in order to do our most important duty. And that's what we're talking about today.

Part of the effort to do our job, part of the effort for this Federal Government to do the job the American people expects us to do in protecting you is to close intelligence gaps. We have such an intelligence gap in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The act needs to be modernized so that all of us engaged in protecting the American people say we have the tools we need to protect you. Leaders in Congress have said they would like to address this problem before they go home, and I appreciate that spirit.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has provided the Congress with a narrow and targeted piece of legislation that will close the gaps in intelligence. In other words, he's working on the Hill, and he's told Members this is what we need to do our job to protect

the American people. It's the bare minimum the DNI said he needs to do his job. When Congress sends me their version, when Congress listens to all the data and facts and they send me a version of how to close those gaps, I'll ask one question. And I'm going to ask the DNI: "Does this legislation give you what you need to prevent an attack on the country? Is this what you need to do your job, Mr. DNI?" That's the question I'm going to ask. And if the answer is yes, I'll sign the bill. And if the answer is no, I'm going to veto the bill.

And so far the Democrats in Congress have not drafted a bill I can sign. We've

worked hard and in good faith with the Democrats to find a solution, but we are not going to put our national security at risk. Time is short. I'm going to ask Congress to stay in session until they pass a bill that will give our intelligence community the tools they need to protect the United States.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007

August 3, 2007

Today I signed into law the "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007." This legislation builds upon the considerable progress we have made in strengthening our defenses and protecting Americans since the attacks of September 11, 2001. In the largest restructuring of our Government since World War II, we created the Department of Homeland Security to better coordinate the protection and response capabilities of our Government. The Director of National Intelligence leads a restructured intelligence community that is better able to uncover, understand, and counter threats from terrorists. To implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, I have issued numerous Executive orders, Presidential directives, and national strategies. I have also signed into law the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, the PATRIOT Act, and other important pieces of legislation.

I am pleased that the legislation I signed today protects Americans from being unduly prosecuted for reporting activity that

could lead to acts of terrorism. I also appreciate the steps taken to modernize the Visa Waiver Program, particularly the additional security measures, but I will continue to work with Congress to advance our security and foreign policy objectives by allowing greater flexibility to bring some of our closest allies into the program. I will also continue to work with Congress to ensure the workability of the cargo screening provisions in a way that increases our vigilance on homeland security while ensuring the continuance of vital commerce. And I appreciate the willingness of Congress to remove several provisions that had previously generated concern.

There is still other work to be done. I continue to believe that Congress should act on the outstanding 9/11 Commission recommendations to reform the legislative branch's oversight of intelligence and counterterrorism activities, which the Commission described as dysfunctional. While this legislation does not heed the Commission's advice, I hope Congress revisits the issue soon.

I also believe it is important to recognize the urgent need for Congress to pass legislation to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a decades-old law that should be updated to address changes in communication technology while protecting the civil liberties of our citizens. The Director of National Intelligence has stated unequivocally that without this change in the law, we will continue to miss significant amounts of information that we should be collecting to protect against potential terrorist attacks.

Congress should also continue to strive to better target grant dollars to cities and States based on risk. This legislation makes some progress, but it also authorizes billions of dollars for grants and other pro-

grams that are unnecessary or should not be funded at such excessive levels. I will not request this excessive funding in my 2009 budget request.

I thank members of both parties in Congress who worked on this legislation, and I appreciate the willingness of members to strengthen provisions we believed would have weakened our security. Leaders in Washington should never forget that our most important duty is to protect the American people. I will continue to work with the Congress to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our Nation safe.

NOTE: H.R. 1, approved August 3, was assigned Public Law No. 110–53.

The President's Radio Address *August 3, 2007*

Good morning. Today I'm traveling to Minneapolis to the site of Wednesday's tragic bridge collapse. Like millions of Americans, I was shocked and saddened when I heard the news that the I-35 bridge gave way during rush hour. The bridge was a major traffic artery, and when it collapsed, dozens of cars fell into the Mississippi River.

Laura and I join all Americans in mourning those who lost their lives and in sending our thoughts and prayers to their families. And we pray that those injured will make a full recovery.

On Thursday morning, Transportation Secretary Mary Peters and Federal Highway Administrator Richard Capka traveled to Minneapolis. They announced \$5 million in immediate Federal funding for debris removal and to help restore the flow of traffic. This is just the beginning of the financial assistance we will make available to support the State in its recovery efforts. Several Federal Agencies are on the ground

aiding State and local officials, including the National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Coast Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

I recognize how important the I-35 bridge is to the State of Minnesota, and my administration is committed to working closely with Governor Pawlenty and Mayor Rybak to rebuild this bridge as quickly as possible.

In times of tragedy, our hearts ache for those who suffer, yet our hearts are also lifted by acts of courage and compassion. We saw those qualities in the residents of a nearby apartment building who rushed to the scene to offer their help. We saw them in the divers who fought the mighty currents of the Mississippi to reach victims, and we saw them in the firefighters who searched car to car for survivors.

Among the survivors was a group of kids returning from a summer field trip. Their

school bus had just passed over the Mississippi River when the bridge below them gave way. The bus dropped more than 20 feet and came to rest on the guardrail of the collapsed bridge span. A staff member named Jeremy Hernandez quickly swung into action. He broke open the back door and helped evacuate the terrified children to safety. The mother of one of the children on board credited Jeremy's presence of mind with helping spare her daughter from tragedy. She put it this way: "I don't know what he was thinking, but it must have been something really good."

Our country is fortunate to have brave and selfless citizens like Jeremy, and all those who risked their own safety to aid in the rescue. This is a difficult time for the community in Minneapolis, but the people there are decent and resilient, and

they will get through these painful hours. As they do, they know that all of America stands with them, and that we will do all we can to help them recover and rebuild.

May God bless those who are hurting in Minneapolis, and may God bless our wonderful country. Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on August 3 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 3. In his address, the President referred to Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota; and Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Interstate 35W Bridge Damage in Minneapolis, Minnesota

August 4, 2007

On behalf of the citizens of America, I bring prayers from the American people to those who suffered loss of life as a result of the collapse of the 35W bridge here in the Twin Cities. I bring the prayers of those who wonder about whether they'll ever see a loved one again.

First, I want to thank the Governor and the mayor and the Senators, Members of the Congress for working in a coordinated way to respond to this tragedy. I have met with the chief of police and the sheriff, rescue workers, people who represent men and women who are working as hard as they possibly can to save life and to find life, to go under these murky waters to find the facts.

And it's going to take a while, but I have been impressed by not only their determination but have been impressed by their compassion. I have met people that

were on the bridge; I met a man who was on the bridge when it collapsed. His instinct was to run to a schoolbus of screaming children and to help bring them to safety.

We have an amazing country, where people's instinct, first instinct, is to help save life. There's—a lot of people's first instincts here in the Twin Cities was to save the lives of somebody who was hurting. And I know the people of this community thank those—their fellow citizens who did that.

I'm here with the Secretary of Transportation because our message to the Twin Cities is, we want to get this bridge rebuilt as quick as possible; that we understand this is a main artery of life here; that people count on this bridge and this highway system to get to work. There's a lot of paperwork involved with government. One of our jobs is to work with the

Governor and the mayor and the Senators and the Members of the Congress to cut through that paperwork and to see if we can't get this bridge rebuilt in a way that not only expedites the flow of traffic but in a way that can stand the test of time.

I make no promises on a timetable. I do promise that Mary Peters, the Secretary of Transportation, is going to be in charge of this project. I do promise she's going to listen to the local authorities to find out what the folks here need. I do promise that when she sees roadblocks and hurdles in the way of getting the job done, she'll do everything she can to eliminate them.

Out of these tragedies can come a better life. And I, having visited with the people here, believe that not only are they committed to a better life, not only are they

committed to turning something ugly into something good, but it's going to happen.

So I'm proud to be with you. Thank you for your leadership. God bless the people of this part of the world. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. at the Lower Street Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, St. Paul District. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota; Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN; Sens. Norm Coleman and Amy Klobuchar; Timothy Dolan, chief, Minneapolis Police Department, MN; Richard W. Stanek, sheriff, Hennepin County, MN; and Gary Babineau, a truckdriver from Blaine, MN, who helped rescue schoolchildren trapped by the bridge collapse.

Statement on Senate Passage of Intelligence Reform Legislation *August 4, 2007*

Last night the United States Senate passed legislation to give our intelligence professionals the legal tools and authority they need to keep America safe. I appreciate the hard work they did to find common ground to pass this critical bill. Today the House of Representatives has an oppor-

tunity to consider that bill, pass it, and send it to me for my signature. Protecting America is our most solemn obligation, and I urge the House to pass this bill without delay.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 1927.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Intelligence Reform Legislation *August 4, 2007*

Tonight the House joined the Senate in passing legislation that will close a critical gap in our intelligence collection, and I appreciate their efforts to complete the legislation before the August recess. The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has assured me that this bill gives him what he needs to continue to protect the

country, and therefore, I will sign this legislation as soon as it gets to my desk.

I also want to remind Congress that our work on reforming the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is not complete. When Congress returns in September, we need to work together on additional reforms, including the important issue of providing

meaningful liability protection to those who are alleged to have assisted our Nation following the attacks of September 11, 2001.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 1927.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Intelligence Reform Legislation *August 5, 2007*

When our intelligence professionals have the legal tools to gather information about the intentions of our enemies, America is safer. And when these same legal tools also protect the civil liberties of Americans, then we can have the confidence to know that we can preserve our freedoms while making America safer.

The Protect America Act, passed with bipartisan support in the House and Senate, achieves both of these goals by modernizing the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Over the past three decades, this law has not kept pace with revolutionary changes in technology. As a result, our intelligence professionals have told us that they are missing significant intelligence information that they need to protect the country.

S. 1927 reforms FISA by accounting for changes in technology and restoring the statute to its original focus on appropriate protections for the rights of persons in the United States and not foreign targets located in foreign lands.

Today, we face a dynamic threat from enemies who understand how to use modern technology against us. Whether foreign terrorists, hostile nations, or other actors, they change their tactics frequently and seek to exploit the very openness and freedoms we hold dear. Our tools to deter them must also be dynamic and flexible enough to meet the challenges they pose. This law gives our intelligence professionals this greater flexibility while closing a dangerous gap in our intelligence gathering ac-

tivities that threatened to weaken our defenses.

We know that information we have been able to acquire about foreign threats will help us detect and prevent attacks on our homeland. Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, has assured me that this bill gives him the most immediate tools he needs to defeat the intentions of our enemies. And so in signing this legislation today, I am heartened to know that his critical work will be strengthened, and we will be better armed to prevent attacks in the future.

I commend Members of Congress who supported these important reforms and also for acting before adjourning for recess. In particular, I want to thank Mitch McConnell and John Boehner for their strong leadership on this issue and Senators Kit Bond and Dianne Feinstein for coming together in the Senate on an effective bipartisan solution. In the House of Representatives, Pete Hoekstra and Heather Wilson were instrumental in securing enactment of this vital piece of legislation before the August recess, and I thank them for their leadership.

While I appreciate the leadership it took to pass this bill, we must remember that our work is not done. This bill is a temporary, narrowly focused statute to deal with the most immediate shortcomings in the law.

When Congress returns in September, the intelligence committees and leaders in both parties will need to complete work

on the comprehensive reforms requested by Director McConnell, including the important issue of providing meaningful liability protection to those who are alleged to have assisted our Nation following the attacks of September 11, 2001.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's News Conference With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan at Camp David, Maryland *August 6, 2007*

President Bush. Good morning. Thank you; be seated. Welcome.

I appreciate a man I've come to admire, President Karzai, for joining us. Laura and I had the honor of hosting the President for dinner last night. He and I spent a lot of this morning just sitting down alone talking about our common interests, common concerns. President Karzai is an optimistic man. He's watched his country emerge from days of darkness to days of hope.

President Karzai. Absolutely.

President Bush. I appreciate your stewardship. I appreciate your commitment to empowering your people. I appreciate your strong stance for freedom and justice, and I'm proud to call you an ally in this war against those who would wreak havoc in order to deny people a chance to live in peace.

We're working closely together to help the people of Afghanistan prosper. We work together to give the people of Afghanistan a chance to raise their children in a hopeful world, and we're working together to defeat those who would try to stop the advance of a free Afghan society.

We spent a fair amount of time talking about our security strategy. You might remember, it was last winter that people were speculating about the Taliban spring offensive and about how the Taliban had regrouped and were going to go on the attack inside Afghanistan. There was a spring of-

fensive, all right; it was conducted by U.S., NATO, and equally importantly, Afghan troops. And we went on the offense because we understand that it is in our mutual interests to deny extremists the opportunity to derail this young democracy.

There is still a fight going on, but I'm proud to report to the American people that the Afghan Army is in the fight. The Government is in the fight, and the Army is in the fight. Afghan national security forces are increasing in strength; there's about 110,000 Afghans now defending their nation. And more Afghans are stepping up to serve, and it's in the interest of the United States to help you develop that national army and local police that will send a clear message to the people of Afghanistan that the governments can help provide an opportunity for people to raise their children in a peaceful world.

There is a lot of forces there in Afghanistan supporting this Government, and our 23,500 troops are proud to stand side by side with 26,000 troops from other nations. And we applaud those countries who have committed their troops to help Afghanistan succeed.

We've committed more than \$23 billion since 2001 to help rebuild the country. I think our citizens will be interested to know, for example, that 7,000 community health care workers have been trained that provide about 340,000 Afghan men,

women, and children a month with good health care.

I remember talking a lot about how the Taliban prevented young girls from going to school in Afghanistan. American citizens recoil with horror to think about a government that would deny a young child the opportunity to have the basics necessary to succeed in life. Today, there are nearly 5 million students going to school in Afghanistan, a third of whom are girls. Still work to be done, don't get me wrong, but progress is being made, Mr. President, and we're proud of you, proud of the work you're doing.

We talked about the need to stem the narcotics trade. I'm sure the President will comment on this. He understands that it's very important for farmers to be incented to grow crop other than poppy, and that he knows full well the United States is watching, measuring, and trying to help eradicate poppy cultivation. We spent more than a fair amount of time on it; we spent a lot of time on it. And it's important that we get this right. Mr. President, I appreciate your commitment to not only dealing with the poppy growers and the poppy crop but also dealing with corruption. It's very important that our societies emerge in such a way that the people have confidence in the capacity of government to conduct the affairs—conduct their affairs in a way that's aboveboard and honest and transparent.

And finally, I do want to congratulate you on the joint jirga that's coming up. This is a meeting between President Karzai, President Musharraf, and representative elements from parts of their respective countries, all coming together to talk about reconciliation and how we can work together—how you can work together to achieve common solutions to problems. And the main problem is to fight extremism, to recognize that history has called us into action, and by fighting extremists and radicals, we help people realize dreams. And helping people realize dreams helps promote peace. That's what we want.

You come from a part of the world, Mr. President, where there's a long history of violence and a long history of people seeking freedom. It's in the interests of the United States to be on the—tip the scales of freedom your way. You only do so with strong leadership, and I appreciate the leadership you're providing. So welcome to Camp David.

President Karzai. [Inaudible]

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for receiving me in Camp David. You and the First Lady are generous and kind hosts, and thank you very much for that.

Mr. President, I am here today to once again thank you and the American people for all that you have done for Afghanistan, for our liberation first, and then for our stability and prosperity. We have gone a long way.

I have been here many times before in America, thanking the American people for what they have given to Afghanistan. I have spoken of roads; I have spoken of schools; I have spoken of clinics; I have spoken of health services; I have spoken of education; I have spoken of agriculture; I've spoken of lots of achievements. I've also had requests for help that you have delivered to us.

But today I'm going to speak about only one achievement that means so much for the Afghan people and, surely, to you and the rest of the world. That is that Afghanistan today, with the help that you have provided and our other allies have provided, can save—is saving the life of at least 50,000 infants after they are born and the life of 85,000 children under 5.

Mr. President, when you and I begin to think of the mothers who can have their babies safe today, then we know the value and the importance of this achievement. And thank you very, very much for this tremendous help. Afghanistan would have not had 85,000 children living today had you not been there to help us with the rest of the world.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

President Karzai. That's a massive achievement, and I am happy about it. I'm sure you are too, and so are women and mothers around the world.

Mr. President, as we have gone a long way, progress has been made. We still continue to fight terrorism; our enemy is still there, defeated, but still hiding in the mountains. And our duty is to complete the job; to get them out of their hideouts in the mountains, and to bring justice to the people of Afghanistan, to the people of America, and to the people around the world who are threatened by these terrorists.

One of the significant steps that we have taken together with Pakistan to have an effective fight against terrorism, an effective fight against extremism and radicalism, was discussed during the dinner that you kindly hosted for me and President Musharraf. And the result of that is going to be seen in 2 days from today, the 9th of August, where, in Kabul, we will have the joint Pakistan-Afghanistan jirga. I hope very much that this jirga will bring to us what we need, which I think it will. And thank you very much for this opportunity—you cause us to have a meeting and to have a result of that.

Mr. President, we have a long journey ahead of us. But what we have traveled so far has given us greater hope for a better future, for a better life. The Afghans are still suffering, but there are millions of Afghans who are enjoying a better and more secure life, who can send their children to school, and who can work in their fields. And thank you very much for that.

Yes, we do have the problem of poppies and narcotics in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is committed to fighting it because this evil is first hurting us and then youth in the rest of the world. So this is for Afghanistan to work against and for the rest of us to work against. We are committed. It will take time; we are realistic about that. But the fight is there, and I hope your assist-

ance will continue to be delivered to Afghanistan to fight narcotics. We have raised our army, indeed. We are working on our police. Our police needs a lot of improvement. And I'm glad that you have committed to helping us with the raising of better police in Afghanistan.

The fight against corruption is going on. We have developed a mechanism, worked through a commission headed by the Chief Justice of Afghanistan that will be ready in 2 months from now and will be announced to the Afghan people on hows and measures and the timeframe that we will need to have an effective fight against corruption in Afghanistan.

The rest, life, is going on well, with a lot of hope. We have a better administration, more capabilities. We can do lots of things on our own, and I'm sure your continued assistance will make life better for us. And thank you very much, Mr. President. Nice of you to receive me here.

President Bush. Thanks for coming. A couple of questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

War on Terror/Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, if you had actionable intelligence about the whereabouts of top Al Qaida leaders in Pakistan, would you wait for Musharraf's permission to send in U.S. forces, even if it meant missing an opportunity to take them out? Or have you and Musharraf worked out some deal about this already?

And, President Karzai, what will be your top concern when you meet with Musharraf later this week?

President Bush. I am confident that with actionable intelligence, we will be able to bring top Al Qaida to justice. We're in constant communications with the Pakistan Government. It's in their interest that foreign fighters be brought to justice. After all, these are the same ones who were plotting to kill President Musharraf. We share a concern. And I'm confident, with real,

actionable intelligence, we will get the job done.

President Karzai. When President Musharraf visits Afghanistan on the 9th of August to inaugurate the joint Pakistan-Afghanistan convention, or jirga, together with me, we will be discussing further improvements and relations between the two countries. The two countries are neighbors; they've been having extensive relationships with each other. We will be discussing improvement of those relations, on all aspects of them. We will also be discussing the possible outcome of the joint jirga between the two countries and how effectively, then, we can carry on the fight against terrorism in both countries and in the region as a result of that jirga. So it's a—it's going to be, I'm sure, a good meeting, ma'am.

Afghan press?

War on Terror

Q. I will ask in Pashto, and then I will translate my question. My question is for Mr. Karzai.

[At this point, the reporter asked a question in Pashto, which he translated as follows.]

I will repeat in English too. Four years ago, in a press conference, Mr. President Karzai said Taliban do not pose any threat to Afghan people. So who do you think supported Taliban to threaten the security by doing kidnappings and attacking the Government officials, and why?

President Karzai. Four years ago, I did say that, and I continue to say that. The Taliban do pose dangers to our innocent people; to children going to school; to our clergy; to our teachers; to our engineers; to international aid workers. They are not posing any threat to the Government of Afghanistan; they are not posing any threat to the institutions of Afghanistan or to the buildup of institutions of Afghanistan. It's a force that's defeated; it's a force that is frustrated; it's a force that is acting in cowardice by killing children going to school.

Who is supporting them is a question that we have been working on for long time and since then. And I hope that the jirga between us and Pakistan will give us solutions to some of the questions that we have.

President Bush. One thing is for certain: We know the vision—their vision of how to govern. They've been in power. They've had the opportunity to show the world how they think and what they do. I mean, it'd be instructive for people to speak to a mother of a young girl about what life was like under the Taliban. These are brutal, coldblooded killers.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. That's what they are. And the fundamental question facing those of us who believe in freedom is whether or not we confront them, and whether or not it's worth it—the effort—to spread an alternative to their hateful vision. And I—we've come to the conclusion it is. And that's why President Karzai stands right here at Camp David, discussing common concerns, common opportunities, about how to defeat a vision of darkness. That's what they are. They just don't believe in freedom. They don't believe it's possible to live in a society where people are allowed to express themselves in free fashion.

And it's really part of an ongoing challenge that the free world faces. The real question is whether or not those of us who have the blessings of liberty will continue to pursue policies—foreign policy, security policy aimed at not only protecting our homeland but aimed at laying a condition for peace to prevail.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Afghan Civilian Casualties/Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. President Karzai said yesterday that he believed Iran was playing a helpful role in Afghanistan. Was he able to convince you in your meetings that that was the case, or do you still have concerns about Iran's role?

And I have a question for President Karzai as well. I'm just wondering if the President was able to give you the assurances that you sought about the effort to reduce civilian casualties in Afghanistan?

President Bush. Let me comment on the civilian casualties, if I might. First, I fully understand the angst, the agony, and the sorrow that Afghan citizens feel when an innocent life is lost. I know that must cause grief in villages and heartbreak in homes.

Secondly, I can assure the Afghan people, like I assured the President, that we do everything that we can to protect the innocent; that our military operations are mindful that innocent life might be exposed to danger, and we adjust accordingly.

Thirdly, it is the Taliban who surround themselves with innocent life as human shields. The Taliban are the coldblooded killers. The Taliban are the murderers. The Taliban have no regard for human life. And therefore, we've spent some time talking about—as the President rightly expressed—his concerns about civilian casualty. And I assured him that we share those concerns.

Secondly, it's up to Iran to prove to the world that they're a stabilizing force, as opposed to a destabilizing force. After all, this is a Government that has proclaimed its desire to build a nuclear weapon. This is a Government that is in defiance of international accord, a Government that seems to be willing to thumb its nose at the international community and, at the same time, a Government that denies its people a rightful place in the world and denies its people the ability to realize their full potential. So I believe that it's in the interests of all of us that we have an Iran that tries to stabilize, not destabilize, an Iran that gives up its weapons ambitions. And therefore, we're working to that end.

The President knows best about what's taking place in his country, and of course, I'm willing to listen. But from my perspective, the burden of proof is on the Iranian Government to show us that they're a positive force. And I must tell you that this

current leadership there is a big disappointment to the people of Iran. I mean, the people of Iran could be doing a lot better than they are today. But because of the actions of this Government, this country is isolated. And we will continue to work to isolate it because they're not a force for good, as far as we can see. They're a destabilizing influence wherever they are.

Now, the President will have to talk to you about Afghanistan. But I would be very cautious about whether or not the Iranian influence there in Afghanistan is a positive force. And therefore, it's going to be up to them to prove to us and prove to the Government that they are.

President Karzai. I had a good discussion with President Bush on civilian casualties. I'm very happy to tell you that President Bush felt very much with the Afghan people, that he calls the Afghan people allies in the war against terror and friends, and that he is as much concerned as I am, as the Afghan people are. I was very happy with that conversation.

Lady?

Q. Mr. Karzai, can I ask my question in Dari first?

President Karzai. Please, yes.

Suicide Bombings

[The reporter asked a question in Dari, which she translated as follows.]

Q. You have recently become a father, and also, you have recently pardoned a teenager who suicide himself, and you said he washed—he was brainwashed.

President Karzai. Brainwashed, yes.

Q. Yes. What do you think about the future of Afghanistan in view of this problem?

President Karzai. Well, ma'am, the man—the boy, I should say, that I pardoned was a 14-year-old boy from Pakistan's South Waziristan Agency. He was sent by his father to a madrassa to get education because he could not any more afford to have him in school, because his

mother had a heart ailment, and they had to spend money on her treatment.

Having sent the boy to a madrassa, he disappeared from there. After a few months, his father heard that he was arrested in Afghanistan, and then he came to Afghanistan. And having seen that this was a teenage—rather, legally underage innocent boy used by terrorists to kill himself and to kill other innocent people, I felt that it was the right decision to pardon him, to give him a new opportunity for education and a new life, and to send a message to his mother that your child is going to be back with you. I am very glad I did that.

But this gives us a lesson about those who are the enemies of all of us, the enemies of people who use young children, who brainwashes them, and who forces them to kill themselves.

The message should be clear to the rest of the world about the evil that we are fighting, the heartless people that we are fighting, who don't even have any feeling for young children, for babies, for teenagers. Most of that, we know today, that the terrorists are buying and selling suicide bombers. We have received calls in our Government offices by handlers of suicide bombers that they want to sell them to us. So it's become a trade, a mean trade; merchants of death are around there. So it's our job to get rid of them.

President Bush. Thank you very much.

President Karzai. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:17 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. President Karzai referred to Chief Justice Abdul Salaam Azimi of Afghanistan.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers August 8, 2007

Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for your hospitality. We're pleased to be here at the Treasury Department.

This morning I spoke with Governor Huntsman of Utah. He gave me an update on the efforts to rescue the trapped miners. I told him our Nation's thoughts and prayers are with the miners and their families and that the Federal Government will help in any way we can.

I just finished a productive meeting with members of my economic team. We discussed our thriving economy and what we need to do to keep it that way. We care a lot about whether our fellow citizens are working and whether or not they've got money in their pockets to save, spend, or invest as they see fit. We talked about America's role in the global economy.

My administration follows a simple philosophy: Our economy prospers when we trust the American people with their own paychecks. When I came to office in 2001, our Nation was headed toward a recession. And so we acted. We acted on the philosophy I just described, and we cut the taxes across the board. And the American people have used this money to fuel an economic resurgence.

Since 2003, our economy has added more than 8.3 million new jobs and almost 4 years of uninterrupted growth. The economy continues to grow at a steady pace, and during the most recent quarter, it grew at an annual rate of 3.4 percent. Unemployment is low. Real after-tax income has increased by an average of more than \$3,400 per person since I took office.

Tax cuts let Americans keep their own money; it stimulates entrepreneurship. And we have a debate here in Washington over tax cuts. Democrats in Congress want to increase taxes and turn them into additional Government programs, and I strongly oppose that approach.

We want the people to keep more of their own money because we understand that the American economy, entrepreneurs and small-business owners are the ones who create jobs. The genius of our free market economy is that it grows from the bottom up, through the college student who starts up a business in a parent's garage, or a stay-at-home mom who works out of a home office, or the small-business owner who dreams of growing his or her enterprise into a big business.

The entrepreneurial spirit has helped our economy keep pace with new technologies, and America is a leader in innovation. Twelve years ago, eBay did not exist. Today, eBay is a global business that reported nearly \$6 billion in net revenues last year. Hundreds of thousands of Americans now make part of their living by selling products on that web site. eBay is an entrepreneurial success story that has helped thousands of Americans become entrepreneurs themselves.

Recently in Nashville, I met a woman who runs a bun company. She cooks bread. Her name was Cordia Harrington. She carved out a foothold in the industry and has built five small businesses. Her businesses employ 260 people. She makes a good product. My point is, this is the enterprising spirit that we must support and encourage here in Washington, DC.

I appreciate the fact that Hank Paulson agreed to join my administration after a long career as one of the world's most successful investment bankers. Here's how he puts it. He said, "This is far and away the strongest global economy I've seen in my business lifetime." In other words, not only is our economy strong but so is the economies around the world. You know, when

you grow your economy and—it's good news for the Treasury and good news for the deficit.

When people earn money, tax revenues go up. This year, tax revenues are expected to be \$167 billion higher than last year's because the economy is growing. Growing tax revenues combined with spending restraint has helped us drive down the Federal deficit, and we were able to do so without raising the taxes on the people who work or without raising taxes on small-business owners or farmers. Estimates show the deficit will drop to \$205 billion this year. That is well below the average of the past 40 years as a percentage of our economy.

Earlier this year, I proposed a budget that will completely eliminate the Federal deficit within the next 5 years and produce surplus by 2012. We can achieve this, but it's going to require spending restraint, and it's going to require keeping taxes low to keep this economy growing.

Not everybody agrees with this approach. There's been a heated debate so far in Congress, and I suspect there will be a lot of heat when they come back, because Democrats in Congress got a significant appetite for more Federal spending. They passed a budget resolution that includes an extra \$205 billion in discretionary spending over the next 5 years. That averages out to about \$112 million per day, \$4.7 million per hour, \$78,000 per minute. Put another way, it's about \$1,300 in higher spending every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year for the next 5 years.

Now, somebody is going to have to pay for it. And that, of course, would be the hard-working American people will have to pay for that excessive spending. If the majority in Congress gets it way, American families, small businesses will face a massive tax hike. It would amount to the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, look, I recognize the Democrats control the Congress and, with it, the power of the purse. I also have some

power, and it's called the veto. And I have the votes in Congress to sustain vetoes, and therefore, I will use the veto to keep your taxes low and to keep Federal spending under control.

When Members of Congress return from their August recess, they'll have less than a month to pass the 12 spending bills needed to keep the Federal Government running before the end of the fiscal year on September 30th. They need to pass these spending bills, one at a time, before the deadline. In a time of war, I ask them to start by sending me the spending bill for the Department of Defense, so I can sign that into law.

There's some long-term challenges to our economy, and we need to work together to address those challenges. One way to address the challenges is to continue opening up markets for America's goods and services, and the best way to do that is to expand free trade. We've negotiated new free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and Korea. And now the Congress needs to carry out its responsibilities and approve these agreements.

We're going to work hard to conclude the Doha round of trade negotiations, all aiming to open up new opportunities for U.S. producers and aiming to fulfill a great calling, and that is to help eliminate poverty around the world.

We need to reform our health care system by making private health insurance

more affordable and available. We need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil by promoting alternative fuels. We need to confront the rising cost of entitlement programs like Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security. I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats to come up with sensible solutions to solve these problems, so that we can say we solved the problems, and not pass them on to future generations.

I'm an optimistic person, particularly when it comes to the ability of Americans to create and dream and work hard. I'll be less optimistic if Congress has its way and raises taxes on the American people. And that's why we're going to work hard not to let them do so. We'll keep good policies in place. We want this to be the land of dreamers and doers. I love the stories of the small-business owner in Nashville or the idea that eBay didn't exist 12 years ago and now is a booming, thriving enterprise. The purpose of government is to make it more possible for people to realize dreams and to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit. That has been the policies of this administration, and it will continue to be the policies of this administration.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:44 p.m. at the Department of the Treasury. In his remarks, he referred to Cordia Harrington, chief executive officer, the Bun Companies.

The President's News Conference August 9, 2007

The President. Good morning, thank you. When I came into office in 2001, our Nation was headed into a recession, so we cut the taxes across the board. And hard-working Americans have used this tax relief to produce strong and lasting economic growth.

Since we began cutting taxes in 2001, our economy has expanded by more than \$1.9 trillion. Since the tax cuts took full effect in 2003, our economy has added more than 8.3 million new jobs and almost 4 years of uninterrupted growth. Inflation is low; unemployment is low; real after-

tax income has grown by an average of more than \$3,400 per person since I took office. The American economy is the envy of the world, and we need to keep it that way.

Our economy is growing in large part because America has the most ambitious, educated, and innovative people in the world, men and women who take risks, try out new ideas, and have the skills and courage to turn their dreams into new technologies and new businesses. To stay competitive in the global economy, we must continue to lead the world in human talent and creativity.

So in my 2006 State of the Union Address, I announced the American Competitiveness Initiative, and I called on Republicans and Democrats in Congress to join me in this effort to encourage innovation throughout our economy. As part of this initiative, I asked Congress to expand America's investment in basic research, so we can support our Nation's most creative minds as they explore new frontiers in nanotechnology or supercomputing or alternative energy sources. I asked Congress to strengthen math and science education, so our children have the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future. I asked Congress to make permanent the research and development tax credit, so we can encourage bolder private sector initiatives in technology.

Today I'm going to sign into law a bill that supports many of the key elements of the American Competitiveness Initiative. This legislation supports our efforts to double funding for basic research in physical sciences. This legislation authorizes most of the education programs I called for in the initiative I laid out at the State of the Union. These programs include Math Now proposals to improve instruction in mathematics and the Advanced Placement program my administration proposed to increase the number of teachers and students in AP and International Baccalaureate classes.

These are important steps forward, and so I'm going to sign the bill. I'm looking forward to it. Yet the bill Congress sent to my desk leaves some of the key priorities unfulfilled and authorizes unnecessary and duplicative programs. I will continue to focus my budget requests on the key priorities in the bill I outlined and will work with Congress to focus its spending on those programs that will be most effective.

I will continue to press Congress to approve the remaining measures of the American Competitiveness Initiative. These measures include the Adjunct Teacher Corps program to encourage math and science professionals to take time out of their lives and teach in our schools and to inspire the youth to become more interested in math and science. I believe Congress ought to make the research and development tax credit a permanent part of the Tax Code to encourage investment.

The bill I will sign today will help ensure that we do remain the most competitive and innovative nation in the world. I thank Members of Congress from both parties who worked hard to secure its passage. I particularly want to thank Senators Pete Domenici, Jeff Bingaman, Lamar Alexander, and John Ensign, as well as Congressmen Bart Gordon and Vern Ehlers.

You know, this bill shows that we can work together to make sure we're a competitive nation. There's a lot of areas where we can seek common ground coming this fall, and I'm looking forward to working with members of both parties to do that.

Thank you for coming. I'll be glad to answer some of your questions, starting with you, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Transportation Infrastructure

Q. Mr. President, former chairman of the House Transportation Committee, Republican Don Young, says there are about 500 bridges around the country like the one that collapsed in Minneapolis last week.

And Young and other Transportation Committee members are recommending an increase in Federal gasoline taxes to pay for repairs. Would you be willing to go along with an increase in gasoline taxes of 5 cents a gallon or more?

The President. First of all, Secretary Peters is gathering information and will report to the White House and report to the Nation about what she finds about whether there are any structural design flaws that may be applicable to other bridges. She's in the process of gathering this information now.

The American people need to know that we're working hard to find out why the bridge did what it did, so that we can assure people that the bridges over which they will be traveling will be safe. That's step one.

You know, it's an interesting question about how Congress spends and prioritizes highway money. My suggestion would be that they revisit the process by which they spend gasoline money in the first place.

As you probably know, the public works committee is the largest committee—or one of the largest committees in the House of Representatives. From my perspective, the way it seems to have worked is that each member on that committee gets to set his or her own priority first, and then whatever is left over is spent through a funding formula. That's not the right way to prioritize the people's money. So before we raise taxes, which could affect economic growth, I would strongly urge the Congress to examine how they set priorities. And if bridges are a priority, let's make sure we set that priority first and foremost before we raise taxes.

Situation in Pakistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One of your chief allies in the war on terrorism, President Musharraf of Pakistan, has faced so much instability and civil strife recently that there has been talk of declaring a state of emergency. How concerned are you

about President Musharraf's situation and whether this might undermine Pakistani efforts against the Taliban and Al Qaida elements in the bordering areas of his country, which have been roundly criticized recently?

The President. You know, I've seen the reports of what they call an emergency declaration. I have seen no such evidence that he's made that decision. In my discussions with President Musharraf, I have reminded him that we share a common enemy, extremists and radicals who would like to do harm to our respective societies. In his case, they would like to kill him, and they've tried.

I have made it clear to him that I would expect there to be full cooperation in sharing intelligence, and I believe we've got good intelligence sharing. I have indicated to him that the American people would expect there to be swift action taken if there is actionable intelligence on high-value targets inside his country. Now, I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation, and that's important for Americans to recognize that. But it's also important for Americans to understand that he shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do and as the American people do.

So my focus in terms of the domestic scene there is that he have a free and fair election. And that's what we have been talking to him about, and I'm hopeful they will.

Yes, we'll just go down the line here. Yes, you.

Pat Tillman

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You speak often about taking care of the troops and honoring their sacrifice. But the family of Corporal Pat Tillman believes there was a coverup regarding his death, and some say perhaps he was even murdered, instead of just friendly fire. At a hearing last week on Capitol Hill, your former Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, other officials used some version of "I don't recall" 82

times. When it was his term to step up, Pat Tillman gave up a lucrative NFL career, served his country, and paid the ultimate sacrifice. Now you have a chance to pledge to the family that your Government, your administration will finally get to the bottom of it. Will you make that pledge to the family today, that you'll finally, after seven investigations, find out what really happened?

The President. Well, first of all, I can understand why Pat Tillman's family, you know, has got significant emotions, because a man they loved and respected was killed while he was serving his country. I always admired the fact that a person who was relatively comfortable in life would be willing to take off one uniform and put on another to defend America. And the best way to honor that commitment of his is to find out the truth. And I'm confident the Defense Department wants to find out the truth too, and we'll lay it out for the Tillman family to know.

Q. But, Mr. President, there have been seven investigations and the Pentagon has not gotten to the bottom of it. Can you also tell us when you, personally, found out that it was not enemy fire, that it was friendly fire?

The President. I can't give you the precise moment. But obviously, the minute I heard that the facts that people believed were true were not true, that I expect there to be a full investigation and get to the bottom of it.

2008 Presidential Election/Al Qaida in Pakistan

Q. Sir, on Monday at Camp David, when you met with President Karzai from Afghanistan, you were asked if you had actionable intelligence in Pakistan of top Al Qaida leaders, would you take action unilaterally; if in fact you felt that President Musharraf simply, for one reason or another, just simply couldn't get his people there in time, would you move in? And you said, if we had actionable—good, ac-

tionable intelligence, we would get the job done.

My question, one, is, who is "we"? Does that we include the Pakistanis or—because the question says, Musharraf wouldn't be able to be in—would you do it unilaterally? And one reason this is a hot question this week is that one of the Democratic Presidential candidates, Barack Obama, talked about taking unilateral action. He kind of got beaten up by people in the Democratic Party and by Mitt Romney in your party, Romney comparing him to Dr. Strangelove. I don't know if you would agree with that, or if you would feel—

The President. John [John Cochran, ABC News], I suspect that over the course of the next months, when I hold a press conference, you'll be trying to get me to engage in Presidential politics; trying to get me to opine about what candidates are saying, whether they be Republicans or Democrats. And hopefully, I'll be disciplined enough not to fall prey to your question, not to fall into that trap.

To the question you asked and to my answer in Camp David, I said I'm confident that we—both the Paks and the Americans—will be able to work up a plan, based upon actionable intelligence, that will bring the top Al Qaida targets to justice. I meant what I said. We spend a lot of time with the leadership in Pakistan, talking about what we will do with actionable intelligence. And the question was, am I confident that they will be brought to justice? And my answer to you is, yes, I am confident.

Q. Are you confident—permit me to have one followup, sir?

The President. Sure.

Intelligence/Pakistan

Q. I assume the CIA—

The President. See, we're getting into kind of a relaxed period here. I'll try to be more accommodating to fellows like you.

Q. It's widely assumed that the CIA operatives are in Pakistan, cooperating with

the Pakistanis, and that they're sharing everything with you and vice versa. Is that a fair assumption?

The President. John, what's fair is, I'm not—what you must assume is that I'm not going to talk about ongoing intelligence matters.

Yes, sir.

Progress in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, I was talking with a journalist about an hour ago in Baghdad who says, to be a cynic in Iraq is to be naive at this point; that there is discernible progress, undeniable progress on the battlefield, but there is just as discernable and undeniable lack of progress on political reconciliation. Given the premise of the surge is to give the Iraqi Government breathing space to get its business done, given that they're not getting their business done, are the American people entitled to hear from you more than, "I've told Prime Minister Maliki he's got to do better"?

The President. As you know, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will be coming back to report on the findings of the success of the surge. The surge success will not only include military successes and military failures but also political successes and political failures. And my own perspective is, is that they have made some progress but not enough. I fully recognize this is a difficult assignment. One of the things that—it's difficult because of years of tyrannical rule that have created a lot of suspicions. And there's a lot of—these folks need to trust each other more.

Secondly, from my perspective, we're watching leaders learn how to be leaders. This is a new process for people to be democratic leaders. Now, no question, they haven't passed some of the law we expected them to pass up to now. That's where a lot of people will focus their attention. On the other hand, there is a Presidency Council, with people from different political parties, trying to work through some of these difficult issues, trying to work through the

distrust that has caused them not to be able to pass some of the law we expect.

And the July 15th report that I submitted to Congress, there were indications that they had met about half the benchmarks and some of the political benchmarks they were falling short. One of the things I found interesting is that the assembly, their elected parliament, has passed about 60 pieces of legislation this year, some of which are directly relevant to reconciliations, like judicial reform, some of which were unwinding Saddam's laws in the past.

One of the questions I recently asked about, is there a functioning government? Is there—a lot of Americans look at it and say, "There's nothing happening there. There's, like, no government at all," I expect they're saying. So I asked about the budgeting process. In other words, is there a centralized budgeting system that takes the oil revenues? As I understand, about 97 percent of the Iraqi revenues to date come from oil. And do they have a rational way of spending that money for the good of society? Now, most of the money, it turns out, is going into their military operations, operating expenses, and capital expenses.

But one of the things I found interesting in my questions was there is revenue sharing. In other words, a central Government revenue sharing to Provincial governments. It surprised me, frankly, because the impression you get from people who are reporting out of Iraq is that it's, like, totally dysfunctional. That's what your—I guess your kind of—your friend or whoever you talked to is implying.

In 2006, the central Government allocated \$2.3 billion to the Provinces. You know, I'm not exactly sure how the funding formula worked, but a quick analysis: There is no question that Shi'a and Sunni Provinces and Kurdish Provinces were receiving money. Of the 2.3 billion, 1.9 had been obligated or spent. Now, some of that money is being better spent now because of bottom-up reconciliation that's taken

place in places like Anbar, particularly with the help of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The PRTs are helping. That's not to say what—my point to you there is that there needs still to be work in making sure that the Provincial governments are functioning well, to earn the trust of the people. It's not just the central Government that we're working with; we're also working with Provincial governments to make sure that people have—are inspired to believe that the state is in their interest.

The point I'm making to you on this, Jim [Jim Axelrod, CBS News], is that there is a lot of work left to be done; don't get me wrong. If one were to look hard, they could find indications that—more than indications, facts that show the Government is learning how to function. People say we need an oil revenue sharing law. I agree with that; that needs to be codified. However, there is oil revenue sharing taking place, is my point. There's a lot of work to be done, and the fundamental question facing America is, is it worth it? Does it matter whether or not we stay long enough for a ally in this war against radicals and extremists to emerge? And my answer is, it does matter. Long-term consequences will face our country if we leave before the job is done. How the troops are configured, what the deployment looks like will depend upon the recommendations of David Petraeus.

David [David Gregory, NBC News].

*National Economy/Home Loan Industry/
Financial Literacy*

Q. Mr. President, I want to get your thoughts about the volatility in the financial markets, but specifically, a series of questions. Do you think that housing prices will continue to fall? Do you think that the inability of people to borrow money the way they used to is going to spill over into economy generally? And what are you prepared to do about it? And specifically, are you considering some kind of government

bailout for people who might lose their homes?

The President. David, I'm wise enough to remind you that I'm not an economist, and that I would ask you direct predictions and forecasts about economic matters to those who make a living making forecasts and predictions. I suspect you'll find, "on the one hand; on the other hand," in how they predict. [Laughter]

Now, what I focus on are the fundamentals of our economy. My belief is that people will make rational decision based upon facts. And the fundamentals of our economy are strong. I mentioned some of them before. Job creation is strong; real after-tax wages are on the rise; inflation is low. Interestingly enough, the global economy is strong, which has enabled us to gain more exports, which helped the second-quarter growth numbers to be robust at 3.4 percent.

Another factor one has got to look at is the amount of liquidity in the system. In other words, is there enough liquidity to enable markets to be able to correct? And I am told there is enough liquidity in the system to enable markets to correct. One area where we can help consumer—and, obviously, anybody who loses their home is somebody with whom we must show enormous empathy.

The word "bailout," I'm not exactly sure what you mean. If you mean direct grants to homeowners, the answer would be no, I don't support that. If you mean making sure that financial institutions like the FHA have got flexibility to help these folks refinance their homes, the answer is yes, I support that.

One thing is for certain, is that there needs to be more transparency in the—in financial documents. In other words, a lot of people sign up to something they're not exactly sure what they're signing up for. More financial literacy, I guess, is the best way to put it. We've had a lot of really hard-working Americans sign up for loans, and the truth of the matter is, they

probably didn't fully understand what they were signing up for. And therefore, I do believe it's a proper role for Government to enhance financial education initiatives. And we're doing that; we've got money in the budget to do that.

Let's see here—Mike [Michael Emanuel, FOX News].

Housing Market

Q. Can I just ask one followup, sir? Come on. [Laughter]

The President. Sure.

Q. Because you weren't this circumspect when you were talking to reporters yesterday about the economy.

The President. How do you know? You weren't there, Dave.

Q. Well, you're right; I wasn't, but—

The President. I'm curious to know why you weren't there. Ask Baker [Peter Baker, Washington Post]; he was there. [Laughter]

Q. Only economics reporters were allowed.

The President. I think I pretty much said the same thing yesterday, in all due respect.

Q. What's going on in the housing market? Is it a correction or a crisis, in your view? Can you assess that?

The President. Yesterday I did comment upon that, that there was a—I talked about the different scenarios that I had been briefed on about whether or not there would be a precipitous decline in housing or whether it would be what one would call a soft landing. And it appeared at this point that it looks we're headed for a soft landing. And that's what the facts say.

Thank you, Mike.

Iran-Iraq Meeting/Iran

Q. Mr. President, thank you. There is more evidence of Iranian weapons ending up in Iraq and, ultimately, killing U.S. troops. And I'm wondering today, sir, if you have a message to the regime in Tehran about these weapons ending up in Iraq and obviously doing harm to American citizens?

The President. One of the main reasons that I asked Ambassador Crocker to meet with Iranians inside Iraq was to send the message that there will be consequences for people transporting, delivering EFPs, highly sophisticated IEDs that kill Americans in Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki is visiting in Tehran today. His message, I'm confident, will be, "Stabilize; don't destabilize." And the sending of weapons into Iraq is a destabilizing factor. That's why we—yes, we've sent the message here and in that meeting.

Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Corporations

Q. Sir, getting back to the credit crunch caused by defaults of subprime mortgages, should Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac be allowed to buy mortgages beyond their current limits or play any additional role that could help revive mortgage finance?

The President. As you know, we put up a robust reform package for these two institutions, a reform package that will cause them to focus on their core mission, first and foremost; a reform package that says, like other lending institutions, there ought to be regulatory oversight. And therefore, first things first when it comes to those two institutions. Congress needs to get them reformed, get them streamlined, get them focused, and then I will consider other options.

Baker.

Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Q. Thank you, sir. A two-part question: The New Yorker reports that the Red Cross has found the interrogation program in the CIA detention facilities used interrogation techniques that were tantamount to torture. I'm wondering if you have read that report and what your reaction to it is. And the second part of the question is, more than a year ago, you said that you wanted to close the detention facility at Guantanamo,

and a year later, nothing has actually happened in that regard. Your Vice President, Attorney General, and Homeland Security Secretary are reported to be resisting such a move. I wonder if you could tell us who's really in charge on this issue. Are you doing anything about it? Do you expect Guantanamo to be open or closed when you leave office?

The President. I did say it should be a goal of the Nation to shut down Guantanamo. I also made it clear that part of the delay was the reluctance of some nations to take back some of the people being held there. In other words, in order to make it work, we've got to have a place for these people to go. I don't know if you noticed a resolution of the Senate the other day, where all but three Senators said we don't want these prisoners in the country. I don't know if it was a 97-3 vote, but it was something-to-3 vote. In other words, part of the issue, Peter, is the practical issue of what do we do with the people?

And you say nothing has taken place. I strongly disagree with that. First of all, we are working with other nations to send folks back. Again, it's a fairly steep order. A lot of people don't want killers in their midst, and a lot of these people are killers. Secondly, of course, we want to make sure that when we do send them back, they're treated as humanely as possible.

The other issue was whether or not we can get people to be tried. One of the things I'm anxious about, want to see happen, is that there to be trials. Courts have been involved with deciding how to do this, and Defense is trying to work out mechanisms to get the trials up and running. And the sooner we can get that up and running, the better it is, as far as I'm concerned. I don't want to make any predictions about whether Guantanamo will be available or not. I'm just telling you it's a very complicated subject.

And I laid out an aspiration. Whether or not we can achieve that or not, we'll

try to. But it is not as easy a subject as some may think on the surface. Again, I refer to you to the Senate vote. When asked whether or not you want to shut down Guantanamo and, therefore, receive some of those prisoners in your home State, there didn't seem to be a lot of support for it. Like, three people said, "It's okay by me," in the Senate.

Your other question, sir?

International Committee of the Red Cross Report on the Treatment of Prisoners of War

Q. Red Cross report?

The President. I haven't seen it. We don't torture.

Yes, Jim [Jim Rutenberg, New York Times].

Iran-Iraq Meeting/Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to pivot off of what you were talking about earlier, with Prime Minister Maliki's visit to Iran. Reports out of Iran today, out of Iran, say that Prime Minister Maliki told President Ahmadi-nejad that he appreciated Iran's positive and constructive stance. The pictures from the visit are very warm. I'm wondering, do you and your Iraqi counterparts see eye to eye on Iran? And what kind of message do those images send to your allies in the region and Americans who are skeptical about the Prime Minister's role?

The President. Jim, I haven't seen the reports. Before I would like to comment upon how their meetings went, I would like to get a readout from our Embassy, who, of course, will be in touch with the Prime Minister and get his readout. And so it's a—you're asking me to be a little speculative on the subject. I haven't seen the picture.

Look, generally the way these things work is you try to be cordial to the person you're with, and so you don't want the picture to be kind of, you know, duking it

out; okay, put up your dukes. That's an old boxing expression. [Laughter]

Q. Once more, please?

The President. And so I don't know, Jim. You've obviously followed this a lot. You've seen the reports. I'm sure you're confident that what you've asked me is verifiable. I'm not surprised that there's a picture showing people smiling.

Q. However—

The President. Let me finish, please. And so it's a—anyway, let me get the facts on what happened. Now if the signal is that Iran is constructive, I will have to have a heart to heart with my friend, the Prime Minister, because I don't believe they are constructive. I don't think he, in his heart of heart, thinks they're constructive either. Now, maybe he's hopeful in trying to get them to be constructive by laying out a positive picture. You're asking me to speculate.

Should I be concerned of a picture—should the American people be concerned about Iran? Yes, we ought to be very concerned about Iran. They're a destabilizing influence. They are a Government that has—its declared policy is very troubling, obviously, when they announce—when Ahmadi-nejad has announced that the destruction of Israel is part of its foreign policy.

That's something obviously we cannot live with. They have expressed their desire to be able to enrich uranium, which we believe is a step toward having a nuclear weapons program. That, in itself, coupled with their stated foreign policy, is very dangerous for world stability. They are funders of Hizballah. Hizballah is intent upon battling forces of moderation. And so it's a very troubling nation right now.

Iran can do better. The Government is isolating its people. The Government has caused America and other nations, rational nations, to say, "We will work together to do everything we can to deny you economic opportunity because of the decisions you are making." My message to the Iranian

people is, you can do better than this current Government; you don't have to be isolated; you don't have to be in a position where you can't realize your full economic potential. And the United States of America will continue to work with our friends and allies in the Security Council and elsewhere to put you in a position to deny you your rightful place in the world, not because of our intention, because of your Government's intention.

So it is a very—it's a difficult issue, Jim. And American people should be concerned about Iran. They should be concerned about Iran's activity in Iraq, and they ought to be concerned about Iran's activity around the world.

Iraq/Iran

Q. Sorry. In your previous conversations with Prime Minister Maliki, have you been confident that he shares your view on Iraq?

The President. On Iran?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes. He knows that weaponry being smuggled into Iraq from Iran and placed in the hands of extremists over which the Government has no control, all aimed at killing innocent life, is a destabilizing factor. He absolutely understands that.

I don't know if you saw yesterday, there was a—we talked to General Petraeus, or I talked to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker yesterday. I noticed in the papers today there was a description of a military operation that took place in Sadr City. The military operation in Sadr City was going after extremist elements, Shi'a extremist elements. And it was a very robust operation. Obviously, it—well, I shouldn't say "obviously"—it was done with the full understanding of the Maliki Government.

Now, I don't know whether this extremist element had been fueled by Iran, but I do know that Maliki is committed against extremist elements who are trying to create enough chaos and confusion that this young

Government and young democracy is not able to progress. So the first thing I looked for was commitment against the extremists. The second thing is, does he understand with some extremist groups there is connections with Iran, and he does. And I'm confident.

Now, is he trying to get Iran to play a more constructive role? I presume he is. But that doesn't—what my question is—well, what my message to him is, is that when we catch you playing a nonconstructive role, there will be a price to pay.

Let's see here, Mark [Mark Smith, Associated Press Radio].

Tax Reform

Q. Mr. President, are you considering a plan to cut corporate taxes? Do you believe America's corporations are not making enough money these days?

The President. Actually, we had an interesting discussion on this subject. And if you read carefully the penetrating reporter by the financial reporter—kind of, like, semi-financial reporter—[laughter]—you'll find that it was—I was talking about an idea that has begun to surface as a result of meetings being held at the Treasury Department.

And the whole reason to look at corporate rates is to determine whether or not they make us less competitive in a global economy. And if so—in other words, if the conclusion is, is that our tax structure makes it harder for businesses to compete, therefore making it harder for people to find work over time, then we need to address the competitive imbalance in our Tax Code.

I also made it clear that we're at the very early stages of discussion and that, in my own judgment, anything that would be submitted to Congress—if submitted at all—would have to be revenue neutral. And therefore, what we'd really be talking about is a simplification of a very complex Tax Code that might be able to lower rates and, at the same time, simplify the code,

which is, like, shorthand for certain deductions would be taken away—in other words, certain tax preferences in the code.

My view all along has been, the more simple the code, the better, whether it be in the individual income tax side or the corporate tax side. However, I would readily concede to you this is a difficult issue, because the reason there is tax preferences in the first place are there are powerful interests that have worked to get the preference in the code. And as I remarked to the distinguished group of writers I was talking to yesterday, it's much easier to get something in the code than get it out of the code.

But I do think it's in the interests to constantly evaluate our competitive advantages and disadvantages. And what Hank Paulson told me was that there's a lot of folks who really believe the Tax Code creates a competitive disadvantage, and therefore, it's certainly worth looking at.

Q. On the subject of tax preferences, what about carried interest? Do you think that taxing those at capital gains rates is fair? A lot of people think it's not.

The President. First of all, I think, Mark, that what ends up happening is that in trying to deal with one particular aspect of partnerships is that you end up affecting all partnerships. And partnerships are an important vehicle to encourage investment and capital flows; they've been important vehicles to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit. In other words, small businesses have been organized as limited partnerships. So we're very, very hesitant about trying to target one aspect of limited partnerships for fear of the spillover it'll have in affecting small-business growth. So we don't support that.

Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Cooperation With Congress/Legislative Agenda

Q. You've been clear about saying that you will veto overspending by Congress when they come back next month to do

appropriations bills. You've also been clear you don't want to raise taxes. Can you do justice to the kind of programs the Government needs for bridges, for housing, and also continue to spend as much as you do with the war in Iraq?

The President. One can meet priorities if they set priorities. The problem in Congress is they have trouble actually focusing on priorities. Appropriators take their title seriously, and they all feel like they got to appropriate, which means there's a myriad of priorities. So the role of the President, it seems to me, is to help Congress focus on that which is important. We have a debate over that which is important, of course, but one thing that we shouldn't have a debate over is whether or not it's important to fund our troops in this war against radicals, extremists, the war on terror. And I think we'll be able to get that kind of cooperation. I would hope that they would get the defense bill to my desk as quickly as possible.

Part of my concerns, of course, is that there are different sets of priorities in both bodies. And it seems like to me that the Congress needs to come together, solve their differences—solve their differences first, and then bring them to the White House and see if we can find accommodation. I have proven in the past, though, Ann, that one is able to set priorities—keep taxes low, grow the economy—and reduce the deficit. In other words, we have cut taxes, causing economic growth, which caused there to be this year alone 187 billion more tax dollars coming into the Treasury; the deficit is reduced to 1.5 percent of GDP, which on a 40-year historical average is very low, or is low, below the average; and we've proven that you can set priorities and meet obligations. And so the Congress needs to learn to do that itself.

Congressional Support for the U.S. Armed Forces

Q. But you're confident that you can continue to sustain the kind of level of spending that you've invested in, in Iraq?

The President. I would certainly hope so, because when you say, sustain the level of spending, you're mainly talking about making sure our troops have what it takes to do the job we've asked them to do. I know there's a lot of Members who don't agree with the decisions I've made. I would certainly hope they would agree, however, that once someone is in combat or in harm's way, that they get the full support of the Federal Government. That's exactly what their families expect, and that's what the Commander in Chief expects as well.

I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby/Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales/Congressional Priorities

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, I wanted to ask you about accountability. You're a big believer in it; you've talked about it with regard to the public schools. But given the performance of Iraqi leaders, given your decision to commute the sentence of Lewis Libby, you've also stood by the Attorney General recently—there have been a lot of questions about your commitment to accountability. And I'm wondering if you could give the American people some clear examples of how you've held people accountable during your Presidency?

The President. Lewis Libby was held accountable. He was declared guilty by a jury, and he's paid a high price for it.

Al Gonzales—implicit in your questions is that Al Gonzales did something wrong. I haven't seen Congress say he's done anything wrong. As a matter of fact, I believe, David [David Greene, National Public Radio], we're watching a political exercise. I mean, this is a man who has testified; he's sent thousands of papers up there. There's no proof of wrong. Why would I hold somebody accountable who has done nothing wrong? I mean, frankly, I think

that's a typical Washington, DC, assumption. Not to be accusatory—I know you're a kind, openminded fellow—but you suggested holding the Attorney General accountable for something he did wrong.

And as a matter of fact, I would hope Congress would become more prone to deliver pieces of legislation that matter, as opposed to being the investigative body. I mean, there have been over 600 different hearings, and yet they're struggling with getting appropriations bills to my desk.

The Presidency/Military Operations in Iraq

Q. If I could follow—sorry. Given the decision to commute the sentence of Libby and given the performance of Iraqi leaders, is it fair for people to ask questions about your commitment to accountability?

The President. I would hope people would say that I am deliberate in my decisionmaking; I think about all aspects of the decisions I make; and I'm a fair person.

And the—back to Iraq, no question, they haven't made as much progress as I would have hoped. But I also recognize how difficult the task is. And I repeat to you: The fundamental question is, does it matter whether or not there is a self-governing entity that's an ally in the war on terror in Iraq? Does it matter? Does it matter to a guy living in Crawford, Texas? Does it matter to your children? As you know from these press conferences, I have come to the conclusion that it does matter. And it does matter because enemies that would like to do harm to the American people would be emboldened by failure.

I recognize there's a debate here in America as to whether or not failure in Iraq would cause there to be more danger here in America. I strongly believe that's the case. It matters if the United States does not believe in the universality of freedom. It matters to the security of people here at home if we don't work to change the conditions that caused 19 kids to be lured onto airplanes to come and murder our citizens.

The first question one has to ask on Iraq is, is it worth it? I could not send a mother's child into combat if I did not believe it was necessary for our short-term and long-term security to succeed in Iraq. Once you come to the conclusion that it's worth it, then the question you must ask is, how difficult is the task of a young democracy emerging? Those who study the Articles of Confederation would recognize that there are difficult moments in young democracies emerging, particularly after, in this case, tyrannical rule.

That's not to say that, Dave, we shouldn't be pushing hard for all opportunities for reconciliation. But for those of us who believe it's worth it, we'll see progress. For those who believe it's not worth it, there is no progress. And that's going to be the interesting debate. And what it's going to come down to is whether or not the United States should be in Iraq and in the region in a position to enable societies to begin to embrace liberty for the long term. This is an ideological struggle.

Now, I recognize some don't view it as an ideological struggle, but I firmly believe it is an ideological struggle. And I believe it's a struggle between the forces of moderation and reasonableness and good and the forces of murder and intolerance. And what has made the stakes so high is that those forces of murder and intolerance have shown they have the capacity to murder innocent people in our own country. And so I put that in the context of accountability.

In the case of Iraq, it's a lot more complicated than just the passage of four laws, even though I would hope they would get the four laws passed. But again, I repeat the threshold question: Does it matter; does it matter to our security here at home? And the answer is, absolutely, it does. It does. And then the second question really for a lot of Americans is, can we succeed? And, in my mind, the answer to that is, absolutely; not only we must succeed, we can succeed.

Listen, thank you all for your time. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:33 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general,

Multi-National Force—Iraq; U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; and I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, former Chief of Staff to the Vice President. He also referred to H.R. 2272, the America COMPETES Act. A reporter referred to Republican Presidential candidate Willard M. “Mitt” Romney.

Statement on Signing the America COMPETES Act *August 9, 2007*

Today I signed into law H.R. 2272, the “America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act.” This legislation shares many of the goals of my American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI). ACI is one of my most important domestic priorities because it provides a comprehensive strategy to help keep America the most innovative nation in the world by strengthening our scientific education and research, improving our technological enterprise, and providing 21st-century job training.

Since I announced ACI in January 2006, Congress has risen to the competitiveness challenge in a bipartisan way. House and Senate appropriators started the funding for ACI basic research programs in fiscal year 2007, and so far in this year's appropriations process, they are fully funding my fiscal year 2008 budget request for the National Science Foundation, the Office of Science in the Department of Energy, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology at the Department of Commerce.

This bipartisan spirit of cooperation continues with the legislation I signed. This legislation supports our efforts to double funding for basic research in the physical sciences. And the bill authorizes most of the education programs I called for in ACI, including the Math Now proposal that im-

proves instruction in mathematics and the Advanced Placement program that increases the number of teachers and students participating in AP and International Baccalaureate classes.

I am, however, disappointed that Congress failed to authorize my Adjunct Teacher Corps program to encourage math and science professionals to teach in our schools. I am also disappointed that the legislation includes excessive authorizations and expansion of Government. In total, the bill creates over 30 new programs that are mostly duplicative or counterproductive—including a new Department of Energy agency to fund late-stage technology development more appropriately left to the private sector—and also provides excessive authorizations for existing programs. These new programs, additional requirements and reports, and excessive authorizations will divert resources and focus from priority activities aimed at strengthening the basic research that has given our Nation such a competitive advantage in the world economy. Accordingly, I will request funding in my 2009 budget for those authorizations that support the focused priorities of the ACI, but will not propose excessive or duplicative funding based on authorizations in this bill.

While this legislation includes many unnecessary and misguided programs, in many

important ways it heeds my call to action of nearly 2 years ago to take steps to ensure the ongoing competitiveness of our Nation. Congress, however, still has more work to do to improve our Nation's competitiveness. In addition to giving priority to full ACI funding in this year's appropriations bills, I call on Congress to complete work on the remaining components of ACI, including modernizing and making permanent the research and development tax credit, authorizing the Adjunct Teacher Corps program, and increasing our ability to attract and retain the best and brightest high-skilled workers from around the world.

I thank members of both parties in Congress who worked on this legislation, and I appreciate the willingness of members to remove or otherwise address several of the administration's serious concerns associated with this legislation. I will continue to work with the Congress to ensure that we keep America competitive through appropriate and strong support for science and technology.

NOTE: H.R. 2272, approved August 9, was assigned Public Law No. 110-69.

Memorandum on Reimbursement for Former President Gerald R. Ford Funeral Expenses

August 9, 2007

Memorandum for the Director of the Office of Management and Budget

Subject: Reimbursement for Former President Gerald R. Ford Funeral Expenses

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as the President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States including Public Law 110-5, the Revised Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2007, I hereby authorize the expenditure from the appropriation, "Unanticipated Needs:"

To	Amount
Gerald R. Ford Foundation,	\$230,600.08
Executive Office of the President	
White House Office account,	\$24,808.00

To defray expenses incurred as a result of the funeral services for former President Gerald R. Ford.

I hereby determine that this expenditure is necessary to meet unanticipated needs in furtherance of the national interest.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Request

August 9, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to my constitutional authority and as contemplated by section 446 of The District of Columbia Self-Governmental Reorganization Act as amended in 1989,

I am transmitting the District of Columbia's 2008 Budget Request Act. This transmittal does not represent an endorsement of the contents of the D.C. government's requests.

The proposed 2008 Budget Request Act reflects the major programmatic objectives

Aug. 9 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

of the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia. For 2008, the District estimates total revenues and expenditures of \$8.38 billion.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Statement on Improving Border Security and Immigration Within Existing Law

August 10, 2007

Today members of my Cabinet announced a series of important new administrative actions to address border security and immigration challenges. These reforms represent steps my administration can take within the boundaries of existing law to better secure our borders, improve worksite enforcement, streamline existing temporary-worker programs, and help new immigrants assimilate into American society.

Although the Congress has not addressed our broken immigration system by passing comprehensive reform legislation, my administration will continue to take every pos-

sible step to build upon the progress already made in strengthening our borders, enforcing our worksite laws, keeping our economy well-supplied with vital workers, and helping new Americans learn English.

I appreciate the work of Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Gutierrez in implementing these important reforms, which will improve our security and enrich our Nation.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's Radio Address

August 11, 2007

Good morning. In America, August is considered a slow news month. But in the war on terror, America and our allies remain on the offense against our enemies. And this month, we've had some encouraging news from both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Earlier this week, I had a good meeting with President Karzai of Afghanistan at Camp David. He updated me on the work his Government is doing to help build a more hopeful future for the Afghan people. He told me that senior officials and tribal leaders from Afghanistan and Pakistan are meeting to discuss how to deal with the

extremists who are targeting both their countries. And he explained why he's confident that his Government will prevail against the Taliban remnants who continue to launch attacks throughout his country.

Here's how President Karzai put it: "The Taliban do pose dangers to our innocent people. [But] they are not posing any threat to the Government of Afghanistan; they are not posing any threat to the institutions of Afghanistan or to the buildup of institutions of Afghanistan." He continued: The Taliban "is a force that's defeated," and it is "acting in cowardice by killing children

going to school.” In other words, the Taliban fighters can still launch attacks on the innocent, but they cannot stop the march of democracy in Afghanistan.

In Iraq, we’re working to help put the Iraqi Government on the same path. The surge that General Petraeus and our troops are carrying out is designed to help provide security for the Iraqi people, especially in Baghdad, and aid the rise of an Iraqi Government that can protect its people, deliver basic services for all its citizens, and serve as an ally in the war on terror. Our new strategy is delivering good results, and our commanders recently reported more good news.

One encouraging development was a coalition airstrike that killed a terrorist named al-Badri earlier this month. Al-Badri was the mastermind of the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, one of Shi’a Islam’s holiest shrines. That bombing sparked the escalation in sectarian violence we saw in 2006. Al-Badri was the most notorious Al Qaida commander in Samarra. He sheltered foreign terrorists, and he was responsible for attacks that claimed many innocent lives. His death is a victory for a free Iraq and a sign that America and the Iraqi Government will not surrender the future of Iraq to coldblooded killers.

Al-Badri is just one of the many Al Qaida leaders and other extremists who are coming under a withering assault across Iraq. Only a year ago, Al Qaida ruled places like Ramadi, terrorizing the local population and intimidating local authorities. Today, Al Qaida has largely been driven out of these cities, markets and schools are reopening, and normal life is returning. And since January, each month we have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 Al Qaida terrorists and other enemies of Iraq’s elected Government.

Our surge is seizing the initiative from the enemy and handing it to the Iraqi people, and Iraqis are responding. Local residents are coming forward with tips that are helping U.S. and Iraqi forces rout out terrorists hiding among the population. While political progress has been slower than we had hoped, the Iraqi Parliament passed more than 50 pieces of legislation in its most recent session. They approved a \$41 billion budget, created an electoral commission and military courts, and laid the groundwork for private sector investment in production of gasoline and diesel fuel. At the same time, Iraqi forces have taken responsibility for security in a number of areas. They are taking losses at a much higher rate than we are. And they’re making these sacrifices willingly, because they are determined to see their children live in freedom.

The enemy in Iraq is still dangerous, and the surge is still in its early stages. Changing conditions on the ground is difficult work, but our troops are proving that it can be done. They are carrying out their mission with skill and honor. They are accomplishing great things for the future of our Nation and for the future of a free Iraq.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8 a.m. on August 10 in Kennebunkport, ME, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 11. In his address, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 10, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks During a Visit With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and an Exchange With Reporters in Kennebunkport, Maine August 11, 2007

President Bush. Everybody having a good time here?

Q. Thank you. It's great.

President George H.W. Bush. It's a good day. You're back.

President Bush. Particularly thinking about you, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Q. Yes, sir.

President George H.W. Bush. Good. Great.

President Bush. Mark, let me ask you, you looking forward to going down to Crawford?

Q. You bet; can't wait.

President Bush. Good. Well, that will be Monday.

Visit of President Sarkozy

Q. Mr. President, what do you expect about France——

President Bush. I expect to be with a friend. I'm looking forward to having him with my family. The best way we can do things—the best way we can send a good signal to President Sarkozy is to invite him here at the family house. I've got a lot of my brothers around, my sister, my daughters. He's going to get a—he's going to figure out what——

President George H.W. Bush. Youngest grandchild made these signs.

The First Lady. Did you see the signs the grandchildren made?

President George H.W. Bush. *Le signe.*

President Bush. What language are you speaking? [Laughter]

President George H.W. Bush. Is that "sign"—*signe*?

Q. *Signe.*

The First Lady. See. He remembered his French.

Q. Mr. President, aren't you disappointed that Mr.——

President Bush. Never disappointed, always upbeat. Feeling good, feeling optimistic about life. Thank you. Thank you. Disappointed about what?

First Lady Cecilia Sarkozy

Q. ——about Mrs. Sarkozy not coming?

President Bush. Of course we are. She's a very dynamic woman. She is—we were looking forward to seeing her as well as the children. And so we're disappointed she's sick, but we understand. That happens sometimes in life.

President George H.W. Bush. Very nice of him to come, having been back to France yesterday.

President Bush. Yes.

President George H.W. Bush. It's amazing.

Visit of President Sarkozy/President Bush's Vacation

Q. Are you surprised the President of France vacations in America?

President Bush. We're pleased he's here. Of course he makes the choice he makes. If people were asking me where I think they ought to vacation, it would be right here in America, where I'll be vacationing, as you know, Monday, starting in Crawford.

President's Vacation

Q. Could you imagine you, or you, sir, as President, vacationing in a foreign country?

President Bush. Of course I could.

Q. Really?

President Bush. Yes, there's some spectacular spots around the world that would be——

President George H.W. Bush. We've done it.

President Bush. ——great places to relax. But as you know, Mark, I'm a fellow—I'm a Texan; I like my place down there.

I like to go down there as much as I can. It's where I can relax. It's also—the job follows you wherever you go; you're always President. And so here we are at my mother and dad's house, enjoying a beautiful Maine day, fixing to sit down with the President of an ally. We're going to have a heart-to-heart talk. We'll be talking about a lot of key issues.

The good thing about President Sarkozy is, you know where he stands; he'll tell you exactly what he thinks. And I hope he'd say the same thing about me.

Q. If he invites you to go to France for a vacation—

President Bush. Of course I would go.

Q. —would you go?

President Bush. Absolutely. Absolutely. Particularly if he could find a place for me to ride my mountain bike. [Laughter]

Q. There are plenty.

President George H.W. Bush. There are plenty of mountains over there.

Q. Yes.

The French Language

Q. Mr. President, could you say something in French?

President Bush. No, I can't. [Laughter] I can barely speak English. [Laughter]

Lunch Menu

Q. Mr. President, what kind of lunch did you—are you going to have?

President Bush. We're going to give him a hamburger or a hot dog, his choice. [Laughter]

The First Lady. We're going to have a traditional family lunch.

Q. Mustard or catsup?

President Bush. It's up to him. We got it all laid out in there. He's got some baked beans. If he'd like some baked beans, we've got that as well.

The First Lady. Native Maine corn too, which is really delicious this time of year.

President Bush. Corn on the cob, real fresh this time of year.

The First Lady. Potato salad—

First Lady Barbara Bush. Coleslaw.

The First Lady. —fresh tomatoes.

President Bush. If he feels like it, he can have him a piece of blueberry pie—fresh blueberries up here in Maine.

Visit of President Sarkozy

Q. Do you think he's bringing cheese here?

The First Lady. We hope so.

President Bush. I think he's bringing good will. He's bringing a good brain, good vision, and good will. I'm looking forward to seeing him.

Visit to Kennebunkport, Maine

Q. Are you going to go fishing?

President Bush. I don't know if we will or not. We've got a—

President George H.W. Bush. We went this morning to check; there's no fish—

President Bush. We may go boating. That's the difference between fishing. I need to spend a little time with him alone. We'll figure out the schedule here in a minute. I've got a—we've probably got 45 minutes of private time that we've got to sit down and talk about some of the key issues of the world. This is a complicated world with a lot of opportunities to bring peace. And no question, when America and France work together, we can get a lot of important things done.

Visit of President Sarkozy/France-U.S.

Relations

Q. What's the main issue you want to address with him?

President Bush. There's a lot of issues, a lot of issues. It's a complicated world.

Q. Iran?

President Bush. One thing—sure. Absolutely, we'll talk about Iran. But, yes, I had a very good visit with the President in Germany, and I was very impressed—impressed with his vision, impressed with his leadership skills. Appreciated very much the involvement of the French Government in helping get the nurses out of Libya. And

I think we can work well together. And that's going to be good for the people of France and the people of the United States, and it's going to be good to help in the spread of peace.

France-U.S. Relations

Q. Do you see it as a time to start new relations with France, Mr. President?

President Bush. We've had good relations with France. Obviously, there's been disagreements, but just because you have disagreements on particular issues doesn't mean you have—not going to have good relations. I respect the French a lot and——

Q. ——new Government give a new leeway to——

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you. I respect the French people; I respect the history of France. We have had disagreements—on Iraq, in particular—but I've never allowed disagreements to not find other ways to work together. The previous administration and my administration worked very closely on Lebanon, and I'm looking forward to building on the progress—here comes the President.

Thank you for the press conference. Chalk it up as a guy who's trying to reach out and be friendly to the fourth estate—that would be the press.

[At this point, President Sarkozy arrived.]

Q. Mr. Sarkozy——

President Bush. Do you want to say a few comments? They just asked me about your wife, and I said how disappointed we were, but we fully understand.

Do you want to ask him a couple of questions? He's never shy around the press.

Visit of President Sarkozy

Q. Mr. Sarkozy, what's the message you bring to the American President and to the Americans?

President Sarkozy. I came to visit the United States on holiday, on vacation, like 900,000 French do every year. It's a great

country. I'm very happy to be here. The United States is a close friend of France, and I'm very glad to be able to meet with the President of the United States here today.

France-U.S. Relations

Q. A new page in the history between the two countries?

President Sarkozy. I just finished reading a biography of Lafayette, and I wanted to tell President Bush about that. The U.S. and France have been allies and friends for 250 years. When the—at the birth of the United States, France chose the side of the U.S.—there were 4 million Americans at that time, and France was the friend of the Americans. Afterwards, when we, the French, were involved in the war, the West were on our side. And on the east coast, we see a lot of cemeteries with small white crosses in the—on the French coast—and those are young Americans who came to die for us. And that is a lot more important than Mr. Sarkozy or Mr. Bush, because after Mr. Bush, after Mr. Sarkozy, we'll continue to be the friends of the Americans.

The U.S. is a large, big democracy. It's a country of freedom, and it's a country that we've always admired because it's the country that brought a constitution and freedom to the world. And France is friends with democracies, not with dictatorships.

Do we agree on everything? No, because maybe even within a family there are disagreements, but we are still a family. And we may be friends and not agree on everything, but we are friends nevertheless. That's the truth.

President Bush. Beautiful. Thank you. We've got to go eat a hamburger. We've got to go eat a hamburger.

President Sarkozy. Cecilia called Mrs. Bush this morning——

The First Lady. Yes, we talked this morning.

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.

Statement on the Death of Mervyn E. Griffin, Jr.
August 13, 2007

For over half a century, Merv Griffin entertained America. He was a man of innovation and energy who greeted challenges with laughter and determination. By following his passions and trusting his instincts, Merv became one of our Nation's best-known and most respected entertainers. He introduced Americans to a generation of talent on his talk show, created

two of the most successful game shows in history, and led a thriving hospitality business. Merv was also a generous leader who gave back to his community, donating millions of dollars to provide abused children with safe haven and brighter futures.

Laura and I are saddened by his death. His family is in our thoughts and prayers.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National
Emergency Regarding Export Control Regulations
August 15, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency caused by the

lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979, as amended, is to continue in effect for 1 year beyond August 17, 2007.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Representative Deborah D. Pryce's Decision Not To Seek
Reelection
August 16, 2007

Throughout her congressional career, Deborah Pryce has championed issues that matter to the families of central Ohio. Her commitment to reducing taxes, strengthening our national defense, and reforming our health care system has helped improve

the lives of her constituents and made America a more hopeful nation. She has also earned national recognition as a persuasive advocate on behalf of women and children. Based on her strong legislative record and consensus-building skills, Deb's

colleagues selected her to lead the House Republican Conference—the highest leadership post ever held by a Republican woman. She will be missed when she departs the Congress.

I look forward to continuing to work with her throughout the remainder of her service. Laura and I appreciate Deb's friendship and wish her and her family all the best.

Statement on Representative J. Dennis Hastert's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

August 17, 2007

It has been a great pleasure forging a close friendship and working relationship with Denny Hastert. He is a good and decent man, and he was a strong and effective Speaker. After teaching government and history at Yorkville High School in Illinois, Denny began making history serving in the Illinois House of Representatives and the United States House of Representatives. During his two decades in Congress, Denny rose through the ranks as a hard-working Member whom colleagues on both sides came to admire, trust, and respect and became the longest serving Republican Speaker in history. Drawing on lessons he learned as a coach, he successfully guided

Members of Congress to work together to enact legislation that has improved the lives of Americans. He led Congress to reduce taxes, improve education, strengthen Medicare, bolster our national defense, and support our troops. Our Nation is stronger because of his service.

I am indebted to Denny for his candid advice and strong support, and I look forward to working with him throughout the remainder of the 110th Congress. As my good friend prepares to move on to the next phase of his life, he has my gratitude for his distinguished service. Laura and I wish Denny, Jean, and their entire family all the best.

The President's Radio Address

August 18, 2007

Good morning. In recent months, American and Iraqi forces have struck powerful blows against Al Qaida terrorists and violent extremists in Anbar and other Provinces. In recent days, our troops and Iraqi allies launched a new offensive called Phantom Strike. In this offensive, we are carrying out targeted operations against terrorists and extremists fleeing Baghdad and other key cities to prevent them from returning or setting up new bases of operation. The terrorists remain dangerous and brutal, as we saw this week when they massacred

more than 200 innocent Yazidis, a small religious minority in northwestern Iraq. Our hearts go out to the families of those killed, and our troops are going to go after the murderers behind this horrific attack.

As we surge combat operations to capture and kill the enemy, we are also surging Provincial Reconstruction Teams to promote political and economic progress. Since January, we have doubled the number of these teams, known as PRTs. They bring together military, civilian, and diplomatic

personnel to help Iraqi communities rebuild infrastructure, create jobs, and encourage reconciliation from the ground up. These teams are now deployed throughout the country, and they are helping Iraqis make political gains, especially at the local level.

In Anbar Province at this time last year, the terrorists were in control of many areas and brutalizing the local population. Then local sheikhs joined with American forces to drive the terrorists out of Ramadi and other cities. Residents began to provide critical intelligence, and tribesmen joined the Iraqi police and security forces. Today, the Provincial council in Ramadi is back, and last month, Provincial officials reopened parts of the war-damaged government center with the help of one of our PRTs. Thirty-five local council members were present as the chairman called the body to order for its inaugural session.

Similar scenes are taking place in other parts of Anbar. Virtually every city and town in the Province now has a mayor and a functioning municipal council. The rule of law is being restored. And last month, some 40 judges held a conference in Anbar to restart major criminal trials. In the far west town of Al Qaim, tribal leaders turned against the terrorists. Today, those tribal leaders head the regional mayor's office and the local police force. Our PRT leader on the ground reports that Al Qaim is seeing new construction, growing commercial activity, and an increasing number of young men volunteering for the Iraqi Army and police.

In other Provinces, there are also signs of progress from the bottom up. In Muthanna, an overwhelmingly Shi'a Province, the local council held a public meeting to hear from citizens on how to spend their budget and rebuild their neighborhoods. In Diyala Province, the city of Baqubah reopened six of its banks, providing residents with much-needed capital for the local economy. And in Ninawa

Province, local officials have established a commission to investigate corruption, with a local judge empowered to pursue charges of fraud and racketeering.

Unfortunately, political progress at the national level has not matched the pace of progress at the local level. The Iraqi Government in Baghdad has many important measures left to address, such as reforming the de-Ba'athification laws, organizing Provincial elections, and passing a law to formalize the sharing of oil revenues. Yet the Iraqi Parliament has passed about 60 pieces of legislation.

And despite the lack of oil revenue law on the books, oil revenue sharing is taking place. The Iraqi Parliament has allocated more than \$2 billion in oil revenue for the Provinces. And the Shi'a-led Government in Baghdad is sharing a significant portion of these oil revenues with Sunni Provincial leaders in places like Anbar.

America will continue to urge Iraq's leaders to meet the benchmarks they have set. Yet Americans can be encouraged by the progress and reconciliation that are taking place at the local level. An American politician once observed that "all politics is local." In a democracy, over time, national politics reflects local realities. And as reconciliation occurs in local communities across Iraq, it will help create the conditions for reconciliation in Baghdad as well.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on August 17 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 17, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico in Montebello, Canada
August 21, 2007

Prime Minister Harper. Might I, first and foremost, thank all the people here and the citizens of Montebello for giving such a warm Quebec welcome. You are quite right to be proud of your beautiful Montebello manoir and the area.

As the leaders of the three countries, between—and our discussions between President Bush and myself were very cordial, constructive. Our three countries maintain peaceful, productive relations and give great contributions to our people. It is part and parcel of our commitment to democracy, free market, NAFTA, and the equality of chances to all citizens.

This is a unique moment to look at the individual aspects that we could look at and the challenges that we have to face. We agreed to discuss the protection of the consumer and looking at the nonsecure products entering the nations, in particular those going to our children.

We also recognize the fact that to find practical, pragmatic solutions to our mutual environmental challenges, our countries are working to find our own sustainable energy and to find national standards on energy efficiency.

Finally—and this is particularly important for Canada—we realize that border security must not threaten the friendly relations that we have. We undertook agreements on co-operation, standards, regulations, pandemics, intellectual property, and research in the energy field. In the framework of this summit, we met the North American Competitiveness Council. Their leaders provided us with valuable information on how we could exploit our partnership in the field of security and prosperity to strengthen our economies and to create good jobs here in North America.

Our discussions did not merely deal with North America. We also discussed a number of other international and hemispheric questions: climate change and too the next meeting of the Middle East discussions, where our countries are defending democracy and freedom and protecting the have-nots.

This summit enabled us to discuss our singular bilateral discussions. President Bush and myself met yesterday afternoon. We discussed a number of subjects, in particular our joint commitment to have a secure border that shall remain open to goods and services and to the interaction between our respective citizens.

President Calderon and myself also had a meeting yesterday evening, and I would like to thank President Calderon and his wife Margarita and their children Maria, Felipe, for having passed a wonderful time with us last weekend. We understand that you have had to shorten your stay due to the consequences of Hurricane Dean on your country. I sincerely regret the terrible aspect of this Hurricane Dean on Mexico, but I understand the concern, that the Mexican authorities have assisted in evacuating a Canadian citizen.

We have been—also been able to arrange our agenda yesterday to discuss important matters for our respective nations. We were able to discuss a number of different matters and the flourishing development of trade between our two countries, and that we shall pursue in the future.

Canada, United States, and Mexico, are good neighbors and good friends. As sovereign nations in our modern world, we

are not merely independent but also interdependent. And we are determined to cooperate for our mutual security, our continued economic growth, and the improvement of our North American relations are unique in the world.

[At this point, Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

—the staff here and the people of Montebello for their warm Quebecois hospitality. You have every reason to be proud of this magnificent resort and this beautiful region.

As host of this year's North American leaders summit, it's my responsibility and pleasure to report that the discussions between Presidents Bush and Calderon and myself were as cordial as they were constructive. Our three countries share peaceful and productive relations that are of considerable benefit to the people of our respective nations. These relations are rooted in our common commitment to democracy, free and open markets through NAFTA, and equal opportunity for all of our citizens. This week's summit has provided an opportunity to share individual perspectives and to take stock of the challenges that we face together.

We agreed to work together on consumer protection. We have to identify and stop unsafe goods from entering our country, especially those designed for our children. We also agreed on the need for practical solutions to our mutual environmental challenges. Our countries are already working together to develop clean and sustainable energy, and we're cooperating on national fuel efficiency standards.

Finally—and this is especially important for Canada—we agreed that border security measures, critical as they are, cannot threaten the bonds of friendship or commerce between us.

Over the past year, we've achieved agreements on regulatory cooperation, pandemics, intellectual property, and research in energy. As part of our summit,

we also met with the North American Competitiveness Council. The Council's business leaders have provided us with good, practical advice on how we can build our Security and Prosperity Partnership to strengthen our economies and create good jobs right here in North America.

But our discussions were not focused exclusively on North America. We also discussed a range of international and hemispheric issues, from climate change to the upcoming APEC meetings, from the Middle East to Haiti, where all three of our countries are working to advance freedom, democracy, and development for the most impoverished people.

Moreover, the summit provided opportunities for one-on-one discussions about our unique bilateral relationships. President Bush and I met yesterday afternoon. We discussed several matters, including our joint commitment to a secure border that remains open to the exchange of goods and services and the interaction of our people.

President Calderon and I met last night. First, let me take the opportunity to thank the President, his wife Margarita, and their children Maria, Felipe, and Juan Pablo, for spending some time this past weekend with our family. I understand you're cutting your visit short, given the impact of Hurricane Dean on your country. I regret the cost of this terrible natural disaster. At the same time, we appreciate the efforts of the Mexican authorities to secure the evacuation of Canadian citizens.

I'm grateful we were able to arrange our schedules yesterday to meet and discuss matters formally before your departure. We had the opportunity to discuss many issues related to the growing relationship between Canada and Mexico that we're going to lead forward together.

Canada, the United States, and Mexico are good neighbors and good friends. As sovereign countries in the modern world, we are both independent and interdependent. And we're committed to working together on mutual security, continued

economic growth, and expanding our unique North American relationship.

President Bush.

President Bush. Thank you, Prime Minister. Thanks for having us here. I too want to thank the good folks of Montebello for their wonderful hospitality. The food was good; the hospitality was warm. You picked a great place to come.

I express my country's concerns for the citizens whose lives will be affected by Hurricane Dean. I respect the fact that President Calderon has decided to get back to Mexico as quickly as possible in a safe way. I want you to know that U.S. Agencies are in close touch with the proper Mexican authorities, and if you so desire help, we stand ready to help. The American people care a lot about the human condition in our neighborhood, and when we see human suffering, we want to do what we can to help alleviate that. So we wish you all good luck.

These meetings are—I'm not going to try to reiterate what Stephen said. He went through the list of the meetings. And he's a—he's right, that we talked about a lot of issues. I just want to give you the spirit of the discussions and why I think they're important.

It's in our people's interests that Canada and Mexico work closely together. In other words, there's a good reason why our leaders should come together on a regular basis. First reason why is to figure out ways to continue to enhance prosperity. It's in our interests that the Canadian lifestyle be as strong as it is, and it's in our interests that prosperity spread to Mexico. If you're a U.S. citizen, you want people that live close to you to be prosperous. The more prosperity there is in your neighborhood, the more hopeful your neighborhood is.

NAFTA, which has created a lot of political controversy in our respective countries, has yielded prosperity. Since NAFTA came to be, trade between our respective countries has grown from \$293 billion a year to \$883 billion a year. Now, for some, those

are just numbers, but for many, it's improved wages and a better lifestyle and more hope. And the question that we're faced with is, how do we continue to enhance prosperity so the average citizen understands the benefits of three countries working together? And I think we made some good progress toward eliminating barriers and toward harmonizing regulations to a point where more prosperity will come to be.

And we discussed a lot of other issues. We discussed bilateral issues. Stephen and I talked about border issues. Of course, Felipe Calderon and I talked about border issues and migration. These are complicated issues, but they're issues that we can work out in good spirit as friends.

One reason one meets is to reconfirm friendships, is to make sure that not only at the leaders' level is there conversations taking place that are friendly but that that spirit translates throughout our governments. And I think we've accomplished that objective today.

We also talked, as Stephen mentioned, about international issues, issues of—concerning South America or the Middle East. These are meaningful discussions. I'm glad I came, and I'm looking forward to hosting them next year. Matter of fact, it's in the interests of our countries that we have these meetings on an annual basis and then have working groups follow through on the discussion items that—during our meetings with the business leaders or our own Cabinet Secretaries.

And so thanks for having me. It's been worthwhile. I appreciate it.

Prime Minister Harper. Senor Calderon.

President Calderon. Gracias. Thank you, Prime Minister Harper and President Bush. In the first place, I would like to thank very specifically—I would like to thank you for the solidarity, the understanding, and the support that I have received from you in order to, well, adjust my schedule to exhaust pending matters and allow me to return in good time in order to personally

tend to the emergency situation that we have to face in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Your understanding and support is also accompanied by the offers of health—help and solidarity to the victims of this national disaster. So far—well, it would be too early to assess the scope of the damages. So far there have been no fatal victims. We can't be sure yet, but we are monitoring the situation every minute, monitoring the hurricane. And as a matter of fact, I'm returning to Yucatan right away, as soon as my aircraft can land, and supervise the rescue missions.

I would also like to thank very sincerely—thank you for the hospitality and for the human warmth, for the very welcoming attitude of Mr. Harper's family. And I do value this. It was a marvelous weekend for my family, such a typically Canadian place—typically, Canadian places are amongst the most beautiful in the world. And I would like to thank your wife Laureen and your children for your offer to spend this time with my family, with my wife and with my children. And I hope I'll be able to return your very nice present in Mexico.

Now, this meeting allows me to reinforce the conviction that North America as a region still has not developed the enormous potential it has. And I'm more convinced about this today than ever before, that it has to be developed. There's no doubt that the globalization process that we are currently experiencing is definitely pressuring throughout competitiveness of our countries—and not only countries but the competitiveness of the countries that have joined into regions.

Now, Canada, U.S., and Mexico have to act together in order not only to improve the quality of life of our people but also to prevent the vast integration process that we've seen in other parts of the world: Asia, Europe, very specifically. We don't want this to displace our producers and displace opportunities for our consumers.

Now, through working groups that we've established through the opinions of the businessmen of all three countries and their recommendations to our respective governments, it's clear to me that there's an enormous agenda that has to be developed, carried out. So I believe that we must relaunch in a more stronger way the strength of the relationship between the three countries of North America. That is to say that each country, each government is facing within their own public opinion—now particularly in Mexico, maybe in the U.S.—they're encountering resistance in relation to one or another aspect—investments, immigration, border crossings, and regulatory aspects.

And all these matters, which most of them are covered by the recommendations of the businessmen that we met, they've come to stand still. And this is a result of the concerns in each country, obstacles that—to the economic integration of our region. I believe we should reassess, or we should have our people reassess what all this means to the common citizen, the region; what it means to the consumers to have better prices and better quality in the products they consume; also, in what it represents for companies to have access to commodities that are more efficient, more productive, better quality, and better priced; also, what it represents to our workers to have available work, thanks to the fact that North America can be a fully integrated region.

Now, at the same time, there are complementary characteristics between the three countries. And this has got to be very specifically addressed in order to leverage the situation in this new century of globalization.

And we agreed also to prioritize certain issues that have been followed up on. For example, when it comes to regional competitiveness, it's quite clear that this is a very important priority. Also, the border area issue—we all want secure and also efficient borders, borders that will allow the

border crossing of those who build, who contribute, and of course, prevent border crossings to those that damage our societies: organized crime, drug trafficking, all the trade in illegal goods.

Also, we talked about sustainable development and the challenges faced by countries, by our region, and by humanity as a whole. And so we talked about our common purpose to find reliable alternatives that will allow us, on the one hand, to preserve the environment, and at the same time, they will not force us to detain or stop our development and thereby have an impact on the prosperity of our people.

We also talked about security. This is a topic that concerns us all, but as President Bush said, we talked about prosperity. And I believe that this meeting—in my case, it's my first meeting, the first meeting I'm participating in—I think this meeting could be the beginning of a new age in the framework of the relationship of the three countries, and—particularly if we relaunch the trade exchange and also if we are able to take advantage of our potential.

I also thank President Bush for his invitation to come to Texas next year in order to continue with these talks. And also, Mexico is interested in hosting the meeting in 2009 in my beloved, dear, beautiful country.

Therefore, the issues were multifarious, and we took advantage of the time we had, although it was reduced because of this emergency situation that we're facing. I'm very happy that the environment within which we worked was very positive, very constructive on the part of everyone in attendance. And we hope that we'll be able to follow up on all the commitments, on the priorities that we've established, and on the recommendations that we've received from the business sector.

Thank you very much, Prime Minister Harper, for your hospitality. Thank you to the Canadian people and the people of Quebec for your hospitality and to the staff of this wonderful place in Montebello that

treated us so generously. And well, we will be at your disposal when you come to us.

Moderator. *Conférence de presse*, good afternoon. We'll begin with the press conference. And just a reminder, it's one question per reporter. We will start with Ben Feller, Associated Press.

Progress in Iraq/Hurricane Dean

Q. Thank you all. Mr. President, yesterday Senator Levin, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said that the Iraqi parliament ought to oust Prime Minister Maliki and his Government for being politically unable to deliver political unity there, for utterly failing on that point. I'm wondering what your reaction is to Senator Levin's comment and whether you think Maliki has lost credibility.

And if I may, President Calderon—

Moderator. I just ask that you limit yourself to one question, please.

Q. I'm just wondering the assessment of the damage in your country, the hurricane damage.

President Bush. The way I view Iraq is from the security perspective and a political perspective. I made a decision to send more troops into Iraq to provide enough security for reconciliation to have a time to take place. It appears to me—and I simply don't—I certainly don't want to prejudge General David Petraeus's report back home, but there is some progress being made. In other words, one aspect of my decision is working.

There are two types of political reconciliation that can take place in a new democracy. One is from the top down, and one is from the bottom up. Clearly, the Iraqi Government has got to do more through its parliament to help heal the wounds of years of—having lived years under a tyrant, see. It's not easy to go from a tyrannical society where the tyrant brutalized his people and created deep suspicions into one in which people are willing to work more closely together.

The Iraqi people made a great step toward reconciliation when they passed the most modern Constitution in the Middle East, and now their Government has got to perform. And I think there's a certain level of frustration with the leadership in general, inability to work—to come together to get, for example, an oil revenue law passed or Provincial elections.

On the other hand, I do want to point out that the Iraqi parliament has met and passed 60 different pieces of legislation. They do have a budgeting process that is in the process of distributing a significant amount of money from the central Government to the Provincial governments, and the money they're distributing is oil revenues. So there may not be an oil revenue distribution law, but there's oil revenues being distributed.

There's a bottom-up reconciliation taking place. It's noticeable and tangible and real, where people at the grassroots level are sick and tired of the violence, sick and tired of the radicalism, and they want a better life. And they're beginning to reject the extremists that have the desire to have a safe haven, for example, from which to launch further attacks on America. In other words, there's a process taking place. And the fundamental question is, will the Government respond to the demands of the people? And if the Government doesn't demand—respond to the demands of the people, they will replace the Government. That's up to the Iraqis to make that decision, not American politicians. The Iraqis will decide. They have decided they want a constitution, they have elected members to their parliament, and they will make the decisions, just like democracies do.

And the question that we have to face in America is, is it worth it? Does it matter whether or not this young democracy survive? Is it in our national interests that this difficult experiment with democracy in the Middle East work? And I've come to the conclusion that it is. It's in our interests because a failed Iraq could easily yield a

safe haven from which the extremists and radicals who once attacked us could attack us again. A failed Iraq would become a recruiting tool for the very same people that still want to attack America. And so it's in our interests.

I told you the other day at a press conference—I don't know if you were there or not—but if you don't believe it's in American interests to be there, you won't find any political reconciliation that is worth defending. If you do think it's in our interests, our security interests, then you'll be able to see political reconciliation taking place, some at the top and some at the bottom.

Now, Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus will be coming back to brief the Congress in about a month's time, and I'm looking forward to hearing their briefing. And I would hope that Members of Congress from both political parties listen very carefully to the report they bring back, as we all make decisions about what's best for our national security in regards to this one theater in the war against the extremists and radicals.

President Calderon. What I can tell you, as you are well aware, Hurricane Dean touched down in Mexico north of Chetumal, which is the State of Quintana Roo, which is on the borders with Belize, with winds of 250 and gusts of winds beyond 350 k. It was a category 5 hurricane; that is the most dangerous. And the initial reports I have, the most important is, until today, but I've not discarded it, but there has been no loss of human life. We still have to know what happened in the more isolated communities in that area.

Our authorities are all over that area, the civil protection area. People are there who are experts in dealing with hurricane matters. There was a power outage to Chetumal, but we have checked with the energy authorities of the Federal level, that power outage will be repaired in the coming hours, and possibly it is.

The hurricane, fortunately, did not go through the main tourist areas—Cancun, Riviera Maya. And more—the daily routine activities in those cities are being reestablished. And they had major flooding or incoming tidal waves, shall we say. But everything has recovered.

I went over the more poor Mayan areas, and I have a great deal of concern for the housing and the lack of services in that general area for the indigenous people there. And that will be the main area of concern for us and activities.

It is now going to Campeche, and we have other concerns, insofar as that is concerned. We have logistical support of the resistance or the maintenance of electrical lines that provide energy throughout the Yucatan Peninsula. We have—in Merida, we have hydroelectric plants that can come in on an emergency.

The layout of the Campeche State, which is a very low level—it is almost at sea level. And there could be a wave increase in height in the tide that may bring about some flooding and might create more difficulties that will be more difficult to resolve.

We are then awaiting that Hurricane Dean will enter the Campeche area, where the main oil production occurs in Mexico. We have ordered the suspension of oil production. Almost 20,000 workers have been taken away from the platforms, and there's about two and a half million oil barrels have been lost until now. But we have been able to save lives. And later again, the Hurricane Dean will go into Veracruz, and this will create different problems to that—to those of the Yucatan Peninsula, that is, the increase of the tidal bore up the rivers and other aspects to the north of Veracruz. Fortunately, Hurricane Dean was a category 5 but is now a category 3 and is about to drop into category 2. Our fear is that it will regain strength once it enters the Gulf of Mexico after Campeche.

But we are ready. The equipment, the teams are ready. The hydroelectric power

is being restored. And there has not been major material damage in the major touristic areas that have been hit by other hurricanes. That is what I know today.

Moderator. I'd like to remind you one more time that it's one question per reporter.

Northwest Passage

Q. President Bush and Mr. Harper, we know the differences between the two countries insofar as the Northwest Passage is concerned. We heard the former Ambassador, Paul Cellucci, that it would be in the best interests of security for the United States to recognize this passage as a Canadian waterway. So I would like to hear your comments, from both of you. Failing which, there is if not a way—could we consider to hear to what extent you would be willing to consider the Northwest Passage to become an international waterway?

Prime Minister Harper. I shall reply, to start off with. I did hear the comments of the former Ambassador Paul Cellucci. We also know that there are certain differences of opinion vis-a-vis this passage between our two nations. But quite honestly, Canada's position is that we intend to strengthen our sovereignty in the Arctic area, not only military but economic, social, environmental, and others.

The former agreements of President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney in the eighties—Canada and the United States did resolve their differences in this area.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

—the statement by former Ambassador Cellucci. Canada, as you know, is fully committed to strengthening its Arctic sovereignty on every level, not just military but economic, social, environmental, any other method, any other means.

Canada and the U.S. do have differences on certain aspects of the Northwest Passage. At the same time, since the agreements of Prime Minister Mulroney and

former President Reagan in the late 1980s, Canada and the United States have been able to manage these differences, and we think we'll be able to continue to do that.

President Bush. Yes, we'll manage the differences—because there are differences on the Northwest Passage. We believe it's an international passageway. Having said that, the United States does not question Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic islands, and the United States supports Canadian investments that have been made to exercise its sovereignty.

Moderator. We will continue with Roberto Gonzalez, *diario Uno Mas Uno*.

Stock Markets/National Economies

Q. Good afternoon. This question is to the three leaders. The stock exchange markets—the stock markets have gone through a severe crisis in recent weeks. How close are we to a stock exchange crash, and what measures have you taken so that it does not affect the real economy?

So when you will be presenting your first report, there's an opposition party that wants to prevent this—what is the outlook in your view? What's the outlook? And do you trust—do you believe that the opposition will accept your invitation for a dialog?

President Calderon. Well, to answer the first question, there's the financial problem, which is quite delicate in several markets. What I can tell you in relation to the case of Mexico, fortunately, our financial system has been solid enough to resist these critical times. I know that many central banks in several parts of the world, the European Union, the Federal Reserve in the U.S., and other central banks, have applied considerable resources in order to bring liquidity to their financial and banking systems.

Now, fortunately, in the case of Mexico, this has not been necessary. The financial system and the banking system is very solid. It took us a lot of work, a lot of money to have such a solid system that would resist situations like this, but fortunately, it

has not required the support of liquidity from the Central Bank of Mexico.

Currently, the Mexican Stock Exchange has adjusted fixed income values. This is the case throughout the world. However, the Mexican Stock Exchange was one of the five that actually had an increase in its value throughout the world last year, over 50 percent. And obviously, the reduction that we're seeing is somehow or another a form of a correction, which will actually improve the health of the financial markets in Mexico.

Could it have an impact in the real economy? Well, that depends on the scope of the situation, how it affects the markets, particularly the North American markets, which affects us most. My belief is that the situation is beginning to stabilize. And it will depend on the impact that it might have on the growth of the U.S., which, as you know, Mexico depends on this growth, on the U.S. growth.

Now, in relation to the second subject, the second issue, I have invited legislators. I'm a democrat that believes in the basic ideas and that believes in constructing dialog, and this is what I'm seeking in Congress, constructive dialog. Unfortunately, I still haven't received a positive answer from this—in relation to this invitation, but I believe, I trust that in the future, there will be greater willingness to talk about issues of concern for all Mexicans.

I know it's another system, Canada is, but Prime Minister Harper has to talk to his Parliament just about every day, every week. And I think—I would say that we would—I would very much like to have an institutional way in Mexico so that we're able to work and to talk about what we agree with and what we don't agree with in our country. I'll be willing to talk to anybody that wants to talk to me, particularly within Congress.

Now, in relation to the attitude of the PRD or other members of that party, I respect them, and of course, I appeal to the sense of responsibility towards the

country. And I hope that maturity will prevail and common sense too. So the only thing that will be lost with this is that anybody that breaks the basic laws of our institutional life—let's say that citizens know very well and recognize the maturity and the responsibility of political parties, and the people of our country are able to punish these attitudes too.

Prime Minister Harper. Our monetary and financial systems that monitor it are following it closely. But naturally, there are certain differences in their assets and liabilities, and some of the major corporations will have drops in their stocks. That is the normal course. But I can assure you that the capital situation of our major corporations, our financial institutions, of our individual persons are very strong.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

Our economic and financial institutions that are responsible for watching these markets are monitoring them closely. At the same time, just to remind people, it's normal for the price of assets of various securities or companies or whatever to go up and down in the marketplace. It's not unusual. I can assure you that the position of Canadian financial sector, in particular our banks, Canadian companies in general, and the household sector, our capital positions are very strong.

President Bush. The fundamentals of the U.S. economy are strong. Inflation is down; interest rates are low; the employment picture is strong; exports are up. We grew at over 3 percent in the second quarter. The fundamental question is, is there enough liquidity in our system as people readjust risk? And the answer is, yes, there is.

Moderator. Bret Baier, FOX News.

Canada-Mexico-U.S. Trade Relations

Q. Thank you. As you three leaders meet here, there are a growing number of people in each of your countries who have ex-

pressed concern about the Security and Prosperity Partnership. This is addressed to all three of you. Can you say today that this is not a prelude to a North American union, similar to a European Union? Are there plans to build some kind of super-highway connecting all three countries? And do you believe all of these theories about a possible erosion of national identity stem from a lack of transparency from this partnership?

Prime Minister Harper. Thank you for—well, let me begin. And I guess I've read some things from my opposition in Canada. I'm not sure these are generally expressed concerns, but a couple of my opposition leaders have speculated on massive water diversions and superhighways to the continent, maybe interplanetary, I'm not sure, as well. *[Laughter]* I even—there were reports of a former Prime Minister lurking in the hallways. I have yet to see him.

Look, we have an enormous trading commercial relationship. It's important that the leaders of that trading relationship get together periodically, have discussions, just as it's important at every level—ministerial level, official level—that they're getting together and talking and making sure they're working out problems.

You know, we had some business leaders in front of us today. One in particular said, you know, the rules for jelly beans—he manufactures jelly beans—the rules for jelly bean contents are different in Canada and the United States. They have to maintain two separate inventories. Is the sovereignty of Canada going to fall apart if we standardize the jelly bean? I don't think so. Maybe Mr. Dion thinks so, but I don't think so.

So these are pragmatic, practical discussions. In fact, it was my predecessor in the Liberal Party who initiated them. And ultimately, of course, for the decisions, we're responsible to our respective populations. We're a democratic system, and as President Calderon mentioned, I have to

listen to that practical input every single day in Parliament.

President Calderon. Well, in fact, I'll be happy with one step in Mexicali and one in Tijuana. In actual fact, there are several myths about this meeting; some are more jovial, funnier than others. But what we are trying to do is simply to meet, talk about our common problems, and see what we can do in practical terms in order to improve the lives of our people. Whether it's to standardize the parameters for chocolates or medicines, I think these are commonsense things. And moreover, I think—and I'll tell you this very clearly—I think that as a region, we are losing competitiveness in comparison with other regions in the world.

And it's not a question of customs unions, let alone having an integration that would actually be—encroach on the sovereignty and culture and resources of each country. We simply have to take advantage of this opportunity of being neighbors and allies in order to generate prosperity and security for our people. And that is the purpose of these meetings.

Now let me tell you that, at times, I would even like to work faster, review more issues, but we have to be very patient. And something that we did talk about also, which is part of my responsibility or our responsibilities as leaders, is to talk to the people and tell them why it's important to have better trading rules; why it's important not to have so many barriers between ourselves; why is it important to resolve issues such as immigration, investment, because that could actually improve the quality of life for our people. It could mean the Mexican consumers could have better products, Canadian products, U.S. products and—well, Mexican products also—because there would be more investment in our country, which requires thousands and thousands of jobs in order to resolve the problems of the people. And that happens when there's investment, and there's only

investment when there is competitiveness. And we do have a way to go in that regard.

President Bush. We represent three great nations. We each respect each other's sovereignty. You know, there are some who would like to frighten our fellow citizens into believing that relations between us are harmful for our respective peoples. I just believe they're wrong. I believe it's in our interest to trade; I believe it's in our interest to dialog; I believe it's in our interest to work out common problems for the good of our people.

And I'm amused by some of the speculation, some of the old—you can call them political scare tactics. If you've been in politics as long as I have, you get used to that kind of technique, where you lay out a conspiracy and then force people to try to prove it doesn't exist. And that's just the way some people operate. I'm here representing my nation. I feel strongly that the United States is a force for good, and that I feel strongly that by working with our neighbors, we can be a stronger force for good.

And so I appreciate that question. I'm amused by the difference between what actually takes place in the meetings and what some are trying to say takes place. It's quite comical, actually, when you realize the difference between reality and what some people are talking on TV about.

Prime Minister Harper. Might I add, in French, I did not know that there were these major plots that were mentioned by the head of the opposition, Mr. Martin, a Liberal Prime Minister, who initiated these discussions, I believe, for Mr. Dion. It is a rather regressive step backwards to this whole question of our NAFTA discussions and SPP.

Canada's Role in Afghanistan

Q. My question is for President Bush. Mr. President, it's become increasingly likely that Canada will withdraw from its current combat role in southern Afghanistan

in February of 2009. Many Canadians, including politicians of different political stripes, have suggested that Canada's military has done its job in the country, that it's played its part, and it would be time to go home then. I'd like to ask you if you believe that Canada has done its job and has fulfilled its duties.

President Bush. I believe Canada has done a fabulous job in Afghanistan. And I thank the people of Canada, but more importantly, the people of Afghanistan thank the people of Canada.

Canadian—the Canadian people sent some of your finest into harm's way to enable a young democracy to not only survive but thrive. And it's been an important contribution in this global struggle against extremists. We're in an ideological struggle against people who use murder and death to achieve political objectives, and the fundamental question is, will free nations help young democracies survive in the face of this threat? And Canada has performed brilliantly. And I thank the mothers and fathers or sons and daughters of those who lost their life in this, for the sake of freedom and peace for the ultimate sacrifice they paid.

Secondly, the Canadian contribution is more than just combat. The Canadian contribution is to help build institutions for a democracy to survive. So the contribution has been vast, and it's been robust. And this Government, along with its parliament, will make decisions what's best for the Canadian people and the people of Afghanistan.

The United States is firmly committed to Afghanistan. We view this as a part of the war against the extremists and radicals. We view this as a significant portion of the ideological struggle, and we believe that when democracy prevails in Afghanistan, it will be a major blow toward those who want to impose a totalitarian view on others.

We believe, for example, it's important for Afghan girls to get a good education.

I know the Canadian people feel the same way. We believe that it's important for women to have rights and to serve in the Parliament. We believe peace is achieved when forms of government give people an opportunity to express themselves in a peaceful way in society. That's what we believe. And one reason we have that strong belief is, we believe in the universality of liberty. We don't believe freedom is just confined to our neighborhood, we believe freedom is universal in its application. That's what we believe. We believe people want to be free, and if given a chance, they will exercise what is necessary to be free, and that freedom yields peace.

I'm giving a speech tomorrow where I'm going to talk about our engagement in Asia and how Asia has been transformed because of liberty. A place where Canadians and U.S. soldiers died in large numbers is now a place of peace and prosperity, where governments evolved in their own—representing their own traditions and history, but nevertheless evolved in a way with liberty as its basis.

And the question we're all confronted with—who live in comfortable societies—is it worth it for our own security to help others realize the blessings of freedom? And my decision is, absolutely, it is. I think it's the calling of the 21st century. I think it's the calling of history. And I appreciate the strong commitment that this Government and the Canadian people have made toward writing the first chapter of what will be laying the foundation of peace throughout the 21st century.

Prime Minister Harper. Might I say that our troops are there. Parliament will make its own decision on the extension of this mission. But at the same time, you the Canadians can be extremely proud of the work done by our troops, our soldiers, our diplomats, our agents that are there working to develop the country, working for one of the peoples that are the poorest in the world. In Kandahar, we have given the possibility to men, women, and children to

have some freedom and some safety and security that we have here in Canada.

I note the passing away—the dying of the soldier Longtin. And his brethren, his comrades are there to uphold those same values and carry on the dead's life to help their brothers and sisters in countries abroad.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

To repeat that, I think we can all be very proud of the work that Canadian troops are doing in Afghanistan. Parliament will make its decision in due course whether it wants to prolong the mission. But I think our difference there—our position there, our presence there has made a real difference in giving just a tiny bit of the freedom, the opportunity, and the security that we have as Canadians, that we take for granted as Canadians.

I note the death of obviously—of a Canadian soldier—Longtin, I think, was the name. We are very fortunate we have a volunteer army, very fortunate to have men and women who put on the uniform willing to defend our values and also improve the lives of their fellow human beings and do so at tremendous personal risk for themselves. And I think we should all appreciate that.

Moderator. We have time for one last question—*[inaudible]*.

Narcotics and Drug Trafficking

Q. Good afternoon, President Bush and Prime Minister. And I thought that this summit would be the—would—actually Plan Mexico would come out of this, the combination of three governments to combat the effects of drug trafficking. What is the obstacle? What is it causing the delay? Why don't the societies of each country know what this plan is about? And can you actually confirm the support of the United States to Mexico? Apparently, it will increase tenfold, and the levels will be similar to Colombia. We hear very often that

the United States wants to take part in this situation against drugs, this war on drugs, and we see it very clearly in Mexico. Now, what is it all about? Could you tell us?

President Bush. Man! *[Laughter]* *Hom-bre!* *[Laughter]* We discussed a common strategy to deal with a common problem, and that is narcotrafficking and violence on our border. First, let me say that in order to develop an effective, common strategy requires—there needs to be serious consultations between our respective governments. It's one thing to say, we're interested in working together, it's another thing to develop a package on both sides of the border that will be effective in dealing with the problem. That's what our people expect us to do. They expect us to see a problem and to develop an effective strategy to deal with that problem.

President Calderon and I met in Mexico, and we had a serious discussion to get this initiative on the table. This is an interim meeting, a meeting for us to make sure that the strategy that's being developed is—will be effective. And so we reviewed where we are in the process.

The United States is committed to this joint strategy to deal with a joint problem. I would not be committed to dealing with this if I wasn't convinced that President Calderon had the will and the desire to protect his people from narcotraffickers. He has shown great leadership and great strength of character, which gives me good confidence that the plan we'll develop will be effective. And the fundamental question is, what can we do together to make sure that the common strategy works? And that's where we are in the discussions right now.

There's all kinds of speculation about the size of the package, this, that, and the other. All I can tell you is, the package, when it's developed, will be robust enough to achieve a common objective, which is less violence on both sides of the border and to deal with narcotrafficking. And we both have responsibilities. And that's what

the package is entailed to develop. It's to develop how do we share our joint responsibilities.

It's in our interests that this program go forward. You mentioned Plan Colombia; this is not like Plan Colombia. This is different from Plan Colombia. This is a plan that says, we've got an issue on our own border. We share a border, and therefore, it's a joint program that will mean—that won't mean U.S. armed presence in your country. Mexico is plenty capable of handling the problem. And the question is, is there any way for us to help strengthen the effort? And so that's what we're studying.

And I can't give you a definitive moment when the plan will be ready, but we're working hard to get a plan ready. And it's a plan that, once it's proposed and out there, I strongly urge the United States Congress to support. It's in our interests, it's in the U.S. interests that we get this issue solved.

President Calderon. Thank you, President Bush, for your comments and also for the question, because this allows us to emphasize the fact that—well, the President has already said, it's a common strategy to combat, in a coordinated way, a common problem. Drug trafficking and violence that's associated to drug trafficking, which is particularly evident on the border between the U.S. and Mexico, cannot be dealt with in an isolated way. It has to be confronted by, dealt with by the people and by the governments that are directly affected by this scourge. And it requires a variety, a multiplicity of actions carried out by society, by governments, in other words, enforcement activities against criminals, preventive activities, protective activities, prevention and treatment of addictions with the young.

Now, I agree with President Bush; it's very important to reduce—well, to have clear policies to reduce the consumption patterns in terms of drugs, including Mex-

ico, because this is a main cause of the problem that we're facing.

Now, last week, for example, last week, three Federal policemen were murdered in Mexico—Mexican policemen, that is—and they were tortured in a very cowardly way. And those Mexican policemen are fully committed towards the Government to free the young Mexicans from drugs and to free Mexican society from slavery on the part of organized crime based on money and technology. And I don't want any—not one single Mexican policeman to have a logistical disadvantage when facing these criminals. I don't want my Government to be responsible for any omission, any legal omission within a legal framework that would have been directed towards defeating these criminals.

So this is a common strategy because it means that the U.S. will do its part and Mexico will do its part. Now, what do we want the U.S. to do—to carry out—have greater surveillance along the border. We are seeing high-powered weapons into Mexico, and we know that we can do much more than we're doing at this point in time. I know that drugs go from Mexico to the U.S. Both of us have to agree so that there is surveillance, efficient surveillance, that is, on both sides of the border. We are facing mafias that are working on both sides of the border. That is quite clear to us. And I think that we will not be acting in an efficient way as long as they have a coordinated strategy and we don't. In other words, they're coordinated on both sides of the border; we are not.

So I would like to introduce into the—well, we have to be respectful of our legislation, our respective legislations. I would want to create a strategy in order to defeat this scourge. And that requires a variety of instruments, strategies, exchange of intelligence, exchange of technology. It also means that we have to keep in mind issues of sovereignty. I told President Bush,

though, we did not want to have U.S. soldiers working in our country, as has happened in other countries. I know that that's typical, of course. But we've said this very clearly, we put forth this very clearly, and in the framework of our own legislations, we will find a way out.

And I would also wonder what the men and women are thinking now, those who are suffering from crime, how scared are they, what's the degree of their fear that has led these groups to be so powerful, to grow so much. And they've essentially taken power in their area of operation. We have developed an aggressive policy to combat organized crime, and I haven't hesitated to use our forces to recover the areas. We've taken about 10,000 drug traffickers to jail, many weapons, 50-millimeter cannons, grenades capable of bringing down aircraft.

And I think—so I cannot send the Mexican policemen to combat this situation with their hands tied. So I have to answer to the Mexican people in order to preserve their security, and I will do so without abusing human rights and without distorting Mexican legislation. I will respect Mexican legislation fully. But I am calling upon my neighbor in order to act in a coordinated way, because it's a situation we both have to face. It's a problem that affects two countries, and only together will we be able to solve it.

There are several causes. It involves several joint responsibilities. And the action, therefore, has to be shared, within the legal framework. What's the scope of this strategy? I cannot tell you now; we cannot tell you now. We're just exchanging assessments, needs, assessing the situation and making it clear what the rules are for each country.

We will have a strategy—I think it's possible—but we will not be able to come up with it until we finish our discussions and negotiations, which, by nature, are very complex. But in the end, that is what we're trying to combat. And it's a problem that's

affecting Mexican citizens as well as U.S. nationals.

Prime Minister Harper. This is an example. We are all sovereign nations, that is quite true, but we are not isolated problems according to our own sovereignty. We have shared problems—for example, drug trafficking. This is a good example. It begins in a country in the Americas or in the Caribbean, but the consequences are seen in the streets in Canada. And we have to discuss these problems. We have to compare our strategies, and sometimes we have to work hand in hand.

[Prime Minister Harper continued in English.]

Once again, this is a perfect example of why we meet. We're sovereign countries, but problems are not—problems don't limit themselves to the boundaries of our countries. Drug trafficking is a perfect example. These problems may originate in some of the countries of Latin America or the Caribbean, but the problems are felt on the streets and the communities of Canada. And that's why we meet to discuss; that's why we meet to compare strategies; that's why we, from time to time, have to engage in shared action.

Let me just say one other thing, if I can, about the drug trade, because indirect reference was made to Colombia. Canada has undertaken negotiations of a trade agreement with Colombia. We have a Government in Colombia that wants to share in the benefits of free and open markets. We don't need to have a trade agreement to have a drug trade with Colombia. The drug traffickers aren't going to wait for our parliaments or our congresses to pass a trade agreement in order to have a drug trade. But if we want to have other opportunities for the people of Colombia and mutual development and shared prosperity, we've got to move forward on these kinds of initiatives. And that's why the Government of Canada is committed to working with Colombia and getting a trade deal.

Moderator. Thank you very much. This brings an end to the press conference.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:57 a.m. at the Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker. Prime Minister Harper referred to former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Argeo Paul Cellucci; former Prime Ministers M. Brian Mulroney and Paul Martin of Canada;

Stephane Dion, leader, Liberal Party of Canada; and Pvt. Simon Longtin, Canadian Forces, who was killed in Afghanistan on August 19. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Portions of Prime Minister Harper's remarks were in French, and an English translation was provided. President Calderon spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Some reporters spoke in French and Spanish, and their remarks were translated by interpreters.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico: The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America *August 21, 2007*

Montebello, Quebec, Canada

We, the leaders of Canada, Mexico and the United States, have met in Montebello to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing North America and to establish priorities for our further collaboration. As neighbours, we share a commitment to ensure North America remains a safe, secure and economically dynamic region, and a competitive player in global markets. We also discussed opportunities to cooperate globally and within our own hemisphere. The values and principles we share, in particular democracy, the rule of law and respect for individual rights and freedoms, underpin our efforts in building a more prosperous and secure region.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), launched in 2005, is aimed at jointly achieving tangible results across a spectrum of areas, while respecting each nation's sovereignty. On February 23, 2007, our ministers responsible for the SPP met in Ottawa to review progress and discuss our further cooperation. Our ministers of industry and commerce, foreign affairs, security, environment, energy, health, trans-

portation and trade have also met in recent months, reflecting our deepening dialogue within North America. They have made progress in advancing the priorities we identified at our 2006 meeting in Cancun. In particular, our three countries have completed:

- a *North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza*;
- a *Regulatory Cooperation Framework*;
- an *Intellectual Property Action Strategy*; and
- a *Trilateral Agreement for Cooperation in Energy Science and Technology*.

In Montebello, we have discussed how we can build on our progress to date to further improve North America's position in the world. The North American Competitiveness Council (NACC), announced last year in Cancun, has provided us with thoughtful recommendations on how we could strengthen the competitive platform for businesses. We welcome the NACC's recommendations, including its readiness to be part of the solution, and we look forward to continuing our dialogue with the

NACC in furthering North America's competitiveness. We ask that our ministers continue to seek input from interested parties in determining future priorities for increasing the security, prosperity and quality of life in North America. In this, the third year of the SPP, we direct our ministers to review the SPP process, focus on priorities and deliver results.

We ask our ministers to focus their collaboration in five priority areas for the next year:

Enhancing the Global Competitiveness of North America

The North American Free Trade Agreement has been a tremendous mutual success in strengthening our economies and in enhancing the competitiveness of North America. In a rapidly changing global economy, we must build on NAFTA's success and reduce unnecessary trade barriers to ensure North America remains a competitive and a dynamic place to do business. To this end, the Regulatory Cooperation Framework will enable us to develop regulatory approaches that are compatible across our borders, while maintaining high standards of health, safety and environmental protection. In the coming year, we ask our ministers to consider work in areas, such as the chemicals, automotive, transportation, and information and communications technology sectors. The Intellectual Property Action Strategy also gives us an invaluable tool for combating counterfeiting and piracy, which undermine innovation, harm economic development and can have negative public-health and safety implications. We also ask our ministers to implement the Strategy and take concrete steps to strengthen our ability to combat counterfeiting and piracy in North America.

We are strongly committed to advancing multilateral trade liberalization through a successful, comprehensive and ambitious conclusion to the WTO Doha Round of negotiations. We endorse the work of our trade ministers in Vancouver on June 13–

14, 2007, to build on NAFTA's success and advance our shared interests in the Doha Round. We ask them to renew their efforts, working with their WTO colleagues, to achieve a balanced outcome that results in meaningful increases in trade in goods and services and improvements in global trading conditions.

Safe Food and Products

We will seek to strengthen the existing cooperation and mechanisms within the region, build on current standards and practices, and work with our trading partners outside North America using a scientific risk-based approach to identify and stop unsafe food and products before they enter our countries. These efforts could include: working with authorities to strengthen inspection and certification in exporting countries; identifying best practices by importers in selecting foreign manufacturers and inspecting goods either before export or before distribution; and reviewing our own existing authorities and practices to enhance national, regional and local coordination. Our governments will continue to address the safety of food and products imported into North America, while facilitating the significant trade in these products that our countries already have and without imposing unnecessary barriers to trade.

Sustainable Energy and the Environment

The further development of clean and sustainable energy is critical to reduce the effects of climate change and air pollution, while fuelling the North American economy. We support an integrated approach to climate change, energy security and economic development, and support the development and deployment of clean energy technologies. Cooperation among our major economies on a range of policy tools and sectoral approaches will advance these objectives. In particular, we ask our ministers to explore ways to cooperate on national auto fuel efficiency standards. We also ask our ministers to develop projects under the

newly signed energy science and technology agreement, cooperate on moving new technologies to the marketplace and collaborate on energy efficiency.

Smart and Secure Borders

Our borders must be both efficient and secure if we are to continue to enhance prosperity, security and quality of life in North America. Effective border strategies minimize security risks, while facilitating the efficient and safe movement of goods, services and people, as trade and cross-border travel increase in North America. These strategies will draw on risk-based border management, innovative use of new technologies, coordinated border infrastructure development, and by moving, where possible, inspection and screening away from the land border. It is sometimes best to screen goods and travellers prior to entry into North America. We ask our ministers to develop mutually acceptable inspection protocols to detect threats to our security, such as from incoming travellers during a pandemic and from radiological devices on general aviation. We also ask our ministers to further cooperate in law enforcement, screening and facilitation of legitimate trade and travellers across our borders.

Emergency Management and Preparedness

The consequences of catastrophic events often transcend national borders. Preparation and planning can mitigate the impact of such events on people and our econo-

mies. Much work has been undertaken between our countries at national, sub-national and local levels to develop common approaches for responding to major incidents. We ask our ministers to continue this work and to address any obstacles preventing critical equipment, supplies and personnel from being deployed expeditiously to those parts of North America where they are needed. We also ask them to develop procedures for managing the movement of goods and people across our shared borders during and following an emergency.

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The SPP is focussed on the well-being of North America, but we also share a desire to work together to advance prosperity, security and stability globally. In Montebello, therefore, we also discussed opportunities to cooperate globally and within our own hemisphere. We ask foreign ministers to enhance dialogue and cooperation in North America, as well as in the hemisphere in such areas as emergency management and preparedness, and disaster risk reduction. Our shared values will continue to guide our collaboration as continental neighbours and global allies in the future.

Prime Minister Harper and President Calderon were pleased to accept the proposal of President Bush for the United States to host the next meeting of North American leaders in 2008.

SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA: NEXT STEPS

We, the leaders of North America, have asked our ministers to pursue the following priority activities and ask them to report to us on their progress in one year:

Enhancing the Global Competitiveness of North America

Global markets are changing, with dynamic new players becoming more competitive and innovative. More and more firms are relying on inputs from a wide

range of international sources for their manufacturing and production processes. In this highly competitive environment, compatible regulations and standards enable us to protect health, safety and the environment, as well as to facilitate trade in goods and services across our borders. Strong copyright and piracy protection also encourage entrepreneurship and protect our citizens. Over the coming year, we ask our ministers to strengthen North America as a platform for global success and to achieve progress on regulatory cooperation and the protection of intellectual property. In particular, we ask our ministers to implement:

The Regulatory Cooperation Framework announced today by:

- strengthening regulatory cooperation, streamlining regulations and processes, encouraging compatibility of regulations and eliminating redundant testing and certification requirements while maintaining high standards of health, safety and environmental protection;
- considering measures and initiatives in areas such as the chemical, automotive, transportation, and information and communication technology sectors; and
- undertaking trilateral cooperation to accelerate and strengthen our national and regional risk-based chemical assessment and management efforts.

The Intellectual Property Action Strategy released today by:

- developing collaborative measures to improve the detection and deterrence of counterfeiting and piracy, expanding public awareness of the importance of intellectual property to our economies and for consumer health and safety, and better measuring the scope and magnitude of counterfeiting and piracy in North America; and
- taking steps such as developing best practices for enforcement and sharing information and intelligence on border enforcement techniques.

We also endorse our ministers' plans to

- develop an economic work plan to respond to the ever increasing pressures on North American competitiveness and to facilitate trade in specific sectors to foster stronger North American value chains; and
- conduct an analysis of the free trade agreements that each country has negotiated subsequent to the NAFTA, beginning with those in the western hemisphere, including opportunities for innovative provisions on rules of origin.

Safe Food and Products

In order to promote the safety of imported products that enter North America and to facilitate trade, we ask ministers to:

- strengthen existing mechanisms within the region and the exchange information on import-safety issues, with the objective of enhancing the safety of food and products before they enter our countries; and
- identify and share with their SPP counterparts the best practices used by importing companies in each country to secure their supply chains and ensure that quality and safety are built into products before they are exported.

Sustainable Energy and the Environment

Balancing our energy requirements with the stewardship of our environment is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We need to enhance our research into new and clean technologies, facilitate the deployment of these technologies to the market, and improve our energy efficiency. We ask our ministers to advance work over the next year to:

- identify and pursue cooperative energy science and technology activities under the newly signed Trilateral Agreement for Cooperation in Energy and Science Technology;
- reduce barriers to the deployment of new and clean technologies;

- continue with efforts to align energy efficiency standards in key products and standby power consumption;
- cooperate for our mutual benefit in the development of biofuels, vehicle fuel efficiency technologies and technologies to reduce emissions; and
- share information and experience and cooperate in efforts to achieve comparable emission measurement, reporting and verification, in order to develop publicly available national emissions inventories. This exchange would include sharing of emissions information on, for example, NO_x, SO_x, CO₂, VOCs, NH₃, Hg and particulates.

Smart and Secure Borders

Our three countries have a long history of cooperative border management, predicated on the understanding that our prosperity and security depend on borders that operate efficiently and effectively under all circumstances. In some cases, the best time to screen travellers and commerce is before they enter North America. Coordinated, mutually acceptable procedures for detecting threats far from our borders are a means to do this. Recognizing differences in legal frameworks and policies, and noting the positive effect on our common security of current information sharing initiatives, we will seek to enhance our cooperation in this respect.

We ask ministers to continue to pursue measures to facilitate the safe and secure movement of trade and travellers across our borders and, in particular, to:

- expedite air transportation through the development of comparable protocols and procedures to eliminate duplicate screening for baggage placed on a connecting flight in North America, and for inbound and outbound air cargo shipments;
- develop mutually acceptable approaches to screening for radiological and other similar threats, to include general aviation pathways, and to con-

tinue to undertake cooperative or joint research to manage such threats;

- develop mutually acceptable approaches to screening people during a pandemic;
- pursue, according to our respective laws, new, innovative and interoperable law enforcement models that promote seamless operations at the border, such as the Canada-US International Maritime Security Operations, to better protect our citizens from criminal and terrorist threats;
- improve and expand existing radio communications available to law enforcement agencies working on border security and cross-border law enforcement;
- work with stakeholders to identify ways to further enhance benefits of trusted traveller programs (NEXUS, FAST and SENTRI), including through expanding and streamlining application processing, further program integration and coordinated infrastructure investments;
- alleviate bottlenecks at the US-Mexico border, facilitate the legitimate flow of trade and people, and increase border security to address specific border issues related to congestion, current and future infrastructure needs, customs cooperation, stakeholder outreach and technology; and
- Canada and the US will maintain a high priority on the development of enhanced capacity of the border crossing infrastructure in the Detroit-Windsor region, the world's busiest land crossing.

Emergency Management and Preparedness

Neighbours help each other in times of distress. Our governments have worked together to address how we might better prevent, prepare for, and respond to disasters—either natural or man-made—by developing a common approach to all aspects of emergency management. We ask our

ministers to continue this work and specifically to:

- define, develop and coordinate appropriate responses to catastrophic incidents in North America; and
- develop bilateral and trilateral protocols and procedures through the Canada-Mexico-United States Emergency Management Council to manage the

movement of goods and people, including emergency responders, across our shared borders during and following an emergency, and to improve communications among governments and between governments and industry, particularly during times of increased threat.

THE SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA: KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE MARCH 2006

Strengthening the Competitiveness of North America

- To lower costs for business, maximize trade and protect health, safety and the environment, our governments completed a trilateral **Regulatory Cooperation Framework**. The framework promotes information sharing among regulators and greater compatibility of regulations and regulatory processes.
- To enhance our common efforts to protect intellectual property rights, the three governments finalized an **Action Strategy to combat trademark counterfeiting and copyright piracy**.
- To strengthen our energy security, environmental protection and economic sustainability, our governments finalized a **Trilateral Agreement for Cooperation in Energy Science and Technology**.
- To increase trade among our three countries, our governments implemented changes to the **NAFTA rules of origin** by mid-2006 that covered approximately \$30 billion in annual trilateral trade. An additional set of changes, agreed to in 2007, will reduce export-related transaction costs for approximately \$100 billion in annual trilateral trade.
- To promote safety and the seamless flow of goods across our border, Canada and the United States have agreed to the **reciprocal recognition of containers** used for the transportation of dangerous goods.
- To enhance the introduction of new wireless services and technologies, Canada and the United States have **implemented a new process to expedite radio spectrum sharing arrangements for the border regions**. This ensures citizens have timely access to the latest wireless services, and public safety and national security authorities have the spectrum they need, when they need it.
- To **improve the compatibility and reliability of critically important wireless communications for public safety/first responders**, Mexico and the United States signed a protocol in August facilitating cross border communications.
- To **facilitate the trade of telecommunications equipment**, Canada and the United States recognized each other's testing and certification for telecommunications equipment. Mexico will have a process in place by the end of 2007 to mutually accept test reports from the US and Canada. This reduces production costs and

shortens the time to bring new products to market.

- To modernize aviation relations and provide airlines with added flexibility to offer better choices and services, the United States and Canada signed and implemented the text of a **comprehensive Open-Skies air transport agreement** on March 12, 2007.
- To **increase border crossing efficiency** at the port of entry, the United States and Mexico announced synchronized, extended hours of operation at the Santa Teresa/San Jeronimo Port of Entry starting September 2007.
- As part of the North American Steel Strategy, North American governments launched a trilateral, publicly-available **North American Steel Trade Monitor website** presenting North American steel trade data on a consolidated basis.
- Mexico and the United States established a **bilateral Border Facilitation Working Group** to advance in the areas of infrastructure, technology, coordination, and stakeholder outreach and engagement while ensuring high levels of security at our points of entry.

Improving the Safety and Security of our Citizens

- To better detect nuclear and radiological material at ports, the Mexican government has agreed to install **advanced radiological detection technology** at the ports of Lazaro Cardenas, Altamira, Manzanillo and Veracruz. About 92 percent of Mexico's maritime cargo passes through these ports.
- To improve surveillance at ports, Canada has completed the **installation of radiation detection equipment** in Montreal, Halifax and Deltaport in Vancouver which, when fully operational, will screen 100 percent of inbound containers.

- To **improve the security and predictability of travel documents**, Canada and the United States approved the *Recommended Standards for Secure Proof of Status and Nationality*.
- To **enhance and strengthen cargo security programs**, Canada and the United States [States]* initiated a five-year program to harmonize automated commercial information systems.

Protecting our Environment, Health and Quality of Life

- To detect, contain and control an avian influenza outbreak, and to mitigate the impacts of a possible human influenza pandemic in North America, our governments have finalized a **North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza**.
- To promote energy efficiency, our governments have **harmonized energy performance standards for key household appliances and consumer products**, such as freezers, refrigerators and room air conditioners.
- To **raise the health status of indigenous people**, Canada, Mexico and the United States exchanged information and research on various indigenous health issues, including suicide prevention, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, diabetes and indigenous health systems.
- To benefit our environment and quality of life, Canada and the United States signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) aimed at **improving motor vehicle fuel efficiency**. The MoC will allow the two countries to benefit from each others knowledge and experience in the area of fuel efficiency.
- To protect the environment, enhance health of people and promote the

* White House correction.

competitiveness of the automotive industry, Mexico started a program to gradually increase, from 2006 to 2009, the **supply of low sulphur fuels** in all the country.

- To improve the **ecological health of our shared marine resources**, our governments continued to expand the North American Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Network. The Network will use our countries' marine protected areas in the development of a tri-national MPA-based monitoring program stretching from Baja to the Bering Strait.
- To **assure the safety of consumers and the security of our food and agriculture systems**, Canada, Mexico and the United States agreed to share

current threat and vulnerability assessment methodology and information for the food and agriculture systems, including imported and exported foods of higher concern, then undertake joint threat and vulnerability assessments.

- To better inform our citizens and civil society and receive input on our collaborative efforts under the SPP framework, the governments of Mexico and Canada **hosted seminars with academics and specialists** on the three countries as part of an ongoing public policy consultation process regarding the future of North America.

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

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Interstate 35W Bridge Damage and Minnesota Floods in Minneapolis, Minnesota *August 21, 2007*

I want to thank the Senators, the Congresspersons, the Governor, and the mayor for joining me and Secretary Peters and others in my administration. We're here to talk about two disasters. First, we talked about the bridge that collapsed. I was here earlier, saw the collapse firsthand. I was impressed by the magnitude of the problem. It was—my heart was touched by the fact that people lost their lives.

Coming back here, I'm impressed by the spirit of cooperation that is taking place to solve the problem. The Federal Government, the State government, and the local government have worked very closely, on the one hand, to rescue the remains in a compassionate way. I appreciate our military divers who are so skilled, skilled at not only finding the bodies but skilled at helping a loved one deal with grief.

The question now is, how fast can we get the bridge built? Members of the Minnesota senatorial and congressional delegation did really good work at the end of the session, passed authorization for a significant chunk of money that would go to get this bridge up and running.

And so our job now is to cut through the bureaucracy, as best as possible, and get the people down here a new bridge. And that's what we've been discussing. The recovery is not complete, but pretty close to complete. The investigation as to why is ongoing. What the people of Minneapolis want to know is how fast can we get them a new bridge, and can it be modern, and can it accommodate future forms of transportation? I believe the answer to that question is yes. The spirit that caused the recovery to be well-coordinated is the very

same spirit that's going to cause this bridge to get rebuilt.

The Governor and others have briefed me on the floods in Congressman Walz's district.

These floods come suddenly. People wake up and find their lives turned upside down. Water comes charging through their communities and really kind of wrecks the infrastructure. But what I have found, and the Congressmen and Senators have found the same thing, you can't wreck the spirit of people.

The job of the Federal Government is to get help moving as quickly as possible. I just talked to the Governor, who has processed the final and the necessary paperwork so that a flood of help can come down, Tim, to get these people realizing somebody cares about them.

I understand rural America pretty well. Sometimes people in rural America wonder whether or not the people in the cities think about them. I appreciate you coming to brief us, because I want those folks to understand, the President thinks about it; the Senators and the Governor have heard

about it, and they care about it. There's help that's available. We'd love to get the small businesses up and running, maybe help to get some shelter down there for people. I'm looking forward to making sure that the right people show up here on the ground. Secretary Peters has been the right person to coordinate this effort for the bridge, and we'll get somebody down here in charge to give your people in your district some hope.

There's no doubt in my mind that when I come back to see the bridge open that these communities will be up and running too, and that State football championship team you were talking about—[laughter]—will be winning games again.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. in the Base Operations—Blue Room at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Air Reserve Station. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota; and Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN. He also referred to Public Law 110–56, approved August 6.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Community Leaders in Riverside, Missouri *August 22, 2007*

How is everybody doing? Thank you for joining me. I'm visiting with some of the area's finest citizens. We talked about businesses and opportunities and sports and culture. It's good to be with you. Thank you. I hope you leave here with the sense that I'm upbeat about the future of this

country. I believe strongly we can do anything we put our minds to do.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 a.m. at the Corner Cafe.

Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri
August 22, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. It's good to be with you again. I understand you haven't had much of a problem attracting speakers. [*Laughter*]

I thank you for inviting me. I can understand why people want to come here. See, it's an honor to stand with the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW is one of our Nation's finest organizations. You belong to an elite group of Americans. You belong to a group of people who have defended America overseas. You have fought in places from Normandy to Iwo Jima to Pusan to Khe Sahn to Kuwait to Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. You brought security to the American people. You brought hope to millions across the world.

As members of this proud organization, you are advocates for the rights of our military veterans, a model of community service, and a strong and important voice for a strong national defense. I thank you for your service. I thank you for what you've done for the United States of America.

I stand before you as a wartime President. I wish I didn't have to say that, but an enemy that attacked us on September the 11th, 2001, declared war on the United States of America. And war is what we're engaged in. The struggle has been called a clash of civilizations. In truth, it's a struggle for civilization. We fight for a free way of life against a new barbarism, an ideology whose followers have killed thousands on American soil and seek to kill again on even a greater scale.

We fight for the possibility that decent men and women across the broader Middle East can realize their destiny and raise up societies based on freedom and justice and personal dignity. And as long as I'm Commander in Chief, we will fight to win. I'm confident that we will prevail. I'm confident

we'll prevail because we have the greatest force for human liberation the world has ever known, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

For those of you who wear the uniform, nothing makes me more proud to say that I am your Commander in Chief. Thank you for volunteering in the service of the United States of America.

Now, I know some people doubt the universal appeal of liberty or worry that the Middle East isn't ready for it. Others believe that America's presence is destabilizing and that if the United States would just leave a place like Iraq, those who kill our troops or target civilians would no longer threaten us. Today I'm going to address these arguments. I'm going to describe why helping the young democracies of the Middle East stand up to violent Islamic extremists is the only realistic path to a safer world for the American people. I'm going to try to provide some historical perspective to show there is a precedent for the hard and necessary work we're doing and why I have such confidence in the fact that we'll be successful.

Before I do so, I want to thank the national commander-in-chief of the VFW and his wife Nancy. It's been a joy to work with Gary and the staff. As Gary said, "We don't necessarily agree a hundred percent of the time." I remember the old Lieutenant Governor of Texas, a Democrat, and I was a Republican Governor. He said, "Governor, if we agreed 100 percent of the time, one of us wouldn't be necessary." [*Laughter*]

But here's what we do agree on: We agree our veterans deserve the full support of the United States Government. We agree that those who—[*applause*]. That's why in this budget I submitted there's \$87 billion for the veterans. It's the highest

level of support ever for the veterans in American history. We agree that health care for our veterans is a top priority, and that's why we've increased health care spending for our veterans by 83 percent since I was sworn in as your President. We agree that a troop coming out of Iraq or Afghanistan deserves the best health care, not only as an active duty citizen but as a military guy, but as—also as a veteran—and you're going to get the best health care we can possibly provide. We agree our homeless vets ought to have shelter, and that's what we're providing. In other words, we agree the veterans deserve the full support of our Government, and that's what you're going to get as George W. Bush as your President.

I want to thank Bob Wallace, the executive director. He spends a lot of time in the Oval Office. I'm always checking the silverware drawer. *[Laughter]* He's going to be bringing in George Lisicki here soon. He's going to be the national commander-in-chief for my next year in office. And I'm looking forward to working with George, and I'm looking forward to working with Wallace, and I'm looking forward to hearing from you. They're going to find an openminded President dedicated to doing what's right.

I appreciate the fact—*[applause]*. I appreciate Linda Meader, the national president of the Ladies Auxiliary—she brought old Dave with her—Virginia Carman, the incoming president.

I want to thank Deputy Secretary of the Veterans Affairs Gordon Mansfield for joining us today. I appreciate the United States Senator from the State of Missouri, strong supporter of the military and strong supporter of the veterans, Kit Bond. Two Members of the Congress have kindly showed up today. I'm proud they're both here: Congressman Emanuel Cleaver—no finer man, no more decent a fellow than Emanuel Cleaver—is with us and a great Congressman from right around the corner

here, Congressman Sam Graves. Thank you all for coming.

Lieutenant General Jack Stultz, commanding general, U.S. Army Reserve Command, is with us today. General, thanks for coming. Lieutenant General Bill Caldwell, commanding general, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is with us today as well. General Caldwell, thank you for your service.

Thank you all for letting me come by. I want to open today's speech with a story that begins on a sunny morning, when thousands of Americans were murdered in a surprise attack and our Nation was propelled into a conflict that would take us to every corner of the globe.

The enemy who attacked us despises freedom and harbors resentment at the slights he believes America and the Western nations have inflicted on his people. He fights to establish his rule over an entire region. And over time, he turns to a strategy of suicide attacks destined to create so much carnage that the American people will tire of the violence and give up the fight.

If this story sounds familiar, it is, except for one thing. The enemy I have just described is not Al Qaida, and the attack is not 9/11, and the empire is not the radical caliphate envisioned by Usama bin Laden. Instead, what I've described is the war machine of Imperial Japan in the 1940s, its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, and its attempt to impose its empire throughout East Asia.

Ultimately, the United States prevailed in World War II, and we have fought two more land wars in Asia. And many in this hall were veterans of those campaigns. Yet even the most optimistic among you probably would not have foreseen that the Japanese would transform themselves into one of America's strongest and most steadfast allies, or that the South Koreans would recover from enemy invasion to raise up one of the world's most powerful economies, or that Asia would pull itself out of poverty

and hopelessness as it embraced markets and freedom.

The lesson from Asia's development is that the heart's desire for liberty will not be denied. Once people even get a small taste of liberty, they're not going to rest until they're free. Today's dynamic and hopeful Asia—a region that brings us countless benefits—would not have been possible without America's presence and perseverance. And it would not have been possible without the veterans in this hall today, and I thank you for your service.

There are many differences between the wars we fought in the Far East and the war on terror we're fighting today. But one important similarity is, at their core, they're ideological struggles. The militarists of Japan and the Communists in Korea and Vietnam were driven by a merciless vision for the proper ordering of humanity. They killed Americans because we stood in the way of their attempt to force their ideology on others.

Today, the names and places have changed, but the fundamental character of the struggle has not changed. Like our enemies in the past, the terrorists who wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places seek to spread a political vision of their own, a harsh plan for life that crushes freedom, tolerance, and dissent. Like our enemies in the past, they kill Americans because we stand in their way of imposing this ideology across a vital region of the world. This enemy is dangerous, this enemy is determined, and this enemy will be defeated.

We're still in the early hours of the current ideological struggle, but we do know how the others ended, and that knowledge helps guide our efforts today. The ideals and interests that led America to help the Japanese turn defeat into democracy are the same that lead us to remain engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The defense strategy that refused to hand the South Koreans over to a totalitarian neighbor helped raise up a Asian

Tiger that is the model for developing countries across the world, including the Middle East. The result of American sacrifice and perseverance in Asia is a freer, more prosperous, and stable continent, whose people want to live in peace with America, not attack America.

At the outset of World War II, there were only two democracies in the Far East, Australia and New Zealand. Today, most of the nations in Asia are free, and its democracies reflect the diversity of the region. Some of these nations have constitutional monarchies, some have parliaments, and some have presidents. Some are Christian, some are Muslim, some are Hindu, and some are Buddhist. Yet for all their differences, the free nations of Asia all share one thing in common: Their governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed, and they desire to live in peace with their neighbors.

Along the way to this freer and more hopeful Asia, there were a lot of doubters. Many times in the decades that followed World War II, American policy in Asia was dismissed as hopeless and naive. And when we listen to the criticism of the difficult work that our generation is undertaking in the Middle East today, we can hear the echoes of the same arguments made about the Far East years ago.

In the aftermath of Japan's surrender, many thought it naive to help the Japanese transform themselves into a democracy. Then, as now, the critics argued that some people were simply not fit for freedom.

Some said Japanese culture was inherently incompatible with democracy. Joseph Grew, a former United States Ambassador to Japan who served as Harry Truman's Under Secretary of State, told the President flatly that—and I quote—"democracy in Japan would never work." He wasn't alone in that belief. A lot of Americans believed that, and so did the Japanese—a lot of Japanese believed the same thing: Democracy simply wouldn't work.

Other critics said that Americans were imposing their ideals on the Japanese. For example, Japan's Vice Prime Minister asserted that allowing Japanese women to vote would "retard the progress of Japanese politics." It's interesting what General MacArthur wrote in his memoirs. He wrote: "There was much criticism of my support for the enfranchisement of women. Many Americans, as well as many other so-called experts, expressed the view that Japanese women were too steeped in the tradition of subservience to their husbands to act with any degree of political independence." That's what General MacArthur observed. In the end, Japanese women were given the vote; 39 women won parliamentary seats in Japan's first free election. Today, Japan's Minister of Defense is a woman, and just last month, a record number of women were elected to Japan's Upper House. Other critics argued that democracy—[applause].

There are other critics, believe it or not, that argue that democracy could not succeed in Japan because the national religion, Shinto, was too fanatical and rooted in the Emperor. Senator Richard Russell denounced the Japanese faith and said that if we did not put the Emperor on trial, "any steps we may take to create democracy are doomed to failure." The State Department's man in Tokyo put it bluntly: "The Emperor system must disappear if Japan is ever really to be democratic."

Those who said Shinto was incompatible with democracy were mistaken. And fortunately, Americans and Japanese leaders recognized it at the time, because instead of suppressing the Shinto faith, American authorities worked with the Japanese to institute religious freedom for all faiths. Instead of abolishing the imperial throne, Americans and Japanese worked together to find a place for the Emperor in the democratic political system.

And the result of all these steps was that every Japanese citizen gained freedom of religion, and the Emperor remained on his

throne, and Japanese democracy grew stronger because it embraced a cherished part of Japanese culture. And today, in defiance of the critics and the doubters and the skeptics, Japan retains its religions and cultural traditions and stands as one of the world's greatest free societies.

You know, the experts sometimes get it wrong. It's an interesting observation, one historian put it, he said, "Had these erstwhile experts"—he was talking about people criticizing the efforts to help Japan realize the blessings of a free society—he said, "Had these erstwhile experts had their way, the very notion of inducing a democratic revolution would have died of ridicule at an early stage."

Instead, I think it's important to look at what happened. A democratic Japan has brought peace and prosperity to its people. Its foreign trade and investment have helped jump-start the economies of others in the region. The alliance between our two nations is the linchpin for freedom and stability throughout the Pacific. And I want you to listen carefully to this final point: Japan has transformed from America's enemy in the ideological struggle of the 20th century to one of America's strongest allies in the ideological struggle of the 21st century.

Critics also complained when America intervened to save South Korea from Communist invasion. Then, as now, the critics argued that the war was futile, that we should never have sent our troops in, or they argued that America's intervention was divisive here at home.

After the North Koreans crossed the 38th Parallel in 1950, President Harry Truman came to the defense of the South, and he found himself attacked from all sides. From the left, I.F. Stone wrote a book suggesting that the South Koreans were the real aggressors and that we had entered the war on a false pretext. From the right, Republicans vacillated. Initially, the leader of the Republican Party in the Senate endorsed Harry Truman's action,

saying, "I welcome the indication of a more definite policy." He went on to say, "I strongly hope that having adopted it, the President may maintain it intact," then later said, "It was a mistake originally to go into Korea because it meant a land war."

Throughout the war, the Republicans really never had a clear position. They never could decide whether they wanted the United States to withdraw from the war in Korea or expand the war to the Chinese mainland. Others complained that our troops weren't getting the support from the Government. One Republican Senator said the effort was just "bluff and bluster." He rejected calls to come together in a time of war on the grounds that, "We will not allow the cloak of national unity to be wrapped around horrible blunders."

Many in the press agreed. One columnist in the Washington Post said, "The fact is that the conduct of the Korean war has been shot through with errors great and small." A colleague wrote that, "Korea is an open wound. It's bleeding, and there's no cure for it in sight." He said that the American people could not understand "why Americans are doing about 95 percent of the fighting in Korea."

Many of these criticisms were offered as reasons for abandoning our commitments in Korea. And while it's true the Korean war had its share of challenges, the United States never broke its word.

Today, we see the result of a sacrifice of people in this room in the stark contrast of life on the Korean Peninsula. Without Americans' intervention during the war and our willingness to stick with the South Koreans after the war, millions of South Koreans would now be living under a brutal and repressive regime. The Soviets and Chinese Communists would have learned the lesson that aggression pays. The world would be facing a more dangerous situation. The world would be less peaceful.

Instead, South Korea is a strong, democratic ally of the United States of America. South Korean troops are serving side by

side with American forces in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And America can count on the free people of South Korea to be lasting partners in the ideological struggle we're facing in the beginning of the 21st century.

For those of you who served in Korea, thank you for your sacrifice, and thank you for your service.

Finally, there's Vietnam. This is a complex and painful subject for many Americans. The tragedy of Vietnam is too large to be contained in one speech. So I'm going to limit myself to one argument that has particular significance today. Then, as now, people argued the real problem was America's presence and that if we would just withdraw, the killing would end.

The argument that America's presence in Indochina was dangerous had a long pedigree. In 1955, long before the United States had entered the war, Graham Greene wrote a novel called "The Quiet American." It was set in Saigon, and the main character was a young Government agent named Alden Pyle. He was a symbol of American purpose and patriotism and dangerous naivete. Another character describes Alden this way: "I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused."

After America entered the Vietnam war, the Graham Greene argument gathered some steam. As a matter of fact, many argued that if we pulled out, there would be no consequences for the Vietnamese people.

In 1972, one antiwar Senator put it this way: "What earthly difference does it make to nomadic tribes or uneducated subsistence farmers in Vietnam or Cambodia or Laos whether they have a military dictator, a royal prince, or a socialist commissar in some distant capital that they've never seen and may never heard of?" A columnist for the New York Times wrote in a similar vein in 1975, just as Cambodia and Vietnam were falling to the Communists: "It's difficult to imagine," he said, "how their

lives could be anything but better with the Americans gone.” A headline on that story, dated Phnom Penh, summed up the argument: “Indochina Without Americans: For Most, a Better Life.”

The world would learn just how costly these misimpressions would be. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge began a murderous rule in which hundreds of thousands of Cambodians died by starvation and torture and execution. In Vietnam, former allies of the United States and government workers and intellectuals and businessmen were sent off to prison camps, where tens of thousands perished. Hundreds of thousands more fled the country on rickety boats, many of them going to their graves in the South China Sea.

Three decades later, there is a legitimate debate about how we got into the Vietnam war and how we left. There’s no debate in my mind that the veterans from Vietnam deserve the high praise of the United States of America. Whatever your position is on that debate, one unmistakable legacy of Vietnam is that the price of America’s withdrawal was paid by millions of innocent citizens whose agonies would add to our vocabulary new terms like “boat people,” “reeducation camps,” and “killing fields.”

There was another price to our withdrawal from Vietnam, and we can hear it in the words of the enemy we face in today’s struggle, those who came to our soil and killed thousands of citizens on September the 11th, 2001. In an interview with a Pakistani newspaper after the 9/11 attacks, Usama bin Laden declared that “the American people had risen against their Government’s war in Vietnam, and they must do the same today.”

His number-two man, Zawahiri, has also invoked Vietnam. In a letter to Al Qaida’s chief of operations in Iraq, Zawahiri pointed—and I quote—to “the aftermath of the collapse of the American power in Vietnam and how they ran and left their agents.”

Zawahiri later returned to this theme, declaring that the Americans, quote, “know

better than others that there is no hope in victory. The Vietnam specter is closing every outlet.” Here at home, some can argue our withdrawal from Vietnam carried no price to American credibility, but the terrorists see it differently.

We must listen to the words of the enemy. We must listen to what they say. Bin Laden has declared that “the war [in Iraq] is for you or us to win. If we win it, it means your disgrace and defeat forever.” Iraq is one of several fronts in the war on terror, but it’s the central front. It’s the central front for the enemy that attacked us and wants to attack us again, and it’s the central front for the United States. And to withdraw without getting the job done would be devastating.

If we were to abandon the Iraqi people, the terrorists would be emboldened. They would use their victory to gain new recruits. As we saw on September the 11th, a terrorist safe haven on the other side of the world can bring death and destruction to the streets of our own cities. Unlike in Vietnam, if we withdraw before the job is done, this enemy would follow us home. And that is why, for the security of the United States of America, we must defeat them overseas so we do not face them in the United States of America.

Recently, two men who were on the opposite sides of the debate over the Vietnam war came together to write an article. One was a member of President Nixon’s foreign policy team and the other was a fierce critic of the Nixon administration’s policies. Together, they wrote that the consequences of an American defeat in Iraq would be disastrous.

Here’s what they said: “Defeat would produce an explosion of euphoria among all the forces of Islamic extremism, throwing the entire Middle East into even greater upheaval. The likely human and strategic costs are appalling to contemplate. Perhaps that is why so much of the current debate seeks to ignore these consequences.” I believe these men are right.

In Iraq, our moral obligations and our strategic interests are one. So we pursue the extremists wherever we find them, and we stand with the Iraqis at this difficult hour, because the shadow of terror will never be lifted from our world and the American people will never be safe until the people of the Middle East know the freedom that our Creator meant for all.

I recognize that history cannot predict the future with absolute certainty. I understand that. But history does remind us that there are lessons applicable to our time. And we can learn something from history. In Asia, we saw freedom triumph over violent ideologies after the sacrifice of tens of thousands of American lives, and that freedom has yielded peace for generations.

The American military graveyards across Europe attest to the terrible human cost in the fight against nazism. They also attest to the triumph of a continent that today is whole, free, and at peace. The advance of freedom in these lands should give us confidence that the hard work we are doing in the Middle East can have the same results we've seen in Asia and elsewhere, if we show the same perseverance and the same sense of purpose.

In a world where the terrorists are willing to act on their twisted beliefs with sickening acts of barbarism, we must put faith in the timeless truths about human nature that have made us free.

Across the Middle East, millions of ordinary citizens are tired of war; they're tired of dictatorship and corruption; they're tired of despair. They want societies where they're treated with dignity and respect, where their children have the hope for a better life. They want nations where their faiths are honored and they can worship in freedom.

And that is why millions of Iraqis and Afghans turned out to the polls; millions turned out to the polls. And that's why their leaders have stepped forward at the risk of assassination. And that's why tens of thousands are joining the security forces

of their nations. These men and women are taking great risks to build a free and peaceful Middle East, and for the sake of our own security, we must not abandon them.

There is one group of people who understand the stakes, understand as well as any expert, anybody in America—those are the men and women who wear the uniform. Through nearly 6 years of war, they have performed magnificently. Day after day, hour after hour, they keep the pressure on the enemy that would do our citizens harm. They've overthrown two of the most brutal tyrannies of the world and liberated more than 50 million citizens.

In Iraq, our troops are taking the fight to the extremists and radicals and murderers all throughout the country. Our troops have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 Al Qaida terrorists and other extremists every month since January of this year. We're in the fight. Today, our troops are carrying out a surge that is helping bring former Sunni insurgents into the fight against the extremists and radicals, into the fight against Al Qaida, into the fight against the enemy that would do us harm. They're clearing out the terrorists out of population centers; they're giving families in liberated Iraqi cities a look at a decent and hopeful life.

Our troops are seeing this progress that is being made on the ground. And as they take the initiative from the enemy, they have a question: Will their elected leaders in Washington pull the rug out from under them just as they're gaining momentum and changing the dynamic on the ground in Iraq? Here's my answer: We'll support our troops, we'll support our commanders, and we will give them everything they need to succeed.

Despite the mistakes that have been made, despite the problems we have encountered, seeing the Iraqis through as they build their democracy is critical to keeping the American people safe from the

terrorists who wants to attack us. It is critical work to lay the foundation for peace that veterans have done before you all.

A free Iraq is not going to be perfect. A free Iraq will not make decisions as quickly as the country did under the dictatorship. Many are frustrated by the pace of progress in Baghdad, and I can understand this. As I noted yesterday, the Iraqi Government is distributing oil revenues across its Provinces despite not having an oil revenue law on its books, that the Parliament has passed about 60 pieces of legislation.

Prime Minister Maliki is a good guy, a good man with a difficult job, and I support him. And it's not up to the politicians in Washington, DC, to say whether he will remain in his position; that is up to the Iraqi people, who now live in a democracy and not a dictatorship. A free Iraq is not going to transform the Middle East overnight. But a free Iraq will be a massive defeat for Al Qaida, it will be an example that provides hope for millions throughout the Middle East, it will be a friend of the United States, and it's going to be an important ally in the ideological struggle of the 21st century.

Prevailing in this struggle is essential to our future as a nation. And the question now that comes before us is this: Will today's generation of Americans resist the allure of retreat, and will we do in the Middle East what the veterans in this room did in Asia?

The journey is not going to be easy, as the veterans fully understand. At the outset of the war in the Pacific, there were those who argued that freedom had seen its day and that the future belonged to the hard men in Tokyo. A year and a half before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan's Foreign Minister gave a hint of things to come during an interview with a New York newspaper. He said, "In the battle between democracy and totalitarianism, the latter adversary will without question win and will control the world. The era of democracy

is finished, the democratic system bankrupt."

In fact, the war machines of Imperial Japan would be brought down, brought down by good folks who only months before had been students and farmers and bank clerks and factory hands. Some are in the room today. Others here have been inspired by their fathers and grandfathers and uncles and cousins.

That generation of Americans taught the tyrants a telling lesson: There is no power like the power of freedom and no soldier as strong as a soldier who fights for a free future for his children. And when America's work on the battlefield was done, the victorious children of democracy would help our defeated enemies rebuild and bring the taste of freedom to millions.

We can do the same for the Middle East. Today, the violent Islamic extremists who fight us in Iraq are as certain of their cause as the Nazis or the Imperial Japanese or the Soviet Communists were of theirs. They are destined for the same fate.

The greatest weapon in the arsenal of democracy is the desire for liberty written into the human heart by our Creator. So long as we remain true to our ideals, we will defeat the extremists in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will help those countries' people stand up functioning democracies in the heart of the broader Middle East. And when that hard work is done and the critics of today recede from memory, the cause of freedom will be stronger, a vital region will be brighter, and the American people will be safer.

Thank you, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. at the Kansas City Convention and Entertainment Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gary Kurpius, outgoing commander-in-chief, and George J. Lisicki, incoming commander-in-chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Robert E. Wallace, executive director, Veterans of Foreign Wars Washington Office; Usama bin

Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Minister of Defense Yuriko Koike

of Japan; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Statement on the Federal Budget *August 23, 2007*

Today's deficit estimate release by the Congressional Budget Office is good news for American taxpayers. Like the estimates put forward by the Office of Management and Budget, it shows that our Government is on a path to meeting the goal I set forth of putting the budget into surplus by 2012. Balancing the budget requires keeping the economy strong, keeping tax rates low, and keeping spending in check.

Through tax relief, we cut taxes for American families and reduced tax rates on dividends and capital gains, energizing small businesses to invest and expand. And since we lowered these important tax rates, the economy has created more than 8 million jobs, increased wages, and grew tax revenues that will lead to a surplus.

Continued spending restraint is a critical element for accomplishing a balanced budget. I again urge Congress to pass spending bills by the end of the fiscal year without wasteful earmarks, without raising taxes, and in regular order, one at a time and on time. Congress has an opportunity to rise to the occasion and work with my administration to accomplish a balanced budget without raising taxes, and I hope they will do so upon their return to Washington in September.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's Radio Address *August 25, 2007*

Good morning. This week, I traveled to Kansas City to address the annual convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I spoke about the ideological struggle that our Nation faces in the 21st century and the lessons we can draw from the advance of freedom in Asia in the 20th century. America's enduring presence and perseverance on that continent aided the rise of democracy, helped transform American enemies into American allies, and made our country safer.

Next week, I will address the members of the American Legion at their annual convention in Reno. In that speech, I will focus on the Middle East and why the rise

of a free and democratic Iraq is critical to the future of this vital region and to our Nation's security.

I will also provide an update on the developments we are seeing from our new strategy in Iraq. Every month since January, U.S. forces have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 Al Qaida terrorists and other extremists. And in June, our troops launched a surge of operations that is helping bring former Sunni insurgents into the fight against Al Qaida, clear the terrorists out of population centers, and give families in liberated Iraqi cities a safer and more normal life.

As security improves, more Iraqis are stepping forward to defend their democracy. Young Iraqi men are signing up for the army. Iraqi police are now patrolling the streets. Coalition and Iraqi forces have doubled the number of joint operations. As the Iraqi people feel more secure, they are also forming neighborhood watch groups. They're volunteering important information about the terrorists and extremists hiding in their midst. And the increase in tips helps account for the marked reduction in sectarian murders.

By driving out the terrorists from cities and neighborhoods, we're creating the conditions for reconciliation, especially at the local level. In communities across Iraq, citizens are seeing their local and Provincial governments return to operation. Despite continuing violence, leaders in places like Anbar, Najaf, and Ninawa are now working through local Provincial councils to approve funds to finance the rebuilding of homes and neighborhoods, to fight corruption, and to create new jobs.

Here at home, it can be easy to overlook the bravery shown by Iraqi troops and Iraqi civilians who are in the fight for freedom. But our troops on the ground see it every day. Last week, a team of American soldiers was meeting with an Iraqi citizens group near Baghdad. Suddenly, a suicide bomber came running around a corner and headed straight for our soldiers and the Iraqi civilians.

One Iraqi man saw what was happening and ran to intercept the bomber. As he pushed the terrorist away, the bomb detonated, killing both men, but sparing four American soldiers and eight Iraqi civilians. Army Staff Sergeant Sean Kane is one of

those who says he owes his life to this brave Iraqi. Sergeant Kane says, "He could have run behind us or away from us, but he made the decision to sacrifice himself to protect everyone." Sergeant Kane spoke to the Iraqi man's father, who said that even if his son had known the outcome beforehand, he "[would not] have acted differently."

The story does not end there. Later that same night, the citizens group contacted the local director of the National Police and told him the location of the Al Qaida cell believed to be responsible for the attack. The National Police immediately conducted a raid that resulted in four arrests.

We are still in the early stages of our new operations. But the success of the past couple of months have shown that conditions on the ground can change, and they are changing. We cannot expect the new strategy we are carrying out to bring success overnight. But by standing with the Iraqi people as they build their democracy, we will deliver a devastating blow to Al Qaida, we will help provide new hope for millions of people throughout the Middle East, we will gain a friend and ally in the war on terror, and we will make the American people safer.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on August 24 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 24, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Resignation of Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales in Waco, Texas

August 27, 2007

This morning Attorney General Alberto Gonzales announced that he will leave the Department of Justice after 2½ years of service to the Department. Al Gonzales is a man of integrity, decency, and principle. And I have reluctantly accepted his resignation, with great appreciation for the service that he has provided for our country.

As Attorney General and before that as White House Counsel, Al Gonzales has played a critical role in shaping our policies in the war on terror and has worked tirelessly to make this country safer. The PATRIOT Act, the Military Commissions Act, and other important laws bear his imprint. Under his leadership, the Justice Department has made a priority of protecting children from Internet predators and made enforcement of civil rights laws a top priority. He aggressively and successfully pursued public corruption and effectively combated gang violence.

As Attorney General, he played an important role in helping to confirm two fine jurists in Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito. He did an outstanding job as White House Counsel, identifying and recommending the best nominees to fill critically important Federal court vacancies.

Alberto Gonzales's tenure as Attorney General and White House Counsel is only part of a long history of distinguished public service that began as a young man when, after high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force. When I became Governor of Texas in 1995, I recruited him from

one of Texas's most prestigious law firms to be my general counsel. He went on to become Texas's 100th secretary of state and to serve on our State's supreme court. In the long course of our work together, this trusted adviser became a close friend.

These various positions have required sacrifice from Al, his wife Becky, their sons Jared, Graham, and Gabriel. And I thank them for their service to the country.

After months of unfair treatment that has created a harmful distraction at the Justice Department, Judge Gonzales decided to resign his position, and I accept his decision. It's sad that we live in a time when a talented and honorable person like Alberto Gonzales is impeded from doing important work because his good name was dragged through the mud for political reasons.

I've asked Solicitor General Paul Clement to serve as Acting Attorney General upon Alberto Gonzales's departure and until a nominee has been confirmed by the Senate. He's agreed to do so. Paul is one of the finest lawyers in America. As Solicitor General, Paul has developed a reputation for excellence and fairness and earned the respect and confidence of the entire Justice Department.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. at the Texas State Technical College Airport. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Congratulating Iraqi Leaders at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico

August 27, 2007

I congratulate Iraq's leaders on the agreement reached yesterday in Baghdad. I've been briefed on the agreement, and this morning I spoke to Iraq's elected leaders. These leaders represent all the Iraqi communities. These leaders of Prime Minister Maliki, President Talabani, Vice President Hashimi, Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi, President Barzani recognize the true and meaningful reconciliation that needs to take place, and they recognize this is a process. Yesterday's agreement reflects their commitment to work together for the benefit of all Iraqis to further the process.

The agreement begins to establish new power-sharing agreements and commits to supporting bottom-up security and political initiatives and advances agreement among Iraq's leadership on several key legislative benchmarks.

While yesterday's agreement is an important step, I reminded them, and they understand, much more needs to be done. The Iraqi parliament will convene again in early September, and it will need to act to codify this political progress.

It's in our interests that we help the Iraqi people succeed. Success in Iraq will be a major blow to the extremists and radicals who would like to attack America again. And that's why the United States will continue to support Iraq's leaders and all the Iraqi people in their efforts to overcome the forces of terror that seek to overthrow a nascent democracy.

In this regard, I welcome and accept the expressed desire of the Iraqi leadership to develop a long-term relationship with the United States based on common interests. The United States is committed to developing this relationship and to strengthening diplomatic, economic, and security ties with the Iraqi Government and its people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice Presidents Tariq al-Hashimi and Adil Abd Al-Mahdi of Iraq; and Masoud Barzani, president, Kurdistan region in Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate David G. Reichert and the Washington State Republican Party in Bellevue, Washington

August 27, 2007

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I appreciate it. Okay, thank you. Thanks for coming. How's your elbow, Dave? [*Laughter*] First of all, I thank you all for supporting an honest, decent, hard-working, fine American in Dave Reichert. You call him "the sheriff." I look at him as a sheriff. He's tough when he has to be, he's compassionate when he needs to be, and he's

an independent thinker. He's the kind of person who has done a fabulous job in the United States House of Representatives, and he deserves to be reelected. And I thank you for supporting him. I particularly want to thank Julie for standing with Dave—and the family.

I know something about families and politics. Like Dave, I married above my head.

[*Laughter*] And Laura sends her very best to the Reichert family. She's a—I left her on the ranch this morning. We're working our way back to Washington, DC. I'm going to Australia to represent the United States of America at what they call APEC. By the way, there's no greater honor than to represent the United States of America overseas. It is a fantastic experience. We're such a fabulous country of decent, honorable people.

I want to thank my friend, the former Senator of the State, Slade Gorton, and Sally, for joining us today. Senator, thank you for being here. Luke, I want to thank you for being here. Thanks for being the chairman. Use this—[*applause*]*—yes. You need to put this money to good use and turn out the vote, get people to the polls.*

We run for reasons. We've got a philosophy that works. We believe in strong defense. We need to protect this country. We believe in human rights and human dignity, and we believe in keeping your taxes low. That's what we believe.

I want to thank Matt Hasselbeck and Mack Strong. These are champs. These men are champs on the field, and they're champs off the field. And they set such a fine example for people who look at the Seattle Seahawks, and they look at these players and say, "Gosh, I'd like to be like them." And I thank you for being such good family men, setting such a good example for the kids here. And I'm honored to have the jersey.

I want to talk about a couple of issues with you. We're a nation at war. I wish I didn't have to say that. No President should ever want to come to any community in our country and say, "We're at war," but we are. And the fundamental question facing this Nation is, how do we face this conflict? What do we do?

The most important priority of government—it's one of the reasons I'm such a strong believer in Dave—is to protect the homeland. That's our most important job. And Dave Reichert understands that. He

understands that it's possible for government to balance the need to understand the enemy and civil liberties. And we're doing just that. He knows what I know, that we've got to use all assets at our power to protect you.

You know, I was deeply affected on September the 11th, 2001. I vowed that day that I would use all of our assets to keep the enemy from harming us again. And I'm proud to have an ally in Dave Reichert, who understands that as well. That's why you've got to send him back.

The stakes are high. There are some—[*applause*—I recognize there are some who hear we're at war and dismiss that as empty political talk. That's either disingenuous or naive—either case it is dangerous because we face an enemy that is ideologically bent, determined to achieve their objectives and murder the innocent. They are not religious people. They may have hijacked religion, but they're not religious. I don't believe you murder innocent people to achieve political objectives and be a religious person. I just don't believe that. As a matter of fact, I believe that's the definition of evil. And I think the United States must do everything we can to prevent them from harming us and others again.

And the stakes are high in this war. Our strategy is to stay on the offense. I would rather defeat them overseas than to face them here at home. And so every day, you've got really fine, decent people working hour after hour to find these killers and to bring them to justice. You can't negotiate with these kind of people; you can't talk sense to them. The only thing—the way to protect us in the short term is to find them before they hurt us again. And that's what's happening every single day.

Dave Reichert understands it. He is a strong supporter of law enforcement, of the intelligence community, and of the United States military. And I appreciate that, Dave.

In the long run, the best way to protect you is to win this ideological struggle by defeating what they believe with something

that has worked throughout history, and that's liberty. I make my decisions based on just some fundamental principles—principles, by the way, I'm not going to change; principles that—you know, I think the thing that matters most in life is when you finish the task at hand, whatever that may be, that you can look in the mirror and say you stayed true to your principles; you stayed true to that which you believe. I'd rather be dealing with people who make decisions based upon what's right, not based upon the latest focus group or opinion poll. And that's exactly what we need to do to protect this country.

I believe there's an Almighty, and I believe a great gift of the Almighty to each man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth is freedom. And I believe it's in the interest of the United States to help people be free. Freedom yields the peace we want. Freedom yields the—lays that foundation for peace so our children can grow up in a peaceful world. And that's what you're seeing happening right now.

Iraq is the central front of this war. This war is being fought on a variety of fronts, and Iraq obviously is the central front. It's the front that's dominating the news. It's the front that appears on your TV screens. It's the front in which there's a lot of debate in a free society, and there should be debate. I happen to believe it's essential that we win this war in Iraq, that we do the job on this front.

We've done some remarkable things there. First of all, we removed a brutal dictator. Getting rid of Saddam Hussein made the world safer. It was the right decision. The Iraqis went to the polls and wrote a Constitution. I mean, I wasn't surprised they went to the polls. If you believe in the universality of freedom, it shouldn't surprise you that people, if given a chance, will express their desire to be free. I wasn't surprised; I was pleased that 12 million people defied the car bombers and killers and murderers to vote.

And then the thinking enemy, recognizing that a free society in the Middle East would be a major blow to their ambitions to spread their caliphate throughout the Middle East, tried to create sectarian violence. They murdered the innocent in order to cause people to doubt government and doubt the coalition. These are cold-blooded killers. These, by the way, have sworn allegiance to—many of them have sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden, the same person that ordered the attacks that killed nearly 3,000 of our citizens. They can't stand the thought of a free society in their midst. An Iraq that can govern itself and sustain itself and be an ally against these radicals and extremists would be a major defeat in this ideological struggle.

And so they struck. And I was confronted with a decision: You either leave, pull back, or send more troops in to try to bring enough security so that the society can emerge and evolve. And I chose the latter. I chose the latter because the consequences of failure in Iraq are enormous for the security of the United States of America.

I gave a speech to the VFW the other day and talked about the different theaters of war in the past, whether it be Japan or Korea and Vietnam. I reminded the listeners, Vietnam was much different from Iraq in that you could leave Vietnam, and yeah, there was a human toll, huge human catastrophe as a result of us leaving, but the enemy wasn't going to follow us here. In the beginning of the 21st century, failure in Iraq would cause the enemy not to retreat, but to follow us to America. The stakes of success for your security are enormous. And that is why I listened to our commanders and the experts and military folks about how to provide enough security for democracy to have a chance to succeed.

I sent a new commander there on the ground, a fellow named General David Petraeus. We've been there for—fully staffed and engaged for about 2 months, with a full complement of manpower, and

we're making a difference. It's changing on the ground. The people are beginning to see that grassroots reconciliation is possible. Neighbors—listen, people want to live in peace. People don't like violence. They want their children to grow up in a peaceful world. If given a chance, I believe people will cling to liberty and freedom. And I know it's in our interests for us to deny Al Qaida a safe haven or the extremists an opportunity to become more emboldened throughout the Middle East. What happens in Iraq matters in America.

And that's why I've asked Congress to wait until these commanders come back—the Ambassador and commander come back and tell people exactly what's happening. You know, when they open up a new school in Iraq, it doesn't make headline news. When Al Qaida kills a bunch of people, it does. And these folks are trying to shake our will. I'm giving a speech to the American Legion tomorrow, and a line in there is, "We will not be intimidated by thugs and murderers. The United States of America will stand strong."

I'm confident we can succeed. I really am. I could not look at a mother whose child was in combat if I didn't believe, one, it was necessary, and two, we can succeed. I couldn't do that in good conscience. And one of the reasons I'm confident we can succeed is because we have done this kind of work before.

I like to remind people about the story of my dad and my Presidency. I find it incredibly ironic that George H.W. Bush went straight out of high school, became a Navy fighter pilot, and fought the Japanese, and some 60 years later, his son sits down at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan, the former enemy, working to keep the peace. Isn't that interesting? I think it is. And you know what happens? Liberty has got the capacity to change an enemy into an ally. Liberty and freedom have—are transformative. They've got the ability to transform an entire region, one of hopelessness, where 19 kids are willing

to get on an airplane to kill, to one of hope, where people realize a better future and a peaceful future.

This is a long ideological struggle we're involved in. And the fundamental question is, will the United States of America take the lead? Will we be confident in the values that have made us a great nation? And I answered that question loud and clear: We're in the lead, we'll stay in the lead, and we'll work for the peace that we all want.

You know, every time you run, at least every time I've run, the economy has always been an issue. And I'm glad it is this time around. *[Laughter]* We have—I can remember campaigning in Washington State and campaigning with Dave before and reminding people of another principle that I believe in, and that is, you can spend your money better than government can. It is a—there is a kind of a philosophical divide in Washington. There are people that, one, don't—believe we don't have enough money in Washington—I happen to believe we do—and secondly, that they would rather figure out how to spend your money than you should.

You know—and so our argument, however, wins when you look at the facts. We had to deal with a recession, an attack on the country, corporate scandals. This economy was not very good in our—in the beginning of my administration. So I went to Congress and said, "I've got an idea for us to get out of this recession. Why don't we let the people have more of their own money? Rather than taking money away from the spenders and savers and investors, why don't we try something different? Why don't we say, 'Here, you can have your own money in your own pocket so you can spend it yourself?'"

And it worked. Since August of 2003—by the way, we didn't cut taxes on a few people, we cut taxes on everybody that paid taxes. It wasn't one of these special deals where you paid some, and you paid some, but you get the tax break; you don't. If

you have a family with children, you got a tax break. I happen to think it was a mistake to penalize marriage. We had a marriage penalty in the Tax Code. It seems like to me, we ought to be encouraging marriage rather than penalizing marriage.

We cut taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We cut taxes on small businesses, and we reduced all the income tax rates. And by the way, most small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax rate. See, if you're a subchapter S or a limited partnership, you pay income tax based upon individual rates. And so when you say you're cutting the individual rates, you're actually cutting taxes as well on small businesses. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small businesses, and so when a small business has more money in its treasury, it tends to expand and invest. When a consumer has more money in his or her pocket, they either save or invest or spend.

And our plan worked. Cutting taxes works. Cutting taxes has created a strong economy. We've created 8.3 million new jobs since August of 2003. Unemployment rates are down. People are working; inflation is low; interest rates are low; people are owning homes. This economy is strong. And the best way to keep it strong is to put people in Congress that won't raise your taxes.

And make no mistake about it, the Democrats are going to raise your taxes, pure and simple. They may say they're not going to in the campaign, but they're going to raise your taxes. How do I know? Well, they submitted a budget recently. Their budget calls for \$205 billion of extra discretionary spending over the next 5 years. That's their blueprint for what they're going to do with your money, 205 billion additional dollars. That averages out to \$112 million a day, \$4.7 million per hour, \$78,000 per minute, \$1,300 in higher discretionary spending every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year for the next 5 years. And you're going

to pay for it. That's why we need to reelect Dave Reichert. And that's why they give the President the power of veto. I'm going to veto any tax threats.

What's interesting is that we were able to cut taxes and grow the economy and, at the same time, reduce our deficit. That's what we told the people we would do. We said, "Give us a chance. You're going to have more money in your own pocket to spend, save, and invest, and we're going to manage this fiscal house in such a way that the deficit comes down." Today, the projected deficit is about 205 billion; that's a nice number. That's what the Democrats are going to take out of your pocket; that's the size of the deficit, which, by the way, as a percentage of GDP is low.

And I've submitted a budget that will actually balance the budget by 2012, so long as we have fiscally responsible people in Washington. And that means we need to elect people who understand what it means to set priorities. And the number-one priority, as far as I'm concerned, is to protecting the American people. The number-one priority is to make sure our troops have the support they need and to make sure our veterans get the care they need.

And Dave is right there. You can count on him. You can count on him to be a watchdog for your money in Washington, DC.

I want to talk about one other issue, and that is—it's a national security issue, it's an economic security issue, and it is an environmental issue—and that is our dependency on oil. Now, that probably comes as a shock to you to hear a Texan say that, but I understand what it means to be dependent on a product from parts of the world where some of the people don't like us. I know what that means for our national security.

I also understand, in this world we live in, when demand for crude oil goes up in a developing country like China and the corresponding supply doesn't keep up with

the demand, the price of gasoline goes up at the pump here in Seattle, Washington. So it's an economic security issue as well. If the terrorists and these radicals that would like to create economic havoc on the United States were ever to be able to significantly disrupt the oil supply, you'd feel it. So it's an economic security issue. And obviously, burning fossil fuels creates an environmental issue.

And so I look forward to working with Dave to come up with a practical plan that enables us, one, to grow the economy and, at the same time, to become less dependent on oil and better stewards of the environment. And our strategy makes sense. It's a commonsense strategy.

Fuel, I believe that we can grow enough fuel to become less dependent on oil. I'd rather our farmers be producing fuel than buying fuel from overseas. I think that's a practical application of technology. We're selling a little—we're using a little more than 7 billion gallons of ethanol now, made mainly from Midwestern corn. In other words, there's a whole industry growing. And we're encouraging it. As a matter of fact, we believe that technology is going to advance to the point where we can reduce our gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years and replace it with alternative fuels. I believe that.

Your government is spending a fair amount of your money—if billions is fair—[laughter]—a lot of your money on technologies because the truth of the matter is, the only way to be able to grow our economy and, at the same time, be better stewards of the environment is to come up with new technologies. It's conceivable that relatively quickly, there are going to be automobiles where you can drive your first 40 miles on a battery and the thing you're in doesn't look like a golf cart. It will actually be a car, something that you'd like to be in. [Laughter]

I'm a big believer in clean coal technologies. We're spending up to about \$2 billion to be able to use this plentiful sup-

ply of energy in an environmentally friendly way. And I think there's going to be some breakthroughs coming down the road.

I believe in nuclear power. I believe if you're really, truly interested in greenhouse gases, then you ought to be supporting nuclear power. If you're really that concerned about the environment, you ought to be saying, this great economy of ours can grow and, at the same time, not pollute. Nuclear power doesn't put one emission into the atmosphere.

And so we're spending money to come up with technologies that will enable us to be less dependent on oil. And I think it makes sense. And I'm proud to have Dave's support. He's an environmentally conscious guy. He cares about the environment, like a lot of people around the country do. But I want to tell you something that's interesting and something you probably haven't spent much time reading about. Do you realize that the United States is the only major industrialized nation that cut greenhouse gases last year? We grew our economy by 3.4 percent in the second quarter, and we cut greenhouse gases.

Our strategy is working. Our philosophy makes sense. It is a commonsense philosophy that's making a difference in the lives of the average citizens. David Reichert understands that, and that's why you need to send him back to the United States Congress. And I'm proud to be here for him.

Thanks for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:28 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency. In his remarks, he referred to Sally Gorton, wife of former Sen. T. Slade Gorton III; Luke Esser, chairman, Washington State Republican Party; Matt Hasselbeck, quarterback, and Mack Strong, fullback, Seattle Seahawks; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

Statement on the Death of Police Officer Germaine Casey August 27, 2007

Officer Germaine Casey of the Rio Rancho Police Department died today from injuries suffered while serving as a member of my security detail in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I am deeply saddened by his death and extraordinarily grateful for his protection. It is a high calling to choose to serve

and protect your fellow citizens, and I will always be indebted to Officer Casey's service.

He leaves behind his wife Lisa and their two children. They are in my thoughts and prayers. May God comfort the Casey family and his fellow law enforcement officials.

Remarks at the American Legion National Convention in Reno, Nevada August 28, 2007

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Please be seated. Commander, thank you very much for the invitation to come. I'm honored to be here. I'm honored to represent Post 77 of Houston, Texas. I hope my fellow Texans behave themselves here in Reno. *[Laughter]* You won't? Okay, well—*[laughter]*.

I appreciate the fact that nearly every community in America has been enriched by the American Legion and the Women's Auxiliary. I appreciate the work that you do to remind our citizens about the blessings of America. You have the profound gratitude of the President and the people of this country. Thank you for your service.

I particularly appreciate the work you do with our country's young. I like the fact that you have a oratorical competition that, according to your organization, helps Americans communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. Paul suggested I might want to sign up. *[Laughter]* I appreciate the fact that through Boys and Girls Nation, you teach young people who are interested in public service about how Washington really works. *[Laughter]* I'm not going there. *[Laughter]*

We meet today at a critical time for our country. America is engaged in a great ideological struggle, fighting Islamic extremists

across the globe. Today I want to talk to you and to the American people about a key aspect of the struggle: the fight for the future of the Middle East. I'm going to explain why defeating the extremists in this troubled region is essential to our Nation's security and why success in Iraq is vital to winning this larger ideological battle.

I do want to thank your commander. It's been my pleasure to work with Paul. He's been in the White House a lot, along with the executive director, John Sommer. He's represented you well, and he's served with distinction. I thank JoAnn Cronin, the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary. I appreciate Bob Spanogle, the national adjutant of the American Legion.

I want to welcome the Governor of the great State of Nevada with us today; Governor Jim Gibbons is with us. Mr. Governor, thanks for coming. The Congressman from this district is a fine Representative named Dean Heller. His wife Lynne sang the national anthem. Thank you both for being here today.

I'm honored to be in the presence of those who wear our Nation's uniform. I thank General Charles Campbell, commanding general, U.S. Army Forces Command, for joining us—Major General Gale

Pollock, Acting Surgeon General of the U.S. Army. And for all those who wear the uniform, thank you for volunteering to defend this Nation in a time of peril. I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief.

For nearly a century, Presidents have looked to the American Legion to provide an example of vision, valor, and love of country. In times of peace, you counseled vigilance. In times of war, you counseled resolve. And in every era, you have carried the well-being of our men and women in uniform in your prayers and in your hearts. We're grateful to your service.

You have an appreciation for how special America is because you have defended her. You know how fragile freedom is because you have seen it under attack. And you know the pain of war because you have lost friends and family members on distant shores, including those whose fates are still unknown. We must not and we will not end our search until we have accounted for every member of our Armed Forces from every war and every corner of the Earth.

I appreciate your efforts to honor the American flag. There are those who say the flag is just a piece of cloth. That's not the view of those who bled for it and saw it drape the caskets of some of our finest men and women. It was the American flag that we planted proudly on Iwo Jima, that first graced the silver surface of the Moon. The country is careful to protect many things because of what they symbolize. Surely we can find a way to show equal respect for the symbol that our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines and coast guards men and women have risked their lives for the flag of our Nation. So today I join the Legion in calling on the United States Congress to make protection of the flag the law of our land.

I also thank you for your strong support of our Nation's veterans. We share a common goal: to make sure our veterans have all the help they need. We have worked together to achieve that goal. The budget

this year that I submitted is nearly \$87 billion for our veterans. That's a 77-percent increase since I took office. It is the highest level of support for veterans in America's history.

I know health care is a concern of yours, and that's why we've extended treatment to a million additional veterans, including hundreds of thousands of men and women returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. We're building new VA facilities in places where veterans are returning so more veterans can get top-quality health care closer to your home. We've expanded grants to help homeless veterans in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. My point is this: The veterans were there when we needed them, and this administration will be with the veterans when they need us.

Perhaps the most important duty that Legion members undertake is to serve as living reminders that a great country has great responsibilities. Once again, America finds itself a nation at war. Once again, we're called to assume the mantle of global leadership. And once again, the American Legion is walking point. I thank you for your fervent and enthusiastic defense of our men and women in uniform as they take the fight to the enemy in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and across the world. They're the finest military on Earth, and we are right to be proud of them.

Many people in this country are asking whether the fight underway today is worth it. This is not the first time Americans have asked that question. We always enter wars reluctantly, yet we have fought whenever dangers came. We fought when turmoil in Europe threatened to shroud the world in darkness. America sent its military to fight two bitter and bloody conflicts; we did what we had to do to get the job done. We fought when powers in Asia attacked our country and our allies. We sent Americans to restore the peace, and we did what we had to do to get the job done. And we responded when radicals and extremists attacked our homeland in the first ideological

war of the 21st century. We toppled two regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that gave harbor to terrorists, defied the international community, and threatened the security of our Nation. And now we're working to help build free and secure societies in their place. And like the past, we will do what we have to do to get the job done.

We've learned from history that dangers in other parts of the world—such as Europe and Asia—directly affect our security here at home. On September the 11th, 2001, we learned that there's another region of the world that directly threatens the security of the American people, and that is the Middle East. America has enduring and vital interests in the region. Throughout our history, the American people have had strong links with this region through ties of commerce and education and faith. Long before oil and gas were discovered in the Middle East, the region was a key source of trade. It is the home to three of the world's great religions. It remains a strategic crossroads for the world.

Yet the hope and prosperity that transformed other parts of the world in the 20th century has bypassed too many in the Middle East. For too long, the world was content to ignore forms of government in this region in the name of stability. The result was that a generation of young people grew up with little hope to improve their lives, and many fell under the sway of violent Islamic extremism. The terrorist movement multiplied in strength, and bitterness that had simmered for years boiled into violence across the world. The cradle of civilization became the home of the suicide bomber. And resentments that began on the streets of the Middle East are now killing innocent people in train stations and airplanes and office buildings around the world.

The murderers and beheaders are not the true face of Islam; they are the face of evil. They seek to exploit religion as a path to power and a means to dominate the Middle East. The violent Islamic radicalism that inspires them has two main

strains. One is Sunni extremism, embodied by Al Qaida and its terrorist allies. Their organization advances a vision that rejects tolerance, crushes all dissent, and justifies the murder of innocent men, women, and children in the pursuit of political power. We saw this vision in the brutal rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, where women were publicly whipped, men were beaten for missing prayer meetings, young girls could not go to school.

These extremists hope to impose that same dark vision across the Middle East by raising up a violent and radical caliphate that spans from Spain to Indonesia. So they kill fellow Muslims in places like Algeria and Jordan and Egypt and Saudi Arabia in an attempt to undermine their Governments. And they kill Americans because they know we stand in their way. And that is why they attacked U.S. Embassies in Africa in 1998 and killed sailors aboard the USS *Cole* in 2001 [2000].* And that is why they killed nearly 3,000 of—people on 9/11. And that is why they plot us—to attack us again. And that is why we must stay in the fight until the fight is won.

The other strain of radicalism in the Middle East is Shi'a extremism, supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran. Iran has long been a source of trouble in the region. It is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. Iran backs Hizballah, who are trying to undermine the democratic Government of Lebanon. Iran funds terrorist groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which murder the innocent and target Israel and destabilize the Palestinian Territories. Iran is sending arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan, which could be used to attack American and NATO troops. Iran has arrested visiting American scholars, who have committed no crimes and pose no threat to their regime. And Iran's active pursuit of technology that could lead to nuclear weapons threatens to put a region already known for instability

* White House correction.

and violence under the shadow of a nuclear holocaust.

Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere. And that is why the United States is rallying friends and allies around the world to isolate the regime, to impose economic sanctions. We will confront this danger, before it is too late.

I want our fellow citizens to consider what would happen if these forces of radicalism and extremism are allowed to drive us out of the Middle East. The region would be dramatically transformed in a way that could imperil the civilized world. Extremists of all strains would be emboldened by the knowledge that they forced America to retreat. Terrorists could have more safe havens to conduct attacks on Americans and our friends and allies. Iran could conclude that we were weak and could not stop them from gaining nuclear weapons. And once Iran had nuclear weapons, it would set off a nuclear arms race in the region.

Extremists would control a key part of the world's energy supply, could blackmail and sabotage the global economy. They could use billions of dollars of oil revenues to buy weapons and pursue their deadly ambitions. Our allies in the region would be under greater siege by the enemies of freedom. Early movements toward democracy in the region would be violently reversed. This scenario would be a disaster for the people of the Middle East, a danger to our friends and allies, and a direct threat to American peace and security. This is what the extremists plan. For the sake of our own security, we'll pursue our enemies, we'll persevere, and we will prevail.

In the short term, we're using all elements of American power to protect the American people by taking the fight to the enemy. Our troops are carrying out operations day by day to bring the terrorists to justice. We're keeping the pressure on them. We're forcing them to move. Our law enforcement and intelligence professionals are working to cut off terrorist fi-

nancing and disrupt their networks. Our diplomats are rallying our friends and allies throughout the region to share intelligence and to tighten security and to rout out the extremists hiding in their midst. Every day we work to protect the American people. Our strategy is this: We will fight them over there so we do not have to face them in the United States of America.

In the long term, we are advancing freedom and liberty as the alternative to the ideologies of hatred and repression. We seek a Middle East of secure, democratic states that are at peace with one another, that are participating in the global markets, and that are partners in this fight against the extremists and radicals. We seek to dry up the stream of recruits for Al Qaida and other extremists by helping nations offer their people a path to a more hopeful future. We seek an Iran whose Government is accountable to its people instead of to leaders who promote terror and pursue the technology that could be used to develop nuclear weapons. We seek to advance a two-state solution for the Israelis and Palestinians so they can live side by side in peace and security. We seek justice and dignity and human rights for all the people of the Middle East.

Achieving this future requires hard work, strategic patience over many years, yet our security depends on it. We have done this kind of work before in Europe. We have done this kind of work before in Japan. We have done this kind of work before, and it can be done again.

The future course of the Middle East will turn heavily on the outcome of the fight in Iraq. Iraq is at the heart of the Middle East. And the two dangerous strains of extremism vying for control of the Middle East have now closed in on this country in an effort to bring down the young democracy.

In Iraq, Sunni extremists led by Al Qaida are staging sensational attacks on innocent men, women, and children in attempt to stoke sectarian violence. Their operatives

have assassinated those seeking to build a new future for the Iraqi people. Their targets include everyone they consider infidels, including Christians and Jews and Yazidis and Shi'a and even fellow Sunnis who do not share their radical distortion of Islam. Their ranks include foreign fighters who travel to Iraq through Syria. Their operations seek to create images of chaos and carnage to break the will of the American people. These killers don't understand our country. America does not give in to thugs and assassins, and America will not abandon Iraq in its hour of need.

Shi'a extremists backed by Iran are training Iraqis to carry out attacks on our forces and the Iraqi people. Members of the Qods Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps are supplying extremist groups with funding and weapons, including sophisticated IEDs. And with the assistance of Hizballah, they've provided training for these violent forces inside of Iraq. Recently, coalition forces seized 240-millimeter rockets that had been manufactured in Iran this year that had been provided to Iraqi extremist groups by Iranian agents. The attacks on our bases and our troops by Iranian-supplied munitions have increased in the last few months, despite pledges by Iran to help stabilize the security situation in Iraq.

Some say Iran's leaders are not aware of what members of their own regime are doing. Others say Iran's leaders are actively seeking to provoke the West. Either way, they cannot escape responsibility for aiding attacks against coalition forces and the murder of innocent Iraqis. The Iranian regime must halt these actions. And until it does, I will take actions necessary to protect our troops. I have authorized our military commanders in Iraq to confront Tehran's murderous activities.

For all those who ask whether the fight in Iraq is worth it, imagine an Iraq where militia groups backed by Iran control large parts of the country. Imagine an Iraq where Al Qaida has established sanctuaries to safe-

ly plot future attacks on targets all over the world, including America. We've seen what these enemies will do when American forces are actively engaged in Iraq. And we can envision what they would do if we—if they were emboldened by American forces in retreat.

The challenge in Iraq comes down to this: Either the forces of extremism succeed or the forces of freedom succeed; either our enemies advance their interests in Iraq or we advance our interests. The most important and immediate way to counter the ambitions of Al Qaida and Iran and other forces of instability and terror is to win the fight in Iraq.

Together, our coalition has achieved great things in Iraq. We toppled one of the world's most brutal and dangerous dictators. This world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. The Iraqi people held three national elections, choosing a transitional government, adopting the most progressive and democratic Constitution in the Arab world, and then electing a Government under that Constitution. Despite endless threats from the car bombers and assassins, nearly 12 million Iraqi citizens came out to vote in a show of hope and solidarity that we should never forget.

In 2006, a thinking enemy struck back. The extremists provoked a level of sectarian violence that threatened to unravel the democratic gains the Iraqi people had made. Momentum was shifting to the extremists. The Iraqi people saw that their Government could not protect them or deliver basic services. Many Shi'a turned to militias for security. Many Sunnis did not see a place for them in the new Iraq. Baghdad was descending into chaos. And one of our military intelligence analysts wrote that Anbar Province—Al Qaida's base in Iraq—was lost to the enemy.

Given the stakes in Iraq, given the fact that what happens in Iraq matters in the United States, it became clear that we needed to adjust our approach to address these changes on the ground. So in January,

I laid out a new strategy. This strategy was designed to help bring security to the Iraqi population, especially in Baghdad. It was designed to help clear the terrorists out of Iraqi cities and communities so that local governments could retake control, resume basic services, and help revive businesses in their communities. It was designed to give the Iraqi security forces time to grow in size and capability so that they can ultimately bring security to their country. It was designed to provide a secure environment in which national reconciliation could take place. And it was designed to encourage more members of the international community to recognize their interests in a free and democratic Iraq and to do more to make that possible.

The central objective of this strategy was to aid the rise of an Iraqi Government that can protect its people, deliver basic services, and be an ally in this war on terror. And we understood that none of these goals could be met until the Iraqi people feel safer in their own homes and neighborhoods.

To carry out this new strategy, I sent reinforcements to Baghdad and Anbar Province. I put a new commander in place, General David Petraeus, an expert on counterinsurgency. Those reinforcements have been fully operational for just over 2 months, yet there are unmistakable signs that our strategy is achieving the objectives we set out. Our new strategy is showing results in terms of security.

Our forces are in the fight all over Iraq. Since January, each month we have captured or killed an average of more than 1,500 Al Qaida terrorists and other enemies of Iraq's elected Government. Al Qaida is being displaced from former strongholds in Baghdad and Anbar and Diyala Provinces. We've conducted operations against Iranian agents supplying lethal munitions to extremist groups. We've targeted Shi'a death squads and their supply networks. The Prime Minister of Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki, has courageously committed to pur-

sue the forces of evil and destruction. Sectarian violence has sharply decreased in Baghdad. The momentum is now on our side. The surge is seizing the initiative from the enemy and handing it to the Iraqi people.

Our new strategy is also showing results in places where it matters most, the cities and neighborhoods where ordinary Iraqis live. In these areas, Iraqis are increasingly reaching accommodations with each other, with the coalition, and with the Government in Baghdad. This reconciliation is coming from the bottom up. It's having an impact in the fight against the enemy, and it's building a solid foundation for a democratic Iraq.

In Anbar, the Province that had been thought to be lost to the enemy is increasingly becoming more peaceful because members of local Sunnis are turning against Al Qaida. They're sick and tired of the dark vision of these murderers. Local sheikhs have joined the American forces to drive the terrorists out of the capital city of Ramadi and elsewhere. Residents are providing critical intelligence, and tribesmen have joined the Iraqi police and security forces.

People want to live in peace. Mothers want to raise their children in a peaceful environment. The local Iraqis, given a chance, are turning against these murderers and extremists.

Many Iraqis who once felt marginalized in a free Iraq are rejoining the political process, and now it's the enemy of a free Iraq that is being left on the margins. Last month, Provincial officials reopened parts of the war-damaged government center with the help of one of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Listen, similar scenes are taking place all across Anbar, the Province once thought lost. Virtually every city and every town in the Province now has a mayor and a municipal council. Local officials are forming ties with the central Government in Baghdad because these

Sunni leaders now see a role for their people in a new Iraq. And in an encouraging sign, the central Government is beginning to respond with funding for vital services and reconstruction and increased security forces.

In other Provinces, there are also signs of this kind of bottom-up progress. In Diyala Province, the city of Baqubah reopened six banks, providing residents with capital for the local economy. In Ninawa Province, local officials have established a commission to investigate corruption, with a local judge empowered to pursue charges of fraud and racketeering. These are signs that our strategy to encourage political cooperation at the grassroots level is working. And over time, see—and over time, as the Iraqis take control over their lives at the local level, they will demand more action from their national leaders in Baghdad. That's how democracy works. And that's why the encouraging developments at the local level are so important for Iraq's future.

At the moment, our new strategy is showing fewer results at the national level. Iraq is overcoming decades of tyranny and deprivation, which left scars on Iraq's people and their psyche. The serious sectarian violence of 2006 and early 2007 further tore at the fabric of Iraqi society, increasing distrust between Iraq's ethnic and religious communities. In the midst of the security challenges, Iraq's leaders are being asked to resolve political issues as complex and emotional as the struggle for civil rights in our own country. So it's no wonder that progress is halting and people are often frustrated. The result is that it has been harder for—than anticipated for Iraqis to meet the legislative benchmarks on which we have all been focused.

In my weekly consultations with Ambassador Crocker, we discuss these challenges. We also discuss the signs of hope. We're encouraged by the agreement reached Sunday night by the top leaders in Iraq's Government. They agreed on several draft

pieces of legislation that are at the core of national reconciliation and are among the benchmarks identified by the United States Congress. For example, the draft law on de-Ba'athification reform addresses the question of how Iraqis will deal with their past. The draft legislation on Provincial powers tackles how Iraqis will map out their future. These measures still have to be passed by the Iraqi parliament. Yet the agreement shows that Iraq's leaders can put aside their differences, they can sit down together, and they can work out tough issues central to the fate of their country.

The agreement by Iraq's leaders was significant for another reason. It thanks coalition—it thanks the coalition for our sacrifices and recognizes the importance of maintaining a coalition presence in Iraq. It also calls for the development of a long-term relationship with the United States. I welcome this invitation. I've committed our Government to negotiating such a partnership soon. This long-term relationship need not require the level of engagement that we have in Iraq today, but it can serve the common interests of both Iraq and the United States to combat terrorism and to help bring stability to an important country and region.

Iraq's Government still has more work to do to meet many of its legislative benchmarks. Yet it's also important to note that many of the goals behind these benchmarks are being achieved without legislation. Here's an example. Now, we believed that an equitable sharing of oil revenues would require the Iraqi parliament to pass an oil sharing law. In fact, the national Government is already sharing oil revenues with the Provinces, despite the fact that no formal law has been passed. Iraq's Government is making gains in other important areas. Electricity production is improving. The parliament has passed about 60 pieces of legislation, including a \$41-billion budget. Despite the slow progress in the Iraqi parliament—here's the evidence—Iraq as a whole is moving forward.

Our strategy is also showing results at the international level. The United Nations and Iraq, with support from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and nations from around the globe, have finalized an International Compact for Iraq that will bring new economic assistance and debt relief in exchange for aggressive economic reforms. So far, the Iraqis have made significant progress in meeting the IMF's economic benchmarks. The Iraqis have convened a Neighbors Conference that's bringing together nations in the region. The goal is to help the Iraqis through specific security and economic and diplomatic cooperation.

As part of these diplomatic initiatives, Prime Minister Maliki has met with counterparts in Turkey, Syria, and Iran to urge the support for his nation. Saudi Arabia is looking to open a new Embassy in Baghdad. The United Nations Security Council has decided to expand its mission in Iraq and is seeking to help with local elections and reconciliation. The United Nations will soon name a new, high-ranking envoy to Iraq to coordinate the U.N.'s expanded effort to that country. Here's what I'm telling you: The international community increasingly understands the importance of a free Iraq. They understand a free Iraq is important for world peace. And that is why we'll continue to rally the world for this noble and necessary cause.

All these developments are hopeful—they're hopeful for Iraq, and they're hopeful for the Middle East, and they're hopeful for peace. In 2 weeks, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to deliver an interim assessment of the situation on the ground and the prospects for the future. This status report comes in less than 3 months after the surge became fully operational. It will likely assess what's going well in Iraq and what needs to be improved and what changes we need to make in our strategy and force deployments in the months ahead. Congress asked for this assessment.

Congress should listen to it in its entirety. And I ask Members of the Congress to withhold any conclusions until they can hear these men out.

Unfortunately, some who had complained about a lack of security in Iraq are now attempting to change the terms of the debate. Their argument used to be that security was bad, so the surge has failed. Now their argument seems to be, security is better, so the surge has failed. They disregard the political advances on the local level and instead change—charge that the slow pace of legislative progress on the national level proves our strategy has not worked. This argument gets it backwards. Improving security is the precondition for making gains in other areas.

Senator Joe Lieberman puts it this way: "While it is true there is no pure 'military' solution to the violence in Iraq, it is worth remembering that neither is there any pure 'political' solution." Security progress must come first. And only then can political progress follow, first locally and then in Baghdad. So it's going to take time for the recent progress we have seen in security to translate into political progress. In short, it makes no sense to respond to military progress by claiming that we have failed because Iraq's parliament has yet to pass every law it said it would.

The American people know how difficult democracy can be. Our own country has an advanced and sophisticated political system in place. Yet even we can't pass a budget on time, and we've had 200 years of practice. Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders are dealing with the issues far more controversial and complicated, and they are trying to do it all at once, after decades of a brutal dictatorship. Iraq's leaders aren't perfect, but they were elected by their people. They want what we want: a free Iraq that fights terrorists instead of harboring them. And leaders in Washington need to look for ways to help our Iraqi allies succeed, not excuses for abandoning them.

The challenge is before us—the challenge before us is hard, but America can meet it. And the conflict has come at a cost, on behalf of a cause that is right and essential to the American people. It's a noble cause. It is a just cause. It is a necessary cause. I wouldn't have asked the young men and women of our military to go in harm's way if I didn't think success in Iraq was necessary for the security of the United States of America. I know it can be difficult to see sometimes, but what happens on the streets of Baghdad and in the neighborhoods of Anbar has a direct impact on the safety of Americans here at home. And that is why we're in this fight, and that's why we'll stay in the fight, and that is why we're going to win this fight.

One of the great blessings of this country is that our men and women in uniform understand it. One of those young men was Specialist First Class Steven Davis of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Steven came from a proud military family. His father and grandfather were veterans. His younger brother, his mother, and her father were all stationed with him in Iraq.

When Steven was killed by an insurgent grenade on the Fourth of July, their hearts were broken. And yet somehow this remarkable family found a way to put aside their grief and continue to serve our country. Steven's mother said that Steven was proud of what they were doing in Iraq, so 6 days after the funeral, she went back on duty as a medic. His father, Buck, a

gulf war veteran, says he wants to go to Iraq today. This family represents the best of the American spirit, a spirit that shows we have the grit and the will to defend the American people.

One day years from now, another President will be in a room like this. That President will look out upon a sea of caps worn by those who show a quiet pride in their service. Some in that audience will include people who won the fight against fascism and nazism and communism. You'll be joined by younger veterans who have fought in places like Kandahar and Ramadi. And just like you, the new generation of veterans will be able to say proudly they held fast against determined and ruthless enemies, helped salvage an entire region from tyranny and terror, and made a safer world for the American people.

To those future members of the American Legion and to all of you, I offer the gratitude of our Nation, and I offer my prayers for a future of peace. Thank you. And may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Paul A. Morin, national commander, American Legion; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran.

Statement on the National Economy *August 28, 2007*

When we keep taxes low, spending in check, and our economy open—conditions that empower businesses to create new jobs—all Americans benefit. Census Bureau data released today confirms that more of our citizens are doing better in this econ-

omy, with continued rising incomes and more Americans pulling themselves out of poverty.

The Census data shows that income gains in 2006 were substantial and widespread

across all income categories. And the largest percentage income gains occurred for people in the bottom 20 percent of incomes.

The data also shows that poverty levels improved significantly, with nearly half a million fewer people living below the poverty line in 2006 than in 2005. Moreover, the poverty rate in 2006 was lower than all but one year in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Census data also shows that challenges remain in reducing the number of uninsured Americans. Containing costs and making health insurance more affordable is the best way to reverse this long-term trend. I have put forth a reform proposal that would fairly distribute the tax advantages to purchasing health insurance, en-

couraging more workers to purchase their own health insurance.

What American workers do not need right now are tax increases to fuel excess spending by the Congress. I encourage Democratic leaders in Congress to resist their urge to increase taxes on Americans and to live within the budget limits I've proposed. It's vital that we do not undermine an economy that has created more than 8.2 million new jobs over the past 4 years and is improving standards of living for so many American families.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks Following a Dinner With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana August 28, 2007

The President. Ms. Chase, thank you for having us here. Laura and I are thrilled to be here with the Governor and the mayor and the Senator, the Congressman, members of my Cabinet, distinguished leaders in this community, and quiet heroes who have helped bring optimism and hope to New Orleans.

We've got social entrepreneurs in our midst, artists in our midst, all of whom have dedicated their lives to the renewal of New Orleans. And we're so honored to be in this restaurant. I know you would want me to say that the food here is about as good as any place here in New Orleans. [Laughter] And I will say it. [Laughter]

Reverend Fred Luter, Jr. It is that good.

The President. It is good. And we're so honored that you gave us a chance to come to the renovated restaurant. I know you're opening in a couple of weeks.

Leah Chase. In a couple of weeks, yes.

The President. Well, we're thrilled that you would allow us to come and taste your beautiful food in this spectacular room. We love your art, but more importantly, we love your spirit.

Mrs. Chase. Thank you.

The President. You're one of the leaders here in this community.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at Dooky Chase's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Leah Chase, owner, Dooky Chase's Restaurant; Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Sen. Mary L. Landrieu, and Rep. William J. Jefferson of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson. Also participating in the dinner were Donald E. Powell, Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Raymond S. "Coach" Blanco, husband of Gov. Blanco; Tommy Andrade, owner, Blanca, LLC; John Besh, executive

chef, Restaurant August and Besh Steakhouse at Harrah's Casino; Dr. Dale Betterton, comanager, Operation Blessing Medical Clinic; Julia Bland, executive director, Louisiana Children's Museum; Drew Brees, quarterback, New Orleans Saints; Joseph C. Canizaro, chairman and chief executive officer, Columbus Properties; Daryn Dodson, IDEAcorns fellow, Idea Village; Norman C. Francis, chairman, and Kim M. Boyle, member, Louisiana Recovery Authority; Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, USA, com-

manding general, First United States Army; Jared Kahan, volunteer, AmeriCorps; Jay Lapeyre, chairman, Business Council of New Orleans; Agustin "Augie" Lopez, owner, Smilie's Restaurant; Rev. Fred Luter, Jr., pastor, Franklin Street Baptist Church, New Orleans, LA; musician Irvin Mayfield; Father Nguyen The Vien, pastor, Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, New Orleans, LA; and Becky Zaheri, president and founder, Katrina Krewe.

Remarks on Hurricane Katrina Recovery Efforts in New Orleans August 29, 2007

The President. Madam Principal, thank you for having us.

Principal Doris Hicks. You're quite welcome. It's our pleasure.

The President. Laura and I are honored to be here. During the moment of reflection, it is a time to ask for the Almighty's blessings on those who suffered, those who lost a loved one, and remember that there's always a more blessed day in the future. And that's what we're here to celebrate, a more blessed day. And there's no better place to do so than in a place of hope, and that's a school. And so we're honored that you would welcome us.

Mrs. Hicks. Thank you.

The President. We love being with your teachers and your students. Thanks for being here.

Governor, thanks for coming. Governor Kathleen Blanco is an educational reformer. She has done what leaders are supposed to do, and when she sees a problem, address them head on and pass law and budget necessary to achieve educational excellence. And you've done so, Governor. I congratulate you for your leadership.

I'm proud to be with the Congressman. Jeff, thanks for coming. You care deeply

about the students of this district, and we're glad you're here.

I do want to thank Don Powell for joining us. Don is the recovery man who represents the White House and the administration here in Washington—from—in Louisiana from Washington. And I thank you for your service.

I appreciate the State education superintendent, Pastorek. Superintendent, thanks for coming. He's got a vision of excellence for the schools in New Orleans and for Louisiana. He shared that vision with us earlier.

I appreciate Paul Vallas, superintendent here in New Orleans, for his willingness to take on this challenge. He doesn't view it as a problem; he views it as an opportunity. I first met Paul in Chicago, where he was an advocate then like he is today of high expectations and strong accountability to make sure every child learns.

I appreciate Hilda Young; Sister Finnerty, she's the superintendent of the Catholic school system here. I thank all the teachers, students, and parents who've joined us.

Hurricane Katrina broke through the levees; it broke a lot of hearts; it destroyed buildings. But it didn't affect the spirit of

a lot of citizens in this community. This spirit can be best reflected when you think about a principal who refused to allow a school to be destroyed by the flood and worked hard to not only rebuild the building but keep the spirit alive. Or it can be reflected in the fact that teachers commute. We met a seventh grade teacher today who commutes 30 miles every day to be able to impart knowledge and to share wisdom with students who will be leading New Orleans in the future.

And so it's—my attitude is this: New Orleans, better days are ahead. It's sometimes hard for people to see progress when you live in a community all the time. Laura and I get to come—we don't live here; we come on occasion. And it's easy to think about what it was like when we first came here after the hurricane and what it's like today. And this town is coming back. This town is better today than it was yesterday, and it's going to be better tomorrow than it was today. And there's no better place to find that out than in the school system.

First, I do want to thank our fellow citizens for their generosity when it comes to helping New Orleans and the gulf coast rebuild. The citizens of this country thus far have paid out \$114 billion in tax revenues—their money—to help the folks down here. And I appreciate the Governor. Last night we went to—we had a nice dinner here in New Orleans—by the way, I have yet to recover. [*Laughter*] Dooky Chase's, if you want to eat a lot of good food, go there. But during that dinner, the Governor expressed her appreciation to the taxpayers of America. In other words, the taxpayers and people from all around the country have got to understand, the people of this part of the world really do appreciate the fact that the American citizens are supportive of the recovery effort.

Of the 114 billion spent so far and resources allocated so far, about 80 percent of the funds have been disbursed or available. And of course, Don and I will try to work through the bureaucracy in Wash-

ington, just like folks down here are trying to work through the bureaucracy, to make sure that there are adequate plans for the money. And so we're working through this kind of collaborative effort of Federal, State, and local folks working together to make sure that taxpayers' money is spent wisely on priorities.

But there's been a commitment—and a strong commitment. A lot of people down here probably wondered whether or not those of us in the Federal Government not from Louisiana would pay attention to Louisiana or Mississippi. In other words, it's one thing to come and give a speech in Jackson Square, it's another thing to keep paying attention to whether or not progress is being made. And I hope people understand we do. We're still paying attention. We understand.

One of Don Powell's jobs is to make sure that the Federal Government understands the hurdles that remain to—for recovery. One hurdle was the levee system. We fully understand that New Orleans can't be rebuilt until there's confidence in the levees. It's one thing to plan; it's another thing to convince people that the levees will work. And there's been a lot of effort by the Army Corps of Engineers. A matter of fact, Don Powell announced the other day that we're going to complete work to improve storm and flood protection infrastructure to a 100-year protection level by 2011. And that's a commitment, and it's an important commitment to make.

We're also going to fund \$1.3 billion network of interior drainage projects to ensure the area has better hurricane protection. In other words, there's Federal responsibilities. The levee system is the Federal responsibility, and we'll meet our responsibility. And there's a—obviously, we want to work together with the State and local governments as well. Obviously, it's a collaborative effort.

One of the things that Kathleen and I have been working on a long time is wetlands restoration in order to provide more

protection for the folks down here. We got a good bill out of the Congress, and there's an opportunity now for Louisiana to have the cash funds necessary to begin a serious and substantive wetlands restoration program.

I appreciate the fact that Al Gonzales was down yesterday, talking about how the Federal Government can help on local law enforcement matters. I firmly believe local law enforcement is just that—local. It requires a commitment by the local folks to hold people to account for crime. But the Federal Government can help. And so Al was down yesterday, announcing and opening a family justice center to help the victims of domestic violence. The VA is going to build a medical center in downtown New Orleans as part of the Federal commitment to helping people here recover.

And so I come telling the folks in this part of the world that we still understand there's problems and we're still engaged. And Don will continue to make sure that we listen and respond when possible.

But let me talk about the school system. There is nothing more hopeful than a good school system. And I firmly believe that excellence in education is going to be the leading edge of change for New Orleans. Margaret Spellings, who is the Secretary of Education, understands this concept. The Government has provided Louisiana with more than \$700 million in emergency education funds to help not only the public school system but also the parochial school system. And that's money well spent. It's money spent on construction; it's money spent on creating incentives for teachers to return; it's money spent to make sure children who went to other school districts—those school districts got reimbursed. It was good money spent because education needs to be the number-one priority of the State, just like Kathleen Blanco has made that the priority.

New Orleans is about to open 80 schools—nearly 80 schools this fall. That's a remarkable achievement, nearly half of

which happen to be charter schools. I believe in freedom to manage and accountability to make sure everybody learns. And that's the essence of the charter school movement: freedom to manage, but accountability to make sure no child gets left behind.

And that's the spirit of the superintendent—both superintendents here. They believe in high expectations and measuring. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. If you don't believe that somebody can learn, you'll set low expectations. If you believe every child can learn, you'll raise the expectations, and then you'll insist upon measurement to make sure that each child is tracked, that we disaggregate results. That's a fancy word for making sure that we understand whether or not each school is meeting certain standards and then help for those that aren't, changes for those that aren't, and praise for those that are. And we're at MLK, and we're here to heap praise.

Mrs. Hicks. Thank you. I agree.

The President. This is the first public school to open in the Lower Ninth Ward. It is a tribute to volunteers, concerned parents, and citizens who care about education. It is a tribute to the fact that there's teachers who taught in makeshift classrooms during renovations. In other words, they care about the buildings, but they care more about education and were willing to teach no matter what the circumstances may be. And it's a tribute to a principal—

Mrs. Hicks. Thank you.

The President. —who had a clear vision.

Mrs. Hicks. Thank you.

The President. And so we're here to herald excellence and to thank the good folks in this community for supporting this school, with the understanding that this school is one of the great beacons for hope.

I want to thank the educational entrepreneurs who've joined us, those who are

in the process of helping find new teachers. Teachers—there was a great concern obviously when schools were reopening as to whether or not there would be enough teachers. And people responded. People responded to the call to help provide, at a grassroots level, the support necessary to encourage people to teach. TeachNOLA is such an example. If you're interested in being a teacher, from around the country, get on the Internet on teachNOLA and you'll find opportunities to come here to Washington—to New Orleans to teach. We've got somebody from Washington who came down to help rally support for the school system. Teach For America is active in this community.

The charter school system, by the way, spawns all kinds of different opportunities for people to be involved with schools. I think of KIPP McDonogh 15 School. It's a high standard school. It is a school that says, "If there are rules that prevent us from teaching, we'll try to figure out how to get around them, because what matters more than anything is teaching a child."

I was impressed that when they got into the school system there, when they first got going in this particular school, they extended the school day with class every other Saturday. They said, "What does it take to catch up? What do we need to do to meet standards?" And the principal—the former principal put it this way: "It took a hurricane to speed up and really jump-start the reform efforts in New Orleans." In other words, the hurricane was disastrous for many reasons, but it also gave a great opportunity for a new way forward, seized by the Governor and the superintendents and the principals, by the way.

Laura and I care a lot about the libraries. That's why we're dedicating books. We're proud to be a part of the rebuilding of this library. Laura has got a foundation and has established the Gulf Coast Library Recovery Initiative, all aiming to make sure that these libraries are stocked with books. You ought to apply to her foundation, by

the way. [Laughter] I think you'll have a good opportunity. [Laughter]

The First Lady. Absolutely.

Mrs. Hicks. I know.

The President. I'll try to work it for you.

Mrs. Hicks. Good. [Laughter]

The President. I'll never forget, one time when I was Governor of Texas, a woman looked at me, and she said, "Reading is the new civil right." It had a profound impact on the policies that we have pursued since I've been in public office and Laura has pursued as a lifelong reader. And that person was right. We've got to start making sure those youngsters can read at grade level and stay reading at grade level. No better way to send the message that that is a commitment, by making sure the libraries are stocked.

I want to share a story with you about a woman named Rebecca Jeanfreau who's here. Where are you, Rebecca? There you go; thanks for coming. She was a Boston architect. She studied to become an architect and was in a firm. But she is from New Orleans. And she started thinking about the community she loved. And so she said, "I needed to act, and I'm ready to act." And she came back to be a teacher. She left a promising career as a architect to come back to a community that she—that is dear to her heart.

It's that spirit, by the way, that is going to allow me to predict with certainty, New Orleans' better days are ahead for the New Orleans people. I mean, this is a—and there are stories like Rebecca all over this community, people who have heard a call to come back and help. No better way to help, by the way, than to teach.

But there are all kinds of different ways people can help the people of New Orleans and the gulf coast recover. You can contribute to the NGOs or the local organizations that are still helping heal hearts. You can help with sending books to schools. You can get on web sites to determine where the needs are. And if you're a citizen of this country who cares about making

sure this part of the region fully recovers, please participate. Please find a way to help and continue to do so.

So, Governor, I'm honored you're here. Laura and I are thrilled to be in this school. We're really pleased that MLK School has given us an opportunity to herald excellence.

Mrs. Hicks. Thank you.

The President. We care deeply about the folks in this part of the world. We ask for God's blessings on the families who still hurt and suffer. And we thank God for

the recovery efforts that thus far have taken place.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 a.m. at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. William J. Jefferson; Hilda Young, president, Friends of King Board; Eric Johnson, seventh-grade math teacher, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology; and Gary Robichaux, former principal, KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts.

Remarks Following a Visit With New Homeowners in New Orleans August 29, 2007

The President. We have just—Laura and I have just been given a tour by the Whites in their new home. And they're going to be moving into this home this weekend maybe.

Gen White. Yes, this weekend.

The President. There's nothing more hopeful than to be with somebody who says, "Welcome to my home," particularly given the fact that these mixed-use housing projects have replaced old-style, low-income housing projects that frankly didn't work. In other words, the storm came, created a lot of heartbreak and heartache, but people took a different look at how best to help people in their homes.

And we're in this beautiful project. This is a stunning project. So I'm with homeowners-to-be, renters. Here's a homeowner-to-be right here. Right across the street, as a matter of fact, isn't that right? People are going to be able to say, "This is my home."

This is really a remarkable project. For people in New Orleans who remember what this site was like compared to what it is today, they've got to be full of hope. And so I appreciate the builders. I appreciate Alphonso Jackson in Housing and Urban Development, the group that have helped get this project started. But most of all, I appreciate the homeowners-to-be, people who are working hard to be able to say, "This is my home." And we really appreciate you giving us a chance to come by.

Ms. White. Thank you.

The President. And we wish you all the very best in your new home. Congratulations to you.

Thank you all. Good job. Thank you. Good luck to you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. at the River Garden Housing Complex.

Remarks on Gulf Coast Reconstruction in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi August 29, 2007

Thank you all for coming. This is the second anniversary of an event that changed a lot of people's lives here in southern Mississippi and up and down the coast. And Laura and I are honored to be with some of those who endured the storm and have dedicated their lives to rebuilding this part of the world.

We've been down here a lot, and as a result, I've gotten to know the local officials and have come to admire them as people dedicated to public service the way it ought to be. I first of all want to thank the Senator, Trent Lott, and his wife Tricia, for joining us. Nobody cares more about the people of southern Mississippi than the Lotts. The people of southern Mississippi are fortunate to have not only a active Senator, but a powerful Senator working on their behalf. And so, Senator, thank you for being here.

Gene Taylor cares a lot. Laura and I are proud to be here with Congressman Taylor. Gene was raised here. The Taylors' daughter was married right there recently. This is where he told me he was baptized, married, and if you're compassionate enough, will be buried. *[Laughter]* In other words, this is home. And when you're talking about a man's home, you hear a sense of passion in his voice. The Congressman has worked hard to make sure the people down here are well represented, and he's doing a fine job for the people of southern Mississippi. Congressman, thank you for being here.

The Governor of Mississippi has shown his true mettle and his value to the people of Mississippi. When crisis hit, he was calm. When the crisis began to abate a little bit, he planned. And he's been good for the people down here. He's taken a problem on, and he's coordinated it and managed in a way that you'd expect your chief executive to do. And so, Governor, I want to

congratulate you on a job well done. I appreciate the First Lady being here as well. Thanks for working hard for the people down here.

Joining us are members of—a member of my Cabinet, Alphonso Jackson, Housing and Urban Development man. Don Powell is here. He is the Federal Coordinator of the Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding. That really means that he is the President's eyes and ears on the ground. And while we recognize that there are bureaucracies that we have to deal with in order to make sure the taxpayers' money is spent wisely, sometimes the bureaucracies get in the way of common sense. And one of Don's jobs is to help spot that—those obstacles to progress and work with the local folks to try to clear them out of the way.

There's still obstacles, and there's still work to be done. But there's been a lot of progress made, and that's what people have got to understand. And I have come to this site, it's what we call ground zero—this is where the worst of the worst of the storm hit—to be able to show the American people that through their generosity, this infrastructure has been rebuilt.

Before I get there, I do want to thank Phil Bryant, the State auditor, for joining us. Appreciate you coming, Phil. And then I want to pay tribute to the local folks that I mentioned.

First of all, Eddie Favre—he's the mayor of the city of Bay St. Louis. Eddie's—for those of you who may be paying attention to this from around the country, he's the man who—would be known as the man who wears short pants. *[Laughter]* Eddie is—he's a colorful character, but he also is a smart man who has dedicated more in his life than he ever dreamed to helping rebuild a city he loves.

Tommy Longo, he's from Waveland. I've always viewed Waveland as a benchmark to determine whether or not this recovery is more than just shallow. In other words, I'll never forget seeing Waveland as we choppered over Waveland. It was, like, nothing; it was gone, completely destroyed. And so when I talk to Tommy—I really view Tommy as a barometer, and if Tommy is optimistic, I'm going to be optimistic; if Tommy says there is progress, I'm going to say, thanks. And Tommy is okay. [*Laughter*] I wouldn't call him the most optimistic guy on the face of the Earth, but given what he's been through and given what he has seen, it is remarkable that he's still willing to serve with optimism.

And so we've got a lot of work to do. These two mayors brought their problems to us—people are worried about insurance here. They're worried about bureaucracy. I'll tell you what they're really worried about; they're worried about the President and other folks in Washington, other than the Mississippi officials, are going to forget what took place down here. And so one of the reasons that Laura and I have come back is to remind people that we haven't forgotten and won't.

Somebody who sometimes is worried about getting forgotten is the county supervisor, Rocky Pullman. Now, Rocky, I guess we've probably met a dozen times, haven't we, Rock? And Rocks reminds me of the county commissioners from the State I've come from. County commissioners are always worried that the city folks are going to get the attention, but the rural folks will be ignored. Not in this case. Rocky has represented the people of Hancock County well, and we spent a lot of time talking to Rocky about debris and trees and other issues still facing the people down here.

Ground zero got hit really hard. I mean, this is the place where the storm did its most damage. And while there is better recovery down the coast, people here are still trying to crawl out from underneath

the extensive damage. It's really one of the messages I heard. And we're proud that Pascagoula is doing better and Biloxi is doing better. That's good. It's good for the State, and we're thrilled that that's happening. But the folks here had a special, extra problems to deal with, and I heard you loud and clear. And I want to thank you for sharing that with me.

The American people have written a check—written checks for \$114 billion to help the people on the coast. And so one thing I do want the American people to know is how grateful the people of this part of the country are for their generosity. We felt we had an obligation to help, and we've helped. Now, of that 114 billion, about 80 percent has been obligated. Mississippi has taken the obligated money and is spending it wisely. There's still 20 percent of the authorized that hasn't been shipped out yet, so there's more money coming. And there's—obviously, we've got some more issues that we're trying to work through in time.

One area where there's been great State-Federal cooperation and local cooperation is the rebuilding of this Bay St. Louis Bridge. Now, remember when we first choppered over here, Governor; the bridge was—there might have been a few pylons showing. You could see the planks underwater of that bridge. And this is a major connector for the people in this part of the world. This is a economic lifeline. So the Federal Government said, we have an obligation to repair infrastructure. I think the Congressman told me we've written a little more than \$260 million worth of checks to help get this bridge built, but more importantly, this bridge was built in record time because of the close cooperation between the State and the Federal Government and the local folks. And it's a beautiful looking bridge, and it's working.

There's another bridge in the foreground here, and that's a private sector bridge.

That's the railroad bridge that's up and running. The private sector is responding here in southern Mississippi. The State of Mississippi—it's interesting—I want to tell our fellow citizens about what they have done here in 2 years' period. One, they've helped move 31,000 families out of temporary housing into permanent homes. I don't think we would have been that optimistic 2 years ago when we were recovering from the storms that it would be possible to make those kind of moves that quickly.

This is a State that opened virtually every public school that was damaged in the storm, a State that understands that education is part of the—an important part of the recovery effort. There's a billion dollars have gone out to help homeowners with repairs and rebuilding. The State is active in trying to help the citizens regain their footing. Tax revenues are up.

Now, that's positive, but that doesn't mean there's not more work to be done and more efforts made to help ground zero recover. The interesting thing about the folks who live in this part of the world, they may have lost their building, but they never lost their soul or their spirit. I think the Senator called them—resilience is what he'd like to define people. I call them optimistic about life.

And one such person is Kay Gough, who is with us today. Kay is somewhere—there she is, right there. Here's an interesting story. First of all, she's a—she loves Bay St. Louis. She recognizes the uniqueness of the community. She's a lifelong reader.

She was concerned about what happened to her community. So what did she do? She opened a bookstore on Main Street, Bay St. Louis. First business up, right? One of the first, yes. And it's an interesting example of the entrepreneurial spirit and a—combined with a civic duty. She said there's still a lot of work that needs to be done to get people back in these communities so that they can be buying her books. She said, "We want people to know that we want to be a part of the recovery and we want to be a part of the community."

It's that community spirit that has been very impressive to me and Laura. It's that can-do attitude. It's the attitude that said, "Okay, a storm came. We understand it, we don't like it, but we're going to deal with it." That's the Mississippi spirit.

And so we're glad to be back. We're glad to be back in a part of our country that is going to be better than it was before. It's—there's still work. We understand that. There's work in Louisiana to be done; there's work in Mississippi to be done. But the progress that has been made really speaks to the coordination of Government effort, but it really speaks to the great spirit of the people who live down here.

May God bless them, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. at Our Lady of the Gulf Parish Community Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi and his wife Marsha.

Statement on the 15th Anniversary of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program

August 29, 2007

Today is the 15th anniversary of the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, established in 1992 under the leadership of President George H.W. Bush and

Senators Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn. CTR programs are a critical tool used to address one of the gravest threats we face: the danger that terrorists and proliferators

could gain access to weapons or materials of mass destruction.

Under the CTR Program, thousands of nuclear warheads have been deactivated, and thousands of delivery systems—including missiles, strategic bombers, and strategic ballistic nuclear submarines—have been eliminated. Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine are free of nuclear weapons and strategic delivery systems. The CTR Program is working to complete security upgrades to Russian nuclear warhead storage sites under the Bratislava Nuclear Security Cooperation Initiative announced by President Putin and me in 2005. To date, over 75 percent of the Russian warhead sites and 160 buildings containing hundreds of metric tons of weapons-usable nuclear material have been secured. Work is underway at the balance of the warhead and material sites, to be completed on an accelerated basis by the end of 2008 under the Bratislava Initiative.

We have also achieved nearly 75 percent completion toward our goal of shutting down two of the last three remaining Russian weapons-grade plutonium production reactors by the end of 2008 and nearly one-third completion toward shutting down the last reactor by the end of 2010, thus eliminating approximately 1.2 metric tons

of weapons-grade plutonium per year. Through the CTR Program, several large-scale Soviet biological and chemical production facilities have been safely dismantled in Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia.

By working to secure, eliminate, and account for weapons and materials of mass destruction, the CTR Program supports the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction and remains the cornerstone for U.S. funding of the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

Another important accomplishment of CTR is the redirection of thousands of former weapons scientists in the former Soviet Union, Libya, and Iraq into commercial or other nonmilitary pursuits. In addition, the CTR Program has helped Albania destroy all of its chemical weapons.

As the threat continues to evolve elsewhere, U.S. CTR efforts are expanding to include the work of securing dangerous biological pathogens, rapidly detecting disease outbreaks, and improving export controls and border security to stop the movement of materials of mass destruction worldwide.

NOTE: The statement referred to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *August 30, 2007*

I strongly condemn the ongoing actions of the Burmese regime in arresting, harassing, and assaulting prodemocracy activists for organizing or participating in peaceful demonstrations. These activists were voicing concerns about recent dramatic increases in the price of fuel, and their concerns should be listened to by the regime rather than silenced through force.

The Burmese regime should heed the international calls to release these activists

immediately and stop its intimidation of those Burmese citizens who are promoting democracy and human rights. I also call on the regime to release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and to lift restrictions on humanitarian organizations that seek to help the people of Burma.

Interview With Foreign Print Media August 30, 2007

The President. So like, what are the rules?

National Security Council Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Dennis C. Wilder. On the record.

The President. I'm talking about for these people back here.

National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe. It's all on the record. It's embargoed until these fine people have a chance to run their stories.

The President. Good. Thanks. I'm looking forward to my trip. This is the seventh APEC summit that I've been to. I find them to be important for the United States in the following ways.

One, it's an opportunity to stress the importance that we place upon basic values, basic value of liberty, basic value of open markets in order to enhance prosperity. It's a chance to remind people that we are linked together. It's an interesting setting, when you have people from different cultures, different languages come together for a common purpose. I think that's important.

It's also a chance for me to remind our country how important it is to have constructive ties in Asia. Asia is a place where we've spilt a lot of blood in the past, and now it's a place of peace. Asia is a place where the United States was engaged militarily, and now we're engaged culturally and socially and economically in a way that is constructive for our peoples.

It will be an opportunity for—remind me that it's possible for enemies to be allies and for enemies to be friends. It's a lesson for a lot of us to think about when we think about the Middle East, that forms of government matter and hopeful societies yield peace.

I'm looking forward to the discussions about trade. The first priority for trade for me at the meeting will be on Doha. I'm

a firm believer in free trade. I believe the Doha round is the best opportunity for us to accomplish a couple of objectives. One is to fight off protectionism and trade freely, and secondly is to help eliminate poverty. This will be an opportunity for the leaders of the APEC summit to express their desire to see the Doha round succeed. We'll take the lead in that, along with other nations.

There's also an opportunity for us to start talking about a free trade agreement of the Pacific region. And I'm looking forward to having that dialog, begin the dialog. It would just be kind of an interesting opportunity to have the dialog on this aspect of our strategic partnership there and to move forward. We've got a lot of—we've got some free trade agreements with people, and that will be at the table. I'd like to see those free trade agreements become regionalized.

Opportunity for me to continue to talk about the struggle between radicalism and reasonableness, between extremism and people that want to live in peace. I happen to believe—I'm sure you've heard me say this—that we're in a major ideological struggle—a struggle we will win, by the way. But it's going to require resolve and dedication. And this will be an opportunity for me to remind our friends at the table that this is the call of our time and that we have an opportunity to write a hopeful chapter here in the beginning of the 21st century and to thank people around the table for understanding this is the call of the time, because there's been a lot of constructive engagement and good work, all aimed at protecting ourselves from short-term attack—in the short term from attack and recognizing that changing conditions of life in the long term will enable us to live in peace.

And finally, I'm looking forward to reminding people that I take the climate change issue seriously; that we recognize that there needs to be international—an international accord to get people at the table who are the major emitters to set a goal. Step one to solving a problem is to set the goal on what we ought to achieve. If you want somebody to be a part of the problem—a part of the solution, you need to let them be a part of defining what the goal ought to be. That's the strategy.

So many of the people at the APEC table are going to come to the major economy conference that—those of us who are emitters will be there, including China, which will be at the table. I don't want to single China out, but China has got a major role to play. Any agreement without China is not going to be an effective agreement. So my strategy has been to get China at the table. We will further the dialog. John Howard has got some very interesting ways to further the dialog in a constructive way, particularly talking about energy usage. So we'll be looking forward to his leadership on the issue. When I told him I was looking forward to coming, we discussed this issue. He's concerned about greenhouse gases. And so he'll take the lead here at the conference, and the United States will play a constructive role.

Anyway, that's why I'm looking forward to going. We've got a big agenda. It's my second trip to Australia. I remind people that Australia—parts of Australia reminds me of Texas—[laughter]—and there's no higher compliment. [Laughter]

So, given that, Geoff, why don't you start off? We'll do two rounds, then I've got to go.

Asia-Pacific Region-U.S. Relations/North Korea/China

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. I think on behalf of all of us, I can say thank you very much for this opportunity today.

The President. Thanks.

Q. As you've just analyzed, Mr. President, obviously Iraq and the Middle East, the war on terror is an overarching policy issue for the Bush administration. Nonetheless, there has been a perception in the region that this has distracted Washington from engagement in Asia. There's been some criticism on that score. Some people are calling this the Pacific century. You're cutting short your trip to Sydney because of the Iraq issue. I'm just wondering, do you think that's warranted, that criticism, and do you see China, for instance, playing the role—the driver in the Pacific century, not the U.S.?

The President. No, it's interesting, first of all, this administration has got good bilateral relations with Japan, good bilateral relations with China, good bilateral relations with Korea. Our relationship with the ASEAN countries are as strong as America has ever been, and of course our ties with Australia are tight, really tight.

And the reason I say that is, is that this just doesn't happen without work. And I have worked hard to develop bilateral relations in such a way that we can achieve strategic objectives. I believe the relations with the United States and the Asian-Pacific region have never been better, and as a result, we're addressing problems and creating opportunities.

One problem, of course, is North Korea. When I came into office, the world was expecting the United States to solve the North Korea issue alone. To me—and the North Korean leader had basically not honored the bilateral agreement that had been struck, and therefore, felt like we needed to put this issue in a position in which others were speaking besides the United States—and have started the six-party talks. Five countries were convinced to come to the table on one side to convince the North Korean leader to give up his nuclear weapons ambitions. It's working. That wouldn't have happened without engagement and good, solid relations.

Another issue obviously is our bilateral relations with China. It's the same—you're in a little different position in that you've got a nice trade surplus with China. We've got a trade deficit with China. And it's important for us to have a—given the complexity of our relationship, that we've got a strategic relationship that allows for engagement and for us to help deal with a major trade deficit, for example, and/or product safety or a SARS outbreak. Secretary Paulson—I empowered Secretary Paulson to develop this special working relationship with China. And it requires a lot of engagement. It requires engagement at the top, with President Hu Jintao, who I respect, as well as people in my Cabinet. So there's a lot of interchange. For those who argue that, they really haven't—frankly haven't followed how engaged we have been.

Is China an issue for the world? Absolutely. But I don't view it as a negative issue; I view it as an opportunity to work with a—one of the really significantly growing economies in the world.

Here's the way I view it: First, I view that a growing middle class in China is good for U.S. exporters. It provides opportunity. And it's—by the way, it's not only good for U.S. exports; it's good for Australian exporters, and it's good for Japanese exporters, and it's good for Singaporean, Malaysian. Anybody who is making a product somebody wants, it's just a good opportunity.

And so as a part of our engagement with China, we have worked with Hu Jintao to convince him to help convert his economy from one of savers to one of consumers, which means—and by the way, that takes a lot of effort and work to get in a position where you can even make those kind of constructive suggestions—which means the development of a pension system or health care, so that people don't feel like they have to hoard their money to save for a rainy day, but in fact, there's some kind of safety net that is predictable, which then

would convert a Chinese person who is beginning to realize better income into a consumer. And then all of a sudden, you've got consumers, which provide opportunity.

Now, Hu Jintao actually gave these remarks at the White House—along these lines—at the East Room there. It took a lot of trust and work to get—to enable him to make that statement, but that's the kind of statement which people around the region ought to say, thankfully—I'm thankful that he was able to say that, because it takes what some view as a problem and converts it into a great opportunity for all of us to grow our respective economies.

Trade

Q. Huge economic opportunity—you see China as the big grower of the economy in the Asia Pacific?

The President. No, I see the United States as the big driver for trade. We're a significant economy. At APEC, people ought to be wondering whether or not George Bush is going to keep taxes low to make sure our economy continues to grow, because we're a significant trading partner. I view China as an opportunity.

I think the United States is going to drive a lot of the trade. That's why we conducted—now, having said that, I think China will provide opportunity for Australian producers, but we also provide the same opportunity. I don't view it as a zero-sum game, let me put it to you that way. I view it as an—I view—all of us contribute, so long as the world doesn't slip into protectionism. And part of the reason one goes to APEC is to promote trade and opportunity.

Tia.

China-U.S. Relations/War on Terror

Q. Just following up about China. Do you consider actually China is a friend or an enemy? And how do you plan to win the hearts and win the markets in the world, including in Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, we have a complex relationship with China. It is one that—where it is growing; it's changing. The United States strongly supports markets. China is a market that's developing. On the other hand, we also support open societies, transparency, where people are allowed to express themselves in a free society. I believe in freedom of religion. I believe in basic freedoms.

So our relationship with China is, on the one hand, we welcome trading opportunities. We want there to be free trade and fair trade; we want the currency to float. These are complex issues. And what makes the relationship even more complex is, at the same time, we believe in human rights and human dignity. And we worked with the Chinese leadership to promote human rights and human dignity.

So it's not—it's hard to define the relationship in kind of a simple, one-sentence structure. And so "complex" is probably the best way to say, but positive. As I told you, I view China as a positive opportunity. And from a personal perspective, have got warm and cordial relationships with President Hu Jintao. I like him; I like to talk to him. He's a smart man. We can share issues together. I can say, "What are your biggest problems?" And he can say to me, "What are your problems?" In other words, we've got a personal relationship.

And that's the way I try to do with all leaders because the best diplomacy is when you can sit down with somebody one on one and speak candidly about issues and problems. We're problem-solvers. See, that's what leaders do. You see problems and you anticipate problems and work together to accomplish something. And therefore, there has to be a personal relationship.

I've also got a very good relationship with your leader. And so bilateral relations—first of all, in the Muslim world, it's very important for people to understand that the war on terror is not a war against Muslims; it's a war against murderers. I don't believe

religious people, truly religious people kill the innocent. At least that's not the religion I believe in. And therefore, it's important for leaders and countries to work together to prevent the murder of the innocent and, at the same time, make sure that we respect—America, in my case, respects religion, values the right for people to worship, and, in the case of Islam, values Islam as an important part of the international scene in the world we live in.

Otsuka.

North Korea/Abduction of Japanese Citizens

Q. Thank you very much, sir.

The President. How are you?

Q. Good.

The President. Have we met before?

Q. No, first time.

The President. Yes, well, I'm better for it. [Laughter]

Q. I have a question on North Korea.

The President. North Korea, sure.

Q. Is it possible that North Korea will give up nuclear weapons program by the end of your term? And to help achieve it, are you ready to remove North Korea from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, even without the resolution of Japanese abductee issue?

The President. Yes, thank you. As to the first part of your question, I certainly hope that North Korea honors its agreements. They—in September of 2006, they made a substantial agreement to disclose and dismantle all aspects of a nuclear weapons program. Is that right, September 6th?

National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley. 2005.

The President. Yes, 2005, excuse me. And here we are in 2007, nearly 2 years later, where we're still reminding them of that agreement. On the other hand, a lot has happened in the last couple of months that would lead me to believe that we're on—we're making progress. And we will continue to push toward the full disclosure and dismantlement.

Secondly, we have—different aspects of our relationship are on the table, but it's performance based. In other words, we expect people to honor their agreements.

Finally, as I assured Prime Minister Abe, that we're not going to forget the abductee issue. He and the Japanese people are very concerned that once certain aspects of the agreement are achieved, that we will forget the fact that Japanese citizens have been abducted.

Well, let me tell you something, Otsuka—Ryuichi.

Q. Ryuichi.

The President. Ryuichi. I'll never forget the meeting I had with the mother—it's very important for your readers to know that that had a deep impression on me—the mother whose daughter was abducted by North Koreans. I can't imagine what that would mean. I guess I can imagine what it would mean; I just can't understand, fully understand the pain that she felt—still feels. And I'll never forget her coming to the Oval Office with the picture of that little girl, picture of her daughter who got abducted. She sat right there in the Oval Office. And my point to you is, is that I'm not going to forget the mother or forget the fact.

And so we'll work with the—continue to work with the Japanese to make it clear to the North Koreans that we also expect there to be resolution to this issue. In other words, I understand, as well as I possibly can, the emotion that people attach to this issue.

Salmy.

Organization of Islamic Conference/War on Terror

Q. Yes, sir. Mr. President.

The President. By the way, happy 50th.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. I remember when I turned 50; I felt old. [*Laughter*] But now that I'm over 60, it's not that old.

Q. Not that bad.

The President. No, it really isn't. You're not even close. You wouldn't even know.

Q. You look very young, sir.

The President. You are young. Oh, I look young? [*Laughter*] Good. I'm feeling pretty young, thanks. It's all in your mind.

Q. Sir, your administration has indicated interest to appoint a special envoy to the Organization of Islamic Conference, or the OIC. Have you identified the person? And what will he or she do to bridge relations with the Islamic countries in the Muslim world, in light of the war in Iraq and in light of the detention of extremists from Muslim countries?

The President. First of all, we have not identified the person yet. We're working toward that end. As a matter of fact, I spoke to the Secretary of State about this this morning, coincidentally enough. And she's coming in, I think, tomorrow. Anyway, we're working the issue.

Secondly, the reason why I suggested—or announced that we're going to do this is because I am concerned about the perceptions in the Muslim world that the United States views the war on terror as a war against a particular religion. And I just explained to you that this is a war of extremists and radicals, ideologues driven by a vision that is not—that hijacks religion in order to justify their position. And any chance we have to dispel false notion and to reinforce the realities is helpful to the United States and frankly others as well. And so that's the reason to name the envoy.

It also is a clear signal that we respect nations and that we treat the Islamic world seriously. And you can do that all different kinds of ways. It's just another statement. It's another moment for people to see the seriousness of intent. In terms of—murder is murder, and murder to achieve political objectives is—needs to be stopped. People murdered Americans to achieve a political objective. There's a debate in our country whether that's true or not. I've made up my mind. I believe it's absolutely fundamentally true because I'm listening to

what the enemy says, the enemy of freedom, what they're saying. They say, "We want a caliphate, we want to spread our vision."

It took a military action, by the way, to liberate people from that vision in Afghanistan. This wasn't an attack on Islam; this was an attack for liberty. Think about a society in which you two could not function in what you're doing because of your gender. Why? Because the vision of these people—who murder the innocent, by the way, to achieve their vision—is that women aren't equal. And it just so happened that, given the way the world is today, that that kind of ideologue provided safe haven for people who plotted and killed people in our country. One, I'm not going to stand for it; I'm going to protect America, just like any other leader would protect their own country. And two, one way to achieve long-term peace is to help people realize forms of government that give hope. And so whether it be in Afghanistan and Iraq, we're helping people realize the blessings of freedom. And frankly, the world ought to be in there helping. And they are, many are.

Freedom yields peace. Asia is peaceful. Why? Because freedom is prevailing, that's why. Forms of government matter. And so the ambassador to the OIC or the President or any other representative of America will be expressing this deep desire to work together to achieve peace.

Derwin.

Six-Party Talks/U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia

Q. Mr. President, what do you think you have achieved with regards to U.S. ties with Asia during your time in office? And what do you consider to be unfinished business?

The President. Unfinished business is North Korea. It's—let me just say, it is finishing. In other words, we're making progress. The six-party talks is working. The first step was to get people to the table, to remind people that it's just not the United States with responsibility. The pur-

pose of the—getting all five of us to the table is so that if North Korea tried to say, "Well, I'm really—I said I was going to do it, but I'm not going to do it," then there is somebody else also saying, "And here are the consequences."

And so that's a major step forward. And now it's beginning to work because they're verifiably beginning to shut down the reactor. And so we've got more to do.

So it's finishing, but unfinished. "Unfinished" is kind of a loaded word, in a way. Sort of like—the question is, can it happen before I'm through? Yes, it can. I hope so. But I'm not—we're not in control of—we're in control of putting the process in place and making sure it's consequential if somebody doesn't go forward. But it's the leader of North Korea who gets to the make the decision. It's his choice to make. I've made my choice. It's his choice to make.

Let me reiterate a little bit of what I said earlier. The definition of successful foreign policy is to be in a position to work with others to solve problems. And this administration has worked hard to be in a position to convince others to work together to solve problems.

I've just outlined some of the problems, some of the problems—whether or not trade is open and people are treated fairly. One classic example of this is intellectual property rights. I know that's a deep concern to your Government, just like it is to all our governments, that if you're trading with a country, you want to make sure that those intellectual property rights are treated respectfully.

And in some societies, it's difficult. And therefore, we have to be in a position to work collaboratively and bilaterally to convince countries that in order to be a part of the international world, you have to honor contract. And one contract is, you don't steal somebody else's intellectual property. That's hard work. But nevertheless, those kind of relationships exist now; we're able to have those kind of dialogs.

There's been a lot of cooperation on the security front in remarkable ways since I've been President. The leadership of your country knows full well the dangers of extremism prevailing and have been very strong in working, for example, on the Proliferation Security Initiative. This is an initiative where many APEC nations have agreed to help find and stop the shipment of materials which could end up in the hands of extremists and radicals that could harm us.

And it took a while to get this relationship in place. But it's a relationship that is necessary to help prevent weapons of mass destruction from being moved. And it's been a very effective relationship. And here's a classic case of a successful collaborative effort.

The biggest danger we have, it seems like to me, is isolationism and protectionism becoming prevalent philosophies. One of the things that this administration has done in working with our friends is to work hard to explain to people the beneficial nature of trading together. And therefore—and that's manifested, by the way, in, for example, the free trade agreement with Australia, which wasn't a given. And there were some difficulties to overcome in Australia and in the United States, but nevertheless, we got it done. And entering into free trade agreements with other nations, such as Singapore, has been good ways of making sure that we codify the benefits of open trading relationships.

And so there's been a lot of progress made, and the North Korean issue is the issue that we're spending a lot of time on and, hopefully, we can get completed.

One more round. Geoff.

Opposition Leader Kevin M. Rudd of Australia/President's Upcoming Visit to Australia

Q. Okay. Mr. President, thank you. Just to the domestic scene, we've got Federal elections, as you know, coming up in Australia. Last time around, you had some

comments with regards to the then opposition leader's policies on Iraq. You described his policy of withdrawal from Iraq as disastrous. You have a one-on-one meeting with the opposition leader, Kevin Rudd; he's ahead in the polls. He's also got a policy in Iraq which talks about withdrawal, albeit with caveats. I'm just wondering, what's your view of the opposition leader, Kevin Rudd? What will you discuss in the meeting? And what do you make of his Iraq policy?

The President. Yes, first of all, I think it makes sense for me to reach out to leading political figures when I go to other countries. And so I'm looking forward to this meeting. I don't know much about him, frankly. Obviously, I haven't—maybe I met him; I don't remember meeting him. When I spoke to the Parliament—

Q. He was an opposition member then.

The President. Could have been shaking hands. I'm going to remind him that, one, the stakes in Iraq are very high for peace; that the liberation of a country—that country was important for peace; and that a democracy—Iraqi-style democracy in the heart of the Middle East is part of winning this ideological struggle. So the first thing I'm going to do is explain to him my views about this—the world in which we live. And I'll remind him that, as far as I'm concerned, that leaving Iraq before the job is done will cause an enemy that attacked us before to become emboldened. And as John Abizaid put it, to think the enemy will stay there and not follow us here is—in other words, we leave before the job is done, they will follow us home.

That—I will remind him that the best way to conduct policy is based upon conditions on the ground; that success is important; that conditions ought to be driving troop deployments. And that's how—I'll tell him how—what I would hope all our coalition partners would view the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Having said that, I do appreciate very much the fact that the Australians have sacrificed and have served. And I'm looking forward to seeing some Australian troops with Prime Minister Howard to thank them and, as importantly, thank their families for joining America and a lot of other countries in the great cause of liberation and peace.

It's going to be an interesting trip, and what's interesting about these trips is that the time around the table with leaders is important, but also the time sitting down with individuals is important as well. It's a good opportunity to conduct foreign policy. And as I told you, a lot of foreign policy, for me, is the capacity to just look at somebody in the eye and tell them what I think and listen to what they think. It's finding that common ground, if possible, to solve problems. Leaders are problem-solvers. And sometimes you can solve problems by anticipating them and putting the conditions in place so that they won't arise in the first place. And sometimes they just show up, and you better be in a position to deal with them.

Military Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

Q. Can I just clarify something?

The President. Yes.

Q. Mr. Rudd is—his theater—he's talked about the importance of Afghanistan, talking about withdrawing our troops from Iraq. But do you support that they stay, that view?

The President. Support what view?

Q. That he is determined to—he has determined that the issue on Afghanistan—to keep troops in Afghanistan.

The President. I view both Iraq and Afghanistan as theaters of the same war against radicals and extremists and look forward to sharing my views with Mr. Rudd, of course, and continue our discussions, strategic discussions with John Howard. I mean, all right.

Tia, back to you again.

Abu Bakar Ba'asyir

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My next question would touch on Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

The President. About what?

Q. Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

The President. Yes, right, right.

Q. As you might know, since he was released from jail, has been exercising activities like any other citizens, including recently—last weekend he inaugurated a long march participated by about 1,000 of his followers, in connection with that commemoration, or welcoming the Ramadan, Islamic fasting month. Actually, how close has your Government monitored the activities of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir? And my main question is, do you think Ba'asyir is still dangerous?

The President. First of all, I didn't know he led a parade of a thousand people. So that may answer your first question. I'm sure our Embassy is aware of the activities that take place in your country. I mean, you are a free country where people are allowed to express themselves in the public square, which is a sign of a healthy society.

I am concerned, however, about anybody who preaches violence and extremism and radicalism in a world in which innocent people just get simply murdered for ideological purposes. There were some terrible murders in your country, as you know, just like in mine, and I'm confident that by far the vast majority—all of Indonesia rejects that kind of behavior. Innocent people were killed in Bali for no other reason than they just happened to be vacationing and because somebody wanted to send a political message because they're involved with this ideological struggle. And those of us who want there to be peace have got to reject this kind of behavior.

And so your Government is a government of law; your Government will conduct itself according to your laws. But anybody who preaches that kind of violence in the

name of what I would call a dark political vision needs to be taken seriously.

Japan's Role in the War on Terror

Q. My next question is about the U.S.-Japan relationship and the war on terror.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. The opposition party in Japan is threatening to cut the extension of Japanese participation in the antiterrorism operations in the Indian Ocean.

The President. Yes.

Q. What do you—question: Are you concerned about that? And will you be—will you raise this issue when you will meet Prime Minister Abe in Australia?

The President. First of all, Japan has been a positive contributor to dealing with the extremists in this ideological war. And I thank the Japanese Government and the people of Japan for their contributions. And I would hope that they would continue to maintain this—their positive influence.

And of course, my conversations with Prime Minister Abe, whom I respect a great deal, will center on the war on terror, as well as a lot of other key issues. Japan has played a significant role in many of the things we've discussed here, like Proliferation Security Initiative, six-party talks. They've been a constructive partner in peace, and I will—we will talk about all aspects of our relationship.

Malaysia-U.S. Relations/Democracy in Malaysia/President's Upcoming Meeting With ASEAN Leaders

Q. Mr. President, tomorrow, August 31st, Malaysia celebrates its 50th—

The President. Fiftieth—make sure my congratulatory remarks get in your article. Headline: Bush Congratulates Malaysia. [Laughter] Do you think that's what it will say?

Q. Something like that.

The President. Upbeat, optimistic George Bush—[laughter].

Q. War on terrorism.

The President. Yes, sure.

Q. It also marks the 50th relations between the U.S. and Malaysia—

The President. Yes.

Q. So what are your outlook and hopes for U.S.-Malaysia relations, and especially with Malaysia being the 10th largest trading partner?

The President. First of all, I do believe we ought to have—take this notion of trade and have meaningful discussions with a potential free trade agreement with Malaysia. Secondly, I respect Prime Minister Badawi, admire his leadership. When his wife died, I tried to call him early just to let him know I cared about him.

Q. He has remarried.

The President. Has he? Good. I'll congratulate him. Thanks for giving me that heads-up. Don't put that in the article, that you had to tell me that. You can put it in there if you want. [Laughter] I'll be glad to—I'm going to congratulate him. That's neat.

Mr. Wilder. You did, sir.

The President. What?

Mr. Wilder. You did congratulate him.

The President. Exactly. I'm going to congratulate him again. [Laughter] I'll double the congratulations. [Laughter] That's right; I did write him a note. I forgot. Did I call him or write him a note?

Mr. Wilder. You wrote him a note.

The President. That's right, yes. Sent him a couple flowers. Anyway, Malaysia is an interesting example of how a free society can deal with movements that could conceivably change and alter the nature of the free society. And I respect the way the Prime Minister has used freedom and used the openness of society to kind of deal with frustration. I mean, all societies have frustrated people. And the question is, will the outlet of that frustration lead to violence or lead to peace? And Malaysia is an example of a country where frustrations have been channeled in a constructive way. And therefore, he's a leader, as far as I'm concerned, and a very constructive force for Southeast Asia.

By the way, I am going to meet with the ASEAN leaders, which is an important meeting as well. It's an opportunity for the United States to stay very much engaged with ASEAN. I unfortunately will not be there for the 60th, but look forward to having an event that would kind of recognize the importance of ASEAN as far as the United States is concerned.

President's Upcoming Meeting With ASEAN Leaders/Alternative Fuel Sources/Environment

Q. So this is a side meeting with the ASEAN leaders after APEC meeting, sir?

The President. Yes, a side meeting with the ASEAN leaders at APEC. I try to do that every time. So they'll have somebody like—I'll sit down and meet with the ASEAN nations as well.

The other thing that's interesting about Malaysia is, they're going to be one of the leaders on alternative fuels.

Q. Biofuel.

The President. Biofuels—absolutely. And that's another area where we can work together. As you know, I'm an alternative fuels person. I believe that it's in our interests that we develop the technologies necessary to deal with energy dependence as well as greenhouse gases. Back to the climate changes—the way—if you're truly interested in dealing with greenhouse gases, people need to focus on the development of technologies that will enable us to, on the one hand, grow our economies, on the other hand, be good stewards of the environment.

Just for the record—and this probably won't be a headline, although I've tried to make it one a lot—when it comes time to climate change, there's one major industrialized nation that actually grew its economy and reduced greenhouse gases; that would be the United States of America—that actually had greenhouse gases go down and the economy go up. So something is working here, and it's technologies, use of technologies. And so I'm going to be re-

minding people about—that we can come up with a strategy that doesn't impoverish our people and, at the same time, takes advantage of technologies. And we're going to need to share some technologies with newly emerging economies in order to achieve this objective.

Anyway, I forgot to make that point.

Q. Mr. President, there appears to be—

The President. I'm not making the point to you, as you can tell. That's why I'm kind of looking over your shoulder. [Laughter]

Asia-Pacific Region-U.S. Relations

Q. There appears to be a perception in Southeast Asia that this administration has neglected the region. How do you plan to convince them otherwise when you meet in APEC?

The President. Well, I—do you want to ask another question, because I already answered it. I'll be glad to answer it again—which is, we've got strong bilateral—first of all, the number of trips I've taken—I've gone to every APEC meeting. I've spent a lot of time with leaders both here and in your respective countries—that we've got relations to a point where we can work together to solve common problems. PSI is one such example of a strategy we've implemented to deal with the realities of the world. North Korea is another example.

And so it's—the truth of the matter is, I spend a lot of time working on Asian matters. And all I'll ask you to do is look at the results of the individual relationships and the ability to put processes in place to deal with the threats we live in and the capacity to work together to solve problems and to create opportunities. And to me, that's a sign of a healthy, robust relationship with an important part of the world.

Okay. Thank you all. Enjoyed it. Looking forward to making the trip.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia; Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; President Hu Jintao of China; President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan; Sakie Yokota, mother of Megumi Yokota, who was ab-

ducted by North Korean authorities; and Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command. A reporter referred to Mark Latham, former leader, Australian Labor Party. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 31. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With David Speers of Sky News *August 30, 2007*

Australia's Role in the War on Terror

Mr. Speers. Mr. President, the United States has around 160,000 troops in Iraq at the moment. Australia has, in its battle group, only around 500 in the relatively safe Dhi Qar Province. Is this just a symbolic contribution? Would it really matter if they were brought home?

The President. First, I want to thank the Howard Government and the people of Australia for joining this global struggle against extremists and radicals who are trying to impose their vision on the world. And that struggle is found—being played out in Iraq and Afghanistan right now and other places.

And so I view Australia's contribution to peace and freedom as more than just Iraq. I view it as, one, a strategic partnership with the United States. I view their contribution as intelligence contributions. But I also understand that there's a commitment to helping people live in freedom as a long-term solution to this ideological struggle.

And I'm often asked about coalition troops. And my attitude is, our coalition partners ought to be making decisions based upon conditions on the ground, because failure in Iraq would lead to, in my judgment, to turmoil, chaos in the Middle East, and other attacks on the United States and other nations. Success will be

a major blow to these radicals and extremists that will make it easier for us to say we've done our duty and laid the foundation for peace.

Opposition Leader Kevin M. Rudd of Australia/War on Terror

Mr. Speers. Well, as you know, there's an election only 2 or 3 months away in Australia, and Kevin Rudd, the Opposition Leader, is ahead in all of the polls. And he has promised to pull those combat troops out of Iraq if he wins. He says he'll consult with the U.S. So, if he does win, what would you be saying to him? Would you be trying to convince him not to do that?

The President. Well, actually, I believe he's on my calendar. I, of course, will be meeting with the Prime Minister, and then I'll be meeting with Mr. Rudd, and I'm looking forward to it. He doesn't know me, and I don't know him. And so I look forward to sharing my views and would ask, if he were to win, that he consider conditions on the ground before making any decisions, that what matters is success. And I believe we can be successful. And I know it's important to be successful. And I will be glad to explain to him why I'm optimistic that this hard work will achieve what we all want, which is, over time, fewer troops and peace. The main thing we want

is to make sure that we deal these radicals and extremists a major blow, which is success in Iraq.

See, here's the interesting thing that I hope the people of Australia understand: There are two forms of extremism that have now converged on Iraq. One is Sunni extremism in the likes of Al Qaida. These people in Iraq swore allegiance to the very same person that ordered the attack on the United States of America. Sunni extremists have killed Australians. Sunni extremists that are inspired by this ideology are killing around the world.

And then there's the strain of Shiism extremism that is fostered by Iran. And these are the two major threats to world peace, and they've converged on Iraq, which should say that we need to do the hard work necessary so we can have peace in the long term for children growing up both in the United States and Australia.

Military Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq

Mr. Speers. So you need those Australian troops there.

The President. We need all our coalition partners. And I would hope that—and I understand, look, everybody has got their own internal politics. My only point is, is that whether it be Afghanistan or Iraq, we've got more work to do. We, the free world, has got more work to do. And I believe those of us who live in liberty have a responsibility to promote forms of government that deal with what causes 19 kids to get on airplanes to kill 3,000 students [citizens].*

United Kingdom's Role in Iraq

Mr. Speers. What, then, do you say about the British withdrawing significant numbers from southern Iraq in what many of your officers say is still a dangerous zone of the country?

* White House correction.

The President. Well, I've talked to—I've said the exact same thing to Gordon Brown: Make sure you're dictated by conditions on the ground. And he—listen, that's exactly what he said he's going to do.

Mr. Speers. So that's not premature, that British withdrawal.

The President. Well, he said that he's going to make decisions based upon conditions. And by the way, the Brits are going to keep a presence. When you say "withdraw," it makes it sound like all their troops are coming home, but that's not what's going to happen.

Mr. Speers. But a significant number of them are.

The President. Well, you know, he will let me know when he makes that decision. He has said that he is going to make decisions in southern Iraq based upon conditions. They're now moved out of the Basra Palace into an air base, which is fine. But they will have a presence there to help this Iraqi Government succeed.

Australian Elections/Australia-U.S. Relations

Mr. Speers. You've had a very close relationship with John Howard. You famously called him the "man of steel." If he doesn't win the election, and Kevin Rudd does become Prime Minister, given that you have differences over such a big issue as Iraq, will the alliance still be the same? Will the relationship be the same?

The President. I refuse to accept your hypothesis.

Mr. Speers. If he wins.

The President. Well, that's if. You're asking me to answer a hypothetical.

Mr. Speers. But will the alliance change?

The President. All I can tell you is, is that I remember John Howard has been behind in polls before and he's won. And so certainly, I'm not going to prejudge the decision of the Australian people. And I will end up dealing with whomever and work hard to make sure that the Australian

and U.S. relationship is good. But I don't buy into your hypothesis.

Mr. Speers. But essentially, the relationship won't suffer if Kevin Rudd becomes Prime Minister?

The President. Look, I'll be glad to deal with the situation. See, that's a loaded question. In this sense, you're trying to get me to predict the outcome of the election, and I'm not going to do it. I don't know enough about it, and I am going down there to deal with the current Prime Minister, who, no doubt about it, is a close personal friend of mine. And I think a man—he is a man of steel, because he's a person who stands on conviction and principle. I don't know Mr. Rudd; I'm looking forward to getting to know him. But that's all I really want to comment about your elections.

Mr. Speers. A lot of Australians will be weighing out, what's going to happen to the alliance if Labor wins the election?

The President. Yes, as I said, I really am not going to get involved in your election down there. I am going to be—I'm going down as the U.S. President, proud of the relationship between the United States and Australia. It is a relationship based upon our common values; it's a relationship based upon good economic ties; and it's a really important relationship. And I presume whoever the U.S. President is after me and the Prime Ministers to come in Australia will understand how important that is.

China

Mr. Speers. Labor also wants the alliance to focus more on China and its military buildup in particular, its nuclear arms stocks. Should more attention be given to that and China's tensions with Japan?

The President. Well, we spend a lot of time on China in this administration. I've got good relations with both the Japanese and Chinese leadership. My view is, is that it's important for there to be an active U.S.

presence in Asia, precisely to make sure that old tensions don't flare up.

And I'm pleased with the progress that's being made in Asia. And obviously, the interesting relationship now in Asia is the trading relationship. Australia, fortunately, has got a surplus with China. And America, however, has got a major deficit with China.

Mr. Speers. Does the military issue concern you?

The President. It only concerns me if there's hostility. In other words, it only concerns me if the Government declares its hostility toward the world. I happen to believe that China's most important issue internally is for them to grow their economy to deal with—they've got to create, like, 25 million new jobs a year in order to stay even, in order to keep their economy growing. And so therefore, my view of China is that they're internally focused to the extent that they want economic growth and vitality; they're externally focused in order to get the raw materials they need. But if they ever turn hostile, I would be concerned about, you know, a military—

President's Upcoming Visit to Australia

Mr. Speers. Mr. President, just finally, a lot of Sydneysiders are complaining about the impost of APEC, in particular your security detail and how that will affect the city for a week while you're there, almost a week while you're there. Do you have any message for them?

The President. Well, first, I'm looking forward to coming to the beautiful city, and to the extent that I inconvenience them, I apologize. I'm not exactly sure what you're talking about, in terms of—

Mr. Speers. The security lockdown in the city.

The President. It's the first—thank you for sharing that with me. I got a lot on my mind, and one of the things that's one [on]* my mind is I'm looking forward to

* White House correction.

coming to one of the most beautiful cities in the world. If I inconvenience people, that's not my intent. My intent is to represent my country in an important meeting in a country that I admire a lot and a country with whom we've got great relations. And it's important that we continue to have great relations.

I hope people—I hope people understand why it's done, and I just hope it doesn't disrupt their lives too much.

Mr. Speers. Mr. President, we do look forward to seeing you in Sydney. Thank you very much for your time.

The President. I'm looking forward to it. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Speers. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:39 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia; and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. This transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 31. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Kensuke Okoshi of NHK Japan August 30, 2007

Japan-U.S. Relations/Japan's Antiterrorism Law

Mr. Okoshi. Thank you, Mr. President. My first question is on the U.S.-Japan alliance. It has been said that relationship between our two countries grew closer than ever before under your leadership. On the other hand, in Japan, the opposition party blocked the extension of the antiterrorism special law, which can be seen as a symbol of the U.S.-Japan alliance. How serious do you think this is?

The President. First of all, we do have a good relationship with Japan, and it's an important relationship. The relationship between the United States and Japan is good for the American people, I believe it's good for the Japanese people, and I believe it's good for stability in not only Southeast Asia but where we cooperate in other parts of the world. And so therefore, I would hope that the Government would keep this important law in place so that Japan and the United States and other nations can continue to work for peace and stability. And it's an important piece of legislation, as far as we're concerned.

President's Meeting With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan

Mr. Okoshi. Will you talk about this issue, about the extension of the antiterrorism special law with Prime Minister Abe at the next meeting in Sydney?

The President. I'm not exactly sure what he wants to talk about. I'd be happy to talk about anything he wants. Of course, I'll be wanting to make sure that our relationship remains as close as it is. Secondly, we'll be talking about economic issues. Thirdly, I know we'll be talking about North Korea, and I will once again make it clear that the abductee issue is an important issue for the United States of America. We want this issue resolved.

This battle against extremism and radicalism that is manifested in two theaters right now, which is Afghanistan and Iraq, is going to be a subject matter. And to the extent that we can work together, it's going to be helpful for peace. The Japanese presence helps peace, helps achieve peace. And that's what we want. We'll talk about every aspect of our relationship.

Six-Party Talks

Mr. Okoshi. On North Korea, in conjunction with six-party talks, there has been an effort regarding the U.S.-North Korea bilateral meeting. Do you regard this softer and more direct approach towards North Korea as a success?

The President. The discussion was as a part of the six-party talks. I am not for undermining the six-party talks. As a matter of fact, the six-party talks is the most successful forum, because I want to make it clear to the North Koreans that should they choose to ignore what they've agreed to do, that it's not just the United States that will be at the table, but China and, of course, Japan and South Korea and Russia. So in other words, there's got to be a sense of accountability if somebody says they're going to do one thing, like shut down their weapons programs, and they don't do it. And there's going to be better accountability when they have said that to five countries as opposed to one. And so it's important that we all stay at the table.

My approach hasn't changed. My approach is firm. They're making some progress now. Obviously, we want to make sure that this continues. But the reactor has been shut down. But they've got a lot more work to do.

Abduction of Japanese Citizens

Mr. Okoshi. How much will the abductee issue be taken into consideration in terms of removing North Korea from the State Sponsors of Terrorism?

The President. I told the Prime Minister this is an important issue for me. Our Ambassador, Ambassador Schieffer, asked me to meet the mom of a young girl who had been abducted. And that's probably the most—one of the most profound meetings I've had in the Oval Office, to see her emotion, to feel her sense of hurt as a result of the callous actions of a state.

And so the abductee issue is an important issue. Of course the Japanese are concerned that what will happen is, is that

we'll conclude the nuclear weapons issue and then forget about the abductee issue. And the answer is, I won't forget about the abductee issue.

Military Operations in Iraq

Mr. Okoshi. Moving on to Iraq. You made a decision to implement surge. And so far, what are some of the things that have met with your expectation, and on the other hand, what are the elements that have fallen short?

The President. First of all, the surge, from a military perspective, from a security perspective, is successful. There are still suicide bombers, and there are still these murderers who are killing people, but we're slowly but surely, along with the Iraqis, taking back neighborhoods and Provinces. Al Anbar Province used to be a safe haven—not a safe haven, used to be kind of the grounds where it looked like Al Qaida was going to be the predominant force, and now we've got them on the run. And so there's been success in the security.

That's not to say everything is perfect, but there's been good successes. At the grassroots level, in other words at the local level, when people feel secure, they start asking questions about what does it take to create peace so their families can grow up peacefully. In other words, when the thugs get removed and people start saying, "I've got a different attitude," that's called reconciliation. They're beginning to say, "What do we need to do to build on this momentum so we can live in peace?"

At the Government level, they're still struggling with—frankly—trying to recover from a dictatorship. And it takes a while. And we've asked them to—hopefully, they would pass some laws—some laws they haven't passed. But I believe, one, we can succeed; two, I know it's important that we do succeed. And I'm looking forward to our people on the ground coming back and charting a way forward so that we can continue to be in a position to succeed.

Environment

Mr. Okoshi. Moving on to your climate change. Are you really inviting the major emitters, including China, to Washington, DC, at the end of this month? What kind of initiatives or roadmaps do you have in mind for the post-Kyoto framework?

The President. Yes, look, I think we need to make sure that we get the major emitters, the big economies of the world that are emitting greenhouse gases to the table so that we can all be at the same table. And the first step toward coming up with a common accord is to recognize there's a problem and set a goal, a reduction goal, because I believe once you get people to sign up to a goal, it makes it easier to begin to get—ask them to sign up to a solution.

So that's the purpose. The purpose is to set up a process that includes everybody. Now, the United States, by the way, has reduced greenhouse gas emissions last year. We grew our economy at about 3 percent, and our greenhouse gases went down. So our strategy is beginning to work. But the truth of the matter is, if we really want to be serious about solving this problem, the question is, how fast can we get new technologies to the marketplace? And the countries that are going to be leading the way and developing new technologies will be the United States and Japan.

For example, I believe that the Japanese battery makers will be coming to the market, hopefully, relatively soon, with a new battery that will enable us to drive a reg-

ular-size automobile for 40 miles on electricity. That will, of course, achieve a couple of objectives: one, less dependence on oil, which will help both our countries; and two, it will help us clean up the environment. And so technologies is going to really make an enormous difference. And to the extent that the United States and Japan cooperates on technologies, it will help the world. We're wealthy nations, and these developing nations are going to look to us to help them develop technologies that will enable them to grow their economies and, at the same time, be better stewards of the environment.

So the way I see it is, post-Kyoto is going to be setting goals, helping countries with the technological developments they need so that each country could meet the goal it sets. And collectively we'll have done a better job on the environment.

Mr. Okoshi. Time is up. Thank you very much, Mr. President—

The President. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Okoshi. —for spending time for Japanese people.

The President. Glad to do it. Proud to be a friend. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:50 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Sakie Yokota, mother of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by North Korean authorities. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 31.

Remarks on Homeownership Financing and an Exchange With Reporters August 31, 2007

The President. Good morning. Thank you for joining me. Secretary Paulson and Secretary Jackson gave me an update on the strong fundamentals of our Nation's economy. Economic growth is healthy, and just

yesterday we learned that our economy grew at a strong rate of 4 percent in the second quarter of this year. Wages are rising, unemployment is low, exports are up, and steady job creation continues.

We also had a good discussion about the situation in America's financial markets. The markets are in a period of transition as participants reassess and reprice risk. This process has been unfolding for some time, and it's going to take more time to fully play out. As it does, America's overall economy will remain strong enough to weather any turbulence.

One area that has shown particular strain is the mortgage market, especially what's known as the subprime sector of the mortgage market. This market has seen tremendous innovation in recent years as new lending products make credit available to more people. For the most part, this has been a positive development, and the reason why is, millions of families have taken out mortgages to buy their homes and American homeownership is at a near all-time high.

Unfortunately, there's also been some excesses in the lending industry. One of the most troubling developments has been the increase in adjustable rate mortgages that start out with a very low interest rate and then reset to a higher rate after a few years. This has led some homeowners to take out loans larger than they could afford based on overly optimistic assumptions about the future performance of the housing market. Others may have been confused by the terms of their loan or misled by irresponsible lenders. Whatever the reason they chose this kind of mortgage, some borrowers are now unable to make their monthly payments or facing foreclosure.

Complicating the situation for borrowers is the nature of today's mortgage market. In many cases, the neighborhood banker who issued a family's mortgage does not own that mortgage for long. Instead, mortgages are sold as securities on the global market. And that makes it harder for the lender and borrower to renegotiate.

The recent disturbances in the subprime mortgage industry are modest; they're modest in relation to the size of our economy. But if you're a family—if your family is

one of those having trouble making the monthly payments, this problem doesn't seem modest at all. I understand these concerns, and therefore, I've made this a top priority to help our homeowners navigate these financial challenges so that many families as possible can stay in their homes. That's what we've been working on, a plan to help homeowners.

We've got a role—the Government has got a role to play, but it is limited. A Federal bailout of lenders would only encourage a recurrence of the problem. It's not the Government's job to bail out speculators or those who made the decision to buy a home they knew they could never afford. Yet there are many American homeowners who could get through this difficult time with a little flexibility from their lenders or a little help from their Government. So I strongly urge lenders to work with homeowners to adjust their mortgages. I believe lenders have a responsibility to help these good people to renegotiate so they can stay in their home. And today I'm going to outline a variety of steps at the Federal level to help American families keep their homes.

First, we're going to work to modernize and improve the Federal Housing Administration; that's known as the FHA. The FHA is a Government Agency that provides mortgage insurance to borrowers through a network of private sector lenders. Sixteen months ago, I sent Congress an FHA modernization bill that would help more homeowners qualify for this insurance by lowering downpayment requirements, by increasing loan limits, and providing more flexibility in pricing. These reforms would allow the FHA to reach families that need help, those with low incomes, less-than-perfect credit records, or little savings.

Last year, the House passed this bill with more than 400 votes. Unfortunately, Congress hasn't acted this year. It would be a good task for Congress to come and get FHA modernization done so that we can help these people refinance their homes,

so more people can stay in their homes. I look forward to signing a bill as quickly as possible.

In the coming days, the FHA will launch a new program called FHASecure. This program will allow American homeowners who have got good credit history but cannot afford their current payments to refinance into FHA-insured mortgages. This means that many families who are struggling now will be able to refinance their loans, meet their monthly payments, and keep their homes. In other words, we're going to start reaching out and making sure people know that this option is available to them so they can stay in their homes.

Second, I'm going to work with Congress to temporarily reform a key housing provision of the Federal Tax Code, which will make it easier for homeowners to refinance their mortgages during this time of market stress. Under current law, homeowners who are unable to meet their mortgage payments can face an unexpected tax bill. For example, let's say the value of your house declines by \$20,000 and your adjustable rate mortgage payments have grown to a level you cannot afford. If the bank modifies your mortgage and forgives \$20,000 of your loan, the Tax Code treats that \$20,000 as taxable income. When your home is losing value and your family is under financial stress, the last thing you need to do is to be hit with higher taxes.

So I believe we need to change the code to make it easier for people to refinance their homes and stay in their homes. And to this end, I've called Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan and told her that she's on to a good idea with the bill that she and George Voinovich have submitted to the Senate. The House has got Rob Andrews of New Jersey and Ron Lewis of Kentucky introducing legislation that is a positive step toward changing the Tax Code so people aren't penalized when they refinance their homes. With a few changes in the Senate version and the House version, this administration can support these bills,

and we look forward to working with them—the Senators and the Members of the House—to pass commonsense legislation to help us address this issue.

Third, my administration will launch a new foreclosure avoidance initiative to help struggling homeowners find a way to refinance. Secretary Jackson and Secretary Paulson are going to reach out to a wide variety of groups that offer foreclosure counseling and refinancing for American homeowners. These groups include community organizations like NeighborWorks and mortgage lenders and loan servicers and the FHA as well as Government-sponsored enterprises like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. These organizations exist to help people refinance, and we expect them to do that.

See, it's easy for me to stand up here and talk about refinancing—some people don't even know what I'm talking about. And we can—we need to have a focused effort to help people understand the mortgage financing options available to them or to identify homeowners before they face hardships and help them understand what's possible.

Finally, the Federal Government is taking a variety of actions to make the mortgage industry more transparent, more reliable, and more fair so we can reduce the likelihood that these kind of lending problems won't happen again. Federal banking regulators are improving disclosure requirements to ensure that lenders provide homeowners with complete and accurate and understandable information about their mortgages, including the possibility that their monthly payments could rise dramatically. In other words, we believe that if the consumer is better informed, these kind of problems won't arise—are less likely to arise in the first place. Banking regulators are also strengthening lending standards to help ensure that borrowers are not approved for mortgages larger than they can handle.

This administration will soon issue regulations that require mortgage brokers to fully disclose their fees and closing costs. We're pursuing wrongdoing and fraud in the mortgage industry through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Justice, the Federal Trade Commission, and other Agencies. In other words, if you've been cheating somebody, we're going to find you and hold you to account. And we'll continue to do our part to help improve all aspects of the mortgage marketplace that is really important to this economy of ours.

With all the steps I've outlined today, we will deliver help and hope to American families who need it. We'll help guard against future problems in the housing sector. We'll reaffirm the vital place of home-

ownership in our Nation. When more families own their own homes, neighborhoods are more vibrant and communities are stronger and more people have a stake in the future of this country.

Owning a home has always been at the center of the American Dream. Together with the United States Congress, I will continue working to help make that dream a reality for more of our citizens. Thank you.

Banking Industry

Q. Sir, what about the hedge funds and banks that are overexposed on the subprime market? That's a bigger problem. Have you got a plan?

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks on the Resignation of Tony Snow as Press Secretary and the Appointment of Dana Perino as Press Secretary and an Exchange With Reporters *August 31, 2007*

The President. Thank you. Good afternoon to you.

Tony Snow informed me he's leaving. And I sadly accept his desire to leave the White House, and he'll do so on September the 14th. He is—it's been a joy to watch him spar with you. He's smart; he's capable; he's witty. He's capable of—he's able to talk about issues in a way that the American people can understand.

And I don't know what he's going to do; I'm not sure he does yet either. But whatever it is, it's going to be—two things: One, he'll battle cancer and win, and secondly, he'll be a solid contributor to society.

I do want to thank Jill and Kendall, Robbie, and Kristi. They have watched a man they love take on a big job and, at the same time, fight disease with a lot of

courage. And so I accept; I love you; and I wish you all the best.

And so I had to make a choice, who to replace Tony, and I've chosen Dana Perino. I did so because Dana is a smart, capable person who is able to spell out the issues of the day in a way that people listening on TV can understand. She can handle you all. [*Laughter*] She's capable of handling your questions.

Q. She has done—[*inaudible*].

The President. She has? Good. Okay. I'm glad to get a little—I'm glad to get that choir singing. [*Laughter*] So I'm not worried about her standing here at the podium. What I look for in somebody like Dana is somebody who can walk in that Oval Office and give me sound judgment and good advice. And I have found that over the course of the time I've known her, she's

capable of doing that. And she's also capable of running the shop that she'll be in charge of.

And so we say to the man we admire a lot, good luck, Godspeed. And to Dana Perino, I'm looking forward to working with you, and I'm looking forward to the American people to get to know you like I've gotten to know you.

Tony.

President's Staff

Q. You've lost a lot of members in your administration—

The President. Hold up there. We're not quite through yet. [*Laughter*]

[At this point, Press Secretary Snow and Press Secretary-designate Perino made remarks.]

The President. Thank you.

President's Staff

Q. How do you feel about losing everybody?

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Press Secretary Snow and Press Secretary-designate Perino.

Statement Following a Meeting With Military Leaders August 31, 2007

The Vice President and I met today with Secretary of Defense Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We had a very productive discussion.

We discussed our commitment to provide our military all it needs to meet the challenges of this new century. This includes a larger Army and Marine Corps. In January, I accepted Secretary Gates's recommendation to increase the overall strength of the two services by 92,000 soldiers and marines over the next 5 years. This will strengthen our military and help reset our forces to respond to multiple contingencies around the world at any given moment. The effort is well underway, but there is more to do, and the Joint Chiefs are doing a terrific job monitoring the health of our All-Volunteer Force.

We also discussed military and civilian coordination. We now have joint civilian and military teams deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and the Philippines. In Iraq, we have more than doubled the number of civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams this year, most of

which are embedded with U.S. combat brigades. These teams are a force multiplier for our men and women in uniform, and they are essential to the bottom-up political progress taking place in Anbar, Diyala, and other Provinces across Iraq. The Civilian Reserve Corps now being developed will enlarge the pool of civilian volunteers to support and enhance our missions.

The American people will soon hear an assessment of the situation on the ground in Iraq and recommendations from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus. This status report comes less than 3 months since our new strategy became fully operational and will assess what is going well, what can be improved, and what adjustments might be made in the coming months. Congress asked for this assessment, and Members of Congress should withhold judgment until they have heard it.

The stakes in Iraq are too high and the consequences too grave for our security here at home to allow politics to harm the mission of our men and women in uniform. It is my hope that we can put partisanship

and politics behind us and commit to a common vision that will provide our troops what they need to succeed and secure our vital national interests in Iraq and around the world.

I always leave these meetings inspired by our men and women in uniform and resolved to do everything I can to support them. The brave men and women of our Armed Forces and their families are mak-

ing heroic sacrifices to secure our country. America will honor these sacrifices by ensuring that our children and grandchildren inherit a more peaceful, just, and democratic world.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Statement on Senator John W. Warner's Decision Not To Seek Reelection *August 31, 2007*

John Warner is one of the most dedicated Senators in American history. Five Presidents have relied on his steady judgment, wise counsel, and candid advice. With Senator Warner's retirement, the Senate will lose one of its most independent and widely respected voices, and the Commonwealth of Virginia will lose one of its fiercest advocates.

John Warner has served our country in many roles throughout his distinguished career, always putting the American people's needs first. He enlisted in the Navy shortly before his 18th birthday and chose to interrupt his law studies to commence a second tour of active military duty as an officer

in the Marine Corps, volunteering for duty in Korea. He went on to practice law, serve as an assistant U.S. attorney, and serve as Secretary of the Navy before his election to the Senate. Our military had no greater friend than Senator Warner during his service as chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Forces.

I look forward to working with Senator Warner in the coming months as we assess the situation in Iraq and pursue policies to keep our country safe.

John Warner is a true statesman. Laura and I wish Senator Warner, his wife Jeanne, and the rest of his family all the best.

Message on the Observance of Labor Day *August 31, 2007*

I send greetings to those celebrating Labor Day 2007.

Our country's economy is built on the hard work and ingenuity of the American people. There is no limit to what our citizens can accomplish when they have the skills to compete and the freedom to achieve their dreams. Through vision and determination, American workers are transforming their neighborhoods, strengthening

our economy, and realizing the great promise of our Nation.

Today, productivity is high, consumers are confident, and incomes are rising across our country. Our economy has experienced one of the fastest growth rates of any major industrialized nation. More than 8.3 million jobs have been created in America since August 2003, and the unemployment rate

remains low. My Administration is committed to promoting progrowth economic policies, keeping taxes low, and supporting small businesses to keep our economy strong and growing.

On Labor Day, we honor the hard work and dedication of the men and women of

our workforce. Their efforts contribute to the prosperity of our great Nation.

Laura and I send our best wishes.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

The President's Radio Address *September 1, 2007*

Good morning. This week, I met with Housing Secretary Jackson and Treasury Secretary Paulson to discuss the economy and the turbulence in our Nation's mortgage industry. The fundamentals of America's economy remain strong, but the mortgage industry is going through a period of adjustment. And some Americans are worried about the impact this is having on their ability to make their monthly mortgage payments.

I have made it a priority to help American homeowners navigate these financial challenges so that as many families as possible can stay in their homes. The Federal Government will not bail out lenders because that would only make a recurrence of the problem more likely. And it is not the Government's job to bail out speculators or those who made the decision to buy a home they knew they could never afford. But I support action at the Federal level that will help more American families keep their homes.

One important way to help homeowners during this time of housing market stress is for Congress to change a key part of the Federal Tax Code. Under current law, when a lender forgives part of a mortgage to help its customer stay afloat, that amount is treated as taxable income. When your home is losing value and your family is under financial stress, the last thing you need is to be hit with higher taxes. So I'm working with members of both parties

to pass a bill that will protect homeowners from having to pay taxes on canceled mortgage debt.

Another important step we're taking for American homeowners is to modernize the Federal Housing Administration. The FHA is a Government Agency that provides mortgage insurance to borrowers through a network of private sector lenders. I've sent Congress important legislation that would help more Americans qualify for this insurance by lowering downpayment requirements, increasing loan limits, and providing more flexibility in pricing. By passing this legislation, Congress will allow the FHA to reach more families in need of our assistance, and I ask Congress to act quickly.

At the same time, we will launch a new FHA initiative called FHASecure. This initiative will help some people who have good credit but have recently been missing their payments. FHASecure will help these families refinance their mortgages so they can make their payments and keep their homes.

There are other ways we can help. My administration will launch a new Foreclosure Avoidance Initiative to help homeowners learn more about their refinancing options. I've directed Secretary Paulson and Secretary Jackson to look into innovative ways to bring together homeowners and counseling groups, financial professionals, and the FHA and Government-sponsored

enterprises like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to help American families find the mortgage product that works best for them.

Finally, the Federal Government is working to make the mortgage industry more transparent and more reliable and more fair so we can reduce the likelihood that homeowners will face similar problems in the future. Federal banking regulators are strengthening lending standards and making mortgages easier to understand. My administration is working on new rules to help our consumers compare and shop for loans that meet their budgets and needs. We are committed to pursuing fraud and wrongdoing in the mortgage industry.

Homeownership has always been part of the American Dream. During my adminis-

tration, we've achieved record homeownership rates. We'll continue to work hard to keep our housing market strong, to ensure that American families can afford the homes they buy, and to help bring the dignity and security that comes with homeownership to more of our citizens.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11 a.m. on August 31 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 31, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Situation at the Crandall Canyon Mine in Huntington, Utah

September 1, 2007

Since August 6, Americans have followed the fate of six miners trapped in a Utah mine. We have prayed for their safety, asked God to comfort their families, and witnessed the unwavering commitment of their community. Our hearts broke when three brave rescue workers gave their own lives in the search for the missing miners.

The people of the central Utah mining community have inspired us all with their incredible strength and courage in the face of tremendous loss. Last night a difficult decision was made to end the search. Laura and I are deeply saddened by this tragedy and continue to pray for the families of these men.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Iraqi Leaders at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq

September 3, 2007

[The President's remarks were joined in progress.]

—as reinforcements. And together with the brave Iraqis, we've gone into Al Qaida strongholds and have driven them out.

Today, Anbar is a really different place. The level of violence is down, local govern-

ments are meeting again, police are more in control of the city streets, and normal life is returning. The people of this Province are seeing that standing up to the extremists is the path to a better life, that success is possible. And soon I'm going to meet with some of the leaders here in Anbar Province who have made a decision

to reject violence and murder in return for moderation and peace.

I'm looking forward to hearing from the tribal leaders who led the fight against the terrorists and are now leading the effort to rebuild their communities. I'm going to speak with members of Anbar's Provincial council, which has reestablished itself and returned to the capital city of Ramadi. I'm going to reassure them that America does not abandon our friends, and America will not abandon the Iraqi people. That's the message all three of us bring.

Earlier, we just met with the leaders of Iraq's national Government: President Talabani and Prime Minister Maliki, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi, Vice President Hashimi, and President Barzani of the Kurdish region. We had a good, frank discussion. We share a common goal: a free Iraq that has a government that responds to the people. The Government they represent, of course, is based in Baghdad, but they're here in Anbar because they know the success of a free Iraq depends on the national Government's support from the bottom up. They know what I know: That when you have bottom-up reconciliation, like you're seeing here in Anbar, it'll begin to translate into central Government action.

The national Government is sharing oil revenues with this Province, and that's a positive development. The challenges are great, and I understand the pace of progress is frustrating. It's frustrating for the American people; it's frustrating for the Iraqi people. These people are working under difficult circumstances after having lived under the thumb of a brutal tyrant. Iraq's local and national leaders are working to ensure that the military success in places like Anbar is quickly backed up by real improvements in the lives of ordinary Iraqis. That's what we discussed today. Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice, and I discussed with the Iraqi leaders that there has been some security success, and now it's important for government to follow up.

Our troops and diplomats and civilian experts will support the Iraqis in these efforts as they follow up. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker gave us an update on how things are looking. They gave us an update on the way forward, and I was pleased with what I heard. The strategy we put into place earlier this year was designed to help the Iraqis improve their security so that political and economic progress could follow. And that is exactly the effect it is having in places like Anbar.

We can't take this progress for granted. Here in Anbar and across Iraq, Al Qaida and other enemies of freedom will continue to try to kill the innocent in order to impose their dark ideology. But General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker tell me if the kind of success we are now seeing continues, it will be possible to maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces. These two fine Americans will report to Congress next week, and I urge members of both parties in Congress to listen what they have to say. Congress shouldn't jump to conclusions until the general and the Ambassador report.

When you stand on the ground here in Anbar and hear from the people who live here, you can see what the future of Iraq can look like. That's why Members of Congress from both parties who have visited Iraq have come back encouraged by what they have seen. For all the differences over the war, we can agree on what's working. And we can agree that continuing this progress is vital to making the strategic interests—vital in meeting the strategic interests of our Nation. It's vital to bring in—it's vital that we work to bring America together behind a common vision for a more stable and more peaceful Middle East.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks to United States Military Personnel at Al Asad Air Base September 3, 2007

The President. Thank you all. General, thank you very much. It's an honor to be with you.

As you know, today is Labor Day back home—

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. —so I thought I'd come by to thank you for all your hard work.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. Every day—every day, you show bravery under incredibly difficult circumstances. Every day, you're doing work on the sands of Anbar that is making us safer in the streets of America. And every day, the United States of America is grateful for what you're doing. I want you to tell your families the Commander in Chief stopped by to say hello, and he said, I'm incredibly proud to be the Commander in Chief of such a great group of men and women.

I'm keeping pretty good company, as you can see. I brought out the A team so they could be with the folks who are making a significant difference in this war against these radicals and extremists. In Anbar, you're seeing firsthand the dramatic differences that can come when the Iraqis are more secure. In other words, you're seeing success.

You see, Sunnis who once fought side by side with Al Qaida against coalition troops now fighting side by side with coalition troops against Al Qaida. Anbar is a huge Province. It was once written off as lost. It is now one of the safest places in Iraq.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. Because of your hard work, because of your bravery and sacrifice, you are denying Al Qaida a safe haven from which to plot and plan and carry out attacks against the United States of America. What

you're doing here is making this country safer, and I thank you for your hard work.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. The surge of operations that began in June is improving security throughout Iraq. These military successes are paving the way for the political reconciliation and economic progress the Iraqis need to transform their country. When Iraqis feel safe in their own homes and neighborhoods, they can focus their efforts on building a stable civil society with functioning government structures at the local and Provincial and national levels. And that's important because a free Iraq, an Iraq that's an ally against these extremists and murderers will be a major defeat for the terrorists.

Earlier today I met with some of the tribal sheikhs here in Anbar. It was a really interesting meeting. And at the table were the leaders of the central Government as well. They told me that the kind of bottom-up progress that your efforts are bringing to Anbar is vital to the success and stability of a free Iraq. See, Iraqis need this stability to build a more peaceful future. And America needs this stability to prevent the chaos that allows the terrorists to set up bases from which they can plot and plan attacks on our homeland.

The very people that you helped the Iraqis defeat in Anbar swore allegiance to the man that ordered the attack on the United States of America. What happens here in Anbar matters to the security of the United States.

And so I thank you for your sacrifice. I thank you for volunteering in the face of danger. I thank you for your courage and your bravery. Every day you are successful here in Iraq draws nearer to the day when America can begin calling you and your fellow service men and women home.

But I want to tell you this about the decision—about my decision about troop levels. Those decisions will be based on a calm assessment by our military commanders on the conditions on the ground, not a nervous reaction by Washington politicians to poll results in the media.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. In other words, when we begin to draw down troops from Iraq, it will be from a position of strength and success, not from a position of fear and failure. To do otherwise would embolden our enemies and make it more likely that they would attack us at home. If we let our enemies back us out of Iraq, we will more

likely face them in America. If we don't want to hear their footsteps back home, we have to keep them on their heels over here. And that's exactly what you're doing, and America is safer for it.

In Anbar, you're doing this hard work every day. We've all come to say thank you. We've come to tell you, the American people are standing with you. They're grateful for your sacrifice. As Commander in Chief, I'm proud to be in your presence on this Labor Day. I ask for God's blessings on you and your family, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:43 p.m.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia in Sydney, Australia *September 5, 2007*

Prime Minister Howard. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome the media to this news conference. I'll say a couple of words, invite the President to speak briefly, and then we'll take a couple of questions from each of the press groups.

It's always a great pleasure, George, to welcome you to Australia. The United States President is always welcome in our country. We have no closer alliance with any country in the world than the one we have with the United States. Both historically and contemporaneously, the importance of the alliance between the United States of America and Australia is deeply embedded in the minds of millions of Australians.

And you, Mr. President, and I have shared a number of very special experiences over the past few years. I remember our first personal meeting was on the 10th of September of 2001. And of course, as a consequence of that meeting and the events that horrifically followed the other day, the paths of our two countries have

been parallel in so many ways, in the fight against terrorism and the promotion of democracy and freedom around the world. And in that context, as well as the more generic national context, I welcome you very warmly on a personal basis to my hometown of Sydney, Australia's largest city and, in my view, the most beautiful big city in the world.

But we had a very broad-ranging discussion. We talked extensively about Iraq, about the climate change aspects of APEC, the American perception towards conditions in the Middle East and in relation to Iran, and also the prospects for something we both hope for, and that is a lasting settlement between Israel and the Palestinian people which does justice to the right of the Israelis to exist unmolested as a free and proud nation and also the right of the people of Palestine to have a homeland.

On a bilateral basis, we have agreed to a number of new arrangements, including

a treaty relating to exchanges in—concerning defense equipment which effectively will remove layers of bureaucracy for defense industries in Australia acquiring American technology. And we'll enter that market on the same basis as do companies coming from the United Kingdom.

We also agreed on joint statements regarding climate change and energy, a joint nuclear energy action plan which involves cooperation on civil nuclear energy, including R&D, skills and technical training, and regulatory issues. Australia intends to participate in the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, and there will be great benefits in terms of access to nuclear technology and nonproliferation. And the United States will support Australian membership in the Generation IV International Forum, which involves R&D to develop safer and better nuclear reactors.

I'm also pleased to announce that we've entered arrangements that will allow something in the order of 15,000—we estimate—young Australians, who are students or graduates, to visit the United States on the basis of some kind of gap year in their studies, and that will be a facility available in the United States which is currently available and very widely utilized by young Australians in the United Kingdom and other European countries.

We have also agreed to have further detailed discussions involving taking our defense cooperation even further, and this involves four components to be explored. The first of those is enhanced cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. And that could, in fact, involve a stationing—basing in Australia by the United States equipment and stores and provisions that would be available for ready use in disaster relief in our immediate region. And we think, in particular, of any repetition of the tsunami disaster or things of that kind which occurred a couple of years ago.

Secondly, a further enhancement of the joint training capability by providing additional support for training by American and

Australian forces in Australia and also further cooperative efforts to develop access and capabilities for international surveillance and reconnaissance. And finally, a further enhancement of our already robust program of military exchanges and joint operations. We've asked our officials to work in more detail around each of those four headings, and as a result of that, I'm very confident that there will be further and very significant enhancement of an already very close relationship.

Can I just conclude by saying that in our discussions, I made it very clear to the President that our commitment to Iraq remains. Australian forces will remain at their present levels in Iraq not based on any calendar, but based on conditions in the ground, until we are satisfied that a further contribution to ensuring that the Iraqis can look after themselves cannot usefully be made by the Australian forces. They will not be reduced or withdrawn.

It may, over time, be that their role will assume greater elements of training or greater elements of other aspects of what their capabilities include, but their commitment, their level, and the basis on which they stay there in cooperation with other members of the coalition will not change under a government that I lead.

We believe that progress is being made in Iraq, difficult though it is. And we do not believe this is the time to be setting any proposals for a scaling down of Australian forces. We think that is objectionable on two grounds: Firstly, it misreads the needs of the Iraqi people, and secondly, at the present time, a close ally and friend such as Australia should be providing the maximum presence and indication of support to our very close ally and friend in the United—in the person of the United States. That is our position, and I've made that very clear to the President in our discussions. And I make it very clear to you at this news conference.

George.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thanks for your hospitality. It's great to be here. You've been telling me how beautiful Sydney is. I now agree. Laura sends her very best to you and Janette, and we congratulate you on, like, your grandfatherhood. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Howard. Thank you.

President Bush. Yes. I admire your vision; I admire your courage. One thing that's really important when it comes to international diplomacy is when a leader tells you something, he means it. And the thing I appreciate about dealing with Prime Minister Howard is that, one, you know where he stands; you don't have to try to read nuance into his words. And then when he tells you something, he stands by his word. And I thank you for that. I appreciate—as well our personal friendship. I'm looking forward for you to buy me lunch today. I'm a meat guy. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Howard. We know that. [Laughter]

President Bush. I'm looking forward to some Australian beef.

We did sign a treaty today that was important. It's the U.S.-Australia Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty. And I think John put it best: It helps cut through the bureaucracy so that we can transform our forces better, share technology better, and frankly enable our private sectors to work together to develop new defense capabilities to defend ourselves. And it is an important treaty. It took a while to get here, but it's—we were able to get it done. And I thank you for giving me a chance to sign it here.

We spent a lot of time talking about Iraq and Afghanistan. As I told John, we're in the midst of an ideological struggle against people who use murder as a weapon to achieve their vision. Some people see that; some people don't see it. Some people view these folks as just kind of isolated killers who may show up or may not show up. I happen to view them as people with an objective, and their objective is to spread

a vision that is opposite of the vision that we share.

There are two theaters in this war on terror. They're evident. One is Afghanistan; the other is Iraq. These are both theaters of the same war. And the fundamental question is, is it worth it to be there, and can we succeed? And the definition of success are countries that can govern themselves, sustain themselves, defend themselves, listen to the people, and serve as allies in this war against extremists and murderers. And if I didn't think we could succeed, I wouldn't have our troops there. As the Commander in Chief of our military, I cannot commit U.S. troops into combat unless I'm convinced it's worth it—important to the security of the United States, and we can meet our objectives.

And as you know, I just came from Al Anbar Province in Iraq. This is a Province that some 6 months ago—or 8 months ago had been written off by the experts as lost to Al Qaida. The people that presumably had taken over Anbar have sworn allegiance to the very same bunch that caused 19 killers to come and kill nearly 3,000 of our citizens. And the experts had said, "Well, Anbar is gone; Al Qaida will have the safe haven that they have said they want." By the way, a safe haven for Al Qaida anywhere is dangerous to those of us who believe in democracy and freedom. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th.

The Province I saw wasn't lost to the extremists. The place I went had changed dramatically, fundamentally because the local people took a look at what Al Qaida stands for and said, "We're not interested in death, destruction. We don't want to be associated with people who murder the innocent to achieve their objectives. We want something different for our children." And as a result of our alliance with these folks, we're now hunting down Al Qaida in this Province. And the same thing has taken place across Iraq. The security situation is changing. That's the briefing I received

from David Petraeus, our general on the ground, General David Petraeus.

He says the security situation is changing so that reconciliation can take place. There are two types of reconciliation, one from the bottom up. I met with sheikhs that are tired of the violence. They're reconciling. They're reconciling after decades of tyranny. They're reconciling after having lived under a dictator who divided society in order to be able to sustain his power.

At the national level, there is reconciliation, but not nearly as fast as some would like. By the way, people who don't believe we should be in Iraq in the first place, there's no political reconciliation that can take place to justify your opinion. If you don't think Iraq is important, if you don't think it matters what the society looks like there, then there's not enough amount of reconciliation that will cause people to say, "Great, it's working." If you believe, like I believe, that the security of the United States and the peace of the world depend upon a democracy in the Middle East and Iraq, then you can see progress. And I'm seeing it.

Is it perfect? Absolutely not. Is there more work to be done? You bet there is. But the fact that their legislature passed 60 pieces of legislation, I thought, is illustrative of a government that's beginning to work. It's more than our Legislature passed. They got a budget out. We're still working on our budget, Mr. Prime Minister.

Do they need an oil law? You bet they need an oil law. Why? Because it will be part of saying to Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurd alike, this—the oil belongs to the people. It's a way to unify the country. On the other hand, they are distributing revenues from the central Government. In Anbar Province, they have distributed 107 million this year, about 96 million last year. There's only one place they could have gotten the revenue from: their oil resources. So there is distribution taking place in spite of the fact there's not a law. They got a budgeting process that's funding their military. In

other words, there is a functioning government.

Again, I repeat: There's plenty of work to be done. There's more work to be done, but reconciliation is taking place. And it's important, in my judgment, for the security of America, or for the security of Australia, that we hang in there with the Iraqis and help them. If this is an ideological struggle, one way to defeat an ideology of hate is with an ideology of hope, and that is societies based upon liberty. And that's what's happening. And it's historic work, Mr. Prime Minister, and it's important work. And I appreciate the contribution that the Australians have made. You've got a great military, full of decent people. And you ought to be proud of them. And I know the Australian people are.

The same work goes on in Afghanistan. The degree of difficulty is just about the same. After all, this is a society trying to recover from a brutal reign. But it's the same principles involved, and that is to help them have their style democracy flourish. And it's happening in Afghanistan. People who have been to Kabul will tell you it's dramatically different than what it was like when we first liberated Afghanistan.

I believe that when the final chapters of the 21st century are written, people will say, "We appreciate the courage and sacrifice made by our respective countries in laying the foundation for peace."

It's interesting we're having APEC here in Australia. And the Prime Minister and I, of course, will be sitting at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan. Sixty years ago, we fought the Japanese. We've got a great relationship. I'm sure much is going to be made of, well, do personalities define the relationship? Well, this relationship has been forged in—based upon values and doing hard work together. Personalities matter. I mean, it helps that he and I are friends, by the way, in terms of the alliance. But the alliance is bigger than the individuals. And so we—our alliance has been forged in battle and in friendship and in—

through trade. And yet we're sitting down with the former enemy, which ought to be an historical lesson of what can happen when liberty takes root in certain societies. And of course, we'll be talking about the peace. We talk about North Korea; we're talking about Asia; we talk about how we can work together to achieve peace.

We are talking about trade here at the APEC summit that the Prime Minister is ably leading. I happen to believe trade is important. I think the free trade agreement between Australia and the United States has been beneficial to both our peoples. Trade's up. When trade is up, it means commerce is up, goods and services are flowing more freely. It means people are more likely to make a living. And by the way, when you're trading with somebody, you want their economy to be good. And I congratulate you on having such a strong economy. That's important for our trading partners to be wealthy enough to have something to trade. *[Laughter]*

And so the question is, can we advance the Doha round and—here at the APEC? And I believe we can. I want to thank you for your able leadership. It's a hard issue to get done, but I believe with will and determination, we can get it done. And as I'll say in the speech here Friday, we'll show flexibility when it comes to making sure this round is as successful as possible.

I am looking forward to speaking out about Burma at the APEC conference. It's inexcusable that we've got this kind of tyrannical behavior in Asia. It's inexcusable that people who march for freedom are then treated by a repressive state. And those of us who live in comfort of a free society need to speak out about this kind—these kind of human rights abuses.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, it—I hope you don't mind me speaking as clearly as I possibly can about the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi and her friends and average citizens who simply want the same thing we have: to live in a free society.

I do want to thank you very much for your leadership on climate change. Now, I know some say, "Well, since he's against Kyoto, he doesn't care about the climate change." That's urban legend that is preposterous. As a matter of fact, the United States last year reduced overall greenhouse gas emissions and grew our economy at the same time. In other—we showed what is possible when you deploy modern technologies that enable you to achieve economic growth so your people can work and, at the same time, become less dependent on foreign sources of oil and, at the same time, be good stewards of the environment.

So I appreciate you bringing up the nuclear power initiative. If you truly care about greenhouse gases, then you'll support nuclear power. If you believe that greenhouse gases are a priority, like a lot of us—if we take the issue seriously, if you take the issue seriously, like I do and John does, then you should be supportive of nuclear power. After all, nuclear power enables you to generate electricity without any greenhouse gases. Anyway, your leadership at APEC has been really strong.

And I'm looking forward to my discussions with the leader of China about a lot of issues, one of which, of course, will be climate change. And my attitude is—as I explained to you—is that in order for there to be an effective climate change policy, China needs to be at the table. In order to get China at the table, they have to be a part of defining the goals. Once we can get people to define the goals, then we can encourage people to define the tactics necessary to achieve the goals. I believe this strategy is going to be a lot more effective than trying us—people—countries to say, this is what you've got to do, we're telling you how to behave, as opposed to, why don't we work together to achieve a common consensus on being good stewards of the environment. APEC is a good forum to do this. You provided great leadership on the issue, and I appreciate it.

We'll take some questions.

Prime Minister Howard. We'll start with the American first.

President Bush. Good. Bret Baier [FOX News].

National Security Threats/China-U.S. Relations/North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've described the U.S. relationship with China as complex. U.S. military sources are now confirming that Chinese hackers hacked into the computers at the Pentagon in June, hackers linked to the Government in Beijing. And it's being described as a complicated cyber attack. Have you been briefed on this attack? How much more complex does this make the relationship with China? And do you plan to bring it up with President Hu Jintao on Thursday?

President Bush. I'm very aware that a lot of our systems are vulnerable to cyber attack from a variety of places. And therefore, the first question should be—not to put questions in your mouth, Bret, but—what are you doing to defend America against cyber attack? Are you aware that we have vulnerabilities, that people can hack into sensitive systems? And are you then providing expertise and technology necessary to defend? And the answer is, yes. We understand that we're vulnerable in some systems, some, by the way, more valuable than others—or less valuable than others, I guess, is the best way to put it.

In terms of whether or not I'll bring this up to countries that we suspect may—from which there may have been an attack, I may. In this instance, I don't have the intelligence at my fingertips right now. Whether it be this issue or issues like intellectual property rights, I mean, if you have a relationship with a country, then you've got to respect the country's systems and knowledge base. And that's what we expect from people with whom we trade.

Our relationship with China is complex. On the one hand, we appreciate the opportunity to trade goods and services. We certainly hope that China changes from a sav-

ing society to a consuming society. Right now, because of the lack of a safety net, many Chinese save for what we call a rainy day. What we want is the Government to provide more of a safety net so they start buying more U.S. and Australian products. We want there to be a—the middle class to feel comfortable coming into the marketplace, the global marketplace, so that our producers can see the benefits directly with trade with China.

By the way, our exports to China are up, Mr. Prime Minister, which is positive. We still have got a huge trade deficit with China, which then causes us to want to work with them to adjust—to let their currency float. We think that would be helpful in terms of adjusting trade balances.

We've got great relations with China from a diplomatic perspective. In other words, we're able to talk with them openly and candidly. But do we agree on every issue? Not at all. I mean, for example, I've spent time talking about dissidents who have been jailed. I'm concerned about the treatment of the Dalai Lama. I want China to be more aggressive when it comes to Iran. I'm interested to hear President Hu Jintao's attitudes toward the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. In other words, there's a lot of issues which we wish they would have a different lean to their policy, so I'm going to discuss these with him. But it's best to be able to discuss these issues in an environment that is frank and open and friendly, as opposed to one in which there's tension and suspicion.

And so when I say we've got great relations, I will sit down with the President and have a good, honest, candid discussion. And he's going to tell me what's on his mind, and I'm darned sure going to tell him what's on my mind.

One area where we are making good progress is on North Korea. As you may remember, I shifted the whole strategic approach to North Korea. I'm convinced that it's more effective to have five countries to say to North Korea the same thing than

just one country, so that if North Korea makes the decision not to honor their word, that there's a better chance that there's consequences that they'll feel. And so as a result of getting China to the table on North Korea, the North Koreans are going to realize there is a lot more than one voice. And China has been instrumental in helping move this process forward. Chris Hill—Ambassador Hill briefed me and Secretary Rice this morning on the fact that North Korea still looks like they're going to honor their agreement to disclose and to shut down their nuclear programs, which will be good for peace.

Anyway, a long answer because it's a complex relationship.

Prime Minister Howard Australian side. Mark [Mark Riley, Seven Network].

Security for President Bush's Visit

Q. Mr. President, welcome to Sydney.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Q. I can assure you it doesn't always look like this, with steel fences and concrete barricades and armed guards on the street. But I wonder, is the—

President Bush. I hope you feel safe.

Q. I feel—

President Bush. You feel inconvenienced, obviously.

Let me just say, before you get—you're trying to maybe get a response. But to the extent I've caused this, I apologize. Look, I don't want to come to a community and say, you know, what a pain it is to have the American President. Unfortunately, however, that—this is what the authorities thought was necessary to protect people. And we live in a free—you live in a free society. People feel like they want to protest—fine, they can. And unfortunately, evidently, some people may want to try to be violent in their protests. But I apologize to the Australian people if I've caused this inconvenience.

Q. Well, I wasn't going to blame you personally, sir. But anyway—

President Bush. I guess I must be feeling guilty; you know what I'm saying? [Laughter]

Australian Elections

Q. The point I was going to make is, as leader of the free world, the people of Sydney don't see their city looking all that free at the moment. And how's that going? We thought that we weren't going to allow terrorists to do this to our free society. And so your very positive view on Iraq and progress towards reconciliation there is of interest to us if you're meeting the opposition leader tomorrow, and his view is that there should be a staged withdrawal of troops from Iraq next year. How would that affect the positive view you put today? And what will you say to disavow him of that decision?

President Bush. First of all, in terms of whether Sydney is going to return to normal after I leave—or after we leave, I suspect it might, don't you? I don't think this is a permanent condition. I think the great freedom of the city of Sydney is going to return quite rapidly, which is different from other societies in the world.

First of all, I'm looking forward to meeting with the opposition leader. I believe I did that on my last trip here to Australia, if I'm not mistaken. And I hope we have an honest exchange of views. You just heard my opinion about Iraq and whether or not, one, we can win, and two, if it's necessary to win. I believe it's necessary, and I believe we can. And I'm looking forward to hearing his opinion.

I'm also wise enough not to prejudge the election results here in Australia. Yours is a slightly loaded question in trying to get me to comment about what it would be like to work with somebody who hasn't even been elected. And therefore, I'm going to let the Australian people express their opinion. My own judgment is, I wouldn't count the man out. As I recall, he's kind of like me; we both have run from behind and won. So that's going to

be part of my—I can tell you, relations are great right now. And I also, as I told you earlier, and I believe this, that our relationship is bigger than any individual in office. It's a relationship based upon values, common values, and it's also a relationship—it's enforced during tough times. When we fought fascism, we learned a lot about each other. And the American people have got great respect for Australians. Anyway, thank you.

Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network].

U.S. Troop Levels in Iraq/Progress in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Yesterday you said that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker—if the kind of success we are now seeing continues, it will be possible to maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces. There are many who believe that you were suggesting you'd make an announcement to lower American troop levels. A White House official dismissed that. But later you were asked aboard Air Force One why it was that twice you mentioned troop levels that have piqued our interest, to which you said, "Maybe I was intending to do that." You pride yourself on being a straight shooter, not coy or cute, so what is it at this time?

President Bush. Surely not cute, I agree. [Laughter] Whatever you do, don't cause me—call me cute, okay?

Q. Okay. So is the administration at this time trying to play it both ways by appeasing the critics, suggesting that troop withdrawal is right around the corner, at the same time making no real commitments?

President Bush. Suzanne, I think I went on to say on Air Force One, if I recall, somewhere between Baghdad and Sydney, that, why don't we all just wait and see what David Petraeus says when he comes—General Petraeus, when he comes back to America. He and Ambassador Crocker are going to come back, and they're going to report to me and report to the Congress and the American people about their rec-

ommendations on the way forward. I will then take their recommendations into account as I develop the strategy necessary to win in Iraq.

That's what I'm interested in. I'm not interested in artificial timetables or dates of withdrawal; I'm interested in achieving objective. I repeat: If you think it's not important that we're there, then you're going to find excuses to get out. If you think it is important to be there, then you ought to be thinking about ways to achieve our objectives. And we are achieving our objectives.

And so I was being as candid as I could with the people on the airplane. And what I said in Baghdad was exactly what they told me: That if conditions still improve, security conditions still improve the way they have been improving, is that we may be able to provide the same security with fewer troops. And whether or not that's the part of the policy I announce to the Nation when I get back from this trip, after the Congress has been briefed on David Petraeus and Ryan Crocker—why don't we see what they say—and then I'll let you know what our position is and what our strategy is.

Prime Minister Howard. Dennis [Dennis Shanahan, The Australian].

*Environment/Alternative Fuel Sources/
Trade Relations*

Q. Mr. President, John Howard put climate change at the center of this APEC meeting. Haven't you undermined his attempt to establish aspirational goals here by scheduling your own meeting in Washington? And to what extent do you regard ratification of Kyoto as being relevant to addressing climate change?

President Bush. Let me start with the latter. Since I'm getting older, you may have to repeat the first part of the question. Kyoto may work for other countries. It may have made sense for certain countries that ratified it; it just didn't make sense for the United States. And so therefore, I told the

truth. And by the way, prior to my arrival in Washington, the United States Senate was given a chance to express their approval or disapproval of whether or not Kyoto made sense to the United States. There was a 95-to-nothing vote against Kyoto. So it's just not my opinion; there's a lot of people who thought Kyoto wasn't the way to go.

So we developed a different approach: energy efficiency standards based upon new technologies. And as I told you, we reduced greenhouse gases in America last year, and our economy grew at 3 percent. I don't know if many countries can make that claim, but we can because our strategy in—of putting new technologies in place is working.

I happen to believe that we can do a better job of becoming less dependent on foreign oil. As an energy exporter, that might kind of frighten some of the energy exporters. But we've got to reduce our dependency on oil, and therefore, have put forth what's called a 20-in-10 program. Over the next 10 years, we will reduce our gasoline consumption by 20 percent by using ethanol and other new technologies. I believe battery technology is going to be coming on so that people in Sydney can drive the first 40 miles in their cars on battery without your car looking like a golf cart.

In other words, there's new technologies coming to market. And the fundamental question is, how to get them to market as quickly as possible? And Kyoto didn't do that as far as we were concerned. As a matter of fact, it's a—if you begin to take an assessment or inventory of countries that are actually meeting the Kyoto targets, I think you'll find that maybe a different approach makes sense. So the reason we rejected Kyoto is because it wouldn't have allowed us to do what we wanted to do, which is grow our economy, become less dependent on foreign oil, and be good stewards of the environment.

John and I have talked about his desire to put climate change at the forefront of APEC, and I was a strong supporter of that. I also reminded him that at the G-8, I took the message that said to our partners there that if you really want to really solve the global climate change issue, let's get everybody to the table. Let's make sure that countries such as China and India are at the table as we discuss the way forward. Otherwise, I suspect, if they feel like nations are going to cram down—a solution down their throat and not give them a voice on how to achieve a common objective, they'll walk. And then you can't have effective global climate change if a nation like China is not involved.

I thought the Prime Minister did something smart in this protocol. He announced that we need to cut back on tariffs that prohibit the exportation of technologies that will enable China, for example, to burn coal in a cleaner way. In other words, they've protected their environmental industries. And he wants to tear down those tariffs and barriers, and we support him strongly on this, so that technology is more likely to be able to flow from those of us who have it to those who don't.

And there are fundamental questions: How fast can we get effective technology to the market—coal sequestration technologies, nuclear spent fuel reprocessing technologies to the market? And once to the market, can we help developing nations acquire those technologies? Otherwise, it's an exercise that's not going to be effective.

And I believe the strategy that we have laid forth is the most effective way to deal with this issue in a serious way. I also appreciate the fact that the Prime Minister is the one that brought the issue to focus and, two, is talking about energy dependency, energy efficiency standards, which is a part of the global climate mix. He shows that leadership on the issue, and I'm proud to be here talking about the issue.

Prime Minister Howard. Okay.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:02 a.m. at the InterContinental Sydney. In his remarks, he referred to Jannette Howard, wife of Prime Minister Howard; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—

Iraq; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan; Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; President Hu Jintao of China; Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet; and Opposition Leader Kevin M. Rudd of Australia.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia on Climate Change and Energy
September 5, 2007

1. Prime Minister Howard and President Bush agreed today on the importance of confronting the interlinked challenges of climate change, energy security and clean development.

2. Australia and the United States are committed to working together to find effective solutions. They are working to ensure that the energy on which both economies depend remains reliable, affordable and secure by promoting efficiency and diversification of supply.

3. Australia and the United States have consistently championed the importance of practical action. The key to comprehensive global action on climate change is to ensure that measures to reduce emissions are consistent with economic growth, poverty alleviation and improvements in living standards.

4. Australia and the United States look forward to working actively and constructively with all countries at the UN Climate Change Conference in Indonesia in December, with a view to achieve a post-2012 agreement that provides for effective action from all the major emitting nations toward the UNFCCC objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The APEC Leaders' Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Sustainable Development will

be a significant step forward in efforts to forge a new international framework.

5. Australia welcomed the initiative by the United States to launch a series of meetings on future global action on climate change and looks forward to participating in the first Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change in Washington DC on 27–28 September 2007. Both countries believe this process will make a major contribution to the negotiation of a post-2012 framework.

6. Both countries highlighted that a key objective of the Major Economies Meeting would be to work toward a consensus on a long-term global goal for reducing emissions. Such a goal will provide a basis for accelerated and concerted action at the national and international level over the coming years. It underlines the importance of viewing action on climate change with a long-term perspective.

7. Together with appropriate policy tools, the development and deployment of low emission technologies will be a key element in addressing the climate change challenge in the medium- to longer-term. The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate is a major initiative that was co-founded by Australia and the United States to drive technology cooperation. Working together, the six members—Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States—have made substantial progress since the establishment

of the Partnership in Sydney in January 2006. The Partnership has initiated more than 100 practical projects in the areas of clean fossil energy, aluminum, coal mining, renewable energy, power generation, cement, buildings and appliances, and steel.

8. Both countries agree that reducing emissions from deforestation is a key component of global action on climate change. The United States welcomed Australia's action in launching the Global Initiative on Forests and Climate, announced by Prime Minister Howard in March 2007, and was pleased to participate in the recent High-Level Meeting in Sydney of 63 countries to take forward cooperation under the Initiative.

9. We also agreed to support multilateral action to liberalize trade in environmental goods and services.

10. Australia expressed its interest in participating in the Generation IV International Forum (GIF), which is a partnership of governments working on fourth generation nuclear power plant technology. The GIF reflects the common interest that many countries share in advanced research and development in this field. The United States expressed its support for Australian membership in the GIF.

11. In acknowledgment of the important contribution nuclear power can make in meeting energy needs and addressing the challenge of climate change, Australia and the United States agree on enhancing bilateral civilian nuclear cooperation and supporting the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). GNEP is a multilateral initiative the United States launched to expand the safe and secure use of zero-carbon emission nuclear energy worldwide. The United States welcomes Australia's participation in the Ministerial GNEP meeting to be held later this month in Vienna, Austria. The two countries also finalised a joint action plan for civil nuclear energy cooperation, including on research and development, regulatory issues, and skills and technical training.

12. Australia and the United States will continue to work closely to advance energy security and climate change issues internationally through other multilateral partnerships, including the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum, the Methane to Markets Partnership, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership and the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy.

13. Important work has also been accomplished bilaterally under the auspices of the Australia-United States Climate Action Partnership and both countries are committed to further action. Progress has been made in the areas of climate change science and monitoring, agriculture and forestry, approaches to managing High Global Warming Potential Gases (synthetic greenhouse gases) and policy tools and approaches to addressing climate change.

14. We will also endeavor under the Montreal Protocol to ensure the recovery of the ozone layer to pre-1980 levels by accelerating the phase-out of HCFCs in a way that supports energy efficiency and climate change objectives. We will continue to exercise leadership in the development of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).

15. The recently-concluded Australia-United States Agreement relating to Scientific and Technical Cooperation will promote collaboration between scientists in both countries on world-leading research and technology development, including in the area of climate change.

16. In recognition of the importance of global action on climate change and energy, the United States welcomes Australia's participation in the FutureGen International Partnership, a major United States-led international project aimed at building a prototype plant that integrates coal gasification and carbon capture and storage to produce electricity with near-zero emissions. This demonstrates and underscores the commitment of both countries to the

development and deployment of clean coal technologies.

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

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Prime Minister John W. Howard of
Australia in Sydney
September 5, 2007

Thank you. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your hospitality. Janette, thank you for joining us.

So the Prime Minister said, “Do you want to eat lunch with some of our finest citizens?” I said, “Sure.” He said, “Fine, I’m going to introduce you to the Australian Defense Force folks.” And I appreciate you having me. It’s a nice barbeque you threw for us. Looking forward to a little cowboy music. [*Laughter*] But most of all, I’ve been looking forward to saying thanks for those who wear the uniform.

These are tough times. They’re times I know that your families wonder whether or not it’s worth it for you to be in the military. For those of you who have been to Iraq or Afghanistan—I saw this wounded man over here—you know that people wonder, is it worth it? Is it worth the sacrifice? And I told some folks today at a press conference, if it wasn’t worth it for our own peace and security, I wouldn’t put our own troops in.

I believe the work that you’re doing alongside our forces is necessary for peace. I believe we are writing one of the great

chapters in the history of liberty and peace. And the Prime Minister has given me a chance to thank you; so I want to thank you. You’ve got a fabulous military.

I talked to our folks all the time about what is it like to be side by side with the Aussies again. And they say, “It’s a great honor and a privilege.” And so thanks for being in the military. Thanks for representing your country. Thanks for making the sacrifice necessary for peace. The work you’re doing is necessary work, and we’re going to win. And we’ll succeed. And when people look back at this chapter in the history of the world, they’re going to say, “Thank God there were folks like you all.”

So, Mr. Prime Minister, I’m honored to be with you. May God bless you all. May God bless our countries. Thanks for having me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at Garden Island. In his remarks, he referred to Janette Howard, wife of Prime Minister Howard. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Howard.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of James A. Nussle as Director of the
Office of Management and Budget
September 5, 2007

I thank the Senate for its strong bipartisan vote confirming Jim Nussle as Direc-

tor of the Office of Management and Budget.

Jim's confirmation comes at a critical time for our Nation's budget as Congress considers this year's annual spending bills. With less than a month until the new fiscal year begins, Congress has not sent any of the 12 appropriations bills to my desk. We must work together quickly to get the people's work done on time.

Jim is a strong advocate for fiscal discipline and pro-growth economic policies,

and he will help lead efforts to balance the budget by 2012 by restraining Federal spending and keeping taxes low. And as OMB Director, he will work to provide transparency regarding Federal spending and earmarks, strong accountability in Government, and better results for taxpayers.

I congratulate Jim and his family on today's confirmation and thank him for his continued service to our Nation.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter *September 4, 2007*

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, with a view to receiving advice and consent, the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (the "London Convention"), done in London on November 7, 1996. The Protocol was signed by the United States on March 31, 1998, and it entered into force on March 24, 2006.

The Protocol represents the culmination of a thorough and intensive effort to update and improve the London Convention. The London Convention governs the ocean dumping and incineration at sea of wastes and other matter and was a significant early step in international protection of the marine environment from pollution caused by these activities.

Although the Protocol and the London Convention share many features, the Protocol is designed to protect the marine environment more effectively. The Protocol moves from a structure of listing substances that may not be dumped to a "reverse list" approach, which prohibits ocean dumping of all wastes or other matter, except for

a few specified wastes. This approach is combined with detailed criteria for environmental assessment of those materials that may be considered for dumping and potential dumping sites.

The Protocol would be implemented through amendments to the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA), which currently covers London Convention obligations. There will not be any substantive changes to existing practices in the United States, and no economic impact is expected from implementation of the Protocol. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Protocol and give its advice and consent to ratification, with the declaration and understanding contained in Articles 3 and 10 respectively in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
September 4, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 6.

Message to the Senate Transmitting an Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material

September 4, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (the “Amendment”). A conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, adopted on October 28, 1979, adopted the Amendment on July 8, 2005, at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the Department of State report on the Amendment. Legislation necessary to implement the Amendment will be submitted to the Congress separately.

The Amendment contains specific provisions to effect a coordinated international response to combating and preventing nuclear terrorism and ensuring global security. It will require each State Party to the Amendment to establish, implement, and maintain an appropriate physical protection regime applicable to nuclear material and nuclear facilities used for peaceful purposes. The aims of the regime are to protect such material against theft or other unlawful taking, to locate and rapidly recover missing or stolen material, to protect such material and facilities against sabotage,

and to mitigate or minimize the radiological consequences of sabotage. The Amendment also provides a framework for cooperation among States Parties directed at preventing nuclear terrorism and ensuring punishment of offenders; contains provisions for protecting sensitive physical protection information; and adds new criminal offenses that each State Party must make punishable by law. States Parties must also either submit for prosecution or extradite any person within their jurisdictions alleged to have committed one of the offenses defined in the Convention, as amended.

This Amendment is important in the campaign against international nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation. I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Amendment, subject to the understandings described in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
September 4, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 6.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in Sydney

September 6, 2007

President Bush. The President and I just concluded a very constructive meeting. It was constructive because, one, we had a lot to talk about—a lot of interests that we want to work together on—and also because he’s an easy man to talk to. I’m very

comfortable in my discussions with President Hu.

We talked about Iran and North Korea and Sudan. We talked about climate change and our desire to work together on climate change. We talked about our economic relations and our trade. And the President

was quite articulate about product safety, and I appreciated his comments. We also talked about currency and exchange rates. And finally, I had a chance to share once again with the President my belief in religious freedom and religious liberty.

It was a constructive and cordial conversation. And once again, he extended an invitation to me and Laura and our family to come to the Olympics. And of course, I was anxious to accept.

So thank you, Mr. President.

President Hu. President Bush and I had a meeting in a candid and friendly atmosphere. We reviewed the new progress made in China-U.S. relations in the past few months. We discussed a number of issues in our bilateral relations. We both expressed a desire to work for further development and growth of the business and commercial sides between our two countries through dialog and consultations.

We also talked about climate change. We believe that the issue of climate change bears on the welfare of the whole humanity

and sustainable development of the whole world. And this issue should be appropriately tackled through stronger international cooperation.

I also briefed the—President Bush on the latest developments in the situation across the Taiwan Straits. President Bush also explicitly stated the U.S. position—consistent U.S. position of opposing any changes to the status quo. We also discussed issues like the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, the Iranian nuclear issue, and Sudan—Darfur.

All in all, our talks have been sincere and cordial. I am committed to working together with President Bush to further advance our constructive and cooperative relations.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:27 p.m. at the InterContinental Sydney. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of Representative Paul E. Gillmor *September 6, 2007*

Congressman Paul Gillmor's life was an extraordinary example to service and leadership. From working as an Air Force judge advocate during the Vietnam war to championing legislation in the Halls of Congress, Paul devoted his career to strengthening his State and his nation. He was a good man and dedicated public servant who represented the people of Ohio with distinction for four decades. In Ohio, he served as president of the State senate for three

general assemblies. In Washington, Paul was well respected for his leadership of a wide range of issues before the House Financial Services and Energy and Commerce Committees. We will always remain grateful for his service.

Laura and I are deeply saddened by his death. We pray for his wife Karen and their family.

Statement on the Death of Jennifer Blackburn Dunn *September 6, 2007*

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the death of Jennifer Dunn. She was a good friend and compassionate leader. During her congressional career, Jennifer effectively promoted policies that enabled more people throughout our country to realize the American Dream. She was committed to reforming welfare, reducing taxes, and strengthening our health care system. She was a tireless advocate for free trade and worked to eliminate the death tax, believing that leadership on these issues would foster

growth and prosperity for small businesses and communities. As a member of the House Republican leadership, Jennifer used her position to help strengthen women's rights and protect children.

After leaving Congress, Jennifer continued to be a strong advocate of common-sense conservative values.

Jennifer was most proud of her family. Our thoughts and prayers are with Keith, Bryant, Reagan, and Angus.

Statement on the Death of Luciano Pavarotti *September 6, 2007*

Luciano Pavarotti was one of the most accomplished and acclaimed opera singers of all time. From singing with his father in a small church choir near Modena, Italy, to performing in sold-out stadiums in America and all across the world, Pavarotti entertained audiences with his perfect pitch and charismatic interpretations. Both as a soloist and as part of the Three Tenors, he sold millions of records and won many prestigious awards.

Pavarotti was also a great humanitarian, using his magnificent talent to rally tremendous levels of support for victims of tragedies around the globe. His international vocal competition in Philadelphia and his school in Modena have encouraged and inspired generations of young artists to pursue their dreams.

Laura and I join Luciano Pavarotti's fans across the world in mourning his loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Pavarotti family.

Message on the Observance of Rosh Hashanah, 5768 *September 6, 2007*

I send greetings to those around the world celebrating Rosh Hashanah.

The sound of the Shofar heralds the beginning of a new year and a time of remembrance and renewal for the Jewish people. During these holy days, men and women are called to reflect on their faith and to honor the blessings of creation.

The enduring traditions of Rosh Hashanah remind us of the deep values of faith and family that strengthen our Nation and help guide us each day. As Jewish people around the world come together to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, it is a chance to look to the new year with hope and faith.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a blessed Rosh Hashanah and shanah tovah.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Remarks at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Summit in
Sydney
September 7, 2007

Good morning, or should I say g'day. [Laughter] Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your introduction. Thank you for being such a fine host for the OPEC summit. I appreciate—APEC summit. [Laughter] He invited me to the OPEC summit next year—[laughter]—the APEC summit. I appreciate your friendship. I appreciate your leadership. They refer to the Prime Minister around here as a battler. I know why. He's courageous; he's wise; he's determined. America could ask for no better friend and more steadfast ally than Prime Minister John Howard.

I appreciate being back here in Australia, and I thank the people of Sydney for their gracious hospitality. The Prime Minister kept bragging about how beautiful Sydney is, and he's right. It's really a beautiful city, Mr. Prime Minister.

Yesterday I had the privilege of visiting the Australian National Maritime Museum, which houses the bell from a great American naval vessel called the USS *Canberra*. This is the only American ship ever commissioned in tribute to an ally's warship lost in battle. It was named by President Franklin Roosevelt to honor the men who gave their lives aboard the Australian ship *Canberra*, which was lost during the Second World War. The bell is a powerful symbol of the enduring ties that bind our two nations. And I was proud to present it to Prime Minister Howard when he came to Washington to mark the 50th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty.

The ceremony took place on September the 10th, 2001. And as we stood together

that morning, I know that I could never have imagined, I suspect the Prime Minister never could have imagined that in less than 24 hours, the United States of America would come under attack and that the ANZUS Treaty would be invoked for the first time, and in a matter of weeks, Australian and American troops would once again be fighting side by side in a global war to defend our freedom and our way of life.

Australia's response after 9/11 was swift and resolute, and this comes as no surprise to the American people. Our two nations have fought together in every major conflict of the past century. Australian Diggers have served alongside American GIs throughout the world. American troops are honored to fight beside such dedicated and courageous allies, and the American people are proud to call Australia a partner in the cause of peace and freedom.

You know, it says something that one of my nation's closest allies in the world is also the farthest from our shores. The United States and Australia are separated by geography—and a lot of it—but we're united by common values. We share a firm belief in democracy and free enterprise and the universal appeal of liberty. Our two nations are united by common interests. We seek an Asia-Pacific region that is growing in freedom and prosperity and peace. And we're determined to help this region become a place of hope where every man, woman, and child has a chance to achieve

their God-given potential and to build a better life.

America's commitment to the Asia-Pacific region was forged in war and sealed in peace. You know, I recently went to the VFW—that's one of our finest veterans organizations, the Veterans of Foreign Wars—and I spoke to the folks there. In that audience today [that day]* there were citizens who had been called out of their normal lives to serve their country in a time of war. And they came to fight for freedom in the Pacific. Their courage spared millions from tyranny and laid the foundations for America's enduring presence in this region.

Today, our alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines and our defense relationships with Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia, and others in the region form the bedrock of America's engagement in the Asia-Pacific. These security relationships have helped keep the peace in this vital part of the world. They've created conditions that have allowed freedom to expand and markets to grow and commerce to flow and young democracies to gain in confidence. America is committed to the security of the Asia-Pacific region, and that commitment is unshakable.

The expansion of freedom and democracy in the Asia-Pacific region is one of the great stories of our time. At the end of World War II, Australia and New Zealand were the only democracies on this side of the Pacific. Now, some nearly 60 years later, we've witnessed Japan's transformation into a thriving free society; we've seen the triumph of democracy in the Philippines; we've seen democratic transitions in Taiwan and South Korea and Indonesia; we've seen the birth of a new democratic nation in East Timor.

The growth of these free societies in this part of the world has unleashed the talent and creativity of millions, and they're using

that freedom to build a dynamic and hopeful Asia-Pacific region. Our challenge is to strengthen the forces of freedom and prosperity in this region. And one of the best ways to do so is through the expansion of trade and investment.

Today, APEC economies account for nearly half of all international trade. It's going to be amazing, John; we have that meeting tomorrow, and when you look around the table, one-half of all international trade will be represented by the leaders at that—at the table. The total trade in goods by APEC countries has grown a lot; it's grown by 300 percent since 1990. Investment in the region has grown by nearly 400 percent. The expansion of trade creates jobs. The expansion of investment creates opportunities for people on this side of the Pacific, and it opens up new markets for American workers and farmers and entrepreneurs. It is in the interest of the United States to liberalize trade and investment at every level: globally, regionally, and with individual nations.

I believe that the best way to open up markets is through the Doha round of trade negotiations. Doha represents a once-in-a-generation chance to open up markets and to help millions rise out of poverty. The United States is committed to seizing this opportunity, and we need partners in this region to help lead the effort. No single country can make Doha a success, but it is possible for a handful of countries that are unwilling to make the necessary contributions to bring Doha to a halt. As negotiations resume in Geneva, leaders in every country have to make tough decisions to reduce barriers to trade. We must focus on what we have to gain, not what we could lose. The United States has both the will and the flexibility to help conclude a successful Doha round, and we urge our APEC partners to join us in this vital effort.

As we work to liberalize trade and investment through Doha, the United States also supports the vision of a free trade area of the Asia-Pacific. This would be a free

* White House correction.

trade area that incorporates all APEC economies; it reduces barriers to trade and investment across the entire Asian-Pacific region. It's a bold idea. It's one, Mr. Prime Minister, that we will work hard to make a reality. And as we do so, we'll continue to foster our bilateral ties.

Today, the United States has free trade agreements in place with Australia—and by the way, Mr. Prime Minister, it's working for the benefit of both our countries. And I thank you for your leadership on that issue. We have free trade agreements with Singapore and Canada and Mexico and Chile, and recently we concluded free trade agreements with two more APEC countries: South Korea and Peru. The United States Congress needs to ratify these trade agreements, for the good of the United States and for the good of the world.

I urge the business leaders gathered here to help educate your people in your communities and your workplaces about the benefits of global trade. You have an obligation—if you believe free trade makes sense, you have an obligation to help educate the people in your communities. I hope you understand this: The surest road to stagnation and instability is the path of isolation and protectionism. The only road to enduring prosperity and stability is through open markets and open trade.

As we work to expand trade and investment, we also got to address the challenges of energy security and global climate change. We need to harness the power of technology to help nations meet their growing energy needs in ways that improve the environment. We need to help people grow their economy and improve the environment, which we can do. It's possible to do so. And the best way to do so is the unleashing of new technologies.

Under Prime Minister Howard's leadership, APEC is holding its first major discussions on a practical set of priorities for cooperation on energy security and clean development and climate change. And, John, thanks for your leadership on this issue.

We agree these issues must be addressed in an integrated way. The work we do here at APEC will make an important contribution to the global discussions in the U.N. about a new framework on energy security and climate change. Later this month, the United States will convene a series of meetings of the nations that produce the most greenhouse gas emissions, including nations with rapidly growing economies like India and China. We're going to work hard to reach an agreement by next year on a detailed plan for future action.

Here's my strategy: In order for there to be effective climate change policy, India and China need to be a part of the process. In order to get them in the process, they have to be included in setting international goals. And the process is beginning here at APEC.

I told you I believe technology is going to help solve our energy dependence issues here. I noticed you signed a significant contract with China. Obviously, you're not dependent on energy. [Laughter] We are—that would be energy from overseas. And so—and we take climate change seriously in America. Since I've been President, we've invested nearly \$12 billion in Government-sponsored research in energy technology. I believe that's the proper use of taxpayers' money, to invest in serious research and development. And interestingly enough, the private sector is also responding in the United States. There's a lot of venture capital going into different forms and different styles and different types of energy, as well as the good policy when it comes—good investment when it comes to climate change.

As a result of our efforts, the United States economy grew last year and we reduced greenhouse gas emissions. In other words, we're achieving our goal, and that is to be better stewards of the environment and, at the same time, grow our economy. We want our people working. We want people to have hope. I understand a prosperous society is a society which is going

to be wealthy enough to make investments necessary to be good stewards of the environment. And that's precisely what's happening in the United States.

We're looking forward to working with the APEC nations to encourage their leadership to invest, just like they're doing here in Australia. We're looking forward to working with ways we can better share technology to encourage developing nations to become better stewards of the environment. And finally, we're working to protect our citizens from the threats and challenges that have emerged in this century.

Today, our nations are standing side by side in a great ideological struggle. In the struggle, the forces of moderation and reasonableness are contending with extremism and radicalism and fear. We're facing a new kind of war. It's a war in which extremists use the murder of the innocent to spread their ideology of hatred and repression, and we must stop them. For the sake of security and peace, those who sit at the table tomorrow must do everything we can to stop the radicals and the murderers.

The nations of the Asia-Pacific understand this threat all too well. You've experienced terrorist violence in your cities and on your streets. Violent Islamic extremists have killed the innocent in Bali and Jakarta and Manila and in other places. The leaders of Al Qaida have issued threats against Australia and Japan and South Korea. Yet for each attack that terrorists and extremists have carried out in this part of the world, many others have been stopped in places such as Singapore and Manila and cities here in Australia.

The fight against the terrorists in this region is one of the untold success stories in the war on terror, and the rest of the world could learn from the approach that has been taken in this region to fight the extremists.

The two most dangerous terrorist networks in this region are a group called Jemaah Islamiyah, or JI, and a Filipino terrorist group called Abu Sayyaf. Both these

groups have been associated with Al Qaida. JI terrorists have trained in Al Qaida's camps in Afghanistan. Al Qaida senior leaders have provided JI with significant funds—money that helped fund the 2002 bombing of a Bali nightclub, the 2003 bombing of a Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, and the 2004 bombing of Australia's Embassy in Indonesia. A senior JI leader and Al Qaida associate named Hambali also worked with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed on an Al Qaida plot to hijack an airplane and fly it into the Library Tower in Los Angeles, California. That plot was foiled with the help of governments in this region. We thank you for helping us save countless lives of our citizens.

The other terrorist network is Abu Sayyaf. This is a group who received funding from Usama bin Laden's brother-in-law and other Middle East terrorist financiers. Abu Sayyaf was behind the 2001 kidnaping of 17 Filipinos and 3 Americans in the Philippines, one of whom they beheaded. They conducted a bombing in Zamboanga City that killed an American soldier and two Filipinos. Abu Sayyaf was behind the worst terrorist attack in the history of the Philippines: the 2004 bombing of a Manila ferry that killed more than a hundred people.

Nations in the Asia-Pacific understand the threat posed by these groups, and together we're following a clear strategy to defeat them. First, we must do everything we can to bring them to justice so they don't kill the innocent. Nations in the Asia-Pacific have arrested and killed key leaders and operatives in networks. In other words, they're following through with that first step of a strategy. In 2003, Hambali was captured, severing the main link between JI and Al Qaida. A few months ago, Indonesian forces tracked down and captured JI's acting emir and JI's top military commander. In the Philippines, the country's military forces launched a campaign called Operation Ultimatum that is targeting Abu Sayyaf. In this operation, they killed Abu

Sayyaf's top leader; they found and killed his closest adviser and confidant.

Pressure keeps the terrorists on the run, and when on the run, we're safer. We must be determined, we must be focused, and we must not let up.

Second, nations in the Asia-Pacific are providing economic assistance to struggling communities where the terrorists operate. The reason we do this is we want to strengthen moderate leaders and give citizens in these communities alternatives to the path of radicalism and violence. For example, in Indonesia, the Government is working with the United States to implement a \$157-million initiative to improve basic education in 1,500 public and private schools.

You know, when the tsunamis hit here in 2004, the United States and friends and allies responded quickly. We did so because we care deeply about the human condition. And that response should send a clear message that the forces of moderation are much more compassionate than the forces of radicalism and terror.

In the Philippines, the Government has worked with international donors to deliver aid to Muslim communities in the southern Philippines that the terrorists have exploited, where they're building roads and bridges and schools and health clinics and providing microcredit to local entrepreneurs. The whole purpose of this part of the strategy is to isolate the terrorists and extremists and to encourage the local population to join the fight against them.

Third, the nations in the Asia-Pacific are increasing regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Malaysia and the United States have established a regional counterterrorism training center in Kuala Lumpur. There are law enforcement training centers in Jakarta and Bangkok that are improving the capabilities of security forces from across this region. And last year, ASEAN nations concluded a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty that will improve the sharing of evidence in terrorist investigations. In

March, foreign ministers from across the region held a counterterrorism conference in Jakarta, where they discussed ways they can improve cooperation in the battle against terror.

Finally, nations in the Asia-Pacific are working to defeat the terrorists' hateful ideology. Prime Minister Lee of Singapore says this—and I quote—"the fight against terrorism is a long-term ideological struggle." I completely agree. We must bring the terrorists to justice. In the short term, the best way to protect our nations is to keep the pressure on them, is to share intelligence, is to talk a lot about where we may think they are and to keep our security forces pressuring them. But in the long term, the best way to bring peace is to defeat them in the battle of ideas.

Our enemies are followers of a violent and narrow ideology. They have a vision which is narrow because it despises freedom, it rejects tolerance, it crushes all dissent. And they have goals. They want to impose this ideology as far and wide as possible. I believe that in the interest of peace, we must promote an alternative vision based upon human dignity and human liberty—a hopeful vision, a vision that is far stronger than the dark appeal of resentment and murder. And that's precisely what we're doing, and that's exactly what leaders here in the Asia-Pacific region are doing.

In Indonesia, President Yudhoyono hosted an interfaith dialog soon after taking office where he called on his fellow citizens to ensure that, quote, "the forces of light and reason and hope overpower the forces of darkness, despair, and violence." The head of the largest Muslim organization, Dr. Hasyim Muzadi, was one of the first Muslim leaders to visit Ground Zero in New York. And here's what he said: "There is no violence, cruelty, chaos, or viciousness on behalf of religion, including Islam."

In Malaysia, Prime Minister Badawi is working to promote what he calls *Islam Hadhari*, or "Civilization Islam." He's called on his fellow Malaysians to, quote,

“show by example that a Muslim country can be modern and democratic and tolerant and economically competitive.”

In the Philippines, President Arroyo has reached out to Muslim leaders and has called the Filipinos to oppose, quote, “terrorists who kill, bomb, and maim to enforce an ideology of evil.” A group of leading Filipino Islamic jurists issued a joint sermon declaring, quote, “Islam and terrorism stand on the opposite ends of the moral spectrum. Murder and the killing of innocent civilians in warfare is strictly forbidden.”

These and other efforts are making a difference. And there’s fertile ground to do so, because, you see, the vast majority of citizens in this region and around the world reject extremism. They want to live in peace. They want to live in freedom. And it’s in the interests of the United States to actively support these forces of moderation, and we will do so.

Freedom has transformed this region. If you really think about the past, it’s amazing what has transpired here. Freedom is transformative. Freedom is a powerful force. There’s more work to be done here. We must work for the day when the people of North Korea enjoy the same freedoms as the citizens of their democratic neighbors. We must press the regime in Burma to stop arresting and harassing and assaulting prodemocracy activists for organizing or participating in peaceful demonstrations. The Burmese regime must release these activists immediately. It must stop its intimidation of these citizens who are promoting democracy and human rights. It must release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

We’ll continue to work with nations like Russia to advance our shared interests while encouraging Russia’s leaders to respect the checks and balances that are essential to democracy. We’ll encourage to work with China, but as we do so, we’ll never shy away from expressing our deepest-held values that each person has human

dignity, and that we believe strongly in liberty. You know, China will be the host of the Olympic games; I’m looking forward to going. And it’s going to be a great moment of pride for the Chinese people. It will also be a moment where China’s leaders can use this opportunity to show confidence by demonstrating a commitment to greater openness and tolerance.

And finally, we look forward to free and fair elections in Thailand.

APEC nations are supporting the advance of freedom in this region. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore helped lead the effort to include democratic and human rights principles in the ASEAN Charter. Japan has incorporated democracy and governance programs into its official development assistance. South Korea hosted an historic gathering of the world’s free nations, the Community of Democracies summit. These are important steps, and now we must build on them by forging new regional institutions to encourage the continued expansion of freedom in this vital part of the world. And so this week, the United States is proposing the creation of a new Asia-Pacific democracy partnership. Through this partnership, free nations will work together to support democratic values, strengthen democratic institutions, and assist those who are working to build and sustain free societies across the Asia-Pacific region.

The lesson of freedom’s advance in the Asia-Pacific region is this: The desire for liberty is universal, written by our Creator into the hearts of every man, woman, and child. Whenever they’re given a chance, whenever they’re given an opportunity, the people of every culture and every religion choose freedom over oppression. In Asia, millions have been given this chance, and they built free societies that are sources of peace and prosperity. And now we must give that same chance to millions across the broader Middle East who share the same desire for freedom that burns in the hearts of people of this region.

I want to thank the APEC nations who are standing with young democracies in the Middle East that are under assault by the terrorists and extremists. In Afghanistan, forces from Australia and Canada and South Korea and New Zealand and Singapore are helping the Afghan people build a free nation and stopping the Taliban and the Al Qaida from returning to intimidate the innocent. In Lebanon, forces from Indonesia and Malaysia and South Korea and China are serving as part of the United Nations force that's helping bring stability to a free nation that is threatened by radical regimes and terrorist violence. And in Iraq, personnel from Australia and Japan and South Korea are helping Iraq's democratically elected Government rebuild from the rubble of tyranny. We're working hard to stop Al Qaida from turning that country into a safe haven.

You may have heard, on my way down here I stopped in Iraq—stopped in Anbar Province. Anbar was an Al Qaida stronghold. Their leaders of Al Qaida had announced that they were going to establish a safe haven from which to launch further attacks on my nation—for starters. It was a part of Iraq that was dangerous, and the truth of the matter is, the—a lot of the experts in my country had said was lost to Al Qaida.

I went there because Al Qaida has lost Anbar. The opposite happened. Anbar is a Sunni Province that once had people joining Al Qaida; they're now turning against Al Qaida. Why? Because people don't want to follow a dark vision. People want to live in hope. Moms around the world share the same deep desire, and that is for their children to grow up in peace and in hopeful societies.

And so the sheikhs there and the local folks turned against Al Qaida. And they asked for help, and we're giving it to them. And we're driving Al Qaida out of their strongholds. And we're giving people a chance to live in peace. And I was proud to go there.

By the way, the same security situation in Anbar is being replicated throughout parts of the country. By providing security we're creating conditions that allow people to reconcile. It's hard for people to come together after years of tyranny, particularly since the brutal dictator did all he could to divide society in order to stay in power. Those of us who live in the comfort of free societies—it's hard to imagine what it is like to recover—psychologically recover from life under a thug like Saddam Hussein. But that's what's happening. And they need time to do so. And they need the security necessary to do so.

We're giving this young democracy the chance. It's in our interest to do so because, as John Howard accurately noted when he went to thank the Australian troops there last year—here's what he said: He said, "If we leave before the job is done—if we leave Iraq before the job is done, it would represent a devastating blow to the hopes of a stable future for the Middle East. It would embolden the Iranians. They would unsettle and destabilize the more moderate elements amongst the Arab states in the region, and it would represent a monumental victory for the cause of international terrorism." The Prime Minister says: "What Iraq and her people now need is time, not a timetable. They seek our patience, not political posturing. They require resolve, not our retreat."

We're going to succeed in Iraq. If given a chance, liberty will succeed every time and liberty will help yield the peace we need.

This is the calling of our time, by the way. This is what leaders have been called to do, is to be able to see over the horizon and envision a peaceful future. This is hard work we're doing, but it's the kind of work we've done before. We've done this kind of work in East Asia before. East Asia used to be a region of turmoil and danger, and today, it's a region of peace and hope and opportunity. With resolve and strength of conviction, the same thing will happen in

the Middle East. And when they look back at this period, Mr. Prime Minister, they'll say, job well done.

I'm honored to be here on the soil of an ally like Australia. We share values, we share vision, and we share resolve to not only protect our people but to spread the peace. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 a.m. at the Sydney Opera House. In his remarks, he

referred to Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia; Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan, on March 1, 2003; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Zarkasih (also known as Mbah), acting emir, and Abu Dujanah, military leader, Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist organization, both captured on the island of Jakarta, Indonesia, on June 9.

Remarks at a Luncheon With Southeast Asian Leaders in Sydney *September 7, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much for inviting me to join the ASEAN group. ASEAN represents our fourth largest trading partner. In other words, this is a group of friends that represent more than just social acquaintances; you represent commerce and trade and prosperity. And I want to thank you very much for giving me the chance to come and talk to you about our common interests and common goals.

I have invited the ASEAN leaders to Texas at their convenience. I'm looking forward to hosting you down there. I'm looking forward to continuing our constructive conversation on—whether it be democracy or fighting terror or expanding trade or avian flu or climate change.

I also am pleased to announce that we'll be naming an Ambassador to ASEAN, so that we can make sure that the ties we've established over the past years remain firmly entrenched.

So I appreciate your hospitality. It's good to be amongst friends. I enjoyed our candid conversation, and I thank you for your leadership in this important part of the world.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore. Thank you. Thank you very much.

President Bush. You bet. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. at the InterContinental Sydney.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea in Sydney *September 7, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you for your time. As usual, we had a very friendly and frank discussion about important matters. We discussed our bilateral relations, which are very strong. And we

thank you for your contributions to helping young democracies such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

But we spent a lot of time talking about the six-party talks and the progress that is

being made in the six-party talks. I understand you're having a summit with the leader of North Korea, and I appreciate the fact that you will urge the North Korean leader to continue to adhere to the agreement that he made with us.

And in our discussions, I reaffirmed my Government's position that when the North Korean leader fully discloses and gets rid of his nuclear weapons programs, that we can achieve a new security arrangement in the Korean Peninsula, that we can have the peace that we all long for. You and I discussed the northeast peace and security agreement—arrangement, which we support.

And so I'm optimistic. There's still more work to be done. But nevertheless, Mr. President, when we have worked together, we have shown that it's possible to achieve the peace on the Korean Peninsula that the people long for.

So thank you, sir.

President Roh. As President Bush has stated, we had a very constructive discussion on six-party talks and the North Korean nuclear issue as well as the other bilateral issues between our two countries.

Before we discussed these issues, I reaffirmed my support for President Bush and his policies and efforts in Iraq to bring peace. I also thanked the President for his efforts in the Visa Waiver Program—for his constructive position on this issue.

We both agreed on the positive outlook for the six-party talks. We believe that this progress is very meaningful. And I also thanked President Bush for his resolve to bring peace to the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asian region, for making a strategic decision to bring peace to the region through dialog.

As is outlined in the 2005 September 19th joint statement, we have a plan for the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and Mr. Bush—President Bush also reaffirmed in November of last year in Vietnam of his willingness and his resolve to end the Korean war officially, once and

for all. Today we revisited this issue. President Bush reaffirmed his determination to replace the current status in the Korean Peninsula with a permanent peace regime, and he stressed that he would be proceeding with this move after the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved.

We also shared the view that should there be more progress in the six-party process, this will be followed by talks to initiate a Northeast Asian regional security mechanism. I also reassured President Bush that the inter-Korean summit will underpin the progress at the six-party talks, that relations—the inter-Korean relations and the six-party talks should be a mutually reinforcing relationship.

I think I might be wrong—I think I did not hear President Bush mention the—a declaration to end the Korean war just now. Did you say so, President Bush?

President Bush. I said it's up to Kim Jong Il as to whether or not we're able to sign a peace treaty to end the Korean war. He's got to get rid of his weapons in a verifiable fashion. And we're making progress toward that goal. It's up to him.

President Roh. I believe that they are the same thing, Mr. President. If you could be a little bit clearer in your message, I think—

President Bush. I can't make it any more clear, Mr. President. We look forward to the day when we can end the Korean war. But that will end—will happen when Kim Jong Il verifiably gets rid of his weapons programs and his weapons.

Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. at the InterContinental Sydney. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. President Roh spoke in Korean, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia
in Sydney
September 7, 2007

President Putin. First of all, I would like to say that I am very glad to have this opportunity to meet with the U.S. President within the framework of the APEC summit.

In the meeting we had today, I started with the words of gratitude for this fantastic and warm welcome which we enjoyed during our visit to Kennebunkport recently.

We have managed to cover all the matters on our bilateral agenda and the key international aspects too. First of all, about the missile defense, we have once again said that it is necessary that our experts meet again very soon and make another trip to Azerbaijan to the Gabala radio location station. By saying this, we confirm that the process of our joint work on this—in this direction is underway.

We also discussed the—Russia's WTO accession plans. We hope that this work will end up with positive results and these endeavors will be continued on the expert level too.

We also discussed the Iranian nuclear issue. And I would like to say that Russia intends and is prepared to continue this work with our partners and colleagues within the framework of the IAEA and the United Nations. And I hope that a solution will be found for the benefits of the international community in general and the benefits of Iranian people in particular.

We also covered our economic relations. We discussed some particular large-scale economic projects, the implementation of which is to the interests of the business communities on both sides, in the U.S. and in Russia.

And we also discussed the environmental issues of—in particular in connection with the forthcoming APEC summit. I should

tell you that we have very close positions on these matters.

I would like to thank my colleague, the President of the United States, for a very constructive and open dialog, which we enjoyed today.

This gives me every hope to believe that further on the relations between the countries will continue to develop in the same positive mood.

Thank you.

President Bush. Vladimir, thanks. For a minute, I thought he brought up the Kennebunkport visit to remind me that he was the only one who caught the fish. But in fact, it was our—my family's great pleasure to welcome my friend the President of Russia to mother and dad's home.

I have nothing much more to add than what Vladimir said. We did discuss a variety of issues that are of importance to our respective countries, and I found the conversation to be cordial and constructive. We are results-oriented people. We want to help solve problems. And we recognize that we can do better solving problems when we work together.

So I appreciate your time, appreciate your friendship, and appreciate the chance to dialog on important matters.

President Putin. And we also agreed that we will enjoy fishing not only in the United States but somewhere in Siberia very soon.

President Bush. Yes, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:51 p.m. at the Marriott Hotel at Circular Quay. President Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of D. James Kennedy *September 7, 2007*

Dr. D. James Kennedy was a man of great vision, faith, and integrity. Under his leadership, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church of Florida developed from a small group of worshipers in an elementary school cafeteria into one of America's most prominent congregations. Dr. Kennedy's message of love and hope inspired millions of Americans and others worldwide through the institutions he founded, including Coral Ridge Ministries, Knox Theological Semi-

nary, and Westminster Academy. He was also a student of history and successful author who encouraged Americans of faith to exercise their democratic freedoms and put their values into practice. His legacy of grace and personal humility will continue to influence hearts and lives.

Laura and I pray for Anne, his wife of over 50 years, and the rest of the Kennedy family.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan in Sydney, Australia *September 8, 2007*

President Bush. Shinzo, thank you for your time. I not only had breakfast with my friend, I just had a very constructive bilateral discussion on a variety of issues. We, of course, discussed concern about climate change, our regional concerns. We talked about energy security. We talked about Iran.

But mostly, I want to thank the Prime Minister, his Government, and the Japanese people for their contribution in the war against terror. The role that Japan plays in this fight is a vital role, and it's a necessary role. Japan provides a vital service not only to the United States but to other countries as a refueler of our ships. And I thank you for that, Mr. Prime Minister, and I thank the Japanese people for that as well.

The fact that we're in a war against extremists was heightened today by the release of a tape. The tape is a reminder about the dangerous world in which we live, and it is a reminder that we must work together to protect our people against

these extremists who murder the innocent in order to achieve their political objectives.

I found it interesting that on the tape, Iraq was mentioned, which is a reminder that Iraq is a part of this war against extremists. If Al Qaida bothers to mention Iraq, it's because they're—they want to achieve their objectives in Iraq, which is to drive us out and to develop a safe haven. And the reason they want a safe haven is to launch attacks against America or any other ally. And therefore, it's important that we show resolve and determination to protect ourselves, to deny Al Qaida safe haven, and to support young democracies, which will be a major defeat to their ambitions.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for being here. I'm proud to call you friend.

Prime Minister Abe. I'm very happy that we were able to have a very nice meeting today, George. Following on to the trilateral breakfast that we had among three countries, Japan, Australia, and the United States, together, the two of us were able

to have a very useful or meaningful discussion on various areas, including the political, economic, and security and climate change—all these areas. And we agreed to further strengthen the indispensable, irreplaceable alliance that we have between our two countries.

And Japan and the United States agreed to cooperate so that we can build an effective framework for addressing the problem of climate change. And we agreed the importance for the international community to be—stay united in the fight against terrorism, which is still ongoing. And we also

agreed on the importance of the Japanese-American refueling operation in the Indian Ocean.

We not only agreed to strengthen our bilateral relationship as allies, but we also agreed to cooperate closely in attacking the various issues that faces the international community.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. at the InterContinental Sydney. Prime Minister Abe spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia in Sydney *September 8, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. President, I admire your leadership, I admire your strength of character, and I appreciate our conversation today. But first, I thank you very much for your strength in this struggle against extremism. You understand firsthand what it means to deal with radicalism, and you've done it in a very constructive way. On the one hand, you've brought people to justice who deserved it; on the other hand, you've worked to improve the human condition.

And we're proud to stand with you on matters such as education. You've got a very constructive education reform package in your country that we believe will make a difference, and I thank you for that.

Today we discussed our bilateral relations and the importance of military-to-military relationship. I think it's important that officers in the Indonesian Army and the Indonesian military come to the United States. I think it's important for our military folks to interface with your officers. After all, Mr. President, if I remember correctly, you spent some time in Kansas. And I think it's in the country's interest that we inter-

face with our friends, the Indonesians, in this way.

I want to thank you for your leadership on climate change. We had a good discussion on climate change. Interestingly enough, the President is in the lead when it comes to coral reef protection, and we want to help you. And you've also got an aggressive plan to stop deforestation. As a matter of fact, you're one of the leaders in the world when it comes to these practical applications of environmental quality and environmental progress. And the United States wants to help. We're working on a \$20 million initiative to help you on your preventing deforestation, and it's a good use of our taxpayers' money, particularly since we've got such a strong champion as you in the lead.

I also thank you very much for our discussion on Doha. Trade will help our respective nations. And your Minister and I had a discussion yesterday, and I want to thank you for your leadership on this key issue.

All in all, Mr. President, I'm proud to be with you today, and I want to thank you for your time.

President Yudhoyono. Thank you, Mr. President. We have discuss lot of things constructively and productively this morning. I have to be thankful for your roles and leaderships in fostering our bilateral friendships and cooperation.

Thank for your willingness to cooperate and assist Indonesia in managing our forests, in preserving our coral, and in other things in saving our planet with a framework of cooperation—effective cooperation. And thank for that kind of support.

Thank also for our good cooperation in the field of education, and also, military-to-military cooperation is progressing well—that benefit both for the U.S. and for Indonesia.

And thank also for your understanding on the ongoing talk on the WTO. Indonesia, with other developing countries, will play a specific role, will approach this thing constructively, finding a proper solution good for both developed nation and developing countries.

President Bush. Sure.

President Yudhoyono. And once again, thank for this cooperation with your roles, and looking forward to having other action and cooperation between our two countries.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. at the InterContinental Sydney. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Noer Hassan Wirajuda of Indonesia.

The President's Radio Address *September 8, 2007*

Good morning. Earlier this week, I traveled to Iraq's Anbar Province to visit our troops and see with my own eyes the remarkable changes they are making possible. If you want to see some photos from this trip, go to whitehouse.gov, where you can view a slideshow of my visit.

Success in Anbar is critical to the democratic future of Iraq and to the war on terror. This largely Sunni Province covers nearly a third of Iraq. It stretches from the outskirts of Baghdad to Iraq's borders with Jordan and Syria and Saudi Arabia. And until recently, Anbar was Al Qaida's chief base of operations in Iraq.

Last year at this time, Anbar was all over the news. Newspapers at the time cited a leaked intelligence report that was pessimistic about our prospects there. One columnist summed it up this way: "The war is over in Anbar Province, and the United States lost." But local citizens soon saw

what life under Al Qaida meant for them. The terrorists brutalized the people of Anbar and killed those who opposed their dark ideology. So the tribal sheikhs of Anbar came together to fight Al Qaida. They asked for support from the coalition and the Iraqi Government, and we responded.

Together, we have driven Al Qaida out of strongholds in Anbar. The level of violence is down. Local governments are meeting again. Young Sunnis are joining the police and army. And normal life is returning. The people of Anbar have seen that standing up to the terrorists and extremists leads to a better life. And Anbar has shown that improving security is the first step toward achieving economic progress and political reconciliation.

On my visit, I met with tribal sheikhs who have fought with us against Al Qaida and who are now building a better future

for their people and for all Iraqis. One Sunni sheikh told me: “We have suffered a great deal from terrorism. We strongly support the democracy you have called for. The previous regime [of Saddam Hussein] should not be characterized as a Sunni regime; it was a regime against the Sunnis, Shi’a, and the Kurds.”

I also met with national leaders from Iraq’s Government: President Talabani and Prime Minister Maliki, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi, Vice President Hashimi, and President Barzani of the Kurdish region. These men come from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, but they all understand the importance of succeeding in Anbar. And so they’re reaching out to help, with positive steps such as sharing oil revenues with Provincial leaders. I thanked the representatives of Iraq’s Government for their efforts to support the bottom-up progress in Anbar. And I told them that the American people expect them to meet their commitments and pass the legislation they’ve agreed on.

While in Iraq, I also received a good briefing from General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker. They gave me an update on our military and political and economic efforts to support our Iraqi partners. They told me about the progress they’re seeing across Iraq and their ideas for the way forward. In the next few days, they will come to Washington to give Congress their assessment of conditions on the ground. I urge the Members of Congress to listen to these two well-respected professionals before jumping to any conclusions.

Most importantly, during my visit, I met with our troops serving in Anbar. Every day, these fine men and women show courage under incredibly difficult circumstances. The work they’re doing on the sands of Anbar is making us safer in the

streets of America. Because of their bravery and sacrifice, our troops in Iraq are denying Al Qaida safe havens from which to plot and plan and carry out attacks against Americans both here and abroad. I know how hard it is for our men and women in uniform to be away from their families. I told them our Nation appreciates their willingness to serve and that the American people stand with them.

Next week, after consulting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, my national security team, Members of Congress from both parties, and Iraqi leaders, I will speak directly to the Nation about the recommendations General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have presented to me. I will discuss the changes our strategy has brought to Iraq. I will lay out a vision for future involvement in Iraq—one that I believe the American people and their elected leaders of both parties can support. By coming together on the way forward, we will strengthen Iraq’s democracy, deal a blow to our enemies, secure interests in the Middle East, and make our Nation safer.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6 p.m. on September 6 at the InterContinental Sydney in Sydney, Australia, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.d.t., on September 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 7, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. Due to the 14-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President’s remarks in Sydney, Australia. In his address, the President referred to Sheikh Abdul Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi, leader, Anbar Salvation Council; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops and Their Families at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii

September 8, 2007

The President. I appreciate the Governor of this beautiful State, Admiral Keating, his wife, for their hospitality. The Secretary and I have just landed. We've come from Australia; we're on our way to DC. And I decided that it was best to stop and say hello to some of our wounded soldiers and sailors and marines.

Every time I have an opportunity to meet people who have sacrificed on behalf of the security of the country, I'm amazed at their spirit and their resolve. One of the things I look for is to make sure that these troops and their families are getting the best possible treatment. If they've got any complaints, I'm available for them to air them out.

And what I heard was encouraging; that people feel like they're getting the best possible care. And that makes me feel good. I told them, when I was in the room, that I came back from Iraq encouraged by what I saw. No question, there's still hard work to do, but my resolve is as strong as it's ever been. I believe we're doing the right thing there for the security of the country and for the peace of the world.

General David Petraeus will be reporting to the Congress, along with Ambassador Crocker, on Monday and Tuesday. I will then talk about a way forward after their report. I ask the Members of Congress just to sit back and listen to what we all have to say before they reach the conclusions that they're going to reach. But one thing is for certain: Now is the time to do the hard work in order to make sure that we can have a peaceful world, now is the time to deny the radicals and extremists a safe haven, and now is the time to advance democracy in the heart of the Middle East. I believe that's the calling of our time, and I believe we'll succeed. And I know it's necessary we do.

Anyway, thank you all for your hospitality.

Admiral Timothy J. Keating. Yes, sir.

The President. Admiral said he cooked some lunch for us today. I'm looking forward to having it.

Adm. Keating. Caught the fish and then cooked the lunch.

The President. Governor, proud to be with you.

Governor Linda Lingle of Hawaii. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much.

The First Lady

Q. Did you change any minds, Mr. President, with your trip?

Q. How is Mrs. Bush?

The President. She's doing great, thank you. I talked to Laura, talked to her twice. I talked to her right before she went in for the surgery, in Australia, and then talked to her twice on the airplane. Her spirits are good. They feel like the surgery was a success. She's now back at the White House. I told her I'm looking forward to having breakfast with her. I told her I'd be home soon. And I'm just grateful that the doctors did a good job, and I thank God for the fact that it came out well.

Q. Is she going to be released by the time you get home, sir?

The President. Yes, she's at the White House now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. at the Tradewinds Enlisted Club. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Timothy J. Keating, USN, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, and his wife Wanda Lee; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for James A. Nussle as Director of
the Office of Management and Budget
September 10, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. I thank you for joining us as I welcome the new Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Jim Nussle. I congratulate Jim. I thank him for agreeing to serve.

Public service is a family commitment. And I want to thank Karen, Sarah, and Mark and all the members of Jim's family for supporting him as he takes on this important duty.

I appreciate the Vice President being here to swear in the newest member of the Cabinet. I appreciate the members of my Cabinet for joining us. Thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here. I know Jim appreciates it.

I appreciate Paul Ryan, a Member of the House of Congress—a Member of Congress from Wisconsin and the ranking member of the House Budget Committee. He's here because he understands that the man I picked to run the OMB knows what he's doing.

The Director of OMB is one of the most important jobs in Government. It's a vital assignment. I picked a man who knows how to count—[laughter]—and knows how to work with Congress to get the job done.

This Agency oversees the broad range of operations essential to the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. It requires a leader who believes in the people, who cares about the people of the United States. Jim is such a person. It also requires a leader who knows how to keep taxes low, because that's what we intend to do.

When it came time to search for a new OMB Director, it wasn't hard to find in Jim Nussle the kind of person I was looking for: somebody who can get a tough job done, and somebody who has a solid record of fiscal restraint. For 6 years, Jim served as chairman of the Budget Committee in the House of Representatives. He accom-

plished his tasks with a lot of skill. He was able to work with people from both parties and with the administration, I might add, handling the tough job. He understands that the Federal dollars don't come out of thin air. In other words, when we spend money up here, we're spending the people's money. He understands every dollar spent in Washington is a dollar that cannot be used by a small-business owner or a farmer or the families trying to save for their children's future.

It's our responsibility to ensure that we run our Government wisely and to spend the people's money wisely. Jim Nussle understands that. He also understands that cutting taxes has helped our economy grow. We've overcome some tough times in America. When you lower taxes in the face of a recession or uncertainty, it enables people to have more money to spend, save, or invest. And the tax cuts that we passed have worked. The economy is—grew at over 3 percent the last quarter. Our national unemployment rate is 4.6 percent. Inflation's low. The best way to make sure our growth continues is not to raise the taxes on the people.

And so we've submitted a budget that keeps taxes low and will enable us to achieve balance by 2012. And Jim Nussle understands this is a realistic budget. And I look forward to working with him to get our budgets passed through the United States Congress. I understand it's going to be tough work, Jim, because people up there want to raise taxes. We can't let them do so, for the sake of our families, for the sake of economic vitality.

I appreciate very much the fact that he knows what I know, that the OMB has got some highly professional, hard-working people who are serving the country. And I thank the good folks who work at the

Office of Management and Budget. I thank you for your service to the country. And I'm looking forward to you getting to know Jim Nussle. He, like me, will appreciate what you're doing for the United States.

And so, Jim, I congratulate you on assuming this important position. I appreciate

your family supporting you. And now I ask the Vice President to swear you in.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director Nussle.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders *September 11, 2007*

I thank the leadership of the Congress for joining us here to discuss the testimonies delivered by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. For some, this isn't the first moment they've been in the White House today, and I want to thank the leaders for joining Laura and me and the Vice President and his wife Lynne as we commemorated the—a day that really helped—or it did define our Nation, which is 9/11/2001. We also had a church service earlier, and I thank particularly the Speaker and the leader for being there as well.

Secondly, all of us around this table are saddened by the loss of Congressman Paul Gillmor. Congressman Blunt has just come from his memorial service. All of us offer our prayers to the Gillmor family during this difficult time.

And finally, I've asked the leadership to come and share their thoughts about Iraq.

As I mentioned, we've had a series of hearings where our commander on the ground and Ambassador in Iraq have talked about a way forward. I think it's very important before I make up my mind that I consult with the leaders of the House and the Senate. I thank the Members for coming and giving me their honest appraisal of whether they think we can find common ground or not and how they think we ought to proceed.

So thank you for coming; appreciate you being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Statement on the Death of Prime Minister John Compton of Saint Lucia *September 11, 2007*

Laura and I offer our condolences to the people of Saint Lucia on the death of Prime Minister John Compton. The father of Saint Lucia's independence, Sir John was

an elder statesman of the Caribbean. We will miss his vision and leadership, and we extend our deepest sympathies to his family.

Message on the Observance of Ramadan *September 7, 2007*

I send greetings to Muslims observing Ramadan in America and around the world.

Ramadan, the holiest days of the Islamic faith, begins with the first light of dawn and commemorates the revelation of the Qur'an to the prophet Muhammad. During the days of fasting, prayer, and worship, Muslims reflect and remember their dependence on God. Ramadan is also an occasion for Muslims to strengthen family and community ties and share God's gifts with those in need.

America is a land of many faiths, and our society is enriched by our Muslim citizens. May the holy days of Ramadan remind us all to seek a culture of compassion and serve others in charity.

Laura and I send our best wishes. Ramadan Mubarak.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 12. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Memorandum on Measures Regarding Certain Liberians in the United States *September 12, 2007*

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Measures Regarding Certain Liberians in the United States

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife. Eventually, many Liberians were granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and permitted to remain and obtain work eligibility in the United States temporarily. Although the armed conflict in Liberia ended in 2003 and conditions have improved, I have found that the political and economic situation in Liberia continues to be fragile.

While acknowledging the progress ongoing in Liberia under that country's current administration, I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons not to enforce the removal of Liberians presently residing in the United States under TPS. In particular, Liberia is struggling

to implement reconstruction and economic stabilization programs for the population, including the thousands of former Liberian refugees who have returned from the West African region and elsewhere.

Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 18 months the removal of any Liberian national (or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia) who is present in the United States and who is under a grant of TPS as of September 30, 2007, and who has continuously resided in the United States since October 1, 2002, except for the categories of individuals listed below.

Accordingly, I now direct you to take the necessary steps to implement for these Liberians:

1. deferral of enforced departure from the United States for 18 months from October 1, 2007; and

2. authorization for employment for 18 months from October 1, 2007.

This directive shall not apply to any Liberian national (or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia): (1) who is ineligible for TPS for the reasons provided in section 244(c)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)(2)(B); (2) whose removal you determine is in the interest of the United States; (3) whose presence or activities in

the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States; (4) who has voluntarily returned to Liberia or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States; (5) who was deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or (6) who is subject to extradition.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Certain Terrorist Attacks *September 12, 2007*

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. Consistent with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency declared with respect to the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, is to continue in effect for an additional year.

The terrorist threat that led to the declaration on September 14, 2001, of a national emergency continues. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect after September 14, 2007, the national emergency with respect to the terrorist threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
September 12, 2007.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Address to the Nation on Military Operations in Iraq *September 13, 2007*

Good evening. In the life of all free nations, there come moments that decide the direction of a country and reveal the character of its people. We are now at such a moment.

In Iraq, an ally of the United States is fighting for its survival. Terrorists and ex-

tremists who are at war with us around the world are seeking to topple Iraq's Government, dominate the region, and attack us here at home. If Iraq's young democracy can turn back these enemies, it will mean a more hopeful Middle East and a more secure America. This ally has placed its

trust in the United States. And tonight our moral and strategic imperatives are one: We must help Iraq defeat those who threaten its future and also threaten ours.

Eight months ago, we adopted a new strategy to meet that objective, including a surge in U.S. forces that reached full strength in June. This week, General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress about how that strategy is progressing. In their testimony, these men made clear that our challenge in Iraq is formidable. Yet they concluded that conditions in Iraq are improving, that we are seizing the initiative from the enemy, and that the troop surge is working.

The premise of our strategy is that securing the Iraqi population is the foundation for all other progress. For Iraqis to bridge sectarian divides, they need to feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods. For lasting reconciliation to take root, Iraqis must feel confident that they do not need sectarian gangs for security. The goal of the surge is to provide that security and to help prepare Iraqi forces to maintain it. As I will explain tonight, our success in meeting these objectives now allows us to begin bringing some of our troops home.

Since the surge was announced in January, it has moved through several phases. First was the flow of additional troops into Iraq, especially Baghdad and Anbar Province. Once these forces were in place, our commanders launched a series of offensive operations to drive terrorists and militias out of their strongholds. And finally, in areas that have been cleared, we are surging diplomatic and civilian resources to ensure that military progress is quickly followed up with real improvements in daily life.

Anbar Province is a good example of how our strategy is working. Last year, an intelligence report concluded that Anbar had been lost to Al Qaida. Some cited this report as evidence that we had failed in Iraq and should cut our losses and pull out. Instead, we kept the pressure on the terror-

ists. The local people were suffering under the Taliban-like rule of Al Qaida, and they were sick of it. So they asked us for help.

To take advantage of this opportunity, I sent an additional 4,000 marines to Anbar as part of the surge. Together, local sheikhs, Iraqi forces, and coalition troops drove the terrorists from the capital of Ramadi and other population centers. Today, a city where Al Qaida once planted its flag is beginning to return to normal. Anbar citizens who once feared beheading for talking to an American or Iraqi soldier now come forward to tell us where the terrorists are hiding. Young Sunnis who once joined the insurgency are now joining the army and police. And with the help of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams, new jobs are being created and local governments are meeting again.

These developments do not often make the headlines, but they do make a difference. During my visit to Anbar on Labor Day, local Sunni leaders thanked me for America's support. They pledged they would never allow Al Qaida to return. And they told me they now see a place for their people in a democratic Iraq. The Sunni Governor of Anbar Province put it this way: "Our tomorrow starts today."

The changes in Anbar show all Iraqis what becomes possible when extremists are driven out. They show Al Qaida that it cannot count on popular support, even in a Province its leaders once declared their home base. And they show the world that ordinary people in the Middle East want the same things for their children that we want for ours, a decent life and a peaceful future.

In Anbar, the enemy remains active and deadly. Earlier today one of the brave tribal sheikhs who helped lead the revolt against Al Qaida was murdered. In response, a fellow Sunni leader declared, "We are determined to strike back and continue our work." And as they do, they can count on the continued support of the United States.

Throughout Iraq, too many citizens are being killed by terrorists and death squads. And for most Iraqis, the quality of life is far from where it should be. Yet General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker report that the success in Anbar is beginning to be replicated in other parts of the country.

One year ago, much of Baghdad was under siege. Schools were closed, markets were shuttered, and sectarian violence was spiraling out of control. Today, most of Baghdad's neighborhoods are being patrolled by coalition and Iraqi forces who live among the people they protect. Many schools and markets are reopening. Citizens are coming forward with vital intelligence. Sectarian killings are down, and ordinary life is beginning to return.

One year ago, much of Diyala Province was a sanctuary for Al Qaida and other extremist groups, and its capital of Baqubah was emerging as an Al Qaida stronghold. Today, Baqubah is cleared. Diyala Province is the site of a growing, popular uprising against the extremists. And some local tribes are working alongside coalition and Iraqi forces to clear out the enemy and reclaim their communities.

One year ago, Shi'a extremists and Iranian-backed militants were gaining strength and targeting Sunnis for assassination. Today, these groups are being broken up, and many of their leaders are being captured or killed.

These gains are a tribute to our military, they are a tribute to the courage of the Iraqi security forces, and they are the tribute to an Iraqi Government that has decided to take on the extremists.

Now the Iraqi Government must bring the same determination to achieving reconciliation. This is an enormous undertaking after more than three decades of tyranny and division. The Government has not met its own legislative benchmarks, and in my meetings with Iraqi leaders, I have made it clear that they must.

Yet Iraq's national leaders are getting some things done. For example, they have

passed a budget. They're sharing oil revenues with the Provinces. They're allowing former Ba'athists to rejoin Iraq's military or receive Government pensions. Local reconciliation is taking place. The key now is to link this progress in the Provinces to progress in Baghdad. As local politics change, so will national politics.

Our troops in Iraq are performing brilliantly. Along with the Iraqi forces, they have captured or killed an average of more than 1,500 enemy fighters per month since January. Yet ultimately, the way forward depends on the ability of Iraqis to maintain security gains. According to General Petraeus and a panel chaired by retired General Jim Jones, the Iraqi Army is becoming more capable—although there is still a great deal of work to be done to improve the National Police. Iraqi forces are receiving increased cooperation from local populations, and this is improving their ability to hold areas that have been cleared.

Because of this success, General Petraeus believes we have now reached the point where we can maintain our security gains with fewer American forces. He has recommended that we not replace about 2,200 marines scheduled to leave Anbar Province later this month. In addition, he says it will soon be possible to bring home an Army combat brigade, for a total force reduction of 5,700 troops by Christmas. And he expects that by July, we will be able to reduce our troop levels in Iraq from 20 combat brigades to 15.

General Petraeus also recommends that in December, we begin transitioning to the next phase of our strategy in Iraq. As terrorists are defeated, civil society takes root, and the Iraqis assume more control over their own security, our mission in Iraq will evolve. Over time, our troops will shift from leading operations to partnering with Iraqi forces and, eventually, to overwatching those forces. As this transition in our mission takes place, our troops will focus on a more limited set of tasks, including

counterterrorism operations and training, equipping, and supporting Iraqi forces.

I have consulted with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, other members of my national security team, Iraqi officials, and leaders of both parties in Congress. I have benefited from their advice, and I have accepted General Petraeus's recommendations. I have directed General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to update their joint campaign plan for Iraq so we can adjust our military and civilian resources accordingly. I have also directed them to deliver another report to Congress in March. At that time, they will provide a fresh assessment of the situation in Iraq and of the troop levels and resources we need to meet our national security objectives.

The principle guiding my decisions on troop levels in Iraq is "return on success." The more successful we are, the more American troops can return home. And in all we do, I will ensure that our commanders on the ground have the troops and flexibility they need to defeat the enemy.

Americans want our country to be safe and our troops to begin coming home from Iraq. Yet those of us who believe success in Iraq is essential to our security and those who believe we should begin bringing our troops home have been at odds. Now, because of the measure of success we are seeing in Iraq, we can begin seeing troops come home. The way forward I have described tonight makes it possible, for the first time in years, for people who have been on opposite sides of this difficult debate to come together.

This vision for a reduced American presence also has the support of Iraqi leaders from all communities. At the same time, they understand that their success will require U.S. political, economic, and security engagement that extends beyond my Presidency. These Iraqi leaders have asked for an enduring relationship with America. And we are ready to begin building that relationship in a way that protects our interests

in the region and requires many fewer American troops.

The success of a free Iraq is critical to the security of the United States. A free Iraq will deny Al Qaida a safe haven. A free Iraq will counter the destructive ambitions of Iran. A free Iraq will marginalize extremists, unleash the talent of its people, and be an anchor of stability in the region. A free Iraq will set an example for people across the Middle East. A free Iraq will be our partner in the fight against terror, and that will make us safer here at home.

Realizing this vision will be difficult, but it is achievable. Our military commanders believe we can succeed. Our diplomats believe we can succeed. And for the safety of future generations of Americans, we must succeed.

If we were to be driven out of Iraq, extremists of all strains would be emboldened. Al Qaida could gain new recruits and new sanctuaries. Iran would benefit from the chaos and would be encouraged in its efforts to gain nuclear weapons and dominate the region. Extremists could control a key part of the global energy supply. Iraq could face a humanitarian nightmare. Democracy movements would be violently reversed. We would leave our children to face a far more dangerous world. And as we saw on September the 11th, 2001, those dangers can reach our cities and kill our people.

Whatever political party you belong to, whatever your position on Iraq, we should be able to agree that America has a vital interest in preventing chaos and providing hope in the Middle East. We should be able to agree that we must defeat Al Qaida, counter Iran, help the Afghan Government, work for peace in the Holy Land, and strengthen our military so we can prevail in the struggle against terrorists and extremists.

So tonight I want to speak to Members of the United States Congress: Let us come together on a policy of strength in the Middle East. I thank you for providing crucial

funds and resources for our military. And I ask you to join me in supporting the recommendations General Petraeus has made and the troop levels he has asked for.

To the Iraqi people: You have voted for freedom, and now you are liberating your country from terrorists and death squads. You must demand that your leaders make the tough choices needed to achieve reconciliation. As you do, have confidence that America does not abandon our friends, and we will not abandon you.

To Iraq's neighbors who seek peace: The violent extremists who target Iraq are also targeting you. The best way to secure your interests and protect your own people is to stand with the people of Iraq. That means using your economic and diplomatic leverage to strengthen the Government in Baghdad. And it means the efforts by Iran and Syria to undermine that Government must end.

To the international community: The success of a free Iraq matters to every civilized nation. We thank the 36 nations who have troops on the ground in Iraq and the many others who are helping that young democracy. We encourage all nations to help by implementing the International Compact to revitalize Iraq's economy, by participating in the Neighbors Conferences to boost cooperation and overcome differences in the region, and by supporting the new and expanded mission of the United Nations in Iraq.

To our military personnel, intelligence officers, diplomats, and civilians on the frontlines in Iraq: You have done everything America has asked of you. And the progress I have reported tonight is in large part because of your courage and hard effort. You are serving far from home, and

our Nation is grateful for your sacrifices and the sacrifices of your families.

Earlier this year, I received an e-mail from the family of Army Specialist Brandon Stout of Michigan. Brandon volunteered for the National Guard and was killed while serving in Baghdad. His family has suffered greatly. Yet in their sorrow, they see larger purpose. His wife Audrey says that Brandon felt called to serve and knew what he was fighting for. And his parents, Tracy and Jeff, wrote me this: "We believe this is a war of good and evil and we must win even if it cost the life of our own son. Freedom is not free."

This country is blessed to have Americans like Brandon Stout, who make extraordinary sacrifices to keep us safe from harm. They are doing so in a fight that is just and right and necessary. And now it falls to us to finish the work they have begun.

Some say the gains we are making in Iraq come too late. They are mistaken. It is never too late to deal a blow to Al Qaida. It is never too late to advance freedom. And it is never too late to support our troops in a fight they can win.

Good night, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Governor Maamun Sami Rashid, Al Anbar Province, Iraq; Sheikh Abdul Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi, leader, Anbar Salvation Council, who was killed in Al Anbar Province on September 13; Jubeir Rashid, member, Anbar Salvation Council; and Gen. James L. Jones, Jr., USMC (Ret.), chairman, Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Luncheon With Military Personnel at Marine Corps
Base Quantico, Virginia
September 14, 2007

It's my honor to come to Quantico to speak to our general officers—our officers and sergeants who train young lieutenants. And I had a chance to speak to some of the lieutenants. First of all, I—my first impression is, it's an amazing country where people volunteer in the face of danger. A lot of these lieutenant—Marine lieutenants fully understand the nature of the world in which we live. And they're willing to serve. They're willing to serve to protect and defend this country, and they're willing to serve to help shape the conditions so that the world is more peaceful.

I told them about my speech last night. I told them that I'd listened very carefully to the recommendations of the military, in particular, General Petraeus, and that the plan I announced was that we're making enough—based upon the fact we're making enough success in Iraq, that we can begin bringing some troops home; that I told the American people last night that we've got what's called return on success. I also told them that our commanders will have the flexibility and the troops needed to achieve the mission, which is an ally in this war on terror and a stable country that can self govern, a democracy in the heart of the Middle East.

I made it clear that the sacrifices that they and their families were going to make were necessary for the short-term and long-term security of the country; that we'd rather defeat the enemy overseas than have to face them here; that we fully understand—or I fully understand that if we were to be driven out of Iraq that the Middle East could be in chaos, and chaos would embolden Sunni extremists like Al Qaida, and chaos would embolden Iran; and that it's in our interests that we help Iraq succeed—it's not only in the interest—

our interests, but it's also in the Iraqis' interests.

I made it clear to them that there's a lot of courage in Iraq. These Iraqis are in the fight. But I also made it clear to them that we expect the Iraqi Government to enhance national reconciliation through the passage of law. I told them that I was able to give the speech because of the progress being made. I hope the American people listened very carefully to what our commanders and Ambassador Crocker had to say. They're there; they understand the progress that's being made.

I also made it clear that now's the chance for us to come together as a nation, that some of us who believe security was paramount were on opposite sides of a debate, where people said, "We just simply need to bring our troops home." Well, now we've got security in the right direction, and we are bringing our troops home. And I call upon the United States Congress to listen very carefully to what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker reported and support the troop levels that these two men think are necessary to achieve our objective. I also expect the Congress to support our men and women in uniform and their families and those who have worn the uniform.

And so it's a great honor to be out here to speak with an incredible group of men and women. It's my honor to be their Commander in Chief.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:43 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Statement on Signing the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007

September 14, 2007

Today I signed into law S. 1, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. This bill represents some progress towards ethics, lobbying, and earmark reform, all of which I strongly support. Strengthening the ethical standards that govern lobbying activities and beginning to address meaningful earmark reform are necessary steps to provide the public with a more transparent lawmaking process. The essence of successful ethics reform is not laws and restrictions, but full disclosure. The legislation includes minimal improvements in the area of disclosure, both for lobbying and earmarks. But there is still more to be done, and I will work with the Congress to improve upon this legislation.

For example, the bill holds Members of the Senate and executive branch employees to a much higher standard of conduct than Members of the House. The specific bill language is confusing, and I believe these increased restrictions would have a negative impact on recruitment and retention of Federal employees. I urge the Congress to make these standards more uniform and less confusing and to do so in a way that will not discourage public service.

In addition, this bill would have the effect of unreasonably burdening sitting Presidents' and Vice Presidents' reelection campaigns. I look forward to working with Congress to amend these provisions to provide a reasonable process for allocating the cost of Presidential and Vice Presidential campaign travel that is consistent with security needs.

I am pleased that the Congress has begun to make progress in bringing greater transparency to the earmarking process. However, this bill falls far short of the reform that American taxpayers deserve. I am concerned that there are potential loopholes in some of the earmark reforms included in this bill that would allow earmarks to escape sufficient scrutiny. This legislation also does not address other earmark reforms I have called on Congress to implement, such as ending the practice of putting earmarks in report language.

I thank members of both parties who worked on this legislation and look forward to working with the Congress to further advance ethics, lobbying, and earmark reform.

NOTE: S. 1, approved September 14, was assigned Public Law 110–81.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Benchmark Assessment Report September 14, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the "Act"), attached is a report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi

benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

The second of two reports submitted consistent with the Act, it has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries

of State and Defense; the Commander, Multi-National Force—Iraq; the United States Ambassador to Iraq; and the Commander, United States Central Command.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

September 14, 2007.

The President's Radio Address *September 15, 2007*

Good morning. This week, General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress on the progress of America's strategy in Iraq, including the surge in forces. They agreed that our coalition faces formidable challenges. Yet they also said that security conditions are improving, that our forces are seizing the initiative from the enemy, and that the troop surge is working.

Because of this progress, General Petraeus now believes we can maintain our security gains with fewer U.S. troops. He's recommended a force reduction of 5,700 troops in Iraq by Christmas, and he expects that by July we will be able to reduce our troop levels in Iraq further, from 20 combat brigades to 15. He's also recommended that in December we begin a transition to the next phase of our strategy in Iraq, in which our troops will shift over time from leading operations to partnering with Iraqi forces and, eventually, to overwatching those forces.

I have accepted General Petraeus's recommendations, and I have directed that he and Ambassador Crocker deliver another report to Congress in March. At that time, they will provide a fresh assessment of the situation in Iraq and of the troop levels we need to meet our national security objectives. The principle that guides my decisions on troop levels is return on success. The more successful we are, the more troops can return home. And in all we do, I will ensure that our commanders on the

ground have the troops and flexibility they need to defeat the enemy.

Anbar Province is a good example of the progress we are seeing in Iraq. Last year, an intelligence report concluded that Anbar had been lost to Al Qaida. But local sheikhs asked for our help to push back the terrorists, and so we sent an additional 4,000 marines to Anbar as part of the surge. Together, local sheikhs, Iraqi forces, and coalition troops drove the terrorists from the capital of Ramadi and other population centers. Today, citizens who once feared beheading for talking to our troops now come forward to tell us where the terrorists are hiding. And young Sunnis who once joined the insurgency are now joining the army and police.

The success in Anbar is beginning to be replicated in other parts of Iraq. In Diyala, a Province that was once a sanctuary for extremists, is now the site of a growing popular uprising against the extremists. In Baghdad, sectarian killings are down, and life is beginning to return to normal in many parts of the city. Groups of Shi'a extremists and Iranian-backed militants are being broken up, and many of their leaders are being captured or killed. These gains are a tribute to our military, to Iraqi forces, and to an Iraqi Government that has decided to take on the extremists.

The success of a free Iraq is critical to the security of the United States. If we were to be driven out of Iraq, extremists of all strains would be emboldened, Al Qaida could find new recruits and new

sanctuaries, and a failed Iraq could increase the likelihood that our forces would someday have to return and confront extremists even more entrenched and even more deadly. By contrast, a free Iraq will deny Al Qaida a safe haven, it will counter the destructive ambitions of Iran, and it will serve as a partner in the fight against terrorism.

In this struggle, we have brave allies who are making great sacrifices to defeat the terrorists. One of these Iraqis was a man named Sheikh Abdul Sattar. He was one of the tribal leaders I met on my recent visit to Iraq, who was helping us to drive Al Qaida out of Anbar Province. His father was killed by Al Qaida in 2004. And when we met Sheikh Sattar, he told me, quote, "We have suffered a great deal from terrorism. We strongly support the democracy you have called for." Earlier this week, this brave tribal sheikh was murdered. A fellow Sunni leader declared, "We are determined to strike back and continue our work." We mourn the loss of brave Iraqis like Sheikh

Sattar, and we stand with those who are continuing the fight.

If Iraq's young democracy can turn back its enemies, it will mean a more hopeful Middle East and a more secure America. So we will help the Iraqi people defeat those who threaten their future and also threaten ours.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 7:50 a.m. on September 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 15. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Jubeir Rashid, member, Anbar Salvation Council. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 14, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2008

September 14, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2007-33

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2008

Pursuant to section 706(1) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107-228)(FRAA), I hereby identify the following countries as major drug transit or major illicit drug producing countries: Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela.

A country's presence on the Majors List is not necessarily an adverse reflection of its government's counternarcotics efforts or level of cooperation with the United States. Consistent with the statutory definition of a major drug transit or drug producing country set forth in section 481(e)(2) and (5) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), one of the reasons that major drug transit or illicit drug producing countries are placed on the list is the combination of geographical, commercial, and economic factors that allow drugs to transit or be produced despite the concerned government's most assiduous enforcement measures.

Pursuant to section 706(2)(A) of the FRAA, I hereby designate Burma and Venezuela as countries that have failed demonstrably during the previous 12 months to adhere to their obligations under international counternarcotics agreements and take the measures set forth in section 489(a)(1) of the FAA. Attached to this report are justifications for the determinations on Burma and Venezuela, as required by section 706(2)(B). I have also determined, in accordance with the provisions of section 706(3)(A) of the FRAA, that support for programs to aid Venezuela's democratic institutions is vital to the national interests of the United States.

Although President Karzai has strongly attacked narcotrafficking as the greatest threat to Afghanistan, one third of the Afghan economy remains opium-based, which contributes to widespread public corruption, damage to licit economic growth, and the strengthening of the insurgency. The government at all levels must be held accountable to deter and eradicate poppy cultivation, remove and prosecute corrupt officials, and investigate and prosecute or extradite narcotraffickers and those financing their activities. We are concerned that failure to act decisively now could undermine security, compromise democratic legitimacy, and imperil international support for vital assistance.

In Afghanistan, one model for success can be drawn by comparing the marked differences in cultivation between the northern and southern provinces. Several northern provinces contributed to a decline in poppy cultivation resulting from a mixture of political will and incentives and disincentives, such as public information, alternative development, and eradication. Furthermore, several northern provinces with very low amounts of poppy are well on their way to becoming poppy free.

Despite the significant progress made in Afghanistan since 2001, the country continues to face tremendous challenges. Our struggle to win hearts and minds, while

confronting the insurgency, continues to directly hinge on our ability to help the Afghan government produce visible results. We need to encourage a firm belief among the Afghan people that their national government is capable of delivering an alternative to the preceding decades of conflict. Our reconstruction assistance is an essential instrument to achieve that goal.

Bolivian counternarcotics cooperation has been uneven. The Bolivian government has cooperated closely on interdiction, and operations and seizures have reached record levels. The government is on track to reach 5,600 hectares of eradication this year, surpassing its goal of 5,000 hectares.

However, these measures have been outstripped by replanting and expansion of cultivation in Bolivia, the world's third-largest producer of coca. The Government of Bolivia's policy of "zero cocaine, but not zero coca" has focused primarily on interdiction, to the exclusion of its other essential complements, especially coca crop eradication. We strongly encourage the Government of Bolivia to make its number one priority the reduction and eventual elimination of excess coca crops, a major source of illegal cocaine for the hemisphere, Europe, the United States, and increasingly, for Bolivian citizens. In the area of drug control policy development, we urge the Government of Bolivia to revamp its national drug control strategy to eliminate permissiveness in licit cultivation, to abolish the so-called "cato" exemption, and to tighten controls on the sale of licit coca. As a party to the three major United Nations drug conventions, we urge Bolivia to move quickly to adopt and implement a modern anti-money/counterterrorism financing law, and take concrete steps to strengthen and better enforce precursor chemical controls and its asset forfeiture regime.

The United States enjoys close cooperation with Canada across a broad range of law enforcement issues. We remain concerned that the production of high-potency, indoor-grown marijuana for export to the

United States continues to thrive in Canada in part because growers do not consistently face strict legal punishment. The marijuana industry in Canada is becoming increasingly sophisticated, with organized crime groups relying on marijuana sales as the primary source of income and using profits to finance other illegal activities. The production of synthetic drugs such as MDMA/ Ecstasy and methamphetamine, some of which are exported to the United States, appears to be on the rise in Canada. The Government of Canada has made a serious effort to curb the diversion of precursor chemicals that are required for methamphetamine production to feed domestic and U.S. illegal markets and has worked productively with the United States in joint law enforcement operations that disrupted drug and currency smuggling operations along both sides of the border.

The Government of Ecuador has made considerable progress in combating narcotics trafficking destined for the United States. However, a dramatic increase in the quantity of cocaine transported toward the United States using Ecuadorian-flagged ships remains an area of serious concern. Effective cooperation and streamlined maritime operational procedures between the U.S. Coast Guard and Ecuadorian Navy are resulting in an increase in the amount of cocaine interdicted. Building on that cooperation, we will work with Ecuador to change the circumstances that make Ecuadorian-flagged vessels and Ecuadorian citizenship so attractive to drug traffickers.

Guinea-Bissau is becoming a warehouse refuge and transit hub for cocaine traffickers from Latin America transporting cocaine to Western Europe. Narcotics traffic is becoming yet another hurdle for Guinea-Bissau as it emerges from civil conflict. International donors and organizations are working to encourage and assist Guinea-Bissau in its efforts to confront organized cocaine trafficking networks that would use the country for warehousing and transshipment. These efforts are certainly appro-

priate and should be supported and advanced to deter illegal drug activities in Guinea-Bissau.

India has an exemplary record on controlling its licit opium production and distribution process, despite formidable challenges to its efforts. The Government of India can be correctly proud of its diligent law enforcement agencies and the introduction of high-tech methods, including "Smart Cards" for each licensed opium farmer. Recently, Indian enforcement officials identified and destroyed substantial illicit opium poppy cultivation in areas thought to be free of illicit cultivation in the past. Indian officials will want to investigate the circumstances of this surprisingly large illicit cultivation to identify those behind this disquieting phenomenon and arrest, prosecute, and convict them.

Nigeria has made progress on many narcotics control and anti-money laundering benchmarks. There is reason to be hopeful. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has seized millions in the proceeds of crime, anti-money laundering efforts have been successful, and Nigeria is cooperating with the international community to improve its efforts against money laundering even more. Still necessary are procedural reforms to streamline extradition procedures. For many narcotics criminals no sanction is more effective than the fear they could face a court and jail time in the countries to which they have trafficked narcotics. Nigeria should also re-double its efforts to use its frequent apprehension of street criminals and couriers to identify and prosecute major drug traffickers.

You are hereby authorized and directed to submit this report under section 706 of the FRAA, transmit it to the Congress, and publish it in the *Federal Register*.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 17.

Teleconference Remarks With Provincial Reconstruction Team Leaders and Brigade Combat Commanders in Iraq *September 17, 2007*

Secretary Rice and Secretary Gates, General Pace, members of my national security team have just listened to some briefings from Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq. I want to thank our fellow citizens for serving on the frontline of—in this war against extremists and radicals. I appreciate their dedication, and I appreciate the sacrifice of their families.

General Odierno just briefed us on an interesting statistic. He said that for the week of September 8–15, attack levels across Iraq are the lowest they have been since January of 2006, which, of course, is a time prior to the Samarra bombing. And when you couple that with the grass-roots efforts that our PRT—Provincial Reconstruction Teams are making, you begin to get a sense of why I'm confident that we can succeed in Iraq, why I believe that the efforts that we're making toward making sure that an extremists like Al Qaida doesn't have safe haven from which to plot attacks and, at the same time, helping people realize the blessings of liberty, which will yield long-term peace, can happen, can succeed.

And so I told the folks there that, on behalf of a grateful nation, that we thank them for what they're doing. And I look

forward to further discussions with those who actually see the progress that is taking place, with those who are living amongst the people and can report firsthand that the success that was reported on by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker now happens on a—is happening on a daily basis.

Now, there's no question, we got more work to be done. But the question I always ask myself is, is the mission important to the security of the United States? And the answer is, absolutely. And can we be successful? And the answer to that is, yes, we can.

And I want to thank you all very much for seeing to it that we will be successful. Thank you for your time, and we ask for God's blessings on you.

Thank you.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 10:10 a.m. The President spoke in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Corps—Iraq; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks on the Nomination of Judge Michael B. Mukasey To Be Attorney General *September 17, 2007*

Good morning. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Judge Michael Mukasey to be the 81st Attorney General of the United States. Judge, thank you for agreeing to serve.

The Attorney General serves as our Nation's chief law enforcement officer. The Attorney General has an especially vital role to play in a time of war, and when we face the challenges—and we face the challenge of protecting our people on a daily

basis from deadly enemies, while at the same time protecting our freedom.

Judge Mukasey brings impressive credentials to this task. In 1987, he was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the United States District Court of the Southern District of New York. It's one of the country's busiest and most respected trial courts. He sat on that court for more than 18 years, and he earned the reputation as a tough, but fair judge. For 6 of those years, he was the chief judge, and he was a sound manager and a strong leader. Throughout his time on the bench, Judge Mukasey was widely admired for his brilliance and his integrity.

Mike has experience in the Justice Department and private practice, as well as having served on the bench. He served 4 years as an assistant United States attorney in Manhattan, where he tried many cases and he developed expertise in the workings of the criminal justice system. He's also worked as a partner in a law firm, and he holds degrees from Columbia University and Yale Law School.

Some of Judge Mukasey's most important legal experience is in the area of national security. Judge Mukasey presided over the trial of the terrorist known as "the Blind Sheikh" and his codefendants in the conspiracy to destroy prominent New York City landmarks, including bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993.

Before the 9/11 attacks, this was one of the most important terrorism cases in our Nation's history, and the verdict in that case was affirmed on appeal. In affirming the convictions, the appeals court signaled out the judge for praise. I found it very interesting of—what they said. Here's what they wrote: "The Honorable Michael B. Mukasey presided with extraordinary skill and patience, assuring fairness to the prosecution and to each defendant, and helpfulness to the jury. His was an outstanding achievement in the face of challenges far beyond those normally endured by a trial judge."

When the World Trade Center was attacked again, Judge Mukasey quickly reopened his court, even though it was just blocks from Ground Zero. He recognized the importance of maintaining a functioning justice system in the midst of a national emergency. He and other judges in his district worked day and night to ensure that applications for warrants were processed, investigations could proceed, and the rule of law was upheld.

Judge Mukasey is clear eyed about the threat our Nation faces. As a judge and a private lawyer, he's written on matters of constitutional law and national security. He knows what it takes to fight this war effectively, and he knows how to do it in a manner that is consistent with our laws and our Constitution. And when confirmed by the Senate as Attorney General, he will work to ensure that our law enforcement and intelligence officers have the tools they need to protect the United States and our citizens.

When he takes his place at the Department of Justice, he will succeed another fine judge, Alberto Gonzales. From his days as a supreme court justice in Texas to his years as White House Counsel and as Attorney General of the United States, this honorable and decent man has served with distinction. I've known Al and his family for more than a decade. He's a dear friend and a trusted adviser. I'm going to miss him, and I wish Al and Becky all the best.

With Mike Mukasey, the Justice Department will be in the hands of a great lawyer and an accomplished public servant. Mike has shown good judgment in the courtroom; he's shown good judgment outside the courtroom. After all, he married a teacher. And we welcome Susan here, as well as son Marc and daughter Jessica. Thank you all for coming. He's also brought his sister Rhoda and brother-in-law Norm. I want to thank you all for supporting Mike as he takes on this important responsibility for our country.

It's a pivotal time for our Nation, and it's vital that the position of Attorney General be filled quickly. I urge the Senate to confirm Judge Mukasey promptly. Until the judge is confirmed, Assistant Attorney General Paul Keisler will serve as Acting Attorney General. Accepting this assignment requires Peter—I said Peter—Peter Keisler. Accepting this assignment requires Peter to delay the departure date he announced earlier this month, and I appreciate his willingness to do so. Peter is the Acting Attorney General. Paul Clement, who agreed to take on this role, will remain focused on his duties as Solicitor General, so he can prepare for the Supreme Court term that begins just 2 weeks from today.

Judge, I'm grateful for answering our Nation's call to serve. I look forward to welcome you as the next Attorney General of the United States. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Omar Ahmed Ali Abdel Rahman (also known as "the Blind Sheikh"), former spiritual leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and former leader of the Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyya terrorist organization. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General-designate Mukasey.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Jose Socrates of Portugal *September 17, 2007*

The President. Thank you for coming. It has been my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of a steady ally and a good friend to the Oval Office. Not only does Prime Minister Socrates represent a close friend, he also has got an important assignment, and that is to lead the EU right now. And so we had—we discussed our bilateral relations. And I asked the Prime Minister, I said, "How would you frame our bilateral relations?" He said, "Good." Well, you know, I feel the same way. And I thank you for coming.

I do want to thank the people of Portugal for supporting your decision to help the people of Iraq and Afghanistan realize the blessings of freedom, and I appreciate that. I know those aren't easy decisions to make, but the people in those countries that believe that they should live in a free society and want to live in a free society appreciate your contributions as well.

And I thank you very much for the comprehensive dialog we've had on issues of

common concern as the—in your role as the—at the EU. First, we discussed and confirmed that the transatlantic relations are very important for the United States and the EU. And the Prime Minister said he wants to work closely with the United States, and I said I want to work closely with the Prime Minister to keep the transatlantic ties very strong.

Secondly, we talked about issues like Darfur, Doha. We talked about Kosovo and the Middle East. And both of us are committing to working together to see if we can't solve those problems, or at least put them in a better position.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, you're welcome here any time. I appreciate that you're setting such a good example for people in your own country and around the world by being an avid exerciser at the ripe old age of 50.

Prime Minister Socrates. Thank you.

President Bush. And you're welcome to come to the Oval Office again. Please.

Prime Minister Socrates. Thank you, Mr. President. It was a very sympathetic conversation with you. And thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to present to you what are the priorities for Europe in the months ahead. In particular, we had the opportunity to discuss the transatlantic relation and importance to Europe on the relation with the United States. As a matter of fact, I don't see any strategic question for the world that don't demands, requires the most—the better relations between Europe and United States.

And thank you also for the opportunity to discuss some of our more delicate matters in the international agenda, mainly the question of Kosovo and the Middle West problem. I had the opportunity to tell the President how Europe has viewed with good eyes the declaration on Middle East of the President Bush, the nomination of Tony Blair. And we are feeling that the

peace process is moving, and it's very good for Middle East, of course, for Europe, and for the world.

Also, our discussions about Kosovo show that the cooperation between Europe and the United States is very important for safety and for stability in the world. And I guaranteed to the President that the first priority I have in my mind regarding Kosovo is, keep Europe united. And we will do my best in order to face the delicate problem, but important for Europe in order to show a strong and united Europe.

Well, thank you very much.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Socrates referred to former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Quartet Representative in the Middle East.

Remarks to Members of Military Support Organizations September 18, 2007

The President. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Laura and I are honored to welcome you here to the South Lawn. Welcome to the people's house. First, I'd like to thank Katy Benko for singing the national anthem. It's not only a beautiful morning to sing the national anthem, it's a beautiful setting in which to sing the national anthem. Katy's husband Ryan is deployed to Iraq. Katy, make sure you e-mail him and tell him how appreciative we are of your service, and tell him how appreciative all of us are of your voice.

Laura and I want to thank the members of our—my administration for joining us. Mr. Vice President, we're really thrilled you're here. Thank you for coming, sir. Secretary of State Condi Rice is with us today. Madam Secretary, appreciate you being here. Secretary Jim Nicholson of the

Veterans Affairs Administration; thanks for coming, Jim.

For you veterans who are here, there is no more solemn obligation by your Government to make sure you have all it takes to—for your health care and for your support. I feel a very strong obligation, since it was my decision that committed young men and women into combat, to make sure our veterans who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan get all the help this Government can possibly provide.

I appreciate the Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren, for joining us; the Secretary of the Navy, Don Winter; General Hoss Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his wife Sandee. By the way, General Cartwright is a marine.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I'm not playing to the crowd or anything. [Laughter]

I want to welcome members of this crowd who have lost a loved one in this war against terror. Our hearts go out to you. We love you. The best way to honor the sacrifices that your loved one made, as well as the sacrifice you have made, is to accomplish the mission, is to achieve the peace.

Laura and I welcome the families who have got a loved one overseas, whether it be in Iraq or Afghanistan, fighting these extremists and terrorists. The best way to honor your loved one is to make sure that he or she has the full support of the United States Government as you accomplish the mission that we have set out. By the way, for the loved ones here, I fully understand the best way to sustain a volunteer army is to make sure you're happy—[laughter]—is to make sure you've got good housing; to make sure that you've got good health care; to make sure that you understand that we know that you're in this fight along with your husband or wife or son or daughter. And that's exactly how this administration feels.

For the veterans who are here, for those of you who are veterans in Iraq and Afghanistan, thank you for volunteering in the face of danger. And for the people who aren't veterans yet, still remain on active duty, thanks for wearing the uniform of the greatest country on the face of the Earth. We're proud of you.

I want to thank our service organizations and those who have come together to support our families and our troops. I can't tell you how important it is for organizations like the Vets for Freedom or the VFW or the American Legion and other groups, two of you—Gold Star Mothers, got you, okay, thank you—Blue Star Mothers, Gold Star Mothers, all the mothers, yes. Every day is Mother's Day as far as you're concerned, isn't it? [Laughter]

Audience member. Don't forget the dads.

The President. And the dads, yes. I knew this was going to happen. [Laughter] Yes, the wives, okay, fine. [Laughter] Everybody's supporting our troops. I want to thank you for doing it.

It's important people hear from you. It's important people hear your voice. And I want to thank you for organizing. I want to thank you not only for the grassroots support of our families, I want to thank you for going up to Capitol Hill. And here's the message I hope you deliver: The Commander in Chief wants to succeed, and the Commander in Chief takes seriously the recommendations of our military commanders. General Petraeus came back to the United States to deliver the recommendations he made to me. Inherent in his recommendations is, one, his belief we're succeeding, his belief we will succeed. And I ask the United States Congress to support the troop levels and the strategies I have embraced.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Thank you all. When the history books are finally written about this chapter in the war against extremists and radicals, they will recognize certain truths: One, that we recognize that if we were to retreat from the Middle East, the enemy would not be content to remain where they are, but they would follow us here. We recognize that the best way to protect our homeland is to defeat an enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here on the streets of America. And we recognized that liberty is powerful, that liberty will yield the peace that we want for generations to come. They will recognize that this generation of Americans did the hard work now, so that future generations could live in security and peace.

And so on this beautiful morning, we thank you for your steadfast resolve; we appreciate your support of those brave souls who have volunteered in the face of the danger. We ask for God's blessings on the families and our troops in harm's way.

And we thank you from the bottom of our collective hearts. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks Following a Visit to the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland

September 19, 2007

Good morning. I have just received a briefing from Director McConnell and Lieutenant General Alexander as well as other members of my national security team. I first want to thank the men and women who work out here for their dedication and their hard work. The work they're doing here is necessary to protect our country from an enemy who would like to attack us again. The people who work out here understand that the Federal Government has no more urgent responsibility than to protect the American people.

Every day, our intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security professionals confront enemies who are smart, who are ruthless, and who are determined to murder innocent people to achieve their objectives. It is the job of Congress to give the professionals the tools they need to do their work as effectively as possible.

You don't have to worry about the motivation of the people out here; what we do have to worry about is to make sure that they have all the tools they need to do their job. One of the most important tools they use is the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA. The law provides a critical legal foundation that allows our intelligence community to monitor terrorist communications while protecting the freedoms of the American people. Unfortunately, the law is dangerously out of date.

When FISA was passed nearly 30 years ago, the legal protections were based on differences in the way that domestic and

overseas communications were transmitted. New technologies have come into being since the law was written. Technologies like the disposable cell phone or the Internet eliminated many of the differences. So one of the consequences of the way the law was originally drafted is that when technology changed, legal protections meant only for the people in the United States began applying to terrorists on foreign soil. As a result, our intelligence professionals reported that they were missing a significant amount of real-time intelligence needed to protect the American people. So earlier this year, Director McConnell sent Congress legislation to fix the problem.

In August, a bipartisan majority in Congress passed the Protect America Act. This law has helped close a critical intelligence gap, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence and information about terrorist plots. The problem is, the law expires on February 1st; that's 135 days from today. The threat from Al Qaida is not going to expire in 135 days.

So I call on Congress to make the Protect America Act permanent. The need for action is clear. Director McConnell has warned that unless the FISA reforms in the Act are made permanent, our national security professionals will lose critical tools they need to protect our country. Without these tools, it'll be harder to figure out what our enemies are doing to train, recruit, and infiltrate operatives into America.

Without these tools, our country will be much more vulnerable to attack.

Unfortunately, some in Congress now want to restrict the tools. These restrictions would impede the flow of information that helps us protect our people. These restrictions would reopen gaps in our intelligence that we had just closed. As I did in August, in evaluating any FISA bill, I will ask Director McConnell whether the legislation gives him what he needs to protect our Nation. The question I'm going to ask is, do our professionals have the tools necessary to do the job to protect the American people from further attack?

In addition to making the Protection America Act permanent, I urge Congress to take up other critical proposals included in the comprehensive FISA reform my administration submitted last April. It's particularly important for Congress to provide meaningful liability protection to those

companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks. Additionally, without this protection, state secrets could be revealed in connection with those lawsuits, and our ability to protect our people would be weakened.

At stake in this debate is more than a piece of legislation. The decisions Congress makes will directly affect our ability to save American lives. I look forward to working with Congress to enact this legislation as quickly as possible, so that our intelligence officials will continue to have the tools they need to keep the American people safe. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Keith B. Alexander, USA, Director, National Security Agency.

Statement on the Death of Parliament Member Antoine Ghanem of Lebanon

September 19, 2007

I strongly condemn today's horrific assassination of Lebanese Member of Parliament Antoine Ghanem. I extend my personal condolences to his family and the families of the innocent persons who were murdered alongside him in Beirut.

Since October 2004, there has been a tragic pattern of political assassinations and attempted assassinations designed to silence those Lebanese who courageously defend their vision of an independent and democratic Lebanon. Today's cowardly attack comes days before the Lebanese Parliament is scheduled to convene to elect a new President. The United States opposes any

attempts to intimidate the Lebanese people as they seek to exercise their democratic right to select a President without foreign interference. We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Lebanese people as they resist attempts by the Syrian and Iranian regimes and their allies to destabilize Lebanon and undermine its sovereignty.

I call on the international community to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these violent attacks and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to protect their freedom.

Remarks on the Resignation of Michael O. Johanns as Secretary of
Agriculture
September 20, 2007

President Bush. Good morning. Mike Johanns has informed me that he plans to return home to Nebraska, which means that his service as Secretary of Agriculture must come to an end. Mike has been an outstanding member of my Cabinet. I knew he would be when I asked him to become the Secretary of Agriculture. I've known him for a long time. I've admired the fact that he is not only a decent person and an honest person, but he's a person who can get some things done.

So I accepted his resignation, and Laura and I bid Mike and Stephanie a warm farewell. And I thank him from the bottom of my heart for leaving a State he loves to come here to Washington, DC, to work in an—to work as the Secretary of Agriculture. You know, Mike brought with him a lot of practical farm experience. After all, he was the proud son of a dairy farmer. He understands the importance of the land. He worked tirelessly on behalf of farmers and ranchers.

And Mike Johanns did an outstanding job as the Secretary of Agriculture. He brought focus and energy to the Department. He was a champion of renewable fuels. He expanded the Department's commitment to conservation. He worked endlessly to open up foreign markets for American beef. He provided timely assistance to farmers and ranchers devastated by natural disasters. I couldn't have asked for a better Secretary of Agriculture.

He worked hard to put in motion a good farm bill. I remember when Mike came here to the Oval, he said to me, he said, "What I'm going to do is, I'm going to travel the country and reach out to the stakeholders to lay the foundation for farm legislation." And that's exactly what he did. And I got feedback from all around America that Mike Johanns listened. He wisely shepherded the process in such a way that

we've got a good farm bill in front of the Congress. He set the framework for success, and I'm confident we can get a good bill passed.

So I want to thank you for your good work getting this teed up.

Secretary Johanns. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. He's got a good team over at the Secretary of—at the Department of Agriculture. In other words, Mike understands that you've got to surround yourself with good folks. And so I feel very comfortable asking Chuck Connor, the Deputy Secretary, to serve as the Acting Secretary. And I want to thank Chuck for his good work.

Mike came by the White House here a couple of days ago, and he asked for my advice. And I appreciate it; everybody likes to have their counsel sought. And during the discussion, he told me he was interested in continuing to serve America, but in a different role. And I asked him if this was something he was seriously considering. In other words, sometimes you get these rumors out there in the political process where somebody feels like they've got to say, yes, I'm interested. But no question in my mind that Mike loves Nebraska, and he's serious about going home and possibly serving in a—the Nation in a different capacity.

And my answer was—to Mike was, I support you, and I encourage you to follow your heart. If it's Mike's decision and Nebraska's choice, he would make an outstanding Member of the United States Senate. There is no doubt in my mind.

And so I want to thank you for your service, thank you for your friendship, thank you for your commitment to America's farmers and ranchers and our country. And Laura and I wish you all the very best.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press

Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Johanns.

The President's News Conference *September 20, 2007*

The President. Good morning. In just 10 days, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP, is set to expire. This important program helps children whose families cannot afford private health insurance, but do not qualify for Medicaid to get coverage they need.

I have strongly supported SCHIP as a Governor, and I have done so as President. My 2008 budget proposed to increase SCHIP funding by \$5 billion over 5 years. It's a 20-percent increase over current levels of funding. Unfortunately, instead of working with the administration to enact this funding increase for children's health, Democrats in Congress have decided to pass a bill they know that will be vetoed. One of their leaders has even said such a veto would be, quote, "a political victory."

As if this weren't irresponsible enough, Congress is waiting until the SCHIP program is just about to expire before getting a final bill passed. In other words, Members of Congress are putting health coverage for poor children at risk so they can score political points in Washington. The legislation would raise taxes on working people and would raise spending by between \$35 to \$50 billion. Their proposal would result in taking a program meant to help poor children and turning it into one that covers children in households with incomes of up to \$83,000 a year.

The proposal would move millions of American children who now have private health insurance into Government-run health care. Our goals should be for children who have no health insurance to be able to get private coverage, not for chil-

dren who already have private health insurance to be able to get Government coverage.

What I'm describing here is a philosophical divide that exists in Washington over the best approach for health care. Democratic leaders in Congress want to put more power in the hands of Government by expanding Federal health care programs. Their SCHIP plan is an incremental step toward the goal of Government-run health care for every American.

I have a different view. I believe the best approach is to put more power in the hands of individuals by empowering people and their doctors to make health care decisions that are right for them. Instead of expanding SCHIP beyond its original purpose, we should return it to its original focus, and that is helping poor children, those who are most in need. And instead of encouraging people to drop private coverage in favor of Government plans, we should work to make basic private health insurance affordable and accessible for all Americans.

My administration will continue working with Congress to pass a responsible SCHIP bill. In the meantime, Congress has an obligation to make sure health insurance for poor children does not lapse. If they fail to do so, more than a million children could lose health coverage. Health coverage for these children should not be held hostage while political ads are being made and new polls are being taken. Congress must pass a clean, temporary extension of the current SCHIP program that I can sign

by September the 30th. And that's the date when the program expires.

I've instructed Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt, who has joined us today, to work with States on ways to mitigate the damage that would result if Congress allows this program to lapse. Our goal in passing legislation should be getting something done for those in need, not getting nothing done so politicians in Washington can claim a political victory.

Mike Leavitt is going to answer questions, if you have any, after my press conference. You looked a little concerned as to whether or not I'd ask—answer any questions. And now I'm happy to take any questions you have, starting with Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

National Economy/Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, economists say that the Nation is at increasing risk of recession. What do you say?

The President. I say that the fundamentals of our Nation's economy are strong. Inflation is down. Job markets are steady and strong. After all, the national unemployment rate is 4.6 percent. Corporate profits appear to be strong. Exports are up. There is no question that there is some unsettling times in the housing market and credits associated with the housing market. And that's why I look forward to working with Congress to modernize the FHA loans so that people can refinance their homes and to change the Tax Code so that if somebody renegotiates a loan, they don't have to pay a penalty, a tax penalty, in so doing.

I'm optimistic about our economy. I would be pessimistic, however, if the Congress has its way and raises taxes. I believe the worst thing that can happen now is to allow the Congress to do that which they have said they want to do, which is to raise the taxes on people, and—because I think taking money out of the hands of

investors and consumers and small-business owners would weaken the economy.

And so, as I say, I'm optimistic. But I would be pessimistic if I thought Congress was going to get their way. And they're not; they're not going to raise taxes.

Q. Do you think there's a risk of a recession? How do you rate that?

The President. You know, you need to talk to economists. I think I got a B in Econ 101. I got an A, however, in keeping taxes low—[laughter]—and being fiscally responsible with the people's money. We've submitted a plan that will enable this budget to become balanced by 2012 so long as Congress learns to set priorities. And we can balance the budget without raising taxes.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Iran

Q. Thank you. The French Foreign Minister has raised the possibility of war with Iran. Is there a risk that the escalating rhetoric over Iran could increase the chances of war, and what would be your message to the U.N. next week regarding Iran?

The President. I have consistently stated that I'm hopeful that we can convince the Iranian regime to give up any ambitions it has in developing a weapons program, and do so peacefully. And that ought to be the objective of any diplomacy. And to this end, we are working with allies and friends to send a consistent message to the Iranians that there is a better way forward for them than isolation—financial isolation and/or economic sanctions.

I believe it's imperative that we continue to work in a multilateral fashion to send that message. And one place to do so is at the United Nations. We're also talking to different Finance Ministers about how we can send a message to the Iranian Government that the free world is just not going to tolerate the development of know-how in how to build a weapon or at least gain the ability to make a weapon.

And the reason why is, is because it's very important for us to take the threats coming out of the mouth of the President of Iran very seriously. He's a person that is, you know—constantly talks about the use of force to—on Israel, for example, and Israel is our very firm and strong ally.

I also—it's very important for the Iranian people to know that our—the United States recognizes the grand tradition and history of Iran and that we respect the people of Iran. We just believe that their Government has made choices that make it difficult for them to realize their dreams, to realize their full potential. The Iranian economy is suffering, some of it through mismanagement, some of it as a result of international pressures. And the people of Iran have got to know that some of the suffering that they're having inside their country is caused by their Government, its inability to work with the world in a responsible way regarding their desire to enrich uranium. And so we'll keep the pressure on them, and again, the objective, of course, is to solve this peacefully.

David [David Gregory, NBC News]. Welcome back.

Israel and Syria

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Where have you been?

Q. I've been around.

The President. You've been doing those shows. [Laughter]

Q. Sir, Israeli Opposition Leader Netanyahu has now spoken openly about Israel's bombing raid on a target in Syria earlier in the month. I wonder if you could tell us what the target was, whether you supported this bombing raid, and what do you think it does to change the dynamic in an already hot region, in terms of Syria and Iran and the dispute with Israel and whether the U.S. could be drawn into any of this?

The President. I'm not going to comment on the matter. Would you like another question?

Q. Did you support it?

The President. I'm not going to comment on the matter.

Q. Can you comment about your concerns that come out of it at all, about for the region?

The President. No. Saying I'm not going to comment on the matter means I'm not going to comment on the matter. You're welcome to ask another question, if you'd like to, on a different subject.

Iraq

Q. I'll ask you about Iraq. Efforts to curtail the deployment of troops is an ongoing debate right now. One of the things you spoke about in your address last week had to do with impatience with the Iraqi Government. And you spoke about that, but not in much detail. How is that dynamic changing, your level of frustration with the lack of political progress? And how long can Americans reasonably expect you to wait before you take some kind of action that really forces the Iraqi Government's hand to reach the goals of reconciliation that you set for them?

The President. In my speech, I made it clear that there has to be a change in security for there to be reconciliation. And I also said that progress will yield fewer troops. In other words, return on success is what I said.

There are two types of reconciliation, David. One is that reconciliation, that very visible reconciliation that happens through the passage of law. In other words, it's reconciliation that shows the Iraqi people that people from different backgrounds can get along and, at the same time, that Government can function. Clearly, there needs to be work there. In other words, there needs to be the passage of law. For example, we strongly believe that an oil revenue sharing law will send a message to Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd alike that there is an effort at the national level to achieve reconciliation.

Having said that, however, there is a functioning government. And the reason I

bring—I guess my point is this, that in spite of the fact they haven't passed a law, there is the sharing of oil revenues on a relatively equitable basis. The other—and so we'll continue to work with the Government to insist and impress upon them the need for there to be the passage of law, whether it be Provincial election laws or de-Ba'athification law or the oil law.

There is local reconciliation taking place. I had a fascinating conversation in the Roosevelt Room earlier this week with members of Provincial Reconstruction Teams from around Iraq, who talked about how people are sick and tired of murder and violence and that they expect their local governments and their central Government to be more responsive to their needs. And local governments are beginning to respond.

Part of the reason why there is not this kind of instant democracy in Iraq is because people are still recovering from Saddam Hussein's brutal rule. I thought an interesting comment was made when somebody said to me—I heard somebody say, where's Mandela? Well, Mandela is dead because Saddam Hussein killed all the Mandelas. He was a brutal tyrant that divided people up and split families, and people are recovering from this. So there's a psychological recovery that is taking place. And it's hard work for them. And I understand it's hard work for them. Having said that, I'm not going to give them a pass when it comes to the central Government's reconciliation efforts.

I also said in my speech, local politics will drive national politics. And I believe that. I believe that as more reconciliation takes place at the local level, you'll see a more responsive central Government.

Yes. Axelrod [Jim Axelrod, CBS News].

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates/Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Your Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, was recently asked by New York Times columnist David

Brooks if knowing what he knows now, invading Iraq was a good idea. And I believe your Defense Secretary answered, "I don't know." Does that represent daylight with you? Is that second-guessing? Have you spoken to the Defense Secretary? And does that change your mind at all?

The President. I think he made it pretty clear the removal of Saddam—I don't know about this column, but I know his previous statements, he said getting rid of Saddam Hussein was the right decision. But I haven't talked to him about the column. If I had to ask everybody in my Government to respond to columns and news stories, that's all I'd be doing, is talking to people in my Government.

I am absolutely convinced Secretary Gates knows that removing Saddam was the right thing, and I'm absolutely convinced he believes we will succeed in Iraq. And so I've got a lot of trust in the man. He's doing a fine job as the Secretary.

Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News].

Israel and Syria

Q. You won't comment on what the Israelis may or may not have done—

The President. That's an accurate statement. I hope you got that from my answer. Now you're afraid—yes, of course, now Gregory is worried I'm actually going to comment, see.

Q. That's what I'm hoping.

The President. Well, I'm not going to, so you might want to go to another subject.

North Korea

Q. I know you won't comment on that. But let's talk about whether or not you believe that North Korea is aiding Syria with a nuclear program.

The President. We have made it clear and will continue to make it clear to the North Koreans through the six-party talks

that we expect them to honor their commitment to give up weapons and weapons programs. And to the extent that they are proliferating, we expect them to stop that proliferation, if they want the six-party talks to be successful.

In other words, whether it be the exportation of information and/or materials is an important part—it doesn't matter to us whether they do—in terms of the six-party talks, because they're both equally important, I guess is the best way to say it. In other words, we want—it does matter whether—let me rephrase that—it matters whether they are, but the concept of proliferation is equally important as getting rid of programs and weapons.

Q. So you believe they are aiding Syria?

The President. It's a general statement that we expect them not to be proliferating.

Race Relations/Situation in Jena, Louisiana

Q. Mr. President, thousands of people are marching today in Jena, Louisiana, in a racially charged case involving six black students for beating a white student. Also, not far from the White House recently, there was a noose that was found hanging from a tree at a college campus. You have worked very hard to bring blacks and Hispanics into your party, but the fallout from the immigration debate and even some Republican Presidential candidates' refusal to go to debates at Univision as well as Morgan State calls into question whether or not the state of race relations is deteriorating in this country and specifically in your party. Your thoughts?

The President. My advice to whoever will be our nominee is to reach out to the African American community as well as other communities, because I believe that we've got a very strong record when it comes to empowerment, when it comes to education or homeownership or small-business formation.

The events in Louisiana are—have saddened me. I understand the emotions. The Justice Department and the FBI are moni-

toring the situation down there, and all of us in America want there to be fairness when it comes to justice. We've got a good record to run on, and my advice to our candidate would be to run on it.

Q. Do you think this is a defining moment in race relations?

President Ahmadi-nejad of Iran's Upcoming Visit to New York City

Q. Mr. President, Iran's President, Ahmadi-nejad, says he wants to go to Ground Zero and place a wreath there. There is some objection to that in New York. What are your thoughts?

The President. My thoughts are that the local police will make the proper decision and that if they decide for him not to go—like it looks like they have—I can understand why they would not want somebody who is running a country who is a state sponsor of terror down there at the site.

Roger [Roger Runnigen, Bloomberg News].

National Economy/Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, back to the economy for a moment. The Fed took its half-point rate cut the other day. Do you think that was enough to stave off recession? And if not, are there other steps you're prepared to do financially?

The President. Roger, I do not comment on the decisions made by the Fed. I will comment on Ben Bernanke; I think he's doing a fine job. The White House and the Congress are responsible for fiscal policy. The worst decision the Congress could make would be to raise taxes during this period. We don't need to raise taxes in order to fund budget priorities. We have submitted a budget that shows we can get to balance by 2012 without raising taxes, and it's one of the reasons I feel so strongly about—that's why I'm not going to let the taxes be raised.

Fletcher [Michael Fletcher, Washington Post].

Situation in Jena, Louisiana

Q. What do you say to those who criticize you for not speaking out on the situation in Louisiana, particularly given your passionate remarks after Hurricane Katrina about race? People say you've fallen silent on this.

The President. As you know, this is an ongoing trial; there's litigation taking place. I feel strongly that there ought to be fair justice. And I just spoke out on it.

National Economy/Social Security Reform

Q. Mr. President, former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld recently was asked if he missed you. He said, no. [*Laughter*]

The President. Wait a minute. I miss him.

Q. Alan Greenspan has come out with a book, a recent book, criticizing you for being fiscally irresponsible. And they're not the first former Government officials to come out and be critical of you. And I'm wondering two things. First, do you feel betrayed by some of these people who have served you and then have come out and criticized you? And then, more particularly, can you respond to Greenspan's criticism?

The President. My feelings are not hurt. You might have been a little selective in quoting Donald Rumsfeld, which I know you didn't mean to be, you know. I respect Secretary Rumsfeld; I believe he did a fine job. And I respect Alan Greenspan. I respectfully disagree with Alan Greenspan when it comes to saying that this administration didn't handle the fiscal issues we faced in good fashion. As a matter of fact, we did.

The deficit, as a percent of GDP, is low. It's lower than the 30-year average. We have submitted a plan to balance the budget. We dealt with a recession, a terrorist attack, and corporate scandals. And we did it by cutting taxes. The tax cuts worked. The economy recovered. People are working. Interest rates are low.

I'm a supply-sider. I believe supply-side economics, when properly instituted, en-

ables us to achieve certain objectives. One, there's people finding work, and there's hope in the economy. Two, that supply-side economics yields additional tax revenues. And if we're smart about how we manage the fiscal budget, it leads to balance, and that's what we have done. We are fighting a war at the same time that we're headed toward balance. In other words, we're making sure our troops get the money they need and veterans get the benefits they need.

The former Chairman Greenspan and I spent a lot of time talking about the unfunded liabilities inherent in Social Security and Medicare. And he's concerned about those unfunded liabilities, as am I. And that's why I went in front of the Congress, in more than one occasion, talking about how to reform Social Security so that young people who are working aren't paying payroll taxes into a system that's going broke.

I'm not going to give up on entitlement reform, but it can require part—members of both parties to recognize we have a problem that ought to be solved now. It's time to—I thought it was time to come together a couple of years ago, and that wasn't the political will in Congress. And I'm not so sure we're going to find it now, but I'm going to keep trying because, like the Chairman, I understand that the biggest issue we've got with the deficit are those deficits inherent in these entitlement programs.

John [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

Government of Dubai and NASDAQ Stock Market/Trade/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President, there's a deal taking shape this morning where the Government of Dubai would buy a share of—a stake in the NASDAQ stock market. And there is some concern being expressed on Capitol Hill about this. It's another deal involving, you know, people overseas that we might not trust. What's your reaction to it? And

also, what's your level of concern about protectionism in general?

The President. My reaction is, is that we have a reform process in place that will be able to deal with this issue. In other words, we're going to take a good look at it as to whether or not it has any national security implications involved in the transaction. And I'm comfortable that the process will go forward.

John, I'm also—I am concerned about protectionism. I'm concerned about it because if the United States loses its confidence when it comes to trading, it will make it less likely our economy would grow. And I just told you, one of the underpinnings of our support is the fact that exports—for economic vitality—is the fact that exports are up, and workers benefit when we're selling products overseas. And I believe these free trade agreements will be an interesting test of protectionism, whether protectionism is real.

We've got four trade agreements that we've negotiated that we want to get passed, and there's going to be some crucial votes coming up here pretty soon in the Congress. And we'll work hard to get all four trade agreements through. And if they don't get through, it is a sign that the protectionists are beginning to be on the ascendancy here in Washington, DC, and that would be a mistake. And for people who are deeply concerned about poverty around the world like I am, the best way to help lift people out of poverty is through free trade agreements. And that's why we're dedicated to the Doha round that is—that Secretary Schwab is so actively engaged in—not Secretary Schwab, trade negotiator Schwab. And we're committed to reach an accord with these nations so that—because trade helps poor people realize a better life. And it's a proven fact.

I'm also worried about isolationism. Isolationism tends to run hand in hand with protectionism. You'll find isolationists are those who say it's not our business what happens overseas, it doesn't matter if

there's a free society in the heart of the Middle East, as far as our long-term security and peace. I just strongly reject that. I think it does matter a lot that the United States is working with other nations to promote liberty and freedom because I believe liberty is a change agent. Liberty can help hostile parts of the world become peaceful parts of the world.

You know, our strategy in dealing with these extremists who still want to attack us is on the one hand, chase them and find them and bring them to justice, and on the other hand, help change the conditions that caused 19 kids to get on airplanes and come and kill nearly 3,000 citizens on our soil. The best way to do that is to be active with foreign policy. It's not to lose faith in values, but to actively promote universal values. And isolationists would say, it's not worth it, doesn't matter to the United States of America. Well, I think it does matter, and I think it matters a lot.

Herman [Ken Herman, Cox News], have you got a question?

2008 Presidential Elections

Q. Yes, sir, thank you.

The President. You're welcome.

Q. Mr. President, for Republicans seeking election next year are you an asset or a liability?

The President. Strong asset. [Laughter] Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Q. Can I follow?

The President. No. [Laughter] I knew I made a mistake calling on you in the first place. [Laughter]

Q. He's known you a long time.

The President. Yes, he has.

Q. And you got an MBA?

The President. The problem is, I called him, and I've known him for a long time.

Q. So you knew what you were getting into. [Laughter]

The President. Yes. Look, candidates who go out and say that the United States is vulnerable to attack and we're going to make sure our professionals have the tools

necessary to protect us are going to do well. Candidates who go out and say that helping these Iraqis realize the benefits of democracy are going to do well. Candidates who go out and say that it's very important for the United States to have clear principles when it comes to foreign policy, they'll do well. Candidates who say, we're not going to raise your taxes will do well.
Ann.

Taxes/SCHIP Legislation

Q. Quick follow, if I may, Mr. President?
[Laughter]

The President. No, you may not. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, back to your grade point average on holding the line on taxes—

The President. Whew, I thought you were going to talk about the actual grade point average. [Laughter] I remind people that, like when I'm with Condi, I say, she's the Ph.D., and I'm the C student. And just look at who's the President and who's the adviser. But go ahead. [Laughter]

Q. If there is a tax increase on cigarettes to fund the SCHIP program, is that a tax increase you oppose?

The President. It does. We don't need to raise taxes. What I want is the Congress to be focused on making sure poor children get the health insurance they were promised. Instead, Congress has made a decision to expand the eligibility up to \$80,000. That's not the intent of the program. The program was, find poor children and help them with health insurance. Their vision is, expand the eligibility so that people making up to 80 will be eligible for this program. I believe this is a step toward federalization of health care. I know that their proposal is beyond the scope of the program, and that's why I'm going to veto the bill.

Let's see, Mark [Mark Smith, Associated Press Radio].

Iraq/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, in January, when you announced your troop surge, you said that its goal was to get all 18 Iraqi Provinces, the security for those Provinces into Iraqi hands by November of this year. The Pentagon, pardon me, is now telling Congress that's not going to happen until July at the earliest. Have the goalposts shifted once more?

The President. No, the goals are the same; achieving those goals have been slower than we thought. And the question is, one, whether or not it's worth it to try to achieve the goals. I believe it's worth it for the security of the country. And the reason why I believe it's for the security of the country is that if we were to leave before the job was done, extremist groups like Al Qaida would be able to gain safe haven. That's what they've said they want. They believe we won't have the will to hang in there and help this Iraqi Government succeed. And they want us out.

And so the goals of helping Iraqis provide their own securities remain the same, and the goals are important toward achieving our objective, and our objective is important for the security of the country. I also believe that a democracy in the heart of the Middle East will be a major blow to extremists or radicals wherever they live in the Middle East. And just yesterday we saw an attack on an anti-Syrian/pro-Lebanese democracy advocate. Now, I don't know who did that, but I do know it is typical of this war we're fighting in, when extremists kill innocent people in order to undermine democracies.

One of the things I feel passionately about is for the United States to recognize what a Middle East would be like if terrorists and extremists were—would have safe haven and were emboldened by a U.S. defeat. And that's why I'm—one, I believe we can succeed, and two, I know we got to succeed—and therefore, have listened

carefully to our commanders and our diplomats as to whether or not they think we can succeed, and if so, what do they need to do it. And that's what I talked to the country about.

And so, Mark, yes, the goals are the same. And have we achieved them as fast? No, we haven't. But however, having not achieved them doesn't mean we ought to quit. It means we ought to work hard to achieve the goals, because the end result is the same, whether the goal is done in November or in July, and that is a country that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself and is an ally against these extremists and radicals; a country which will deny safe haven to the folks who have sworn allegiance to the crowd that attacked us on September the 11th.

A couple of more, and then I'm going to let Leavitt come up here.

Blackwater USA Incident in Iraq

Q. A followup, sir?

The President. Yes, please.

Q. Thank you. You said earlier that people in Iraq are sick and tired of the violence. To what extent has the recent Blackwater incident frayed your relations with Prime Minister Maliki and his Government? And why are outfits like Blackwater above the law in Iraq?

The President. First of all, I have yet to speak to the Prime Minister about this subject. I'll see him in New York next week at the U.N.; I'm confident he'll bring it up. I also appreciate the fact that he's willing to work with the U.S. Government to set up a commission to find out what actually happened. The folks like Blackwater who provide security for the State Department are under rules of engagement. In other words, they have certain rules. And this commission will determine whether or not they violated those rules. And I'm looking forward to finding out what the results are.

Q. Any regrets about that incident and the fact that there were—

The President. Well, let's find out what the facts are first. Obviously, to the extent that innocent life was lost, you know, I'm saddened. Our objective is to protect innocent life. And we've got a lot of brave souls in the theater working hard to protect innocent life. And evidently, some innocent lives were lost. My thoughts and prayers go out to the families. I want to find out the facts about exactly what took place there in the theater, and that's exactly what we're about to find out.

A couple of more here. Wolffe [Richard Wolffe, Newsweek].

Oil Revenue Sharing in Iraq

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. You looked asleep back there; that's why I was calling on you.

Q. You recently spoke just earlier about the importance of oil revenue sharing in Iraq. Recently, a company called Hunt Oil, run by one of your long-time supporters, Ray Hunt, signed a deal with a Kurdish regional government to drill for oil up there. That deal has come under intense criticism from the national Government in Baghdad. They say it undermines the discussions about oil legislation. What's your opinion of that kind of deal and how it impacts this long-stalled legislation?

The President. Our Embassy also expressed concern about it. I knew nothing about the deal. I need to know exactly how it happened. To the extent that it does undermine the ability for the Government to come up with an oil revenue sharing plan that unifies the country, obviously, if it undermines it, I'm concerned.

Yes.

General David H. Petraeus

Q. Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Big Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News], he's back.

Q. What is your reaction to the MoveOn.org ad that mocked General Petraeus as General "Betray Us" and said that he cooked the books on Iraq? And

secondly, would you like to see Democrats, including Presidential candidates, repudiate that ad?

The President. I thought the ad was disgusting, and I felt like the ad was an attack not only on General Petraeus but on the U.S. military. And I was disappointed that not more leaders in the Democrat Party spoke out strongly against that kind of ad. And that leads me to come to this conclusion: that most Democrats are afraid of irritating a left-wing group like MoveOn.org—or more afraid of irritating them than they are of irritating the United States military. That was a sorry deal. And it's one thing to attack me; it's another thing to attack somebody like General Petraeus.

All right. Leavitt is going to answer some questions, if you have any for him. Make sure they're—tone them down a little bit;

this is his first time in here. Martha, you and Gregory be polite on him. Thank you for your time.

Michael.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:46 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa; former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan; Parliament Member Antoine Ghanem of Lebanon, who was assassinated in Lebanon on September 19; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. A reporter referred to Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner of France.

Message on the Observance of Yom Kippur, 5768 September 20, 2007

For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the LORD your God.

LEVITICUS 23:28

On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, the faithful leave behind their daily concerns and gather together to draw near to God. This day is a time when Jews everywhere reflect on their lives, seek forgiveness, and find solace in God's merciful nature.

The Shofar's call signals our recommitment to our Creator and to each other. In the year ahead, may we all be reminded of the Almighty's steadfast love for His children and achieve the peace we all seek.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a blessed Yom Kippur.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism

September 20, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism is to continue in effect beyond September 23, 2007.

The crisis constituted by the grave acts of terrorism and threats of terrorism committed by foreign terrorists, including the terrorist attacks in New York, in Pennsylvania, and against the Pentagon committed on September 11, 2001, and the continuing

and immediate threat of further attacks on United States nationals or the United States that led to the declaration of a national emergency on September 23, 2001, has not been resolved. These actions pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism, and maintain in force the comprehensive sanctions to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
September 20, 2007.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Senate Transmitting a Treaty Between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation

September 20, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation, done at Washington and London on June 21 and 26, 2007. I transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report

of the Department of State concerning this Treaty.

My Administration is prepared to provide to the Senate for its information other relevant documents, including proposed implementing arrangements to be concluded pursuant to the Treaty, relevant correspondence with the Government of the United Kingdom about the Treaty, and proposed amendments to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations.

This Treaty will allow for greater cooperation between the United States and the United Kingdom, enhancing the operational capabilities and interoperability of the armed forces of both countries. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Treaty.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

September 20, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 21.

Remarks Honoring 2006 and 2007 NCAA Championship Teams *September 21, 2007*

Thank you all. Please be seated. It is a beautiful day to welcome champs to the White House. And I am honored to stand with some of our country's finest student athletes, and look at some of our finest student athletes, and glad to give you an excuse to skip class. *[Laughter]* But I'm really glad to welcome you here and to congratulate you on being a champion.

I really enjoy a day like today. You didn't get to see, but I got to shake hands with athletes and coaches and people, some of whom have come a long way to be recognized here at the White House. And it is really a lot of fun to be with people who set high standards and work hard to achieve goals, which you've done.

And there are some others here who want to recognize you as well: Senator Lamar Alexander from Tennessee—thanks for coming, Lamar; Lisa Murkowski from Alaska; Senator Gordon Smith and Sharon from Oregon. We're sure glad you all are here. Zach Wamp from the State of Tennessee and Kim, proud you all are here as well. They are here because the States they represent happen to have teams who are champs as well.

I want to welcome all the team captains, the coaches, the school officials, and all the fans who have joined us. You're different: You've come from different schools, different sports, but you deserve to be called champion.

The first champions I want to recognize are the Arizona State indoor track and field and outdoor track and field champs. I learned a new symbol. *[Laughter]* The women's track team from Arizona State claimed two national championships in 1 year. In the winter, the Sun Devils earned the indoor title; in the spring, the outdoor title. It makes Arizona State one of only three schools in NCAA history to win women's indoor and outdoor track and field championships in the same season. I congratulate Coach Kraft and all the athletes who've joined us today. Thanks for coming.

Coach Pat Casey and the Oregon State baseball team have joined us. Oregon State is here to celebrate two consecutive national championships in baseball. Earlier this summer, the Beavers won all five of their games in the College World Series. That is hard to do. You outscored your opponents 42–16. You trailed for only one inning. You took the lead and never looked back. And as a result, you're the first college baseball team to win back-to-back titles in 10 years. And I'm proud you're here, and congratulations on the job you're doing.

Speaking about repeat champs, the Duke women's golf team is with us today. The ladies of the golf team have now won three NCAA championships in a row and five overall. They're really hard to beat. This spring, the team played through wind and rain to win the championship tournament

by 15 strokes. And I want to welcome Coach Brooks and the team here today. Coach Brooks picked up his 102d career win. This is the most in the history of NCAA women's golf. You've got a good coach; you've got good players. When you play hard, you end up right here at the White House. Congratulations, and thanks for coming.

How about the Johns Hopkins men's lacrosse team? Coach Pietramala and the team won a tough championship game. This is not the first time they've been here, by the way. They were here back in 2005. Everybody is going to remember—at least people who pay attention to lacrosse will remember that the Blue Jay team scored a goal in just 12 seconds in the game and hung on to win 12–11 in a tough game. This is the ninth men's lacrosse championship for Johns Hopkins. I congratulate you on carrying on a proud tradition at a fine university, and welcome to the White House.

Pat Summitt knows something about coaching. We're proud to welcome this soon-to-be, if not already, Hall of Fame coach and the ladies' basketball team from the University of Tennessee. This team is upholding a long-time tradition for Tennessee women's basketball. After all, this is their seventh national title under Coach Summitt. Here's how the coach described the moment. She said: "To win anything, you have to be a tight team. They believed in each other and obviously had one goal, to cut down the nets." They did, and we're proud to welcome you here to the White House. Thanks for coming.

Brown University women's crew is with us today. Brown University crew has a lot to celebrate in recent years. After all, they have won the NCAA title five out of the last nine seasons. These women know how to row. [Laughter] Brown is the winningest women's crew program in the history of the NAAs. We wish their coaches all the very best as they deal with a personal problem. I'm sorry they're not here, but these

women—if anybody can lift their spirits—because they performed brilliantly. I also appreciate the fact that we've got Academic All-Americans and National Scholar-Athletes on this team as well. Congratulations on achieving excellence on all fronts, and welcome to the White House.

Coach Robinson and others coach the mighty Golden Gophers of Minnesota in the University of Minnesota men's wrestling team, grapplers. This spring, you earned the third national title in team history. And I appreciate the fact that you train hard, work hard, and as we say in Texas, "outwrestle 'em." [Laughter] Congratulations, and welcome to the White House.

Here's the final group of champs. From the great State of Alaska, the men and women's rifle team from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. It is safe to say this team traveled the furthest to be here. You earned the trip. This is, by the way, the eighth time in 9 years that the Nanooks have been the NCAA champions in rifle. Interestingly enough, guess who they beat? West Point. Any time you outshoot West Point, you're really good at what you do. [Laughter] And so we welcome you to the White House, and thanks for coming.

As I explained to some of the teams, one of the reasons why I love to welcome people here is to remind you that you can be a champ on the field, and you can be a champ off the field; that because you're a champ on the field, you have a chance to inspire somebody to make right choices in life. You have the opportunity to set a good example. You don't know how many youngsters are looking at you, but there's a lot. People are wondering how champs behave. So by setting high standards and working hard to achieve them, you're influencing other people.

I also appreciate the fact that you're involved with raising money for cancer awareness or collecting toys and clothing for those in need. Some of the teams have supported the Special Olympics. A lot of the folks on these teams have volunteered

in the communities in which they live. And I thank you for that. You're proving what I know is true, that you have to be a dedicated soul to get here in the White House—to get here to the White House when it comes to athletics, but it is that same dedication that makes you achieve excellence in sports that helps you be an excellent person in life.

And so we welcome you here. We thank you for coming. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Greg Kraft, track and field program head coach, Arizona State University; Dan Brooks, women's golf team head coach, Duke University; Dave Pietramala, men's lacrosse team head coach, Johns Hopkins University; and J Robinson, men's wrestling team head coach, University of Minnesota.

The President's Radio Address *September 22, 2007*

Good morning. In just 8 days, the State Children's Health Insurance Program—or SCHIP—is set to expire. This important program helps children whose families cannot afford private health insurance, but who do not qualify for Medicaid to get the coverage they need. I strongly supported SCHIP as a Governor and have strongly supported it as President. My 2008 budget proposed to increase SCHIP funding by \$5 billion over 5 years, a 20-percent increase over current funding.

Instead of working with my administration to enact this funding increase for children's health, Democrats in Congress have decided to pass a bill they know will be vetoed. One of their leaders has even said such a veto would be "a political victory." As if this weren't irresponsible enough, Congress is waiting until the SCHIP program is just about to expire before passing a final bill. In other words, Members of Congress are risking health coverage for poor children purely to make a political point.

The proposal congressional leaders are pushing would raise taxes on working Americans and would raise spending by \$35 to \$50 billion. Their proposal would result in taking a program meant to help poor children and turning it into one that covers

children in some households with incomes of up to \$83,000 a year. And their proposal would move millions of children who now have private health insurance into Government-run health care. Our goal should be to move children who have no health insurance to private coverage, not to move children who already have private health insurance to Government coverage.

My administration remains committed to working with Congress to pass a responsible SCHIP bill. In the meantime, I called this week for Congress to make sure health insurance for poor children does not lapse. If they fail to do so, more than a million children could lose health coverage. Health coverage for these children should not be held hostage while political ads are being made and new polls are being taken. Congress must pass a clean, temporary extension of the current SCHIP program that I can sign by September 30th, the date the program expires.

In addition to extending the SCHIP program, Congress needs to focus on passing fundamental spending bills, especially the annual funding bill for the Department of Defense. Congress must also pass additional funding for our troops fighting the war on terror. We need these bills so we can get our men and women in uniform

essential equipment, like additional armored fighting vehicles that are resistant to mines and ambushes.

The American people expect their elected leaders in Washington to work together by passing responsible bills in a timely manner. I am confident that with good will on both sides, Democrats and Republicans can do this. We can meet our obligations to help poor children get health coverage. We can meet our responsibilities to the men and women keeping our Nation safe.

And we can do our duty to spend the taxpayers' money wisely.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on September 21 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 21, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to the Young Presidents' Organization *September 24, 2007*

Thank you all. Please be seated. I've spoken to a lot of people in this room, but rarely have I spoken to a group of people who I can address, Mr. President, or Madam President. [*Laughter*] I thank you for joining us. I appreciate Jim Nussle joining us as well.

I look forward to having—giving you a few remarks on the budget. As business leaders, you know it's important to set priorities and make decisions in a timely way. That's what you do on a daily basis. If you were running a company whose lease was up for renewal in a few months, you'd ask the landlord to start negotiating on prices and terms. You would anticipate the cancellation of the—or the renegotiation of the lease. You would ask for time to think about the best way forward, and you wouldn't be happy if the landlord waited until the night before your time was up and then dropped on your desk a 500-page lease that he expected you to sign. In the business world, that's called alienating your customers. [*Laughter*] In Washington, that's called the appropriations process. [*Laughter*]

The fiscal year ends in less than a week. Yet Congress has not sent a single appro-

priations bill to my desk. Not one. Instead, the congressional leaders may end up lumping all 12 outstanding appropriations bills into one massive, trillion-dollar piece of legislation later this year. This would make it easier for Members to sneak in all kinds of special projects, put in wasteful spending or porkbarrel that they are not willing to debate in the open.

If they think that by waiting until just before they leave for the year to send me a bill that is way over budget and thicker than a phonebook, if they think that's going to force me to sign it, it's not. This would be bad for our country, it would be harmful for our economy, and it would be unfair for the taxpayers.

This is an important time for our economy. For nearly 6 years, we've enjoyed uninterrupted economic growth. Since August 2003, the economy has added more than 8.2 million jobs. Productivity is growing, and that's translating into larger paychecks for American workers. Unemployment is low, inflation is low, and opportunity abounds. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

You know, this economic vitality just didn't happen—in other words, it's—I think

it's the result of hard work and people dreaming big dreams and working hard to fulfill them. I also believe it's the result of progrowth economic policies. And the job is—in Washington is to keep the environment sound for investment and for growth.

And so with that in mind, last February, I submitted a budget to Congress that fully funds our priorities, yet holds the growth of nonsecurity discretionary spending to less than inflation, it puts us on the path to budget surplus by 2012, and it does all this without raising taxes. In other words, we can meet priorities, and we can do so without raising taxes. I think raising taxes would be bad for the economy and bad for the working people.

Unfortunately, the Democratic majority in Congress has chosen a different path. The plan they have put forward includes an increase in discretionary spending that is nearly \$22 billion more than my budget request. Some in Congress will tell you that \$22 billion is not a lot of money. As business leaders, you know better. As a matter of fact, \$22 billion is larger than the annual revenues of most Fortune 500 companies. And the \$22 billion is only for the first year. With every passing year, the number gets bigger and bigger, and so over the next 5 years, the increase in Federal spending would add up to \$205 billion. And the only way to pay for such a large spending increase is to raise taxes on the American people.

So it's no surprise that the same Members of Congress who are planning the big increase in Federal spending are also planning the largest tax increase in American history. At a time when families are working hard to pay their mortgages or pay for their children going to college, now is not the time to be taking money out of their pocket.

The Founders understood that there would be times when the President and the Congress would have different views about spending and taxes, and so they gave

the executive and legislative branches different powers. Congress has the power of the purse, the authority to pass tax bills and set spending levels. The President has the authority to reject unwise or excessive taxes and spending. And unless Congress has a two-third majority, it must come to an agreement with the President if it wants to get a bill enacted.

Every year, Congress deals with separate bills that fund the day-to-day activities of our Government, everything from defense to homeland security to education and transportation. These 12 spending bills are the normal process by which Congress sets its priorities when they spend your money.

Now we are days away from the end of the year—end of the fiscal year. And as I told you, Congress hadn't finished one of these bills. They got the requirement to do 12; they hadn't done 1. If Congress doesn't get its work done in a week, the Government is not going to have the funding to continue important services. I don't believe the American people should be denied those services because Congress can't get its work done.

Congress needs to pass these annual spending bills. And if they need more time, I urge them to pass a clean continuing resolution. Under a clean continuing resolution, the Government would continue to operate at current funding levels while the Congress works on the annual appropriations bills. The principle should be that there would be no new spending, no new policies, no new projects unless the President and Congress agree in advance on a specific item.

The continuing resolution is not a new idea. This isn't the first time it's—would have happened. The last Congress didn't pass all its appropriations bills on time. And with the help of a continuing resolution, Congress kept the Government running while finishing the work. An earlier Republican Congress did the same thing during

President Clinton's second term after a disruptive Government shutdown that no Congress has allowed since.

When the 110th Congress took office earlier this week, the leaders promised to make the legislative process more transparent and to prove they could be responsible with the people's money. They said, "Give us a chance to be responsible." Well, now is the time to honor those pledges. By passing a clean continuing resolution, Congress would give itself extra time to complete the 12 annual spending bills, and

do them 1 at a time, in a fiscally responsible way.

I believe we can work together to keep your taxes low, to keep the economy growing, and to balance a Federal budget. I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and visit with you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:52 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Office of Management and Budget Director James A. Nussle.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in New York City *September 24, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, members of your delegation, thank you for coming. I strongly support the creation of a Palestinian state. I believe it's in the interests of the Palestinian people. I believe it's in the interests of Israel to have a democracy living side by side—democracies living side by side in peace.

And the fundamental question that I ask is, is there leadership that share the vision and are willing to work hard to achieve the vision? And if the answer to that question is yes, the United States of America will be a strong partner in implementing the vision.

I have known the President for quite a while. I am convinced that he is dedicated to the formation of a Palestinian democracy that will live with peace with their neighbor Israel. And I believe the Prime Minister of Israel is dedicated to the same vision. And therefore, as I told the President, the United States of America will work as hard as we possibly can to help you achieve the vision, Mr. President.

Condi Rice has been very engaged—Secretary Rice has been very engaged in the

region. And when she speaks, she's speaking for me and my Government. And I appreciate you taking time to explain to me the hurdles you see, the role you'd like to see the United States play, and your dedication to a cause that is just and important. I appreciate the fact that you're fighting the extremists who don't share the same kind of view. And I believe that the vision of two states, side by side in peace, is achievable. And we want to help you realize that goal.

So thank you for coming.

President Abbas. Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving us here and for hosting us. We appreciate that very much. I would like to take this opportunity to confirm to you that we truly believe very strongly in the peace process, and we believe very strongly in your vision of establishing a Palestinian, independent, viable state that lives side by side with the State of Israel.

Mr. President, these days we feel hopeful, and we feel and we sense the hope, especially after the call to convene an international meeting during the month of November. We believe that this meeting

should deal with the substance and issues of substance that would lead to full negotiations on permanent status that would lead to a permanent peace and a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

And based on our belief of the seriousness of this call, both us and the Israelis have formed the teams that will work immediately in order to negotiate for the issues to be ready and ripe to take it one step further and be prepared and ready prior to the mid-November date for the convening of the meeting.

I also take this opportunity to reaffirm again that we strongly believe in the roadmap, which includes your vision, Mr. President, as well as the Arab initiative. Collectively, together, I believe they represent a strong framework that would allow us and

help us to negotiate the permanent status issues and reach an agreement on it.

Therefore, Mr. President, we will continue to count on your work, on your support, and your serious efforts. We have faith and trust in all of this and believe that with the help of this, we'll be able to reach the just and durable peace in the Middle East.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil in New York City *September 24, 2007*

President Bush. It's a pleasure to be with my friend the President of Brazil. Every time we visit, it's always a fruitful and important discussion. And we talked about climate change. And I assured the President that the event we're having in Washington, which he kindly is coming to, is an important meeting about reaching international consensus on how to move together on the issue of climate change.

We talked about alternative fuels. Brazil, under President Lula's leadership, is a leading producer of ethanol. And he is an evangelist on the subject. And I appreciate very much his leadership, because I believe the United States will benefit from ethanol. And so I look forward to working with you. And I want to thank you for your leadership in Haiti.

And finally, we had a good discussion on Doha. We share a commitment to for—a successful round of trade talks. And I

assured the President that the United States would show flexibility, particularly on agricultural goods, in order to help achieve a breakthrough. So I want to thank you for the conversation. It's a joy being with you.

President Lula. First of all, I would like to thank for the opportunity once again to be here with President Bush and with members of his Cabinet. Secondly, we are convinced that on the climate change and the Doha round, we're still dependent on some factors. And one of these factors is the willingness of an important country like the U.S. demonstrating its capability to be flexible.

And President Bush has demonstrated the willingness to reach an agreement; in the many different conversations that we have had, he has demonstrated very clearly his willingness. And the U.S. is willing to be more flexible. And he's also willing to

discuss with all countries on climate change. And this has been Brazil's position.

We are convinced that the Doha round is a need; it's something that is a necessity for the rich and for the poor countries. And we'll be—the rich and the developing countries could give a contribution for the less developed countries.

And at the same time, the climate issue is an issue that involves all the human beings on the planet Earth. So all of us, we share responsibility to take care of the planet that we will leave for our grandsons and for our grand-grandsons. We don't want to try to find who to put the blame on or who is innocent. What matters is that everybody has to take care of the planet, because if we don't take care of the planet Earth, we will all have something to lose.

I once again told President Bush that Brazil is willing to do its share on the climate issue, as also to cope with what we have to cope with, from the deforestation of the rain forest in the Amazon, which we managed to reduce in 52 percent in the year.

And on the Doha round, Brazil is willing to do whatever is necessary so that we can reach a deal very—[inaudible]. If we manage to convince important countries like China, India, South Africa, Argentina, Mexico, plus the European Union and Japan, I believe that we can, in the next phase, announce good measures as related to the Doha round, as also on the climate change.

So what we are demonstrating is that the issue exists. No one has a definite solution. We are in—just in a learning process on how to cope with this issue. And we all want to do our homework. The demonstration of the political will President Bush has, and myself, is, we're sending a signal that no one owns the truth; everybody knows a little bit and doesn't know so much a little bit too. We want together to add up our knowledge so that we can find the best solutions. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:48 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. President Lula da Silva spoke in Portuguese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City *September 25, 2007*

Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you for the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Sixty years ago, representatives from 16 nations gathered to begin deliberations on a new international bill of rights. The document they produced is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it stands as a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty. The declaration opens by recognizing "the inherent dignity" and the "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" as "the founda-

tion of freedom and justice and peace in the world." And as we gather for this 62d General Assembly, the standards of the declaration must guide our work in this world.

Achieving the promise of the declaration requires confronting long-term threats. It also requires answering the immediate needs of today. The nations in this chamber have our differences, yet there are some areas where we can all agree. When innocent people are trapped in a life of murder and fear, the declaration is not being upheld. When millions of children starve to death or perish from a mosquito bite,

we're not doing our duty in the world. When whole societies are cut off from the prosperity of the global economy, we're all worse off. Changing these underlying conditions is what the declaration calls the work of "larger freedom," and it must be the work of every nation in this Assembly.

This great institution must work for great purposes: to free people from tyranny and violence, hunger and disease, illiteracy and ignorance, and poverty and despair. Every member of the United Nations must join in this mission of liberation.

First, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from tyranny and violence. The first article of the Universal Declaration begins, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." The truth is denied by terrorists and extremists who kill the innocent with the aim of imposing their hateful vision on humanity. The followers of this violent ideology are a threat to civilized people everywhere. All civilized nations must work together to stop them by sharing intelligence about their networks and choking their—off their finances and bringing to justice their operatives.

In the long run, the best way to defeat extremists is to defeat their dark ideology with a more hopeful vision, the vision of liberty that founded this body. The United States salutes the nations that have recently taken strides toward liberty, including Ukraine and Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and Mauritania and Liberia, Sierra Leone and Morocco. The Palestinian Territories have moderate leaders, mainstream leaders that are working to build free institutions that fight terror and enforce the law and respond to the needs of their people. The international community must support these leaders, so that we can advance the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Brave citizens in Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq have made the choice for democracy, yet the extremists have re-

sponded by targeting them for murder. This is not a show of strength, it is evidence of fear. And the extremists are doing everything in their power to bring down these young democracies. The people of Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq have asked for our help, and every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand with them.

Every civilized nation also has a responsibility to stand up for the people suffering under dictatorship. In Belarus, North Korea, Syria, and Iran, brutal regimes deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. Americans are outraged by the situation in Burma, where a military junta has imposed a 19-year reign of fear. Basic freedoms of speech, assembly, and worship are severely restricted. Ethnic minorities are persecuted. Forced child labor, human trafficking, and rape are common. The regime is holding more than 1,000 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party was elected overwhelmingly by the Burmese people in 1990.

The ruling junta remains unyielding, yet the people's desire for freedom is unmistakable. This morning I'm announcing a series of steps to help bring peaceful change to Burma. The United States will tighten economic sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their financial backers. We will impose an expanded visa ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights, as well as their family members. We'll continue to support the efforts of humanitarian groups working to alleviate suffering in Burma. And I urge the United Nations and all nations to use their diplomatic and economic leverage to help the Burmese people reclaim their freedom.

In Cuba, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end. The Cuban people are ready for their freedom. And as that nation enters a period of transition, the United Nations must insist on free speech, free assembly, and ultimately, free and competitive elections.

In Zimbabwe, ordinary citizens suffer under a tyrannical regime. The Government has cracked down on peaceful calls for reform and forced millions to flee their homeland. The behavior of the Mugabe regime is an assault on its people and an affront to the principles of the Universal Declaration. The United Nations must insist on change in Harare and must insist for the freedom of the people of Zimbabwe.

In Sudan, innocent civilians are suffering repression. And in the Darfur region, many are losing their lives to genocide. America has responded with tough sanctions against those responsible for the violence. We've provided more than \$2 billion in humanitarian and peacekeeping aid. I look forward to attending a Security Council meeting that will focus on Darfur, chaired by the French President. I appreciate France's leadership in helping to stabilize Sudan's neighbors. And the United Nations must answer this challenge to conscience and live up to its promise to promptly deploy peacekeeping forces to Darfur.

Second, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from hunger and disease. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food and clothing and housing and medical care." Around the world, the United Nations is carrying out noble efforts to live up to these words.

Feeding the hungry has long been a special calling for my Nation. Today, more than half the world's food assistance comes from America. We send emergency food stocks to starving people from camps in Sudan to slums in—around the world. I've proposed an innovative initiative to alleviate hunger under which America would purchase the crops of local farmers in Africa and elsewhere, rather than shipping in food from the developed world. This would help build up local agriculture and break the cycle of famine in the developing world.

And I urge our United States Congress to support this initiative.

Many in this hall are bringing the spirit of generosity to fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria. Five years ago in sub-Saharan Africa, an AIDS diagnosis was widely considered a death sentence, and fewer than 50,000 people infected with the virus were receiving treatment. The world responded by creating the Global Fund, which is working with governments and the private sector to fight the disease around the world. The United States decided to take these steps a little further by launching the \$15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Since 2003, this effort has helped bring cutting-edge medicines to more than a million people in sub-Saharan Africa. It's a good start. So earlier this year, I proposed to double our initial commitment to \$30 billion. By coming together, the world can turn the tide against HIV/AIDS once and for all.

Malaria is another common killer. In some countries, malaria takes as many lives as HIV/AIDS, the vast majority of them children under the age of 5 years old. Every one of these deaths is unnecessary because the disease is preventable and treatable. The world knows what it takes to stop malaria: bed nets and indoor spraying and medicine to treat the disease. Two years ago, America launched a \$1.2 billion malaria initiative. Other nations and the private sector are making vital contributions as well. I call on every member state to maintain its focus, find new ways to join this cause, and bring us closer to the day when malaria deaths are no more.

Third, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from the chains of illiteracy and ignorance. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration states, "Everyone has the right to education." And when nations make the investments needed to educate their people, the whole world benefits. Better education unleashes the talent and potential of its citizens and adds to the prosperity of all of us. Better education

promotes better health and greater independence. Better education increases the strength of democracy and weakens the appeal of violent ideologies. So the United States is joining with nations around the world to help them provide a better education for their people.

A good education starts with good teachers. In partnership with other nations, America has helped train more than 600,000 teachers and administrators. A good education requires good textbooks. So in partnership with other nations, America has distributed tens of millions of textbooks. A good education requires access to good schools. So in partnership with other nations, America is helping nations raise standards in their schools at home and providing scholarships to help students come to schools in the United States. In all our education efforts, our Nation is working to expand access for women and girls, so that the opportunity to get a decent education is open to all.

Finally, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from poverty and despair. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration states, "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, and to just and favorable conditions of work." In the 21st century, this requires ensuring that people in poor countries have the same opportunity to benefit from the global economy that citizens of wealthy countries have.

The United Nations provides vital economic assistance designed to help developing nations grow their economies and reach their potential. The United States agrees with that position. We've dramatically increased our own development assistance, and we're delivering that aid in innovative ways. We started the Millennium Challenge Account to reward nations that govern justly, fight corruption, invest in their people, and promote economic freedom. With this aid, we're reaching out to developing nations in partnership, not paternalism. And we're ensuring that our aid

dollars reach those who need them and achieve results.

In the long run, the best way to lift people out of poverty is through trade and investment. A nation that is open and trading with the world will create economic rewards that far exceed anything they could get through foreign aid. During the 1990s, developing nations that significantly lowered tariffs saw their per capita income grow about three times faster than other developing countries. Open markets ignite growth, encourage investment, increase transparency, strengthen the rule of law, and help countries help themselves.

The international community now has an historic chance to open markets around the world by concluding a successful Doha round of trade talks. A successful Doha outcome would mean real and substantial openings in agriculture, goods and services, and real and substantial reductions in trade-distorting subsidies. The world's largest trading nations, including major developing countries, have a special responsibility to make the tough political decisions to reduce trade barriers. America has the will and flexibility to make those necessary decisions. Our negotiators are demonstrating that spirit in Geneva. I urge other leaders to direct their negotiators to do the same. And I'm optimistic that we can reach a good Doha agreement and seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

In the meantime, America will continue to pursue agreements that open trade and investment wherever we can. We recently signed free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These agreements embody the values of open markets: transparent and fair regulation, respect for private property, and resolving disputes under international law rules. These are good agreements, and they're now ready for a congressional vote, and I urge the Congress to approve them as soon as possible.

As America works with United Nations to alleviate immediate needs, we're also

coming together to address longer-term challenges. Together, we're preparing for pandemics that could cause death and suffering on a global scale. Together, we're working to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Together, we're confronting the challenges of energy security and environmental quality and climate change. I appreciate the discussions on climate change led by the Secretary-General last night. I look forward to further discussions at the meeting of major economies in Washington later this week.

The goals I've outlined today cannot be achieved overnight, and they cannot be achieved without reform in this vital institution. The United States is committed to a strong and vibrant United Nations, yet the American people are disappointed by the failures of the Human Rights Council. This body has been silent on repression by regimes from Havana to Caracas to Pyongyang and Tehran, while focusing its criticism excessively on Israel. To be credible on human rights in the world, the United Nations must reform its own Human Rights Council.

Some have also called for reform to the structure of the Security Council, including an expansion of its membership. The United States is open to this prospect. We believe that Japan is well-qualified for permanent membership on the Security Council and that other nations should be considered as well. The United States will listen

to all good ideas, and we will support changes to the Security Council as part of broader U.N. reform. And in all we do, I call on member states to work for an institution that adheres to strict ethical standards and lives up to the high principles of the Universal Declaration.

With the commitment and courage of this chamber, we can build a world where people are free to speak, assemble, and worship as they wish; a world where children in every nation grow up healthy, get a decent education, and look to the future with hope; a world where opportunity crosses every border. America will lead toward this vision where all are created equal and free to pursue their dreams. This is the founding conviction of my country. It is the promise that established this body. And with our determination, it can be the future of our world.

Thank you, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. in the General Assembly Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; Srgjan Kerim, President, 62d Session of the U.N. General Assembly; President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba; President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, in his capacity as President of the United Nations Security Council. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq in New York City *September 25, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, it's good to see you again. We generally meet via TV screens—[laughter]—and now it's good to see you in person. And I appreciate your delegation coming. You brought a very distinguished delegation—Ministers in this

Government, the Foreign Minister, the Speaker of the Assembly is with us today—Mr. Speaker, thank you.

We talked about a lot of issues; we spent time talking about reconciliation and law. And the Prime Minister and the Speaker

are dedicated to getting good law out of the Assembly. And the political parties in Iraq must understand the importance of getting these laws passed. Some politicians may be trying to block the law to gain special advantage. And these parties have got to understand that it's in the interests of Iraq to get good law passed. And so I want to thank you for your dedication and your commitment to laws that will help this young democracy reconcile and move forward.

The Prime Minister and I have talked about a variety of concerns. And I assured him we want his security forces well-trained, mobile, and capable of handling Iraqi security on their own. I have made it clear to the American people that our troop levels will depend upon success. When General Petraeus reported to the country, you know, I talked about troops coming home based upon success. And success in Iraq is important to the future of our countries, and it's obviously important to the people of Iraq.

You're sitting in a vital region and when you succeed—which I'm confident you will—it'll send a message to other people who believe in peace. It'll make it easier for people to grow up with a hopeful future in the Middle East. When that happens, it makes America more secure. If we were to leave before the job is done, chaos could ensue, innocent people would lose their life, extremists would be emboldened, nations that are worried about the United States would—about our commitment would lose their nerve, the countries of the Middle East would be endangered, and that would cause America to be endangered as well.

And so we're with you, Prime Minister. We thank you for the courage of the Iraqi people. We expect there to be reconciliation and law, just like you expect there to be reconciliation and law. And I appreciate your time today. Appreciated your remarks yesterday; I thought they were strong

remarks about a hopeful Iraq. And it's good to be with you.

Prime Minister Maliki. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I am grateful to be here with you. I thank you for the meeting with your distinguished delegation and with my delegation.

During the meeting with the President, we have reviewed a number of issues. We have discussed a variety of issues. All of them are common issues that we strongly believe that they represent the mutual goal that we have, the mutual goal of confronting and defeating terrorism, as well as building and continuing to build the Iraqi institutions and the Iraqi Government.

The Iraqi side is fully prepared to assume all the responsibilities and to work for a better future for all of Iraq. We have made it very clear and emphasized that the future of Iraq goes through the gates of national reconciliations, of political agreements. And that is the way to make the states, and that's the way to ensure and assure the future of Iraq.

The task before us is gigantic. We have succeeded in ridding Iraq of the dictatorship and the regime that governed there. Now we have another challenge, which is to get rid of terrorism, terrorist organizations. The road will be long; it requires cooperation from everyone and the international community in order to uproot terrorism and secure a better future for everyone.

We believe and we feel that there is a development and progress that's happening every day in our political life, in the way to manage and administer the country in the security situation. Of course, as the President referred, also we have some spending legislations—that we will continue to exert every possible efforts to have those spending legislations passed. They've been sent to the Iraqi parliament. But also, we continue to work on the basis of the existing law, and we continue to work to have those legislations passed.

We also discussed the importance and—of the region where we live. It is a vital region. It is important for Iraq and the region to be away from conflicts, to have a stable region and a stable Iraq, and to uproot terrorism in that part of the world and in that country. Iraq's security is very important, and we have talked about the importance of mutual respect between our two sides and working together for our mutual goals. We have a great deal of confidence that we will be victorious. *Shukran.*

President Bush. Shukran.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoshyar Mahmud Zebari and Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mahmud al-Mashhadani of Iraq; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting on Democracy in New York City *September 25, 2007*

Thank you all for coming. This is a meeting of people who love liberty and who understand that freedom is universal. I appreciate the ability to share thoughts about how to embolden those who seek reform to stand with those who are willing to fight tyranny and ways for us all to be effective.

As you know, there are people around the world who are desperate to live in free societies. I think, for example, of those in Burma. And it's incumbent upon those of us who live in free societies to help them.

I can think of no better way to work toward freedom than to strategize with leaders from around the world who are willing to take the hard steps necessary to spread liberty.

And so I'm looking forward to our strategy session. I appreciate your time. I want to thank you very much for your interest in this vital subject. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:34 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters.

Remarks During a Meeting With the United Nations Security Council in New York City *September 25, 2007*

Mr. President, thank you. And thank you for convening this meeting of the United Nations Security Council. I appreciate the opportunity to join you. And I appreciate your focus is—your focus on the challenges to peace and security in Africa, particularly in Sudan and Darfur.

The reason I say that is, my Nation has labeled what's taking place in Darfur as genocide, and when we find genocide, it's

time to do something about it. Time is of the essence. And so, Mr. President, you're focusing our attention on this crucial matter.

I want to thank the Secretary-General, as well, for your support of the people of Darfur. I appreciate your determination to make relieving their suffering a priority of the United Nations.

And I want to thank Chairperson Konare for the leadership of the African Union. After all, you deployed 7,000 troops. But 7,000 troops is not enough, if you believe what's taking place on the ground is genocide. Now, maybe some don't think it's genocide, but if you've been raped, you think it's—the human—your human rights have been violated. If you're mercilessly killed by roaming bands, you know it's genocide. And the fundamental question is, are we, the free world, willing to do more? You've made a strong effort, and we appreciate you. But you know better than me that the area of Darfur is bigger than France, or Texas, and both are plenty big for 7,000 troops.

Your Excellencies, the fighting in Darfur between the rebels and the Government continues. Two hundred thousand people have lost their lives; 200,000 innocents are no longer with us. More than 2 million people have been forced from their homes. They're fleeing the violence. And they go into refugee camps, and they head into neighboring countries like Chad and Central African Republic.

And that's why I appreciate your leadership, Mr. President, to help these countries help these refugees. The resolution adopted today addresses the plight of the refugees in Chad and Central African Republic. In other words, it's a step in the right direction. It's a practical solution to a big problem. It's a part of a grand solution, Mr. President. That's why your leadership is appreciated.

The resolution authorizes the deployment to these two nations of a robust European peacekeeping force and several hundred police and military advisers. This U.N. mission is going to help national and local governments exercise sovereignty over their territory. It's going to allow workers to deliver humanitarian aid. That makes us feel

good. We're spending \$2 billion so far on providing aid, and we want to make sure our aid gets to the people who need help.

And that's why the United States strongly supports the resolution and the mission. We continue to support swift implementation of existing resolutions of this Council. We want the words of this Council to mean something. We want it to be said, when the Council speaks on behalf of suffering people, those words will be followed by action.

And so we call on the Government in Khartoum to facilitate the deployment of a robust U.N. peacekeeping force to save life. We call on all parties to cease arm sales to the combatants. We expect people gathered around this table to send a focused message that innocent life matters. We expect President Bashir to observe a cease-fire during next month's peace talks, and we want the rebels to do the same.

We're tired—the message has got to be, we're tired of people trying to escape the noose of pressure. We want the pressure to be uniform. Why? Because we believe in universal freedom and peace.

The conflict in Darfur has claimed too many lives, and there's too much suffering. The innocent victims of this conflict want only to return to their homes. They want to live in peace. And it's our duty to help them realize that dream.

Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. in the Security Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, in his capacity as President of the United Nations Security Council; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson, Commission of the African Union; and President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan.

Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the Integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas
September 25, 2007

Fifty years ago today, nine students endured bitterness and violence because of the color of their skin and because of their convictions. As an Arkansas high school turned into a battleground for equality, the bravery of the Little Rock Nine inspired a generation of Americans.

Today, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High

School. This anniversary reminds us of our Nation's struggle to fulfill its founding promise for all Americans. We are also reminded of the resilience of the heroes who sacrificed for justice and equality. We honor their courage, and we resolve to continue their work to make America a more perfect Union.

Statement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress
September 25, 2007

Earlier today the 2007 Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, was released. The news is outstanding. Eighth graders achieved their highest scores ever in math, while fourth graders set records in both reading and math. African American and Hispanic students posted alltime highs in a number of categories, which represents progress toward closing the achievement gap.

These scores confirm that No Child Left Behind is working and producing positive results for students across the country. Since No Child Left Behind became law in 2002, the States have been setting standards and holding schools accountable for ensuring that every child can read and do math at grade level. We are successfully challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations and continuing to make significant progress in reforming our schools.

As we commemorate the integration 50 years ago of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, we are reminded of the sacrifices students and their families have made in pursuit of a better education. Today's results demonstrate America's progress in making their dreams a reality, but we have more work to do. Now is not the time to turn back the clock on educational accountability and real options for parents, which No Child Left Behind provides.

The successes detailed in the Nation's Report Card highlight the importance of reauthorizing No Child Left Behind. I have proposed a number of ways to improve the law, by increasing flexibility, helping struggling schools, and empowering parents with more choices. I look forward to continuing to work with lawmakers of both parties to strengthen this important law.

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the
United Nations in New York City
September 25, 2007

Mr. Secretary-General and Mr. President, distinguished members of the United Nations community, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: It's my pleasure to welcome you to New York. We look forward to concluding a successful 62d session of the United Nations General Assembly under the leadership of President Kerim.

Mr. Secretary-General, I appreciate your determination to ensure that the United Nations lives up to its high ideals, takes responsibilities seriously, and helps more people live in freedom and justice. You have urged this organization to help the suffering people of Darfur. You have strengthened international resolve to deter regimes pursuing the world's most dangerous weapons. You have supported freedom and independence for the people of Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq.

Under your leadership, the United Nations is addressing global challenges, such as the important issue of climate change. I welcome your efforts to advance the work of U.N. reform and uphold the highest ethical standards throughout this organization.

So, Mr. Secretary-General, in honor of your first year of leadership and in anticipation of your continued leadership in the years to come, I offer a toast to you and to the United Nations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:44 p.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Srgjan Kerim, President, 62d Session of the U.N. General Assembly. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-General Ban.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Hamid Karzai of
Afghanistan in New York City
September 26, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome back to the States. It just seemed like yesterday we were at Camp David.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. We had a fruitful set of discussions there, and we've had some this morning.

First of all, I thank you for your courage and your leadership. I appreciate your full understanding that a government that responds to its people is a government that is—provides hope and opportunities. I thank you for the progress report you've given me. This country has gone from a brutal tyranny where women and girls were repressed to a country where women and

girls have hope. The department has got strong women in the ranks. Young girls are going to school. Health care is now available in ways like never before.

President Karzai. Child mortality.

President Bush. Child mortality rates are down. And this is a tribute to you and your Government, the people of Afghanistan's desire to live in peace. It's in the interest of the United States that we continue to help you. It's in our security interests that this democracy flourish because when freedom takes place in Afghanistan, it will set an example for what's possible in other parts of the broader Middle East. When people see that there's hope in a

part of the world that had been ravaged by war, had been terrorized by brutal extremists, when people realize there's a different way of life, they'll demand the same things. And it's peace that we all want, and it's liberty that will help us keep that peace.

So, Mr. President, you've got strong friends here. I appreciate your courage. As you know, every time we meet, you—I ask you, “Are you making progress; are more children going to school; are more health care clinics operating; are the security forces more capable of dealing with the extremists?” I expect progress, and you expect progress. And I appreciate the report that you have given me today. So thank you, and welcome.

President Karzai. Thanks very much, Mr. President. And, as always, thank you for the great hospitality that you have always given to the Afghan people and to me personally, to my delegation. Camp David was a lovely place—I wish one could stay there longer sometime in the future. *[Laughter]*

Afghanistan, indeed, has made progress, but, Mr. President, that should be a tribute to you, your leadership, and the American people for all that we have achieved there in Afghanistan, especially the thing that you

mentioned, reduction in child mortality—from a country that was the worst in the world to a country that's coming up and saving 85,000 lives, especially this year, of children under 5; and for a country that was self-sufficient 40 years ago in zero production to becoming again self-sufficient in the production of food after the years of drought and misery and want and the roads and education and the Afghan flag flying around the world. So there is an endless list for which we have to be grateful to you.

And most important of all, Mr. President, something that we tend to forget from time to time, the liberation of Afghanistan, such an important thing for the Afghan people. I don't know if you feel it in the United States, but we feel it so immensely in Afghanistan that we are now, once again, a free country, liberated from the grips of terrorism and Al Qaida and their associates. And we love our flag flying around the world; I love to see it in this room, by the way.

Thank you very much.

President Bush. Good. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 a.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

Remarks on the No Child Left Behind Act in New York City *September 26, 2007*

The President. Good morning, Laura and I are really pleased to be here in New York City and really pleased to be able to be here with the mayor and the superintendent and our Secretary of Education. And particularly, we're pleased to be with the students and principals of—the principal and students of PS 76.

These are hard-working students who are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And we had a chance to visit with them and learn about their dreams, and

we really appreciate you all being here. It's exciting for us to be here.

Last week, the school system here in New York City received the Broad Prize for Urban Education. This is one of the most prestigious education prizes in the country. The award is given every year to large urban school districts that have shown the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement, while narrowing the achievement gap amongst poor and minority students.

In bestowing this recognition on New York City, the Broad Prize Committee highlighted the city's strong leadership. And that starts with Mayor Mike Bloomberg. The mayor is a no-nonsense guy who understands that if you set a goal, you expect to see results in achieving that goal. He knows how to ask tough questions, and he's pretty good about moving aside bureaucracy that will inhibit the people he has selected to achieve the goal. And the person he selected to be the chancellor is Joel Klein, who really is one of the country's finest school superintendents.

I appreciate both these men being here. And I want to congratulate you on this well-deserved honor.

This city tackled the challenges of underperforming schools in such a way that it has become a model for urban schools. This achievement is a hopeful sign for other school districts across America. If New York City can do it, you can do it. And one of the things that's interesting about the prize and our ability to communicate with each other is that if people are truly interested in figuring out how New York City accomplished its objectives, they ought to e-mail the school district. They ought to look at the strategy. They ought to figure out what the mayor and superintendent have done to empower principals and teachers and parents. And teachers and parents and the principals and the students also deserve credit when it comes to recognizing this award.

I also believe that part of the reason why New York City did well is because of the No Child Left Behind Act, which raises standards, insists upon accountability in the schools all across our country. The No Child Left Behind Act is working. I say that because the Nation's Report Card says it's working. Scores are improving, in some instances hitting alltime highs. Children across America are learning. The achievement gap that has long punished underprivileged students is beginning to

close. And I'm going to spend a little time talking about that today.

First, I do want to recognize the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. I do want to recognize Louise Sedotto, who is the principal of PS 76. You know, one of the things that's interesting—I bet you Joel will tell you this—that when you find a school that is performing well, you find a principal who is willing to think outside the box and lead. And I appreciate you being here, Louise, and I congratulate you and your teachers.

Principal Louise Sedotto. Thank you, sir.

The President. I bet you, when I ask your teachers, do they like you, they'll say, "We not only like her, we love her."

[Laughter]

And I want to thank the students again who are here. And the reason I'm glad they're standing here is because all the old folks up here recognize that the future of our country depends on a high-quality education for our children. And that was the reason why people from both political parties came together in Washington to pass the No Child Left Behind Act.

The law is based on this premise: The Federal Government invests money in education, and we ought to expect results in return for that investment. It's a pretty simple principle. If you're a taxpayer and you're spending your money, you want to make sure that money gets good results. And the best way to determine whether you get good results is to measure. Instead of just hoping for the best, we've asked States to set standards, to hold schools accountable so that every child can read and do math at grade level.

Measuring results is important because it helps teachers spot problems early. You can't solve a problem unless you diagnose the problem, and it's best to diagnose problems early in a child's life. Measuring results gives parents information. If you're interested in getting parents involved in your schools, just post your results up for people to read. It's amazing how it gets a parent's

attention when the schools aren't meeting expectations.

A system that doesn't hold people to account assumes that certain children cannot learn and that it's acceptable to shuffle them through school. Well, that's not acceptable in America, to shuffle children through school. That's what I have called the soft bigotry of low expectations. Through the No Child Left Behind Act, we have challenged that soft bigotry. And the Nation's Report Card shows we're making good progress.

Here's how the Report Card works. More than 700,000 students from every State have been tested. They've been tested in math and reading, and here are the results. In math, the scores for fourth and eighth graders were higher than they've ever been. In reading, the scores for fourth graders were also the highest on record. The Nation's Report Card shows that some of the achievement gaps amongst African Americans and Hispanic students are narrowing. In the fourth grade reading, the achievement gap between white and African American students is at an alltime low. In the eighth grade math, the achievement gap between white and African American and white and Hispanic students has narrowed since 2003. What all this means is, No Child Left Behind Act is working for all kinds of children in all kinds of schools in every part of the country.

And so we've got to build on the progress. And that means Congress needs to reauthorize and strengthen the No Child Left Behind Act. The act is working; Congress needs to reauthorize it and make it better. Through this law, our Nation has made an historic commitment to America's children, and we have a moral obligation to keep that commitment. We must ensure that they have the skills they need to succeed in life, and in a global economy, that becomes even more important.

As Congress considers reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, I've offered several proposals to help strengthen it. And

Secretary Spellings is going to be on Capitol Hill to explain why these proposals will make a good law even better. One, we can lift achievement—student achievement higher by giving local leaders more flexibility in the law as well as providing funding to turn around troubled schools. I believe student achievement will be enhanced when families with children stuck in low-performing schools have a opportunity to send their child to a better school.

We should increase access to tutoring programs for students who struggle and make sure these children get the special help they need. If you measure and you find a problem, it's time to provide tutoring for those children so they can get up to speed. That's what happens here in New York City. The mayor and the superintendent and the principal say, "When we find a problem, we're going to address that problem early." And it's working.

We should reward teachers who improve student achievement in low-income schools. When you find a good teacher willing to go into a school that needs help, that teacher ought to be given an additional incentive.

We should make sure our children are prepared for the jobs of the future by expanding access to Advanced Placement courses and strengthening math and science education. As yesterday's positive Report Card shows, children do learn when standards are high and results are measured.

And so my call to the Congress is, don't water down this good law. Don't go backwards when it comes to educational excellence. Don't roll back accountability. We've come too far to turn back. And so Congress needs to work with this administration to pass legislation that helps—gives our children the education they deserve.

I don't think there's anything more important than the education of young people. I know that's how the mayor feels, and I know that's how the superintendent feels, and I know that's how Laura and Margaret

feel. There's nothing more American than ensuring that all our children have the chance to realize their fullest potential and their highest dreams. And the improvement in New York City's public schools reminds us of what we can achieve when we set big goals and work hard to meet them.

And so I'm proud to be here to congratulate the good folks of New York City. I want to thank all involved with making sure our children have the skills necessary

to realize the great hope of America. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joel I. Klein, chancellor, New York City Department of Education; and Louise Sedotto, principal, PS 076 The Bennington School. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Signing the College Cost Reduction and Access Act September 27, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated, unless you don't have a chair. [*Laughter*] I welcome you to the White House. I have the honor of signing a bill that will help millions of low-income Americans earn a college degree. I'm really looking forward to signing this bill. I love the fact that this country is dedicated to helping people who want to realize a dream.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act expands one of America's most important and successful education initiatives, the Federal Pell Grant Program. For the last 6 years, I've worked to make sure that we expand Pell grants. I know the Members of Congress feel the same way. Pell grants give young people a chance to pursue their dreams. They give our fellow citizens the chance to build a better future.

The bill also takes important steps to put higher education within reach for more of the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank the Congress for answering this call. I appreciate your hard work on this piece of legislation, and I'm looking forward to signing the bill.

I want to thank the Secretary of Education for her hard work. Margaret Spellings is dedicated to making sure every child can learn and every child can realize dreams. I want to thank you for establishing

the bipartisan Commission for the Future of Higher Education. The Commission engages students and families and policy-makers and business leaders in the academic community on ways to improve higher education and to make it more affordable and accessible. I appreciate you taking that on, Margaret.

I want to thank Congressman George Miller from California who has joined us. He happens to be the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. When George puts his mind to getting something done, he can get it done. I'm about to call to—get him to—call him to get this No Child Left Behind Act reauthorized. [*Laughter*] But I don't want to mix messages early in the speech. [*Laughter*]

I thank Congressman Ric Keller from Florida and Congressman John Spratt, who is the chairman of the House Budget Committee. I'm honored you all joined us. Members of the Senate need to be thanked as well: Senator Ted Kennedy, Mike Enzi, Orrin Hatch, and Lamar Alexander. They were going to be here, but they got votes on the Senate floor, so they're here in spirit.

I want to thank the students who have joined us today. I appreciate you all being

here. These are Pell grant recipients. We believe it's important to put a face behind what it means to get a Pell grant. In other words, every one of these folks up here is benefiting from the Pell grant, so he or she can realize their dreams. That's what America is all about, isn't it?

The other thing is, this is a practical approach to dealing with the fact that we're—live in an age in which technology is transforming the way we live and work. And in order for our citizens to be able to seize the opportunities of a new era, they're going to have to have skills that can be only learned through a postsecondary education. That's the realities of the world in which we live. According to one study, 80 percent of the fastest growing jobs in America require some sort of education after high school. Times are changing. When we were—when the baby boomers like me were younger—it's a different era. We're living in a global economy. And we've got to stay competitive as we head into the 21st century, and the best way to stay competitive is to make sure people have access to good education.

And one of the best ways to make higher education affordable is through Pell grants. Pell grants make it possible for people from all walks of life to afford a college education. Pell grants send an important message to students in need: If you work hard and you stay in school and you make the right choices, the Federal Government is going to stand with you. That's what a Pell grant says.

With us today are a number of young Americans whose lives have been transformed; I'm going to mention two. Robert Garcia, I'm mentioning him because he's a remarkable story, but also, he happens to be from Texas. *[Laughter]* His family struggled financially. Robert's mom sacrificed mightily to get him a good education. By the way, that happens all across our country. Parents are sacrificing mightily to make sure their children can realize a dream. With her support—with his mom's

support, he became a leader in his high school band, and he graduated fifth in his class.

A Pell grant made it possible for Robert to go to the University of Texas, where he has just begun his junior year. The lowest grade he's made so far in college is B. That sets him apart from the President. *[Laughter]* Robert wants to use his education to get involved in public policy, so he can help at-risk youth. Here's what Robert says: "The Pell grant has saved my life." That's got to make us feel good, to hear that. "The Pell grant has saved my life. They've provided me with everything I need to survive: living expenses, tuition, books, and food. Without the Pell grant, I wouldn't be here."

Kalise Robinson, she grew up in Washington, DC. She was shuffled through the foster care system, and she was mistreated for much of her childhood. But she never lost her spirit. She was struggling to support her children, and she asked for help, and she found it from a community outreach group. They helped her find shelter, and she got a GED. In 2005, with the help of a Pell grant, Kalise entered the University of District of Columbia. She currently has a 3.3 grade point average, and when she graduates, she wants to help somebody else. Kalise says: "I came from a rough life. The Pell grant helped me. Wherever I go, I tell people there are options out there for you. If you work hard, there is help and money out there for you." We thank you both for being here. Thank you all for coming too.

And so today is a reaffirmation of our commitment, our determination to help more Americans realize dreams by getting a good education. The bill I sign today increases funding for Pell grants by \$11.4 billion over the next 5 years. It allows us to increase the maximum award from 5,400—to \$5,400 by 2012. And these are positive steps, and they're good steps. I wish we could make the Pell grant process

last year round. I think that would be helpful. I want to work with the Members of Congress to see if we can't get that done. That recognizes the realities for Pell grant recipients.

The bill also helps ease the burden on men and women in uniform who have taken out loans for higher education. We believe that when you're wearing the uniform, we need to help you; that you're making a sacrifice, and it's okay for the Government to help you in dealing with your loans when it comes to higher education. And so those on active duty will now have new flexibility to defer payments on their loans.

These are important steps. This bill does, however, create new and duplicative programs that divert resources from the Pell grants. This bill makes some spending commitments that aren't paid for yet, and I look forward to working with the Congress to ensure Pell grant increases that are not fully funded in this bill are paid for with offsets in other areas. And we're going to continue working with Congress to make sure the Pell grants stay strong.

I also want to make—do want to mention No Child Left Behind, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman. [Laughter] Chairman Miller was one of the main reasons why this bill got off the House floor in the first place. He's one of the main leaders to make sure the bill got to my desk.

And the reason I bring it up is, in order to make sure we've got more children ready for college, the No Child Left Behind Act

needs to be reauthorized and strengthened. Just this week, we saw what happens when you have high standards and you measure, measure for results. Those results were reported out through the Nation's Report Card. About 700,000 people were tested nationwide to determine whether or not standards are being met. Eighth graders achieved their highest scores ever in math, while fourth graders set records in both reading and math. African American and Hispanic students posted alltime highs in a number of categories. In other words, that achievement gap is beginning to close in America. It's something that we all want to see happen.

There is nothing more important than making sure our children get a good education. Today we've taken an important step in that direction. I'm hoping we can get the No Child Left Behind Act reauthorized and strengthened. I appreciate the Members being here today. I thank you for your hard work on this. I'm honored to sign this piece of legislation, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

Thanks for coming.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. H.R. 2669, approved September 27, was assigned Public Law No. 110-84.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and Federal Aviation Administration Acting Administrator Robert A. Sturgell

September 27, 2007

The President. Today I'm joined by Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and the Acting Administrator of the FAA,

Bobby Sturgell. I want to thank you all for coming.

We've been having a discussion about the fact that a lot of our air travelers are not only inconvenienced, they're—in some cases, they're just not being treated fairly. And there's a lot of anger amongst our citizens about the fact that, you know, they're just not being treated right.

And the Secretary and I have been talking about what to do about it, and I've instructed her to report back to me as quickly as possible on two matters: one, to make sure that consumers are treated fairly and complaints are listened to, and that we address some of the egregious behavior that our consumers have been subjected to. Endless hours sitting in an airplane on a runway, and there's no communication between the pilot and the airport, it's just not right. And so Mary is going to work very hard to make sure the system is much more responsive.

The other issue, of course, is dealing with congestion. And one of the reasons

why our consumers on airlines, airline passengers are being so inconvenienced is because the skies are too crowded. And there's some short-term things we're going to do, and Mary is going to report back to me about what those will be.

Now, also, Congress needs to look at this FAA reauthorization—I call it modernization—and work with this Department and work with Bobby bringing our FAA into the 21st century, so that our consumers and passengers and citizens won't be inconvenienced the way they are.

Now, we've got a problem; we understand there's a problem; and we're going to address the problem. Madam Secretary, I appreciate your willingness to do so.

Secretary Peters. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *September 27, 2007*

The world is watching the people of Burma take to the streets to demand their freedom, and the American people stand in solidarity with these brave individuals. We feel admiration and compassion for the monks and peaceful protesters calling for democracy. Every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand up for people suffering under a brutal military regime like the one that has ruled Burma for too long. I call on all nations that have influence with the regime to join us in supporting the aspirations of the Burmese people and to tell

the Burmese junta to cease using force on its own people, who are peacefully expressing their desire for change. By its own account, the junta has already killed at least nine nonviolent demonstrators, and many others have been injured and arrested as they seek to express their views peacefully. I urge the Burmese soldiers and police not to use force on their fellow citizens. I call on those who embrace the values of human rights and freedom to support the legitimate demands of the Burmese people.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation To Implement the United States-Peru Free Trade Agreement

September 27, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit legislation and supporting documents to implement the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (Agreement). The Agreement represents a historic development in our relations with Peru, and it reflects the commitment of the United States to supporting democracy and economic growth in Peru. It will also help Peru battle illegal crop production by creating alternative economic opportunities.

In negotiating this Agreement, my Administration was guided by the objectives set out in the Trade Act of 2002. The Agreement will create significant new opportunities for American workers, farmers, ranchers, businesses, and consumers by opening new markets and eliminating barriers.

Under the Agreement, tariffs on approximately 80 percent of U.S. exports will be eliminated immediately. This will help to level the playing field, since over 97 percent of our imports from Peru already enjoy duty-free access to our market under U.S. trade preference programs. United States agricultural exports will enjoy sub-

stantial new improvements in access. Almost 90 percent, by value, of current U.S. agricultural exports will be able to enter Peru duty-free immediately, compared to less than 2 percent currently. By providing for the effective enforcement of labor and environmental laws, combined with strong remedies for noncompliance, the Agreement will contribute to improved worker rights and high levels of environmental protection in Peru.

The Agreement forms an integral part of my Administration's larger strategy of opening markets around the world through negotiating and concluding global, regional, and bilateral trade initiatives. The Agreement provides the opportunity to strengthen our economic and political ties with the Andean region, and underpins U.S. support for democracy and freedom while contributing to further hemispheric integration.

Approval of this Agreement is in our national interest.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
September 27, 2007.

Remarks During a Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change

September 28, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Thanks. Good morning. Thank you. Welcome to the State Department. I'm honored to address this historic meeting on energy security and climate change. And I appreciate you all being here.

Energy security and climate change are two of the great challenges of our time. The United States takes these challenges

seriously. The world's response will help shape the future of the global economy and the condition of our environment for future generations. The nations in this room have special responsibilities. We represent the world's major economies, we are major users of energy, and we have the resources and knowledge base to develop clean energy technologies.

Our guiding principle is clear: We must lead the world to produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and we must do it in a way that does not undermine economic growth or prevent nations from delivering greater prosperity for their people. We know this can be done. Last year, America grew our economy while also reducing greenhouse gases. Several other nations have made similar strides.

This progress points us in the right direction, but we've got to do more. So before this year's G-8 summit, I announced that the United States will work with other nations to establish a new international approach to energy security and climate change. Today's meeting is an important step in this process. With the work we begin today, we can agree on a new approach that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen energy security, encourage economic growth and sustainable development, and advance negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

I thank the State Department for hosting this event. I appreciate members of my Cabinet who have joined us today. I thank Jim Connaughton, who is the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, for being here. I appreciate you being the personal representative of this, and I hope you're doing—I hope you think he's doing a fine job. *[Laughter]*

I welcome Minister Rachmat, the Minister of Environment of Indonesia, who is the chairman of the upcoming U.N. climate meeting in December. I welcome Mr. de Boer, who is the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I welcome all the Ministers and delegates who are here. We really appreciate you coming. I thank the Ambassadors for joining this august group.

I thank Members of the Congress who have taken time to come by: Congressman Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Congressman Bart Gordon of Tennessee. I appre-

ciate you taking time to come by and participate in these meetings.

Every day, energy brings countless benefits to our people. Energy powers new hospitals and schools, so we can live longer and more productive lives. Energy transforms the way we produce food, so we can feed our growing populations. Energy enables us to travel and communicate across great distances, so we can expand trade and prosperity. Energy sustains the world's most advanced economies, which makes it possible for us to devote resources to fighting hunger and disease and poverty around the globe.

In this new century, the need for energy will only grow. Much of this increased demand will come from the developing world, where nations will need more energy to build critical infrastructure and grow their economies, improve the lives of their people. Overall, the demand for energy is expected to rise by more than 50 percent by 2030.

This growing demand for energy is a sign of a vibrant, global economy. Yet it also possesses—poses serious challenges, and one of them, of course, is energy security. Right now much of the world's energy comes from oil, and much of the oil comes from unstable regions and rogue states. This dependence leaves the global economy vulnerable to supply shocks and shortages and manipulation and to extremists and terrorists who could cause great disruptions of oil shipments.

Another challenge is climate change. Our understanding of climate change has come a long way. A report issued earlier this year by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded both that global temperatures are rising and that this is caused largely by human activities. When we burn fossil fuels, we release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and the concentration of greenhouse gases has increased substantially.

For many years, those who worried about climate change and those who worried

about energy security were on opposite ends of the debate. It was said that we faced a choice between protecting the environment and producing enough energy. Today, we know better. These challenges share a common solution: technology. By developing new low-emission technologies, we can meet the growing demand for energy and, at the same time, reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, our nations have an opportunity to leave the debates of the past behind and reach a consensus on the way forward. And that's our purpose today.

No one country has all the answers, including mine. The best way to tackle this problem is to think creatively and to learn from others' experiences and to come together on a way to achieve the objectives we share. Together, our nations will pave the way for a new international approach on greenhouse gas emissions.

This new approach must involve all the world's largest producers of greenhouse gas emissions, including developed and developing nations. We will set a long-term goal for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. By setting this goal, we acknowledge there is a problem. And by setting this goal, we commit ourselves to doing something about it.

By next summer, we will convene a meeting of heads of state to finalize the goal and other elements of this approach, including a strong and transparent system for measuring our progress toward meeting the goal we set. This will require concerted effort by all our nations. Only by doing the necessary work this year will it be possible to reach a global consensus at the U.N. in 2009.

Each nation will design its own separate strategies for making progress toward achieving this long-term goal. These strategies will reflect each country's different energy resources, different stages of development, and different economic needs.

There are many policy tools that nations can use, including a variety of market

mechanisms to create incentives for companies and consumers to invest in new low-emission energy sources. We will also form working groups with leaders of different sectors of our economies, which will discuss ways of sharing technology and best practices.

Each nation must decide for itself the right mix of tools and technologies to achieve results that are measurable and environmentally effective. While our strategies may be differentiated, we share a common responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while keeping our economies growing.

The key to this effort will be the advance of clean energy technologies. Since I became President, the United States Government has invested nearly \$18 billion to research, develop, and promote clean and efficient energy technologies. The private sector here in our country has responded with significant investments, ranging from corporate research and development to venture capital. Our investments in research and technology are bringing the world closer to a remarkable breakthrough, an age of clean energy where we can power our growing economies and improve the lives of our people and be responsible stewards of the Earth the Almighty trusted to our care.

The age of clean energy requires transforming the way we produce electricity. Electric powerplants that burn coal are the world's leading cause of greenhouse gas emissions. The world's supply of coal is secure and abundant. And our challenge is to take advantage of it while maintaining our commitment to the environment. One promising solution is advanced clean coal technology. The future of this technology will allow us to trap and store carbon emissions and air pollutants produced by burning coal. Since 2001, the United States has invested more than two and a half billion dollars to research and develop clean coal. And in partnership with other nations and the private sector, we're moving closer to

an historic achievement: producing energy from the world's first zero-emissions coal-fired plant.

We also need to take advantage of clean, safe nuclear power. Nuclear power is the one existing source of energy that can generate massive amounts of electricity without causing any air pollution or greenhouse gas emissions. Without the world's 439 nuclear powerplants, there would be nearly 2 billion additional tons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere each year. And by expanding the use of nuclear power, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions even more.

The United States is working to reduce barriers to new nuclear powerplants in our country without compromising safety. Just last week, a company applied for approval to build the first new nuclear reactor in my country since the 1970s.

As we build new reactors here in the United States, we're also working to bring the benefits of nuclear energy to other countries. My administration established a new initiative called the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership. This partnership will work with nations with advanced civilian nuclear energy programs, such as France and Japan and China and Russia. Together, we will help developing nations obtain secure, cost-effective, and proliferation-resistant nuclear power, so they can have a reliable source of zero-emissions energy.

We'll also need to expand our use of two other promising sources of zero-emissions energy, and that's wind and solar power. Wind power is becoming cost-effective in many parts of America. We've increased wind energy production by more than 300 percent. We also launched the Solar America Initiative to lower the cost of solar power, so we can make—help make this technology competitive as well. Taken together, low-carbon technologies like wind and solar power have the potential to one day provide up to 20 percent of America's electricity.

The age of clean energy also requires transforming the way we fuel our cars and

trucks. Almost all our vehicles run on gasoline or diesel fuel. This means we produce greenhouse gas emissions whenever we get behind the wheel. Transportation accounts for about 20 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions every year. To reduce these emissions, we must reduce our dependence on oil. So America is investing in new, clean alternatives. We're investing millions of dollars to develop the next generation of sustainable biofuels like cellulosic ethanol, which means we'll use everything from wood chips to grasses to agricultural waste to make ethanol.

We're offering tax credits to encourage Americans to drive fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles. We're working to develop next-generation plug-in hybrids that will be able to travel nearly 40 miles without using a drop of gasoline. And your automobile doesn't have to look like a golf cart. *[Laughter]*

We're on track to meet our pledge of investing \$1.2 billion to develop advanced hydrogen-powered vehicles that emit pure water instead of exhaust fumes. We're also taking steps to make sure these technologies reach the market. We've asked Congress to set a new mandatory—I repeat, mandatory—fuel standard that requires 35 billion gallons of renewable and other alternative fuels in 2017 and to reform fuel economy standards for cars the same way we did for light trucks. Together, these two steps will help us cut America's consumption of gasoline by 20 percent in 10 years. It's an initiative I've called 20-in-10.

Ushering in the age of clean energy is an historic undertaking. We take it seriously here in the United States. And achieving this vision will require major investment in innovation by all our nations. Today, the United States and Japan fund most of the research and development for clean energy technologies. But meeting the objectives we share and the goal we're going to set will require all the nations in this hall to increase their clean energy research and development investments.

We must also work to make these technologies more widely available, especially in the developing world. So today I propose that we join together to create a new international clean technology fund. This fund will be supported by contributions from governments from around the world, and it will help finance clean energy projects in the developing world. I've asked Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson to coordinate this effort, and he plans to begin exploratory discussions with your countries over the next several months.

At the same time, we also must promote global free trade in energy technology. The most immediate and effective action we can take is to eliminate tariff and nontariff barriers on clean energy goods and services.

As we work to transform the way we produce energy, we must also address another major factor in climate change, which is deforestation. The world's forests help reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere by storing carbon dioxide. But when our forests disappear, the concentration of greenhouse gas levels rise in the atmosphere. Scientists estimate that nearly 20 percent of the world's greenhouse gas admissions are attributable to deforestation.

We're partnering with other nations to promote forest conservation and management across the world. We welcome new commitments from Australia, Brazil, with China and Indonesia. The United States remains committed to initiatives such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the Asian Forest Partnership. We will continue our efforts through the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, which helps developing nations redirect debt payments toward forest conservation programs. So far, my administration has concluded 12 agreements, concluding up to 50 million acres of forest lands. America's efforts also include an \$87 million initiative to help developing nations stop illegal logging. These efforts will help developing nations save their forests and

combat a major source of greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States is also taking steps to protect forests in our own country. It's one thing to help others; we got to make sure we do a good job here at home, and we are. Since 2001, we've provided more than \$3 billion to restore our forests and protect them against catastrophic fires as part of the Healthy Forests Initiative. In partnership with our farmers and ranchers, we're providing tens of billions of dollars in incentives for conservation. We're promoting sustainable public and private land management policies. By taking these steps, we've helped increase the amount of carbon storage in our forests, and we've helped safeguard a national treasure for generations to come.

What I'm telling you is, is that we've got a strategy; we've got a comprehensive approach. And we look forward to working with our Congress to make sure that comprehensive approach is effective. And we look forward to working with you as a part of this global effort to do our duty.

And we've done this kind of work before. And we have confidence in the success of our efforts. Twenty years ago, nations finalized an agreement called the Montreal Protocol to phase out substances that were depleting the ozone layer. Since then, we have made great strides to repair the damage. Just last week, developed and developing nations reached consensus on speeding up the recovery of the ozone layer by accelerating the phaseout of these harmful substances. This accelerated phaseout will bring larger benefits because they'll dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We have seen what happens when we come together to work for a common cause, and we can do it again. And that's what I'm here to urge you. The United States will do our part. We take this issue seriously. And we look forward to bringing a spirit of cooperation and commitment to our efforts to confront the challenges of energy security and climate change. By

working together, we will set wise and effective policies. That's what I'm interested in, effective policies. I want to get the job done. We've identified a problem; let's go solve it together.

We will harness the power of technology. There is a way forward that will enable us to grow our economies and protect the environment, and that's called technology. We'll meet our energy needs. We'll be good stewards of this environment. Achieving these goals will require a sustained effort over many decades; this problem isn't going to be solved overnight. Yet years from now, our children are going to look back at the choices we make today, at this

deciding moment. It will be a moment when we choose to expand prosperity instead of accepting stagnation. It will be a moment when we turn the tide against greenhouse gas emissions, instead of allowing the problem to grow. It will be a moment when we rejected the predictions of despair and set a course of a more hopeful future.

The moment is now, and I appreciate you attending this meeting. And we look forward to working with you. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:09 a.m. at the Department of State.

The President's Radio Address *September 29, 2007*

Good morning. Today I am signing emergency legislation to fund the Federal Government for the next 7 weeks. This legislation was necessary because Congress failed in its most basic responsibility to pass the spending bills that fund the day-to-day operations of the Government. There are 12 of these bills this year, and Congress did not complete a single one of them, so Congress had to send me a stopgap measure before the fiscal year ends this Sunday at midnight.

Congress's failure to pass these 12 spending bills is disappointing, but I do thank the Congress for passing this temporary measure and for passing it without any new spending, new policies, or new projects. It would have been wrong to deny essential Government services to the American people while Congress works through its annual spending bills.

I also appreciate the way this bill handles our disagreements over the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Congressional leaders have put forward an irresponsible plan that would dramatically expand this

program beyond its original intent. And they know I will veto it. But it is good that they kept the program running while they try to work out a more responsible approach.

Congress now has more time to complete its work on its annual spending bills. Earlier this year, congressional leaders promised to show that they could be responsible with the people's money. Unfortunately, they seem to have chosen the path of higher spending. They have proposed spending increases that would add an extra \$205 billion on top of my administration's budget request over the next 5 years. There's only one way to pay for such a large spending increase, and that is to raise taxes on the American people. So it is no surprise that the same Members of Congress who are planning this big increase in Federal spending are also planning the biggest tax increase in American history.

If these Members get their way, the tax relief my administration delivered could be taken away from you. Let me explain what this would mean for an average taxpayer.

If you have children, your taxes would rise by \$500 for each child. If you're a family of four making \$60,000 a year, your taxes would be more than \$1,800 higher. If you're a single mother with two children working to make ends meet, your taxes would go up by more than \$1,000. If you're a small-business owner working to meet a payroll, your taxes would increase by almost \$4,000. And if Congress allows our tax relief to expire, more than 5 million low-income Americans who currently pay no income taxes would once again have to pay taxes.

These are not the only taxes Congress wants to raise. They're proposing higher taxes on dividends and capital gains. They're proposing higher taxes on cigars and cigarettes. They're proposing to raise taxes on domestic oil and natural gas production. They're proposing new taxes on stock and bond transactions. And they refuse to make the Internet tax moratorium permanent. If this tax ban expires, it would open the doors for State and local officials

to impose new taxes on your access to the Internet.

At a time when many American families are dealing with rising mortgage rates, college costs, and health care expenses, it is wrong to take even more money out of your paychecks. Washington's elected leaders can do better. By working together, we can keep taxes low, help keep the economy growing, balance the Federal budget, and build on our record of fiscal discipline and greater economic opportunity for all Americans.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:35 a.m. on September 28 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 28, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Public Law 110-92, approved September 29. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at an Armed Forces Farewell Tribute to General Peter Pace and
an Armed Forces Hail in Honor of Admiral Michael G. Mullen as
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Fort Myer, Virginia
October 1, 2007

Mr. Vice President, Mrs. Cheney, Secretary Gates, members of the Cabinet, Members of Congress, members of the diplomatic corps, members of the finest military ever, that United States military, Secretary Rumsfeld, General Myers, members of the Pace and Mullen families, and distinguished guests: Today we pay tribute to an outstanding Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and we welcome his distinguished successor.

Ceremonies like this are a storied military tradition. It is a time when families, friends, and comrades honor those who

have fulfilled great duties to their nation. It is a time when we show appreciation to those who step forward to assume new obligations. It's a time when we make generous use of words like "honor" and "character." Sometimes those words are used too often. In the case of the two men we celebrate today, those words cannot be used too much.

Admiral Mike Mullen comes to this post with a broad and unique range of talents and experience. Some of you may not know that his parents were highly regarded members of the Hollywood community, who

worked for some of the greatest entertainers of the day. Many people are surprised when told about the Admiral's show business roots. After all, he's humble, well-grounded, and filled with common sense. [Laughter] Not exactly what one thinks about when they think of Hollywood values. [Laughter]

Admiral Mullen left California to attend the United States Naval Academy to pursue a career in military service. He soon found himself stationed on a destroyer on the gunline off the coast of Vietnam. During that tour, Admiral Mullen was part of operations so intense that the gun barrels on his ship glowed red. That was the beginning of a distinguished career.

The Admiral has commanded three ships, an aircraft carrier battle group, and the U.S. Second Fleet. He served as the commander of all U.S. naval forces in Europe and the NATO Joint Force Command. And later, as Chief of Naval Operations, he championed the construction of new types of vessels needed to deal with the threats of the 21st century.

Admiral Mike Mullen understands what's at stake in the war on terror. He was on duty at the Pentagon when Flight 77 made its doomed plunge. He felt the plane slam into the building. He saw the carnage and devastation. And like all who worked there that terrible day, he still carries the pain and the loss. Admiral Mullen was there when war reached America's shore, and he brings the talent, vision, and judgment needed to help us fight and win that war.

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen will follow his strong belief that every member of our Armed Forces is, as he put it, "part of one team and one fight." He will continue to set a sterling example to our men and women in uniform. He will bring judgment and candor to decisions that may mean the difference between life and death for young Americans who are serving our Nation. He will demonstrate the same love of country

and dedication to duty that inspired his sons to follow him into military service.

Admiral Mike Mullen is a man of decency and honor, and I congratulate you on your new assignment. And I know your parents would be proud. And I thank you and Deborah and Jack and Michael for your service to our Nation.

As Admiral Mullen begins his service as Chairman, he is fortunate to have as an example the man we honor today. General Pete Pace is one of the most respected and accomplished military leaders I have ever known. He helped craft America's response to an unprecedented assault on our homeland. He helped liberate two nations from brutal tyrannies and helped bring freedom to millions of people. He began the process of transforming our military into a more efficient and effective force.

Yet these accomplishments do not begin to tell the full story of this remarkable man. That story begins in Teaneck, New Jersey, where General Pace grew up the proud son of an Italian immigrant. His dad worked two and sometimes three jobs to provide for his family. His mom attended church service every Sunday, and, according to the good general, still lights candles to pray that her children are happy, healthy, and safe.

General Pace was a good student and a good athlete. His mom said the general has been good at everything he's ever done. Some of you may think mothers are required to say only admiring things about their sons. Well, take it from me, it's not always the case. [Laughter]

General Pace's dad died before he could see his son reach the height of his career, yet he always knew that his son would be a success. His family believed in his potential, and they weren't the only ones. There's something about General Pete Pace that makes believers out of nearly everyone. That includes the men who served with him in Vietnam and whom he led during some of the most vicious urban combat in American military history. It includes the

troops he led in Somalia, who looked to him for resolve and guidance during difficult times. It includes marines, who look with pride on the first of their ranks to lead the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It includes two Secretaries of Defense, who relied on the general during tough and trying times. And it includes a President, who has counted on General Pace's candor and sound judgment during some of the most difficult times in our country's history.

During his service at the Pentagon, General Pete Pace has shown us many talents. He's shown an intellect sharpened by postgraduate studies at George Washington and Harvard. He's shown us great oratorical skills; this is a man who frequently speaks without notes. I really don't recommend this to everyone. *[Laughter]* He's shown a sharp wit. When a naval commander once made an edgy joke in front of the Secretary of Defense, the general stepped right in and gave the young officer some advice. He said, "Never let a promising career stand in the way of a good joke." *[Laughter]*

The most important attribute General Pete Pace has shown us is a quiet strength. It is a strength that has won the admiration of friends and peers. It is a strength built on the love and support of a strong and devoted wife Lynne and their family, Peter, Lynsey, and Tiffany. It is a strength that gave Pete solace in the tough and sometimes bitter world of Washington, DC. It helped him bring selflessness to a city filled with egos and a dignity to a political process that might have worn down a lesser man. He now leaves active service with a distinguished team in place and a talented successor. And yet I also have the sense that General Pace is not going to end it all here. He's a man who has always put country first, and he will find new ways to serve.

General Pete Pace always understood what's important. It wasn't the titles he received or the honors bestowed, and it cer-

tainly was not the good graces of official Washington. What mattered most were the young men and women who serve our country and risk their lives for its honored cause. He kept a picture on his desk of the first marine who died under his command in Vietnam. He can still recite the names of all other marines who died under that first command. And because this is a man with a tender heart, sometimes it's hard for him to get through all the names without choking up a little bit.

Pete has devoted his life to those who wear our country's uniform. And they are devoted to General Pace. They're among the hundreds who've received his advice and friendship. They're among the thousands who lined up at military bases during his final tour to shake his hand and wish him well and say goodbye. They're among the millions whose names he will never know but who will always remember him. And they include that single soldier who came up to the General on his last visit to the war zone. He looked at General Pace with gratitude, respect, and pride and said, "Thanks for your service. We'll take it from here."

General Pace, throughout your life, you have led those troops to honorable achievements and into the pages of history. Because of your example, you can know that with courage, valor, and confidence, they will take it from here.

And so Godspeed to my friend General Pete Pace. Thanks for your courage. Thanks for your leadership. And thanks for your service to a country we love.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; and Gen. Richard B. Meyers, USAF (Ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocols to the Convention on the Prevention of Maritime Terrorism October 1, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Protocol of 2005 to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (the “2005 SUA Protocol”) and the Protocol of 2005 to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf (the “2005 Fixed Platforms Protocol”) (together, “the Protocols”), adopted by the International Maritime Organization Diplomatic Conference in London on October 14, 2005, and signed by the United States of America on February 17, 2006. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Protocols.

The Protocols are an important component in the international campaign to prevent and punish maritime terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promote the aims of the Proliferation Security Initiative. They establish a legal basis for international cooperation in the investigation, prosecution, and extradition of those who commit or aid terrorist acts or trafficking in weapons of mass destruction aboard ships at sea or on fixed platforms.

The Protocols establish the first international treaty framework for criminalizing certain terrorist acts, including using a ship or fixed platform in a terrorist activity, transporting weapons of mass destruction or their delivery systems and related materials, and transporting terrorist fugitives. The Protocols require Parties to criminalize these acts under their domestic laws, to cooperate to prevent and investigate suspected crimes under the Protocols, and to extradite or submit for prosecution persons accused of committing, attempting to commit, or aiding in the commission of such offenses. The 2005 SUA Protocol also provides for a ship-boarding regime based on flag state consent that will provide an international legal basis for interdiction at sea of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials, and terrorist fugitives.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Protocols, subject to certain understandings that are described in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 1, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 2.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in West Hempfield Township, Pennsylvania October 3, 2007

The President. Thanks for the warm welcome. Sit down. Thanks for coming. It's great to be back in your county again. Mar-

ion, I appreciate the invitation. I'd like to share some thoughts with you, and then

I'd like to answer some of your questions if you got time, because I do. [*Laughter*]

I really appreciate the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce for giving me an opportunity to explain why I have made some of the decisions I have made. My job is a decisionmaking job. And as a result, I make a lot of decisions. And it's important for me to have an opportunity to speak to you and others who would be listening about the basis on which I have made decisions, to explain the philosophy behind some of the decisions I have made. And so I'm looking forward to your questions, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to come and share them with you.

I'm sorry Laura is not with me. She's by far the better half of the Bush family. [*Laughter*] And she's a—she really is a remarkable woman. She—when I married her, she didn't like politics or politicians. [*Laughter*] And now she's the First Lady of the United States. And she's come to realize what I understand: It doesn't take much to be able to put influence—to influence somebody in a positive way. And so she cares deeply about issues like malaria. She believes, like I believe, that we can eliminate the scourge of malaria and save lives all around the world. She cares deeply about literacy. She cares deeply about making sure women have got good information to—when it comes to healthy choices with their life so they don't suffer from heart ailment. She cares a lot about women in Afghanistan. She cares a lot because she's got a big heart. And I'm sure proud to call her wife, and I think the country is lucky to have her as the First Lady.

I appreciate—I want to thank Tom Baldrige, the president of the chamber, and the officers of the chamber and the president-elect of the chamber and all the folks who make the chamber work.

I do want to contradict Marion, which is a little—shouldn't be doing in the first thing I say, but she said that because of me, you're growing. No, it's because of you you're growing. See, it's because of the en-

trepreneurship and small-business owners and hard-working people in Lancaster County that you're growing.

I'm going to talk—spend a little bit of time talking about what is the proper relationship between the Federal Government and the risk takers in society. But I just want to make sure you understand what I know, and that is, prosperity occurs because people work hard and dream dreams and work to fulfill those dreams. And so I congratulate you on the economic vitality of this region, Marion. Thank you for trying to give me credit where it's not due.

I also want to thank the Chryst family for welcoming us to this facility. This is—Jay is the dad. He's expanded his business, and he wisely turned it over to his daughter—[*laughter*]*—Dana.*

So I asked the Chrysts, I said, "How are you organized, from a tax perspective?" Dana said, "We're a subchapter S." And the reason I bring that up to you is, I'm going to talk a little bit about tax policy here in a minute, and when you cut individual income taxes, you cut taxes on a small business that's organized as a subchapter S corporation. And so I talk about tax cuts; I want you to be thinking about tax cuts not only for yourself but tax cuts for small-business owners.

Expansion of this business has provided people new opportunity employments—new employment opportunities here in Lancaster County. You know, when you give a man more money in his pocket—in this case, a woman more money in her pocket to expand a business, it means they build new buildings. And when somebody builds a new building, somebody has got to come and build the building. And when the building expanded, it prevented additional opportunities for people to work. Tax cuts matter. I'm going to spend some time talking about it. I want to thank you for giving us a chance to come and use you all as an example, and also, the hall works.

I do want to thank Senator Arlen Specter for being here today. Mr. Senator, you

didn't need to come. I'm honored you're here, and I'm sure the people of this county are honored you're here too. Thanks for coming.

Finally, I appreciate the Congressman from this district, Congressman Joe Pitts. I appreciate you being here, Congressman; thank you. *[Applause]* Sounds like you packed the audience with some of your family. *[Laughter]*

Right before I walked in here, I had a chance to talk to some State troopers and thank them for their service to the community. These folks were first on the scene at the West Nickel Mines Amish School tragedy. I am constantly amazed that our country produces people, decent, honorable people who are willing to serve. These folks had the ultimate challenge, which is to bring comfort to a hurting community. I thank you for what you've done, I thank you for what you're doing, and I thank you for what you will do. I am honored to be in the presence of the troopers who were there first on the scene. Thanks for coming.

I appreciate so very much Krist Blank joining us today. Mr. Blank, I'm honored you are here. I will tell you that, like a lot of Americans, I was deeply troubled when, you know, I found out that mothers and dads were grieving for the loss of their daughter. And I also was—my soul and spirits were lifted when I read the stories about the forgiveness and compassion that the Amish community showed toward the shooter's family. It was a remarkable statement of love and strength and commitment for people who had suffered so mightily to say to, you know, a widow and her children that we're able to overcome our grief and express our deep love for you. And so I want to thank you, sir, and your community for being such great examples of the compassion of the Lord. And I'm honored you're here.

Knowing him, he's sorry I even talked that way, see? He's a remarkable guy who told me something interesting. He said,

"I'm praying for you, Mr. President." This is not going to be a church service, I promise you. *[Laughter]* But I will tell you that the prayers of the people matter a lot; they really do. And it's one of the most inspiring—*[applause]*.

I want to talk a little bit about the environment necessary to continue economic growth. The job of this Government is not to try to create wealth. The job of the government is to create fiscal policy such that people feel inspired or confident in risking capital. In other words, the job of government is to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurship. One of the issues that we're going to be facing in Washington, DC, is how to spend your money. In other words, what do we do with the good money that we've—the good money we've collected? How do we spend it?

And there's a difference of opinion in Washington, DC, right now. I've submitted my budget, the core principle of which is that we will do what it takes to defend our homeland and make sure our troops have what it takes to do their jobs and keep your taxes low by not raising them. And we showed the way forward on how to get the balance in the year 2012. In other words, you got to be fiscally responsible, set priorities with your money, and keep your taxes low.

The principle is, is that tax cuts inspire investment, encourage consumption and savings. In other words, the more money you have, as opposed to the government having, the more likely it is the local economies will grow. That's why I brought up the example of the SCHIP corporation. When we cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes, we cut taxes on small businesses too. And one of the principles on which I'm making decisions is, I'd rather the Chrysts spending their money than the government spending their money. See, I think they know how to spend their money in such a way that their business will grow.

Now, there's a different approach in Washington. And folks have suggested that we increase spending. As a matter of fact, a 5-year budget that's submitted by the current leadership of the Congress increases spending by \$205 billion over 5 years, which would—and so you say, “That's fine, sounds good, all these programs sound wonderful.” Except how you going to pay for it? That's the question I ask. How are you going to pay for the promises? And the answer is raising taxes. And I think they're wrong to raise taxes on the American people. I know we don't need to raise taxes on the American people.

This economy has got in some difficulties when it comes to the housing markets, and the last thing we now need to do is raise taxes. See, taking money out of the economy at a time when the housing market is adjusting could exacerbate economic difficulties. And the role of government is to try to create an environment so that small businesses flourish and families can realize opportunities and dreams and consumerism remains strong.

And so what you're going to see me making decisions this year is when they spend—they try to increase taxes on you, I'll use the prerogative given to me under the Constitution, and I'm going to veto the tax bills. I'm going to—[*applause*].

I just vetoed a bill today, and I want to explain to you why. It's called SCHIP—Children's Health Insurance policy. First of all, the intent of the SCHIP legislation passed previous to my administration is to help poor children's families buy the children health care, or get them on health care. That's what it is intended to do. Poor children in America are covered by what's called Medicaid. We spend about—this year—about \$35.5 billion on poor children's health insurance. So the first point I want to make to you is, a lot of your money is being spent to make sure poor children get help, medical help.

In other words, when they say, “Well, poor children aren't being covered in

America,” if that's what you're hearing on your TV screens, I'm telling you there's \$35.5 billion worth of reasons not to believe that. And by the way, that Medicaid expenditures only accounts for children of the poor; it doesn't account for the mothers and fathers. So a lot of your money does go to help poor families with health insurance.

The SCHIP program was supposed to help those poor families, the children of poor families have the ability to get health insurance for their children. I strongly support the program. I like the idea of helping those who are poor be able to get health coverage for their children. I supported it as Governor, and I support it as President of the United States.

As a matter of fact, my budget—the budget request I put in said, let's increase the spending to make sure that the program does what it's supposed to do: sign up poor children for SCHIP. The problem is, is that the current program—and by the way, there's about half a million children who are eligible who aren't signed up. So I said, why don't we focus on the poor children rather than expand the program beyond its initial intent.

I want to tell you a startling statistic, that based on their own States' projections—in other words, this isn't a Federal projection, it's the States saying this is what's happening—States like New Jersey, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Illinois, and New Mexico spend more money on adults in the SCHIP program than they do on children. In other words, the initial intent of the program is not being recognized, is not being met.

It is estimated by—well, here's the thing, just so you know: This program expands coverage, Federal coverage, up to families earning \$83,000 a year. That doesn't sound poor to me. The intent of the program was to focus on poor children, not adults or families earning up to \$83,000 a year. It is estimated that if this program were

to become law, one out of every three person that would subscribe to the new expanded SCHIP would leave private insurance.

The policies of the Government ought to be, help poor children and to focus on poor children. And the policies of the Government ought to be, help people find private insurance, not Federal coverage. And that's where the philosophical divide comes in. I happen to believe that what you're seeing when you expand eligibility for Federal programs is the desire by some in Washington, DC, to federalize health care. I don't think that's good for the country. I believe in private medicine. I believe in helping poor people, which was the intent of SCHIP, now being expanded beyond its initial intent. I also believe that the Federal Government should make it easier for people to afford private insurance. I don't want the Federal Government making decisions for doctors and customers.

That's why I believe strongly in health savings accounts or association health plans to help small-business owners better afford insurance for their workers. That's why I believe we ought to change the Federal Tax Code. You're disadvantaged if you work for a small business and/or an individual trying to buy insurance in the marketplace—disadvantaged relative to somebody working for a large company. If you work for a large company, you get your health insurance after tax. If you buy insurance, you have to pay—no, you buy your insurance after taxes as an individual; you get your insurance pretax when you're working for a large corporation. You're at a disadvantage if you're an individual in the marketplace.

So I think we ought to change the Tax Code. My view is, is that every family ought to get a \$15,000 deduction off their income taxes, regardless of where they work, in order to help people better afford insurance in the marketplace.

So I wanted to share with you why I vetoed the bill this morning. Poor kids,

first; secondly, I believe in private medicine, not the Federal Government running the health care system. I do want Republicans and Democrats to come together to support a bill that focuses on the poor children. I'm more than willing to work with Members of both parties from both Houses, and if they need a little more money in the bill to help us meet the objective of getting help for poor children, I'm more than willing to sit down with the leaders and find a way to do so.

So thanks for giving me a chance to discuss one of the many decisions I make as your President. Decisionmaking is—requires a couple of things—and then I'll answer some questions—one, having a vision, having a set of beliefs, set of principles by which one makes decisions. You know, if you're constantly trying to make decisions based upon the latest poll or focus group, your decisionmaking will be erratic. You got to have a core set of beliefs. I believe you spend your money better than the government spends. I believe that the system works better when there's more money in your hands.

And foreign policy—I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe that a gift—[applause]—I believe there's an Almighty, and I believe a gift of the Almighty to each man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth is freedom. That's what I believe. And I believe it's in the interests of the United States of America to help people become free. That's how you yield the peace we all want. We want people to live in free societies.

And if you believe in the universality of freedom, it's in the interest of this country to act. That doesn't mean military operations. But it does mean, for example, relieving suffering. I also believe in the admonition, to whom much is given, much is required. A lot has been given to the United States. I believe it's in our interests to help relieve needless deaths when it comes to mosquito bites around the world. I believe it's in our interests to help relieve

the suffering of HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa. It's in our interests to do so. It's part of the belief system that says, you know, that we have obligations and duties to ourself.

No, by relieving suffering overseas, not only do you lift the moral sights of our country, but it recognizes the reality of the world in which we live. When there's despondency, despair, and hopelessness overseas, it can affect the security of the United States of America. And so I—what I'm telling you is that I made a lot of decisions when it comes to your security and the peace of the world. And I did so based upon certain fundamental principles.

Secondly, it's important to delegate. There's a lot of action in Washington, DC, believe me, and I've got a lot of decisions to make. And so I delegate to good people. I always tell Condi Rice, "I want to remind you, Madam Secretary, who has the Ph.D., and who was the C student." [Laughter] "And I want to remind you who the adviser is and who the President is." [Laughter] I got a lot of Ph.D. types and smart people around me who come into the Oval Office and say, "Mr. President, here's what's on my mind." And I listen carefully to their advice. But having gathered the device, I decide; you know, I say, "This is what we're going to do." And it's "Yes, sir, Mr. President." And then we get after it, implement policy.

It's a joy to be your President. It's not only an honor, it's a joy, because I truly believe the decisions I am making will yield the peace we want and the prosperity that we all desire. So now I'll be glad to answer some questions from you if you got any. If not, I can keep on blowing hot air until the time—[laughter]—until the time runs out.

Yes, sir.

President's Decisionmaking/Progress in Iraq

Q. [Inaudible]—follow opinion polls. You don't govern by opinion polls. And I really respect that—[inaudible].

The President. Okay, thank you, sir. Yes, those same polls will tell you that they're worried about catastrophe in the Middle East affecting the security of the United States. In other words, you pretty well—look, I'm not going to argue polls with you, but I will tell you this, sir: First of all, if we have a troop in harm's way, they're going to have the best—they're going to have what's necessary to—so they can do their job.

And secondly, we are bringing troops home. General David Petraeus announced that he wasn't going to replace 2,200 marines that were in Anbar Province, and the reason why he didn't feel like he needed to replace them is because they were successful. They had done their job. Reconciliation is taking place. Normal people are beginning to step forward and say, "We want to live in peace." Al Qaida, that thought they were going to have Anbar as a safe haven, has been rejected by the local populace. And he believes, as do the Iraqis, that we can maintain security without 2,200 troops.

We're going to bring another brigade home by Christmas. So that's 5,700 troop reduction. General Petraeus, in his testimony, recommended to me—a recommendation I accepted—that we can get down to 15 brigades by July. That's 20 from 15.

And the reason I tell you this, sir, is, I want to make a couple of points. One, if I didn't think the mission was necessary for our security, I wouldn't have our troops there. Secondly, if I didn't think we could succeed, I wouldn't have our troops there. I cannot look in the eye of a mother or father whose son or daughter is in combat and not believe that we can succeed, and it's necessary.

Secondly, I believe that it is very important for the Commander in Chief to take the advice of his military commanders very seriously. In my position, sir, I don't want our troops feeling like I'm making decisions based upon politics when their lives are

at risk. I want our troops feeling—knowing that I’m making decisions on the considered judgment of our military, all aimed at accomplishing an objective, which is for a country in the heart of the Middle East to be able to govern, sustain itself, and serve as an ally against these extremists and radicals.

Let me give you my world view on this. Like you, I’d like them home. I really do. But my decisions have been based on my—or at least my belief that what we’re seeing is one of the—a great ideological struggle between forces of rational behavior, decent people, lovers of liberty, versus radicals who have a belief system, and they’re willing to murder the innocent to achieve—to advance their objectives. That’s how I view it. I don’t think you’re a religious person if you murder the innocent to achieve political objectives. I think you’re a person who is manipulative and cynical and willing to kill in the name of religion; I don’t think you’re religious.

Secondly, a lot of my decisionmaking has been influenced by what happened on September the 11th, 2001. I vowed that day that I would do everything in my ability to protect you, and that I would—I wouldn’t tire—I can’t remember my exact words, but I would stay on the job. And that’s exactly what I have been doing.

On the one hand, we’re pursuing radicals and extremists through sharing of intelligence and through special operations and through working alliances to bring them to justice before they come and kill again. And I would remind you that the people that have sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden in Iraq wanted Anbar Province as a safe haven from which to launch further attacks on the United States. And one of the great successes of this conflict has not only been to liberate 25 million people from the clutches of a brutal tyrant but to make sure that Anbar Province wasn’t a safe haven for those who swore allegiance to Usama bin Laden.

But in the long run, the way to defeat ideological people is with a better ideology. And there’s no better ideology than one based upon liberty. If you believe in the universality of liberty, then it shouldn’t surprise you when 12 million people in Iraq went to the polls. They said, we’ve been given a chance to express our individual desires. And they went to the polls to vote.

We have been through these kind of conflicts in our history. We went through the conflict against communism and fascism. These wars play out differently. This war is really hard for the American people to understand because the enemy uses asymmetrical warfare. They use hundred-dollar weapons to destroy half-a-million-dollar vehicles, which has got to, as a taxpayer, concern you. I understand that. I understand it.

But the struggle is just as intense today as it was in the forties and the fifties. I must have told this story hundreds of times, that one of the most amazing aspects of my Presidency was my relationship with the Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi. What’s amazing about it is that when my dad was 18, he signed up to fight the Japanese; they were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. Thousands of people died in that conflict. They attacked America, the last time we were attacked, by the way, prior to September the 11th was Pearl Harbor. And 60 years later, I’m sitting at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan talking about peace, talking about how to help young democracies thrive in this ideological struggle, both of us knowing full well that the ultimate defeat of extremism, in the name of an ideology that is dark, is freedom—is the light of freedom. And the amazing thing is, is that what happened was that Japan’s form of government changed.

Liberty is transformative. Our one-time enemy is at the table talking about peace. And the same thing is going to happen in the Middle East. And it’s going to be tough to get there, and it’s hard work. But

you—I've got faith in the transformative power of liberty. I believe that people want to be free. I believe a gift of the Almighty to each man, woman, and child is freedom. And I believe, when given the chance, people want to be free. And I firmly believe freedom leads—yields the peace we want.

And so, sir, to answer your question, it's important we succeed, and it's important we support our troops. Thank you.

Yes, sir. I appreciate the question. Yes, they'll get it for you. I'm not going to read it right now. Go ahead.

Agriculture/Alternative Fuel Sources/Energy

Q. Thank you. Hello. First, I appreciate you being here and being in this kind of forum to answer questions.

The President. Thank you.

Q. It helps me to have a better understanding of you as a person—

The President. I hope so.

Q. —so thank you very much. Thanks. I have two questions, if I could. One is, can you talk about the farm bill and how it's going to help local farmers in this area? And then would you also talk about global warming and how the U.S. is being a leader in a worldwide effort to combat global warming? Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Thanks, great question. First, on the farm bill—I believe it's in the interest of local farmers to have markets available to them. In other words, a core principle of any good farm policy is for the administration to work to open up markets. If you're good at something—and we're really good at farming—we want to be in a position to sell that which you grow, overseas.

Secondly, I believe very strongly that programs that encourage overproduction are programs that need to be seriously evaluated. In other words, I'd rather you selling into existing markets than producing where there be no market. In other words, it's a combination—look, I'm a safety net person for farmers. I just want to make sure

the safety net is a actual safety net, not a incentive for overproduction.

Thirdly, I strongly believe in the conservation title inherent in the farm bill, the last farm bill. This is a CRP program which says to farmers, look, we want to help you set aside part of your land that may not be good for farming, but would be good for habitat, soil conversation. It's really one of the—I think one of the great accomplishments of this administration is to work with the farm community to have an advanced CRP program.

And that's kind of the inherent principles. The marketplace has worked for farmers. I also believe—this is going to answer your global warming question as well—it's in the Nation's interest to diversify away from hydrocarbons. Probably comes as a shock to you from a guy from Texas saying that. But it's—dependence on oil creates national security issues. There's too many people who have got oil that may not like us.

Secondly, we import about 60 percent of our oil from overseas—fortunately, most of it from—a lot of it from Canada and Mexico. But it doesn't take much to disrupt an oil market, and therefore, we got an economic issue when it comes to dependency on oil. One terrorist attack on a major oil facility could cause the world price of oil to go up. There are new big consumers of hydrocarbons in the marketplace. China and India, as they're growing their economies, are creating additional demand relative to supply. And therefore, the price of gasoline goes up here in Lancaster County as these economies grow. And finally, dependency upon oil creates an environmental issue.

And so therefore, one of the strategies that we're putting in place is—and this happens to be beneficial for farmers—is, why don't we grow our way out of dependency on oil? Why don't we use, initially, corn as the feedstock for an ethanol industry that has gone from about a billion gallons

a year when I first became President to over 6 billion gallons a year?

In other words—and so what I'm beginning to tell you is—what I am—not beginning, what I am telling you is that we have a comprehensive strategy to deal with energy security and environmental quality at the same time. And the interesting dynamic that has taken place in the environmental debate is the two issues have now come front and center at the same time. In other words, you can solve one, you can solve the other.

Now, in terms of the environment, my—I gave a speech the other day in front of the major economies of the world. And the reason I asked the major economies of the world to come to the table is because there is no solution for global warming unless all the major economies, or the growing economies of the world come to the table. You can't have a—one of the reasons I was against Kyoto was not because I'm not—don't support, you know, good quality environmental policy. I didn't think it made sense to have policy that didn't include all the major economies, like China.

And so why don't we try this approach—why don't we make sure that China comes to the table on this issue? And step one is, we'll sit around the table and agree on a common goal about what the reductions of greenhouse gases ought to be over the first half of the next century. Because if you can get somebody to sign on to a goal, you then get somebody to recognize there's a problem and then obligate them to come up with a solution. So that's part of the strategy.

Here at home there are three aspects of our economy that affect greenhouse gases. First, automobiles—and I just described to you the policy that I think is good to address our reliance upon oil, which also affects that aspect of our economy that—where there's a lot of emissions, and that's the automobiles. We can't rely upon corn forever for ethanol. There are

a lot of hog growers and cattle growers around that get a little nervous when the price of corn is going up the way it is. And so your Government is spending a fair amount of money, of your money, to research cellulosic ethanol. And that's a fancy word for using corn chips or switchgrass to be able to be the feedstock for new ethanol production.

And smart people tell me we're pretty close. So someday it's very conceivable that the farmers around here are going to be growing switchgrass. And then you become energy producers. Or you can imagine if we can use wood chips as a source to be able to produce ethanol; then all of a sudden, you got a lot of the places that grow pine trees become a part of the energy mix. It's very conceivable that we can reduce our energy, our gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years. As a matter of fact, I've asked Congress to put that into law, not as a voluntary standard, but a mandatory standard.

Secondly, electricity—and so, you know, the real question on this environmental issue is, can we have policies in place that enable us to grow our economies and, at the same time, protect the environment? And technology will enable us to do that. That was the other message I talked about at this conference. You don't have to shut down your economy in order to protect the environment.

Technology will enable us, for example, to generate electricity from coal, but have zero emissions. That's where we're headed. So we're spending a couple of billion dollars of your money on clean coal technology. The dream is to have a coal-fired plant that produces zero emissions. And the smart people tell me that's coming.

And by the way, on automobiles, just—you got me stuck on something I'm interested in: automobiles. You're going to be driving your car with a battery, and so the first 40 miles—this is going to be helpful for urban dwellers—the first 40 miles will be driven on a battery charge. I feel like

it's coming pretty quick. And your deal doesn't have to look like a golf cart, you know; it's going to look like a car—[*laughter*]*—*or a pickup truck, you can drive a pickup truck. [*Laughter*] Well, they drive them in Texas. [*Laughter*] You get your first 40 miles—I'm not quite through. And it's a long answer, I'm sorry. It's called filibustering. [*Laughter*]

The other thing is, is that we got to promote nuclear power. I am convinced that the plant designs today are safe. I know we have got to do research on how to burn down the spent fuel in order to make people comfortable that we can deal with the waste in a smart way. If you're an environmentalist and concerned about greenhouse gases, you got to be for nuclear power. Nuclear power enables the developed world and the developing world to generate, get a—get cheap electricity without one iota of greenhouse gases.

And so we're talking to countries like China and India about a help—how to help them develop a civilian nuclear power industry. And so the question that's got to be on your mind—I'm certain it is—"How they going to get the fuel? Do you really want a lot of people enriching?" Well, there's a Nuclear Suppliers Group that does produce fuel; we're one of them. And so my vision is, if you want to have your nuclear powerplant, fine. The Nuclear Suppliers Group will provide you the fuel and will collect the spent fuel. And hopefully, as this new technology comes, we'll reprocess the spent fuel in a way that reduces the amount of spent fuel and the toxicity of the fuel.

And finally, there's—the third aspect of greenhouse gases here at home is how do you—you've got to build your buildings better, and building codes matter when it comes to the construction of buildings. And so there's the three-part strategy. Then the question is, who develops the strategy for each country? Well, my attitude is, we can develop our own strategy. See, we'll set the goal, work with other nations to set

the goal, and we'll develop a strategy. We'll develop a strategy that meets the needs of the American economy. We'll develop a strategy that the American people are comfortable with, all aiming to achieve the international goal.

And anyway, it's a great question. I appreciate you asking it.

Yes, little guy, you got one?

Border Security/Immigration Reform

Q. Do you have any further plans on preventing illegal immigration?

The President. Illegal immigration? Yes, I do. He said, do I have any plans to prevent illegal—further plans. One is to double the Border Patrol. Two is to modernize the border. You know—I know you've haven't ever been down there—or maybe you have. I used to live close to the border, and it is an expansive territory, and it's hard to enforce. And you can't have a Border Patrol agent every quarter-mile. You've got to have infrastructure, as well, to leverage the presence of Border Patrol.

And so we're modernizing it. We're getting some fencing and some automobile routes—you get on the Arizona border; you can't tell what's border and what's not border. I mean, it's just desert. But we're beginning to clearly define the border, and we're beginning to have much more effective enforcement on the border.

The second aspect of the immigration policy that discouraged a lot of our Border Patrol and frankly discouraged a lot of Americans and made them believe that the Government wasn't serious about enforcing the border is, oftentimes, we would find somebody trying to sneak into our country illegally and then release them. And the old policy was, check back in with your immigration court. The problem is, they weren't interested in checking back in with the immigration court; they were interested in working. And so it was called catch-and-release. We've ended that.

One of the things we did with the Congress over the last couple of years is increase the number of detention facilities and beds. So somebody gets caught sneaking into our country illegally will be held in detention, particularly if they're from a Central American country, for example. And they're being shipped home now, which sends a message back to Central America that it's not a free ride anymore. In other words, there is a cost of trying to come into the country.

Thirdly, so it's modernization, increased manpower, and better policy in terms of enforcing law.

Now, I'm going to tell you my position on this, just so you know loud and clear. I don't think you can fully enforce the border like Americans expect unless you recognize that people are willing to do whatever it takes to sneak in here to do jobs Americans aren't willing to do. And therefore, I believe, as an integral part of border security, that we say to somebody, "You can come here on a temporary basis to pick peaches or to work in a chicken factory." In other words, there's a lot of jobs Americans aren't willing to do, but somebody else is willing to do it because they want to put food on the table for their families. And until we have a rational, temporary guest-worker program, people are going to sneak in.

I used to remind people, family values don't stop at the Rio Grande River. You got people who are worried about putting food on the table and are willing to get in the bottom of an 18-wheeler in 100-degree temperature because they're going to come and do a job many Americans don't want to do. And so I fully believe that if you want to enforce the border and be humane, have a temporary-worker program. Give people a chance to come with a tamper-proof ID card that says, you going to come for a limited period of time to do a job that somebody else isn't doing.

That, by the way, relieves the pressure off the employers. If you're a small-business

owner—[*applause*]*—*well, there's somebody who's worried about it. If you're running a nursery here in Lancaster County and somebody shows up to work, you're not in much of a position to determine whether or not that Social Security card somebody gives you is forged or not. And believe me, there is a whole forgery network around this immigration issue, just like there's a whole smuggling network around this immigration issue.

And so it's—anyway, I put up an idea, and we tried to get it through Congress; it didn't work. And so in the meantime, however, this border security initiative is still going on down there on the border. I'm constantly in touch with the person in charge. I said, "Here's what you said you're going to do, are you're doing it?" That's one of the jobs of the President, is to hold people to account. I'm interested in results. I said, "You're going to come in and check in with me on a regular basis to show me what's happening." And it's amazing what happens—I'm sure you do this in your businesses; you say, "You show up and give me an accounting of what's taken place." Well, the same thing works in government. And so I'm watching carefully, and we're implementing the will of the United States Congress on the border security.

Yes, sir.

Federal Utilities

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Thank you.

Q. Recently, the Federal Government implemented the National Electric Transmission Corridors Project, whereby the Federal Government can step in and not only identify corridors where we need to increase transmission capabilities along the east coast or the west coast, for example, but oversee, if you will, what the State says. In other words, if a State is holding up the project, the Federal Government can come in and say, "No, this is where it's going to go, and this is how we're going

to do that.” Recently, when the Federal Government has identified some of these corridors, the States’ Governors have come out against some of these corridors because they don’t want to lose control. I’m just wondering what your opinion is on that.

The President. It’s a—the issue, as well as whether or not the Federal Government has the right of eminent domain to put certain Federal systems in place over the objections of State and landowners—and I support it on a limited basis, so long as it achieves a national objective. And I think having modern communications and electricity wires is in the national interest.

Yes, ma’am.

Federal Support for Private Food Bank Programs

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Well, you raised your hand. [Laughter] You didn’t mean it? You want a little chance to collect the thoughts, you know? I mean, we’re talking national TV here, you know? [Laughter]

Q. I actually wrote it down so I wouldn’t get flustered.

The President. Yes, it didn’t work. Yes. [Laughter] It’s just the President.

Q. Exactly. Thank you for picking me. I work for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. And in the last two of your budgets, you have attempted to eliminate the commodity supplemental food programs. It’s okay. We can talk about that.

The President. Yes. [Laughter]

Q. Now, with—

The President. I did? Anyway—[laughter].

Q. Yes, sir, you did.

The President. I’m going to call the man responsible right when I get home. Anyway, go ahead.

Q. Your Secretary of Agriculture came to visit us, and we asked him about it too.

The President. And what did he say?

Q. Not a lot. [Laughter]

The President. Why did you ask that question? [Laughter] Anyway.

Q. With a half a million seniors who rely on this food—and the food stamp benefit for seniors who live in poverty isn’t—it comes nowhere near this benefit that they receive—how do we make sure that our seniors have the food that they need?

The President. Yes.

Q. And what I would say is, you know, I mean, I just want to make this program for my food bank.

The President. Well, where do you get most of your food from in the food bank? Private donations, right?

Q. Well, we’re fortunate, yes.

The President. Yes. That’s the way it ought to be. Food banks ought to be supported through the generosity of individuals. And—anyway, keep going. So the program that we’re—

Q. But I mean, for the supplemental—commodity supplemental food program, there’s nothing to replace it with. Food stamps aren’t going to work, and we’re talking about folks who live in poverty—elderly folks who live in poverty.

The President. Right.

Q. They already made all the mistakes, which they can’t fix—

The President. Yes, look, if somebody is poor, we want to help them.

Q. Exactly.

The President. And the fundamental question is, what’s the proper balance between Federal help and private help? And when it comes to food banks, look, I don’t know the program. Maybe I shouldn’t make this admission; maybe I should try to bull my way through. I don’t know the program; I’m sorry. I’ll be glad to look into it. But just from a philosophical perspective, one of the wonderful things about the country is, when there’s a need, the average citizen steps up and helps fills the need through private charity. And your program, I suspect, really functions well because the food bank is a dear cause for people. People say, “How can I love my neighbor?” Well, one way to love your neighbor is the food bank.

And the truth of the matter is, I suspect that if seniors are suffering here in Lancaster County and you put out the call, people are going to help. And so I would—I will get your budget—yes, leave your name. I'll get your budget question answered, because you'll be maybe surprised, not surprised—I don't know all the budget lines. [Laughter] I tend to try to have the big picture. But it's big picture for you, and I understand it. Thank you for your question. I will seriously find out for you.

Yes, ma'am.

Middle East/War on Terror/Spread of Democracy

Q. Thank you very much. It's truly an honor to have a President come to our county.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I just wanted to ask you specifically, relating to Israel and Palestine, what, in your opinion, will it really take to ever have peace? And is it that really possible?

The President. That's a great question. What will it take to have peace in the Middle East? And first, it'll take a firm rejection of extremism and a rejection of people who use terror as a weapon to achieve their political objectives. This ideological struggle that I just described to you is taking place throughout the entire Middle East.

Secondly, I believe that in order for there to be peace, there needs to be a Palestinian democracy committed to living side by side with an Israeli democracy in peace. And so I've advanced this vision. First of all, I believe it can happen. There's nothing worse than a leader saying, "I don't think it's going to happen, but we'll try." I do believe it can happen. I do believe there can be peace. I understand how difficult it is because there are people who can't stand the thought of a democracy in their midst, because they have a different vision of government. This is what you're seeing playing out in Iraq. This is what is playing out in Afghanistan. Isn't it amazing that two of the youngest democracies

on the face of the Earth are being challenged by murderers and terrorists? They have a different vision of government.

Thirdly, this is being played out in Lebanon. A struggling democracy is having to deal with extremist groups funded by parties in the region that worry about the advent of democracy. And so my strategy has always been to lay out a vision that I believe can work, and work toward that vision. And so we're doing that in the Middle East.

Now, first, in order for there to be peace in the Middle East, there has to be a commitment by the leaders of the parties to work toward two democracies living side by side in peace. The United States can't impose a solution. We can't make the leader of a democracy—force the leader of a democracy to make a decision that is not in the interest of the people of that democracy. So one of the interesting breakthroughs has been that the Israelis have come to believe, and rightly so, that it's in their long-term interest that we work toward a Palestinian democracy. Otherwise, the demographics will overwhelm the Israeli democracy.

And so the leadership—this isn't—they didn't say, "Hey, good idea, let's have Palestinian democracy," because I said it. They have said this because it's in their interest. And so does their—President Abbas believe it's important and necessary. But the problem is, is that we have got to do two things. One, we've got to make this hope real for the Palestinians. In other words, they've heard a lot of rhetoric, but they really haven't seen a state begun to emerge from the rhetoric. So there's got to be hope.

And so one of the things Condi and I are working on is to see if we can't get the two parties to agree on what a state would look like so that the average Palestinian says, "Wait a minute. I'm sick and tired of this violence; I'm not going to support those who espouse radicalism and violence in order to achieve an objective, because here's a different vision." And in the

meantime, we're trying to help this Palestinian democracy have the institutions in place—a security institution, an economic institution, an actual functioning government—that will inspire not only their own people but inspire the Israelis to eventually trust their judgment that a Palestinian state on her border will yield the peace. And it's hard—it can happen.

But we have to be firm in our rejection of extremists and radicals. And what happens in Iraq, for example, matters in the Palestinian Territory. What happens in Lebanon matters around the Middle East. And the truth of the matter is, Iran is using Hizballah in Lebanon and is worried about democracy in the Middle East—can't stand the thought of a democratic government on our border—is creating issues of peace.

And one of the reasons I answered the man's question the way I did about the need to succeed is because there would be nothing worse for world peace if the Iranians believed that the United States didn't have the will and commitment to help young democracies survive; that if we left before the job was done, there would be chaos. Chaos would embolden not only the extremists and radicals who would like to do us harm, but it would also embolden Iran. And what you don't want is somebody—is to have a nuclear arms race taking place in the Middle East.

And so our objective with Iran is to peacefully deal with the issue and convince the Iranians to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions for the sake of peace. And that requires more than one voice speaking to them. It requires the international community understanding the stakes of what a nuclear-armed Iran could mean. I'm kind of getting out of the lane here on the question, but anyway, I wanted to share this with you.

All of these democracy movements and freedom movements are related to the larger issues that you're reading about in your newspapers. The Iranian issue, the Iraqi issue, they're all interrelated. And that's

why it's really important for the United States to stay engaged and to promote democracy for the sake of peace.

See, 50 years—the time between when my dad fought and Koizumi came into the office, 50 years is really—or 60 years is not all that long—unless, of course, you're 59. [Laughter] But anyway, it's just not all that long. And I've told people, this is the first chapter of freedom's march in the 21st century, against these radical ideologues. It's the first chapter. We're in for an ideological struggle that's going to take awhile.

And my commitment is, let's make sure that first chapter that's written is one that'll yield the peace we want. Let's make certain when we look back at this generation that they say, "They didn't shirk their duty; they did the hard work so future children can live in peace." And it's difficult. It's a difficult work. It's hard to do the hard things now. And so—and the American people are—you know, they don't like war. He's got to know, I don't like it either. But I also understand the challenges.

And anyway, there's a part of an answer for a strategy that I believe is going to work. I really do.

Yes.

Education

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. A college education, if you're a poor student, you just got to—you got help because I signed a bill that increased the amount and size of Pell grants. I believe strongly that Pell grants is one good way of helping families afford higher education. I believe in tax incentives to help families save for higher education. I believe in student loans to help families afford higher education.

My view is this, that if you work hard and you want to go to college, you can find all the help you want. Now, some people don't like repaying loans, but that's part of life. If we can borrow some of your money—if somebody's going to borrow some of your money, they ought to repay

your money. No, I think if you really look hard, you'll find there's a lot of help.

The best thing we can do, by the way, to make sure that higher education is relevant—this isn't exactly your question—but to make sure it works in America is to make sure our children can read and write and add and subtract. And I want to spend a little time talking to you about a subject that may be controversial for some. It's called the No Child Left Behind law. See, it's an old trick: You talk about education, I segue into something I want to talk about. [Laughter]

Here's the law. As Governor of Texas, I was deeply concerned about schools in my State that were simply moving children through the system without being able to tell parents or officials or taxpayers whether or not that child could meet standards. And so what ended up happening is, is that I would go to a school, and they'd say, "Well, we've inherited kids who can't read"—from the elementary school, for example. So I decided to try to do something about it. And step one was to say, if you're going to take our money, taxpayers' money, you need to measure. There needs to be a standard. You need to show us whether or not, for example, children are reading at grade level by the third grade.

And I took this—and the standards started improving education results. I mean, we actually—using the word "result" wasn't something that we could use before we measured. We were guessing. Now we're measuring in our State.

And so I took this attitude to Washington, DC. We're spending a lot of your money on poor kids in Federal education, which I support. But I don't support the notion of not knowing whether or not that child can read. And so therefore, we said, "You design the tests." In other words, I said, "You design the tests, not the Federal Government." I believe in local control of schools, but I just believe in strong accountability. I believe in saying to a school district, "You better get it right, and you're

going to measure to show us whether or not you're getting it right." And I also believe that in early grades, when we find somebody who can't read up to grade level, we ought to spend additional money to help that child get up to speed now, before it's too late.

And so the No Child Left Behind Act says, we trust you to run your schools the way you want to run them, but you show us whether or not a child can read, write, and add and subtract. Guess what happens generally in some of the schools—in my State, at least, they used to—guess who was penalized by a system that didn't measure? African American inner-city kids, you know, they're hard to educate; let's just move them through. That's unacceptable to America. And it was certainly unacceptable to me as Governor and me as President. I believe every child can learn, and I expect schools to teach every child how to learn.

And so to answer your question on college, you can find help to go to college; you sure can. But my advice is doing what I'm sure you're doing, which is studying hard now so that college is relevant to you later. And so I thank you for your question.

Yes, sir.

Presidential Election/President's Family

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, I will.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. I'll veto it. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, I have a lot of respect for the job you do—

The President. Why don't you just leave her right there, then? [Laughter]

Q. After saying you're still having fun, I have even more respect for you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. But my question is a little bit lighter, I guess. Two things: One, are you able at this point to support any of the Presidential candidates coming up?

The President. No.

Q. All right. [Laughter] Then my next question—I have recently watched the

interviews with your daughters, and you have to be very proud of them.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I'm proud of my daughter. My question is, would you rather see your daughters go into business or politics?

The President. I'd rather them do whatever they want to do. And I—what I want them to do is, I want them to understand that when they can—when they love a neighbor or when they help somebody in need, that they're really helping themselves. I want them to understand there is a certain responsibility in our society to reach out. So when Jenna told me she's a school teacher, I was very proud of that. Or when Barbara went down and worked in a AIDS—pediatric AIDS clinic in South Africa, I was very proud of that.

And, yes, I love my daughters. And one of the hardest things I've done is, I've put them in the spotlight. And that was—I really wrestled with the decision to run for President because, of all the candidates, I understand what it means to be a son or a daughter of a President.

And so it's been a blessing to see them grow up. And I'm real proud of them.

Yes. No, you're second.

Immigration Reform

Q. Mr. President, it's a pleasure to have you here. My question, it brings the immigration issue a little closer to home. Recently, the mayor of Hazleton came to Lancaster City and spoke about his views regarding penalties for landlords and others who support illegal immigrants. The city of Lancaster passed an ordinance that rejected that sort of thinking. I'd like your thoughts about that position, please.

The President. I think that—one of the reasons I was strongly in favor of comprehensive immigration reform is so that would preempt local governments from taking a variety of actions which creates a confusing mosaic around the country. Obviously, you know, State, local governments can do what they want to do. But I believe

the reason they feel like they need to do that is because the Federal Government hasn't acted with a comprehensive immigration reform bill. And one of the consequences of the Federal Government not being able to act in a focused, concerted way is that people felt obligated to respond locally.

And so Congress needs to—you know, I don't know whether they're going to bring the issue up again. I was deeply disappointed that we couldn't get the bill going. I really felt like a comprehensive bill would, as I say, prevent this notion of city governments responding to immigration in a variety of different ways. Same thing is happening in Texas, in some places. And so it's a—anyway, we'll keep trying to get it done. I'm going to tell you something: The country needs to address this thing in a comprehensive fashion.

Yes, sir. Oh, I'm sorry, ma'am. When you're getting over 60, sometimes your mind slips. [*Laughter*]

War on Terror/Progress in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, my question is, are you disappointed in Americans condemning the Iraqi war now, since—

The President. Do what now?

Q. I said, are you disappointed in the Americans that condemn the Iraqi war now, since after—right after 9/11 it seemed like we were all ready to go to war over it?

The President. I'm not—listen, people don't like war. I'm not disappointed in America at all. I love America. And I fully understand, you know, that people just are anxious about seeing death on their TV screens. I also understand that, you know, the enemy understands that. And so these spectacular bombings of innocent people are meant to achieve a couple of objectives: one, shake the will of those inside Iraq or wherever they kill—Afghanistan, Indonesia, the Philippines—all aiming to disquiet societies that live under the democracy. But they're also smart people. They

know that these spectaculars will get on our TV screens.

And they understand the goodness of America. They may not view this as a strong characteristic of our society, which is that we respect human rights and human dignity and human life, and that may be viewed as a weakness in their perspective. But for me, it's a strength. And they know that we'll recoil from these kinds of deaths. And so it's a—I'm not surprised, ma'am, that this war has created anxiety in our society. You know, like everybody else, I wish it would, you know, be over. But I want it over having accomplished our objectives, which is, as I told you, to write a solid chapter in this long ideological struggle so that 50 years from now, when people look at the decisionmaking, they say, "Now I understand where he's coming from, and it was worth the sacrifice—which is peace."

We live in a society, in a way, where things—people have expectations that things ought to happen quite quickly. To come from a tyrannical society that really didn't know the habits of democracy and be given the challenge and the responsibility of governing a democracy is hard work. And I'm not making any excuses, but I'm telling you, it's hard. There's no basis for which these folks inside Iraq have governed, except for somebody else's experience, not their own experiences. And I talk to these leaders a lot. And the first thing I'm looking for in them is courage—do they have the courage necessary to stand up in the face of these attacks by extremists; do they have the capacity to reach out to each other? You know?

And what's happening in Iraq is that as security has improved at the local level, local folks just—average citizens stand up and say, "We want more." It is wrong to assume that the average mom in Iraq is willing to accept violence. The average mom in Iraq wants what you want, which is your child growing up in peace. The average child—mom in Iraq wants some-

thing better for her child than what was under the tyranny of Saddam Hussein.

And so it's a—what's happening there is, is as I said in my speech the other night, local politics will affect national politics; reconciliation is taking place at the local level, and people who are learning how to run a democracy are beginning to respond. And anyway, I'm not disappointed in America at all. I love America, and I really love the people.

Yes. I think that was your question, wasn't it? Okay. The answer was so long, I lost track.

What you got, buddy?

Iran/North Korea

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Okay, I'll ask you a question. What grade are you in?

Q. I'm in 10th grade.

The President. Tenth, fabulous. Yes.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Atta boy. [Laughter]

Q. What I would like you to help me understand is, why you consider that—[inaudible]—refuse to negotiate directly with—[inaudible].

The President. Appreciate that.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Great question. He says, why won't I sit down with the Iranian leaders, why won't there be direct negotiations with Iran? In order for diplomacy to work, the other side needs as much or more from you as you need from them. We have started negotiations with a leader and a form of government we don't agree with, called North Korea.

And let me give you this case study. I was concerned about the North Korean weapons programs. I was concerned that they didn't honor agreements from the past, and so therefore, I said, we're not going to continue the bilateral negotiations that I inherited, because I felt very strongly that those negotiations were nonconsequential. In other words, there was no consequence if somebody decided to just go

ahead and ignore what we'd agreed to. Negotiations just for the sake of negotiations oftentimes send wrong signals. Negotiations to achieve consequences are worth doing.

And so my first objective was to put the negotiation—discussion, potential discussions in the position that if Kim Jong Il decided to say one thing and do another, there would be some consequences. And the most consequential move would be that people—countries in the neighborhood, such as China, would become—would try to affect North Korean policy. In other words, to get China at the table was an objective, so that when we spoke to North Korea, they would hear more than one voice, the United States. They had heard the voice of the United States for the previous 6 years and didn't honor their obligations, we felt. But maybe they would change their behavior if they heard the voice of other countries. In other words, five of us got together and said, "Here's what we expect you to do, and in return for you doing this in a verifiable way, you will end up getting this. But if you decide to make a promise and not honor that promise, then there will be consequences." We had already sanctioned North Korea, so we were pretty much nonconsequential on the diplomatic front. But China hadn't, for example.

And so step one was to try to make sure that any discussions we had were able to achieve objectives, and in this case—this example was one where we were willing to discuss it, but we want to make sure that we set it up in such a way that when it came time for North Korea to dismantle its programs, we would, one, be able to verify it, and two, we would be able to keep them at the table and keep them progressing. And that's where we are today. In other words we've—and it takes a while to get all this in place.

You know, in Iran, we're dealing with a country where the leader has said that he wants to destroy Israel. My belief is that the United States will defend our ally

Israel. This is a leader who has made very provocative statements, and we have made it clear, however, in spite of that, that we're willing to sit down with him, so long as he suspends his program, his nuclear weapons program. In other words, it's his choice, not mine anymore.

So I believe that's the best way to achieve an objective without undermining our credibility, without sending the wrong signal to people. And so it's—each case matter is different. And so if your question is, will you ever sit down with them? We've proven we would with North Korea. And the answer is, yes, just so long as we can achieve something; so long as we are able to get our objective. And I guess what I'm telling you is, it takes time to get things in place so that there will be results.

And, actually, that's a great question for a guy your age. I never would have thought of it. *[Laughter]*

Yes.

Cooperation With Congress/President's Decisionmaking

Q. *[Inaudible]*—thank you, Mr. President—*[inaudible]*—Lancaster.

The President. Okay.

Q. What do you see as your goal as leader of the country in depolarizing Congress and getting more win-wins out of Congress and less vetoes from you?

The President. Yes. You know, probably the most disappointing thing about my experience in Washington is the harshness of the discourse, is the zero-sum attitude. And I've tried to do my part by holding people with respect and to—you know, talking about people in such a way that it doesn't degrade the process. I want this little guy to look at Washington and say, "Wow, this is something I may aspire to."

First of all, I'm not so sure there's much that we can do at this point in time. The war has been divisive; I understand that. The politics is coming around the corner here in 2008, and people are going to be posturing a lot. Maybe it's—part of it's, I

guess, my stubbornness over taxes. I'm just not going to raise your taxes, I just want to make that clear. And so therefore, if the definition of "common ground" is, raise taxes, there are just some redlines for me—no, I'm not suggesting you suggested that.

I'll still try to do my best to treat people with respect. It's the best thing a President can do, it seems like to me. And the other leaders ought to be doing the same thing. If you disagree with a person, don't make it personal. Don't feel like you have to tear the other person down in order to make a political point.

And I got to go, I hate to tell you. You're paying me too much money to be sitting here talking. *[Laughter]*

I want to conclude by, one, thanking you for coming. I hope you get a better sense of why I made the decisions I make and who I am as a person. You know, it's a—oh, I don't know what people think when they're looking on the TV screen. The only thing I can do is just to tell you what's in my heart and to let you know the principles by which I decide things, my great optimism about the future. I'm an optimistic guy. And the reason I'm optimistic is because I believe in the greatness of the country, and I believe the values of America are so real.

I told somebody behind stage, this has been a joyous experience, being the President. My buddies in Texas just simply don't think I'm telling them the truth. *[Laughter]* But it is. It is a joyous experience to try to solve problems. It's a joyous experience to represent a country full of decent and honorable and caring people.

And I thank you for giving me a chance to come. And I ask for God's blessings on you and our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. at Jay Group, Inc. headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Marion McGowan, chairman, Tom Baldrige, president, and Jim Smucker, chairman-elect, Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Jay Chryst, founder, and Dana Chryst, chief executive officer, Jay Group, Inc.; Krist Blank, Amish church leader; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran. The President also referred to H.R. 976, the "Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007." An audience member referred to Mayor Louis J. Barletta of Hazleton, PA.

Statement on the Agreement Announced at the Six-Party Talks in Beijing *October 3, 2007*

I welcome the agreement announced today at the six-party talks in Beijing. Today's announcement reflects the common commitment of the participants in the six-party talks to realize a Korean Peninsula that is free of nuclear weapons.

In September 2005, we agreed on a joint statement that charted the way forward toward achieving a nuclear weapons-free peninsula. In February 2007, the participants

in the six-party talks announced a set of first steps toward implementing that agreement. Today's announcement maps out additional steps toward our ultimate goal of full and verifiable denuclearization.

Under the agreement reached today, North Korea has committed that by the end of 2007, it will provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear

programs, nuclear weapons programs, materials, and any proliferation activity. North Korea will get started on its commitment to disable all its existing nuclear facilities by disabling the core nuclear facilities at Yongbyon by the end of the year. North Korea also committed not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how beyond its borders.

The other parties—including the United States—are providing economic and energy

assistance to North Korea. Such assistance is being provided as North Korea carries out its commitments.

I commend Secretary Rice, Ambassador Hill, and our negotiating team for their hard work and dedication to this important effort, which will help secure the future peace and prosperity of the Northeast Asian region.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007” *October 3, 2007*

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 976, the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007,” because this legislation would move health care in this country in the wrong direction.

The original purpose of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was to help children whose families cannot afford private health insurance, but do not qualify for Medicaid, to get the coverage they need. My Administration strongly supports reauthorization of SCHIP. That is why I proposed last February a 20 percent increase in funding for the program over 5 years.

This bill would shift SCHIP away from its original purpose and turn it into a program that would cover children from some families of four earning almost \$83,000 a year. In addition, under this bill, government coverage would displace private health insurance for many children. If this

bill were enacted, one out of every three children moving onto government coverage would be moving from private coverage. The bill also does not fully fund all its new spending, obscuring the true cost of the bill’s expansion of SCHIP, and it raises taxes on working Americans.

Because the Congress has chosen to send me a bill that moves our health care system in the wrong direction, I must veto it. I hope we can now work together to produce a good bill that puts poorer children first, that moves adults out of a program meant for children, and that does not abandon the bipartisan tradition that marked the enactment of SCHIP. Our goal should be to move children who have no health insurance to private coverage, not to move children who already have private health insurance to government coverage.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 3, 2007.

Remarks Following Discussions With Parliament Member Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon

October 4, 2007

President Bush. It is my honor to welcome the honorable Sa'ad Hariri here to the Oval Office. Sa'ad is the majority leader in the Lebanese Parliament.

I told this courageous leader that the United States strongly supports the success of democracy in Lebanon, that we respect your country, and that we understand the obstacles that you face. First, I was very impressed by the response of the Government and Prime Minister Siniora in dealing with the extremists and radicals, impressed by his willingness to have the Lebanese forces work for security in Lebanon, and so impressed that I asked Admiral Fallon to go to Lebanon to assess how we can further help the Government and the forces protect themselves from radical elements who are willing to use violence and terror to achieve objectives.

We talked about the upcoming Presidential election, and I am deeply concerned about foreign interference in your elections. It is—the message has been sent to nations, such as Syria, that they should not interfere in the election of the President. The international community has spoken, and we expect Syria to honor those—that demand.

Sa'ad Hariri suffered incredible tragedy when his good father was assassinated, killed in Lebanon. And as a result of that coldblooded murder, the international community has demanded accountability. At that tribunal, it's taking too long to get started. The international community must work more quickly to stand up this tribunal so people will be held to account. And not only that, this tribunal will send a clear message that there will be justice delivered for not only the murder of your dad but for the murder of others that have taken place on the streets of Beirut.

You know, I admire your courage. This is a tough time.

Mr. Hariri. Thank you.

President Bush. And I appreciate the fact that you care enough about the people of Lebanon that you're willing to work hard for peace and democracy and freedom. And I reiterate what I told you, is that the United States is more than just an admirer; we want to help you as best as we possibly can.

So I welcome you here to the Oval Office.

Mr. Hariri. Thank you. I thank you, Mr. President, for the political and all the support that you have given Lebanon, from the international tribunal, from helping the security forces also in fighting those terrorists in Lebanon. Also, we in Lebanon have a very important constitutional Presidential election that we don't want any foreign interference in this Presidential election.

We've had Members of our Parliament being killed. We ask—I ask Mr. President that this action is taken by terrorists that want to finish our democracy. We will stay resolved; we will stay focused on our democracy. We will not let those who want to destroy our democracy succeed. We have paid very dear blood, from my father to Mr. Antoine Ghanem lately; we're willing to pay the price to preserve our democracy. And we shall preserve our democracy with our country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Welcome. Glad you're here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; Adm. William J. "Fox" Fallon, commander, U.S. Central Command; and former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14, 2005. Mr. Hariri referred to Parliament

Member Antoine Ghanem of Lebanon, who was assassinated on September 19.

Statement on Senator Pete V. Domenici's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

October 4, 2007

For over three decades, the citizens of New Mexico have turned to Pete Domenici for leadership on issues that matter to their families, their communities, and their country. He earned the respect and trust of his constituents, which is why they elected him to serve in the United States Senate longer than any other New Mexican in history.

A proud son of Italian immigrants, Pete has devoted much of his life to serving the State and the country that he loves. In Washington, he has won the respect of his peers as a skilled and determined legislator. He championed clean nuclear power and helped secure the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the first national energy plan in more than a decade. As

chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, he was a leader in efforts to lower taxes, balance the budget, and reduce Washington spending. And he has been a tireless advocate for our men and women in uniform. Senator Domenici has helped improve the lives of millions of Americans and made our country safer.

Pete is a man of intellect and compassion. I have valued his counsel and friendship, and I look forward to working with him as he serves out the remainder of his term.

Laura and I are grateful for Pete's service to our Nation. As he nears retirement, we pray for his health and well-being, and we send Pete, his wife, Nancy, and their family our best wishes.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Legislation

October 4, 2007

In August, I proposed a comprehensive plan to help homeowners avoid foreclosures and stay in their homes. As part of this plan, I pledged to work with Congress in a bipartisan way to temporarily reform a provision of the Federal Tax Code to make it easier for homeowners to refinance their mortgages during this time of market stress.

Today a bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives passed legislation to help people stay in their homes and move this process forward. I applaud the House's efforts. I urge the Senate to swiftly consider this legislation and make it temporary.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3648.

Remarks at the Iftaar Dinner October 4, 2007

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. *Ramadan Mubarak*. Laura and I are pleased to have you here for our seventh Iftaar dinner. Tonight we celebrate traditions of Islamic faith, which brings hope and comfort to more than a billion people. For Muslims around the world, the holy month of Ramadan is a special time of prayer and fasting. It is a time for charity and service to those less fortunate. It's a time to celebrate Islam's learned and vibrant culture, which has enriched civilization for centuries.

Ramadan is also a good time for Americans of all faiths to reflect on the values we hold in common, including love of family, gratitude to the Almighty, devotion to community, and a commitment to religious liberty. The freedom of worship is central to the American character. It's the first protection in the Bill of Rights. It holds together the fabric of American society, supporting every individual's right to practice his or her beliefs without fear.

Today, our world is at war with violent extremists who seek to tear the fabric of our society and stop the advance of freedom in Muslim societies around the world. They attack holy sites, destroy mosques and minarets, and kill innocent men, women, and children, including Muslims who do not share their radical views. They believe that by spreading chaos and violence they can frustrate the desire of Muslims to live in freedom and peace. We say to them, you don't represent Muslims, you do not represent Islam, and you will not succeed.

America is standing with mainstream citizens across the broader Middle East. We stand with nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a democratic future for their children. We're standing with Afghan people as they defend their young democracy against the Taliban and Al Qaida. We're

standing with the Lebanese people, who raised the banner of a Cedar Revolution to reclaim their freedom and independence. We're standing with all who seek the blessings of liberty and the peace that freedom brings.

Americans have a history of standing with Muslims facing suffering and hardship, and it's a proud history. Our country defended Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo after the breakup of Yugoslavia. We supported Kuwait after it was invaded by Saddam Hussein. Americans came to the aid of victims of devastating earthquakes in Pakistan, India, and Iran. Americans responded with urgency and compassion to the wreckage of the tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka and Thailand. We're rallying the world to confront the genocide in Sudan and deliver humanitarian aid for those in dire need. And we support the establishment of a Palestinian democracy to live side by side with Israel in peace.

As you break your Ramadan fast at this Iftaar dinner, let us renew our faith in the universality of freedom. Let us celebrate the millions of Muslims that we are proud to call American citizens. And let us honor the many Muslim nations that America is proud to call friends.

Laura and I are grateful you're here. Thank you for coming. We wish you a blessed Ramadan. And now I ask the Imam to say the blessing.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:16 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Cmdr. Abuhena M. Saifulislam, USN, Navy Chaplain Corps.

Interview With Elie Nakouzi of Al Arabiya October 4, 2007

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, it's nice to see you. It's nice to meet you. And how are you doing?

The President. Welcome. Come on in the Oval Office. I'm doing great. Thank you. I welcome you here. And I thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about some of the decisions that I have made right here in this Oval Office. I'm honored you've come.

President's Decisionmaking

Mr. Nakouzi. Actually, I want to tell the people of the Middle East that this is the place where big decisions are made. This is the office. But here it comes to my mind that how hard it is on you, Mr. President, to take like—a big decision like war, for example—is it that easy to take a decision such like war—

The President. No, it's the hardest decision a President can make. And when I campaigned for office, I never really thought about the decision to put men and women in harm's way. I never thought that that would happen. Circumstances changed, of course, and I had to make some very difficult decisions about how to protect our homeland and take action necessary to—the actions that, I think, will yield the peace.

And so whether it be in Afghanistan or Iraq, I was—I have made those decisions. And I will tell you, they're hard decisions, because I understand the consequences. One of the hardest things for me is to meet with a mother. I met with a mother yesterday in Pennsylvania who lost her son in combat. And you know, those can be very tearful and emotional moments, and I understand that. And my—the only thing I try to do is provide as much comfort as I can and to assure the mom, in this case, that I thought the decision was necessary for peace and necessary for our secu-

rity, and that I valued the fact that her son would volunteer, and that I vowed to honor that sacrifice by achieving our objectives.

Anyway, this is the room where I make the decisions.

War on Terror

Mr. Nakouzi. But would these moments—I mean, these emotional moments, would they make you reconsider or rethink about what's going on in our area now?

The President. Not really. As a matter of fact, I leave most of the meetings reassured that the loved one, in this case, fully understanding what we were doing. See, I believe that, one, it's noble to liberate 25 million people from a tyrant; two, that we cannot allow Iraq to be a safe haven for people who have sworn allegiance to those who have attacked us. In other words, I believe we must defeat the extremists there so we don't have to face them here at home. And three, I believe the spread of liberty will yield peace. And I believe the Middle East is plenty capable of being a part of the world where liberty flourishes. That's what I believe people want.

And so I leave those meetings saddened by the fact that a person has pain in her heart—and yesterday she had pain in her heart—but encouraged by the fact that her son died for a noble cause and a necessary cause. And that's exactly what she told me.

Islam/Religious Freedom

Mr. Nakouzi. Actually, I want to thank you again, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to talk for the first time to the Arab world, to address them with the big concerns. I know we have a great deal of questions. I know you have a very tight schedule—

The President. Sure. I want to show you the Rose Garden, one of the most famous areas——

Mr. Nakouzi. It's a great chance for me. I heard, Mr. President, also, that you are receiving an Iftaar——

The President. Yes, I am.

Mr. Nakouzi. ——in the White House, which is, of course, a Muslim ritual

The President. It is.

Mr. Nakouzi. But I want to tell you——and I hope this doesn't bother you at all——that in the Islamic world, they think that President Bush is an enemy of Islam——

The President. Sure.

Mr. Nakouzi. ——that he wants to destroy their religion, what they believe in. Is that in any way true, Mr. President?

The President. No, it's not. I've heard that, and it just shows—to show a couple of things: One, that the radicals have done a good job of propagandizing. In other words, they've spread the word that this really isn't peaceful people versus radical people or terrorists; this is really about the——America not liking Islam.

Well, first of all, I believe in an almighty God, and I believe that all the world, whether they be Muslim, Christian, or any other religion, prays to the same God. That's what I believe. I believe that Islam is a great religion that preaches peace. And I believe people who murder the innocent to achieve political objectives aren't religious people, whether they be a Christian who does that—we had a person blow up our——blow up a Federal building in Oklahoma City who professed to be a Christian. But that's not a Christian act, to kill innocent people.

Mr. Nakouzi. Exactly.

The President. And I just simply don't subscribe to the idea that murdering innocent men, women, and children——particularly Muslim men, women, and children in the Middle East——is an act of somebody who is a religious person.

We are having an Iftaar dinner tonight—I say, “we”——it's my wife and I. This is

the seventh one in the 7 years I've been the President. It gives me a chance to say *Ramadan Mubarak*. The reason I do this is, I want people to understand about my country. In other words, I hope this message gets out of America. I want people to understand that one of the great freedoms in America is the right for people to worship any way they see fit. If you're a Muslim, an agnostic, a Christian, a Jew, a Hindu, you're equally American.

And the value—the most valuable thing I think about America is that——particularly if you're a religious person—you can be free to worship, and it's your choice to make. It's not the state's choice, and you shouldn't be intimidated after you've made your choice. And that's a right that I jealously guard.

Secondly, I want American citizens to see me hosting an Iftaar dinner.

Mr. Nakouzi. That's a strong message for the Americans.

The President. It is a strong message. I want to remind your listeners that one of the first things I did after September the 11th is, I went to the local mosque. And I did because I wanted to send a message that those who came to kill Americans were young terrorists, and they do not reflect the views of the vast majority of peaceful people in the Middle East; and that our——precisely the message I was trying to send, the war is not a struggle against Muslims, the Muslim religion; it is a struggle of honorable, peaceful people throughout the world against the few who want to impose their vision.

[At this point, there was a change in location, and the interview resumed as follows.]

War on Terror/Progress in Iraq/Spread of Freedom

Mr. Nakouzi. Actually, Mr. President, we are talking about these terrorists and what's going on in the world right now. Are you also a man of war, as some try to describe, President Bush?

The President. Oh, no, no, I believe the actions we have taken will make it more likely peace happens. I dream it will be—the last thing I want to be is a President during war. Now, remember, we got attacked. And I responded, after careful deliberation, in an attempt to make sure that—with a strategy of protecting ourselves. We can't allow these people that attacked us to have safe haven. We must not give them an opportunity to strike us again. And therefore, it's important to keep the pressure on.

On the other hand, the ultimate way for peace is for people to realize the great blessings of liberty. And what's interesting—and what has taken place ought to be hopeful to people in the Middle East—is that two young democracies have sprung up where people, when given a chance, voted. See, I believe there is a universal God. I believe the God that the Muslim prays to is the same God that I pray to. After all, we all came from Abraham. I believe in that universality. And I believe a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child is freedom; I really do. And I think people, if given a chance, will seize freedom. And it's liberty and free societies, not—they don't have to look like America—an Iraqi democracy is going to be Iraqi; it's going to reflect Iraqi traditions and Iraqi history.

There are some universal aspects to liberty: One, people can vote; people can express their opinion; people can be in a free press; people ought to be allowed to go to the town square and protest against their government without fear of reprisal. And when given that opportunity, 12 million Iraqis went to the polls.

Mr. Nakouzi. So excuse me, Mr. President, what you're trying to say is, sometimes a decision of war—you have to take a decision of war in order to achieve peace.

The President. That's exactly right.

Mr. Nakouzi. And that's what happened in Iraq.

The President. First of all, yes. I was very concerned about the dictator in Iraq. He was an enemy of the United States of America. He had ties to terrorists—I'm not saying those who attacked us on September the 11th, but I am saying ties to terrorists. He had a lot of money that he was willing to spend on weapons of mass destruction. We didn't find the weapons, but he certainly had the knowledge. And in my judgment, over time, he would have been able to develop those weapons, and they would have been—one thing the Middle East doesn't need is a nuclear arms race.

Former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq

Mr. Nakouzi. Yes, we're going to discuss this.

The President. Well, this guy doesn't—the man, Saddam Hussein, had capability; but remember, there's also a human condition. I believe in human rights. I believe every life has value, whether it be an American life or a life of a person in the Middle East. And this brutal guy killed hundreds of thousands of his own people. And he was unbelievably brutal to neighbors and, as well, to Iraqis. And there's—liberation is a powerful—to me, liberating people is a powerful step toward peace. I wish we didn't have to do this militarily. I was hoping that diplomacy would work. I gave diplomacy a lot of chance to work.

Mr. Nakouzi. But it didn't.

The President. It did not work. So the choice was his, not mine. He had the choice as to whether or not this issue would be resolved peacefully. See, that's the interesting thing that has been turned around. And so I don't regret the decision. As a matter of fact, I feel it was the right decision to this day. And now the question is, will America keep its commitment to the millions of Iraqis who want this society to work? And the answer to that is, yes, we will.

Iraq

Mr. Nakouzi. And here, Mr. President, I would love to ask—I mean, for the Iraqis now, they know and they keep on listening to the news. Sometimes we tell them we want to withdraw the troops. And now we're talking about the partition of Iraq, which is very, very bad news for the Iraqis.

The President. Yes, it is.

Mr. Nakouzi. I know you refused this. You want the unity of Iraq. But what if this Iraqi—what if, in the next administration, another President comes to the office and believes in the partition of Iraq? What's going to happen then?

The President. I don't think it will happen. I don't think it's going to happen.

Progress in Iraq

Mr. Nakouzi. How do you guarantee?

The President. Well, first of all, an American President must understand that Iraq is a sovereign nation operating under its own Constitution. And I'm very confident that the will of Iraq will prevail. And I know there's some noise out of here about partition. But most folks who follow this issue don't support partition, and they don't think it's a good idea.

What Iraq is going to have to do is get the proper balance between the central Government and the Provinces, the very same thing we've been worried about here in America for years. What is the right road between the States and Washington? So that's a constant discussion. But that's what they're going to have to do in Iraq as well. And they're going to need the security situation such that they're able to have an honest political discourse.

So our step one was to help them secure their neighborhoods—and it's working—and make sure these radicals, such as Al Qaida and some of these Shi'a groups, many of whom—which are criminal, aren't able to have their way with this society. And now we'll work toward helping these folks have the important discussion about what should be the role of Baghdad, or

what should be the role of the Provincial governments. And when they get that right, when they get settled out, then I think you'll see a much more unified country.

And it's going to be very hard for an American President or any other outside country to dictate to the Iraqis, "Here's what your government must look like," because the Iraqis will show over time that they're capable of making these decisions themselves, and they are making hard decisions right now, by the way.

Spread of Freedom/Iraq

Mr. Nakouzi. I know that your message, your deep message was—to the Arab world—was democracy, freedom, human rights. And you've said too many times that the first message is democracy, is that you have rights, you people of the Middle East, to be free. But now, is democracy still a priority? Because all we hear now in Iraq is, let's achieve security; let's achieve stability. Is democracy in the Middle East on hold now, waiting for security first?

The President. Well, first of all, no. I strongly believe in the freedom movement. It's ingrained in my soul. It comes from my belief that freedom is universal. And I believe freedom is ingrained in everybody's soul, and if just given a chance, they'll reach for it.

Now, in Iraq, in order for the Government to have breathing space, to be able to do the hard work of reconciliation so that the dreams of the average citizen in Iraq can be realized—which is a free society—there's got to be security. And so security is really a step, an important step, in the freedom movement.

You can't make the decisions if you're worried about getting blown up. And what the enemy wants to do, the enemy of a free Iraq, they want to create enough chaos and confusion inside Iraq that causes people to doubt. And they want, by the way, to kill enough innocent people that causes the American people to lose their patience

and determination to help freedom movements.

Not every freedom movement requires military action. But freedom movement does require U.S. commitment to helping reformers and just the average citizen realize the blessings of a free society.

And so the freedom movement is the front and center of our foreign policy because I understand that the peace that we want—listen, we all want peace, except for those who are trying—

Mr. Nakouzi. “Except for those,” exactly.

The President. But peace will succeed as more and more people become free.

[At this point, there was a change in location, and the interview resumed as follows.]

Iran

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, we have moved from the Oval Office to the beautiful garden, and here I would like to ask you question that go through the minds of the Arab world. Our world is going through very difficult days.

Let me start with what people expect of me, which is Iran. Mr. President, have you made the decision to strike Iran, as some are saying, or trying to say that you will not leave your administration and office before you strike Iran militarily?

The President. I have made the commitment that I would continue to work with the world to speak with one voice to the Iranians, to the Iranian Government, that we will work in ways that we can to make it clear to you that you should not have the know-how on how to make a weapon, because one of the great threats to peace and the world would be if Iranians showed up with a nuclear weapon. It would give them an opportunity to blackmail or threaten or possibly follow through with their stated objective, which is the destruction of Israel.

I, of course, said all options are on the table, but I made a pledge to the American people, we will work diplomatically to solve the problem. And that’s why you see us

at the United Nations working with the EU countries and China and Russia to send that clear message, and that we’re going to continue to impose sanctions and make it harder for the Iranian Government to operate in the world until they change their mind, until they come to a new way forward. I have said that if they suspend their nuclear program, we will be at the table. But they have so far refused to do that.

I’ve also spoken to the Iranian people. And I want to make it clear to the people of Iran that the United States respects Iran, respects the people, respects the proud tradition, and that the Government of Iran has taken decisions that make it harder for them to live their lives. It’s the decisions of the Government of Iran that have led to the isolation of the country. And that if this Government would only be responsible, would listen to the world, would not continue its weapons program—the idea of being able to have the capacity to make a weapon—then there’s a better way forward for the Iranian people.

Mr. Nakouzi. But, Mr. President, is there a redline, either a timeline or redline—I hear from analysts that Iran wants today, or at least trying today to buy time in order for you to wait—to lose the time that you can make a big decision, such as going to war. In your judgment, is there a timetable? Is there a ceiling that if negotiations would fail, a decision to go to war would be made?

The President. The Iranian regime must understand that I’m dedicated to the proposition that they should not continue their desire to enrich, as will be people that follow me in office. There is universal concern about Iranian ambition here in America. This is not a party issue, an issue between one party or the other. When the Iranian President announces to the world that he’s going to destroy an ally or announces to the world that he will end up defying the world—that—no matter who the President is, there is going to be a continued focus

and effort to achieve this issue, to resolve this issue.

Mr. Nakouzi. This issue, before I move to Iraq, which also, a lot of Iraqis are waiting for this—is there—there are some leaking to the press, and particularly the Arabic press—is it true that you have issued orders, Mr. President, to your senior generals in the American military to prepare for a major and precise strike that could happen during the end of January or February?

The President. I would call that empty propaganda. Evidently, there's a lot of gossip in parts of the country—world that try to scare people about me, personally, or my country or what we stand for. And that kind of gossip is just what it is: It's gossip; it's baseless gossip.

Progress in Iraq

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, we have talked about Iraq. And you have tried to give us a message to assure the Iraqi people—when we were in the garden together—that you do not believe in the partition or the division of Iraq. And this is a very controversial issue in Iraq. And it is scary to even some of the leadership in Iraq. Just to continue and follow up with that issue, did we reach what we reached because of American mistakes or because of Iraqi mistakes and the Iraqi Government?

The President. I think, first of all, the successes in Iraq have been really quite extraordinary. One, the people of Iraq no longer have to live under a dictatorship, a brutal dictatorship. Secondly, the Iraqi people wrote and ratified a modern Constitution. Thirdly, there is a Government that is in place that is beginning to take on the responsibilities of governing. For example, quite a few billions have been spent in the Provinces by the central Government. That doesn't get any focus, but there is a functioning Government; there is revenue sharing; there is money to the Provinces.

There is still work to be done, no question about it. But the biggest problem facing Iraq was because killers, bombers decided to murder innocent people in order to stop progress. So what I tell people is, is that the reason why there hasn't been smooth progress—and by the way, it's hard to transition from a dictatorship to a Iraqi democracy—but the main problem has been not the Iraqis or not the United States, but it's been the fact that people have murdered.

For example, what I find appalling is that Al Qaida bombed a holy site, a Muslim holy site; that there have been bombs in markets where innocent people are shopping and young children get destroyed by Muslim—people who profess to be Muslims. Their hearts are so hardened that they're willing to kill innocent people.

And so the task is to deny these people their ability to blow up the innocent. And that's exactly what's happening because of Iraqi bravery and Iraqi forces and a commitment by the Government to deal with murderers. See, I believe murderers murder, and it doesn't matter whether you're a Shi'a murderer or a Sunni murderer or a Christian murderer, you're a murderer. And the role of a state is to protect the innocent people from those murderers. And that's what you're seeing taking place in Iraq. But in the meantime, government is beginning to function better.

But people shouldn't be surprised that it's not instant democracy. First of all, the leaders never have had any practice with democracy, and they're learning to get along after years of tension and resentment. I support Prime Minister Maliki strongly, and I support the Presidency Council strongly. I just had President Talabani in to the Oval Office the other day. And the reason I do is because—I look for courage and commitment. And these leaders are courageous men, and they're committed to a free Iraq. Has it been perfect progress? No. Is there more work to be done? You bet there's more work to be done. But are

things better—getting better over time? Yes, they are. And that's what's important for the American people to know. And what's important for the Iraqi people to know is that we're going to support them, is that they've got our help because we want them to succeed. We want them to realize their dreams.

Iraqi Leadership

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, so the words that were said attributing to the White House or the American position about disappointment in Prime Minister Maliki is not true? You are not disappointed in Prime Minister Maliki and this Iraqi Government yet?

The President. I strongly support Prime Minister Maliki. Again, there's a lot of gossip here, as well as overseas. One of the jobs that I have to continue to do is constantly repeat what—the position of my Government. And the position of my Government is that Prime Minister Maliki is a good man who is working hard, and we strongly support him.

But it's not just Prime Minister Maliki that we support, we also support President Talabani or Vice President Al-Mahdi or Vice President Hashimi. We support those who are committed to peace and committed to the welfare of the Iraqi people. And we support those who are willing to take on these extremists, the few who are murdering innocent people in order to create chaos and confusion inside of Iraq. Again, I repeat: The situation is not perfect, but our country is not perfect. And I'm proud of the courage of the Iraqi citizens.

The Iraqis have been through a lot of bloodshed and violence, and yet they're still strong in their desire to achieve. The Iraqis will be successful.

Lebanese Elections

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, let's move to Lebanon. And a lot of Lebanese are waiting. You have met with Mr. Sa'ad Hariri today, and they are all talking about

the upcoming elections in Lebanon that could or could not happen. Does President Bush have a specific, preferred candidate in Lebanon that you wanted to support for the Presidency of Lebanon? Is there going to be elections in Lebanon that will take place?

The President. No, I have no specific candidate, and I told that to Sa'ad Hariri. I have a deep desire to help the Lebanese democracy succeed. I am deeply concerned about foreign interference into the Presidential election. I am concerned that neighboring countries will try to create instability so that this democracy doesn't succeed, just like I'm deeply concerned that there's been murder on the streets of Beirut, including Sa'ad Hariri's dad, and that the international community must follow through in an expeditious way—must follow through quickly in holding—in having an international tribunal, so that those who murdered—so that the facts come out and those who murdered would be held to account.

There's just too many parliamentarians who are trying to work for a peaceful Lebanon being assassinated. And we need to know who is doing that assassinations. And when they're found out, they need to be held to account; there needs to be a consequence. And the international community has been too slow in getting the international tribunal moving.

Thirdly, I told Sa'ad Hariri that I sent one of our top military men into Lebanon to help them modernize their armed forces. And the reason I felt comfortable doing that is because Prime Minister Siniora showed courage and had—as did the Lebanese forces when they went out to rout out some extremists who were causing chaos or trying to cause chaos in Lebanon. And yet it became apparent to me that this military was full of courageous people but didn't have the modern equipment necessary to defend the country from extremists and/or extremists who had been funded from outside influence.

This is a very difficult situation. I'm hopeful that obviously the Presidency will be resolved and that a unified government can move forward. Sa'ad Hariri shared with me the strategy of the March 14th coalition, and I was more than willing to listen. I assured him and I assure the Lebanese people that we want to help you succeed.

Syrian Involvement in Lebanon

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, are we able to say today, for example, to the Lebanese people—and we know that the United States is the most powerful constituency in Lebanon—can we say to the Lebanese people that you, specifically, Mr. President, will prevent any foreign interference in Lebanon that could be imposed from the outside and have a President that is being promoted by outside force?

The President. I think maybe that's a promise that I'm not sure I could keep, because the one thing that we did was, we worked with France to pass a U.N. resolution to get Syria, Syrian presence, visible presence, out of Lebanon. However, I suspect that there's still a lot of Syrian influence in Lebanon that is not helpful. And one way to make it clear to the Assad Government that we don't appreciate this is for the United States to—is to analyze the sanctions we've placed on the Government and think about other ways to continue to send a message and to work with our friends, particularly in Europe, to send the same message. In other words, there has to be a consequence for continued involvement.

And the other thing is, is that I think it's going to be an important signal to send—is this tribunal. The international community said we ought to have a tribunal. I'm frustrated frankly by the pace at which the tribunal is lingering; it's not moving. There needs to be a definitive moment where the evidence is laid out, and if it's clear evidence—in other words, if somebody's guilty, they ought to be held to account so that murder is not—so that

there's this clear signal that murder is not going to be accepted. The brave souls of Lebanon who are being killed—Sa'ad Hariri's dad was one, blown up, murdered. Why? Because he supported democracy. Lebanese democracy is for freedom.

And that ought to send a clear message to people throughout the world that it is so important for those of us who live in free societies to support brave people who are promoting liberty. This man wanted nothing more than the Lebanese mom to be able to raise her child in peace. And yet somebody ordered or somebody followed through with coldblooded murder to deny those dreams for the Lebanese people. And the same thing is happening in Iraq, and it's unacceptable behavior.

And the United States is firm in its desire to help the average citizen in the Middle East live in peace. It just so happens a peaceful Middle East will make America more secure. So we have common interests. And that's really what I want the people in the Middle East to hear, that each issue is an issue that's got difficult problems, but there's an interconnection. Extremists want to stop freedom, though. And we want you to live in peace. And we respect your religion, and we respect your humanity. And our desire for you is to realize your full potential, God-given potential.

Peace in the Middle East

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, of course I cannot conclude this interview without asking the most important question, that is the issue of Palestine. Is President Bush convinced, truly convinced inside, that it is possible yet to achieve peace between Israel and Palestine? Can we achieve the two states, living side by side, and not as two enemies but two friends? Is it possible or is it difficult or impossible to achieve?

The President. I believe in my soul, in my heart, that not only is it necessary that there be two states living side by side in order to achieve peace, but it's possible.

I'm very optimistic we can achieve a two-state solution.

First, Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas are committed to a two-state solution and are making progress. We've done a lot of dialog between the two men, and they are making progress. And they're making progress that—I believe—where the average Palestinian and average Israeli will begin to see what a vision looks like; in other words, something to work for, something that's more tangible than just a Rose Garden speech by the President or hopeful comments by others—something real.

Secondly, that—you know, we're hosting a international conference that will be attended by interested parties—the Arab League, you know, important Arab League group will be there; a committee will be there from the Arab League. And it's an opportunity for there to be a serious—substantive discussions about the way forward and a two-state solution. A lot of it is going to be empower both parties, give them confidence to follow through on the vision.

I also want you to know that I fully understand the two-state solution is a part of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and that our strategy is to get all concerned countries to the table; to get this comprehensive peace moving forward in a way that is tangible and real, so people can see it. In other words, I'm not interested in just a photo opportunity, and I don't think anybody else is going to be interested in that. I really want to see if we can advance the progress.

Step one was for there to be a commitment by Israel and the Palestinians to this peace. And step two is a commitment to the roadmap. In other words, nobody is going to want—have a state that becomes a launching pad for attack. The Palestinians—the average Palestinian doesn't want that, and surely the Abbas Government doesn't, and Israel can't stand that.

And so we've got—we got to work a lot with the Palestinians to help their security

forces—and we are—and to help the President and the Prime Minister with economic aid, tangible economic aid so the average Palestinian can see a better life ahead, can realize there's something better than violence. And so I am very optimistic about it, about the prospects for peace.

War on Terror

Mr. Nakouzi. Steven told me that time is over, Mr. President. Could you just—a few seconds, if you allow me. And since I wanted to go ask you that question when we, after—20 days after commemorating September 11th, I said, when I meet President Bush, I'm going to ask him a question. This massacre that happened on 9/11, it is very difficult for any Arab who lives in the Arab world that can imagine what happened to innocent American people on that day.

I would like to know what was your reaction the first time when you heard that 15 Saudi Muslims were among the hijackers who committed this crime and this terrorist act? How did that affect your relationship with the Kingdom—which plays a major role in the region—and particularly Crown Prince Abdallah—now King Abdallah—who is a personal friend of yours?

The President. King Abdallah is a personal friend of mine, and I respect him. You know, I have seen murder before in my own country. I have seen evil people take innocent life. And when that's happened, I haven't condemned everybody else around.

I will give you an interesting story. I was in a community yesterday—a gunman came and killed five young Amish girls—this is last year. And the gunman was killed. The Amish community, which is a religious community here in America, went and reached out to the wife and children of the gunman in compassion and love. And I'm not saying I was that—you know, I hope I could be that compassionate. It was a great act of compassion.

And the reason I tell you that is, my reaction on September the 11th was, I vowed to find the killers—those who ordered the killing—and bring them to justice. On the other hand, never did it enter my heart and my mind to be embittered toward a group of people, innocent people, who had nothing to do with the murderer. In other words, I was focused on the individuals and their commanders, not citizens in the Middle East, of any country, particularly Saudi Arabia.

In other words, my first reaction was not, look, the Saudis are bad people. My first reaction was, evil people came and killed, and we'll react to protect ourselves. And we'll react to protect ourselves in two ways. One is to work with concerned governments, including Saudi Arabia, to find those few that are willing to murder us. And those same murderers that came to the United States would very much like to murder the leaders in Saudi Arabia. And so there's a lot of common ground throughout the world to rout out people and to bring them to justice.

And the long term—these people believe something. There's an ideology behind their views, and the ideology basically is very different from one based upon freedom. Their ideology is, you can't worship the way you see fit. And if you don't worship the way they want you to worship, you'll be publicly beaten, or you'll be killed, or you'll be in prison. They don't believe, for example, young girls ought to be educated. I strongly disagree with that. I think one of the great potentials of the Middle East is women. And I certainly know, as a father, that I want my little girls to be—you know, have a good education, which they did. And I'm confident other fathers want the same thing in the Middle East, even though we may not speak the same language or share the same religion.

And so my reaction was—tough reaction to make sure we find those who ordered the killing and bring them to justice and to keep the pressure on them so they don't

do it again—and I believe they want to do it again. But on the other hand, I have this sense of a possibility based upon something that's worked throughout the world, and that is, people being able to realize dreams through liberty.

This isn't the first time that societies have had to make choices. This isn't the first time where people made the focused effort to become a free society. And it won't be the first time when a part of the world has gone from one that's been tense and full of unspeakable tragedy to one of peace.

And that's where we're headed; we're headed to peace. And I can't thank you enough for the opportunity to speak on a free channel to people throughout the Middle East. Our country is a loving country. It's hard for me to believe that people can't look at America and say, "Wow, what a compassionate group of people"—because we are. And yet I understand the images of my country have been distorted. And I understand people say things about me personally that simply aren't true. And so I appreciate the chance to come and talk to you directly and to talk to your viewers directly about what's in my heart and about the fact that my country is a country of peace.

Mr. Nakouzi. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Al Arabiya TV, I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity. You were very generous with us on time; I know you have a very hectic schedule.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. And I hope to meet with you again when you also are in a position to achieve some of our democracy in our region. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview began taping at 11:35 a.m. in the Oval Office and continued on the Colonnade and in the Map Room at the White House, for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President

Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq; Parliament Member Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri and Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud

Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Portions of Mr. Nakouzi's remarks were in Arabic, and an English translation was provided. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 5. A tape was not available for verification of this interview.

Remarks on the National Economy and Homeland Security *October 5, 2007*

I want to thank members of my economic team for coming into the Oval Office this morning to bring some good news here for America's families and America's working people. The—last month, our economy added 110,000 new jobs. And that's good news for people here in our country. It's an indicator that this economy is a vibrant and strong economy.

The folks briefed me on the fact that they are—numbers for July and August were revised—the job numbers, job creation numbers. And this economy added 118,000 new jobs in July and August as well. This means—with these revisions, it means that we've had 49 consecutive months of job creation. And that's the longest uninterrupted job growth on record for our country.

You know, I am really pleased with the economic news, but I don't take good news for granted. I understand people are worried about their mortgage payments or concerned about sending their child to college. I know that people are concerned whether or not they're going to have enough money to meet their needs. And so my call to the United States Congress is, keep taxes low. If you want this economy continue to grow and if you want to reinforce the fact that we've got—entrepreneurship is strong and people are working, don't raise taxes.

And I'm looking forward to working with the Congress to set priorities on how we spend the people's money. But I also am going to make it very clear to people in Congress that we're not going to raise the taxes on the working people.

And so I'm real pleased. I thank you all for coming in to bring this good news to me. It's—this good news is a real tribute to the hard-working Americans, the people out there working hard to put food on the table. And it's a tribute to the entrepreneurial spirit of the country.

I want to say something else. There's been a lot of talk in the newspapers and on TV about a program that I put in motion to detain and question terrorists and extremists. I have put this program in place for a reason, and that is to better protect the American people. And when we find somebody who may have information regarding an—a potential attack on America, you bet we're going to detain them, and you bet we're going to question them, because the American people expect us to find out information, actionable intelligence so we can help them, help protect them. That's our job.

Secondly, this Government does not torture people. You know, we stick to U.S. law and our international obligations.

Thirdly, there are highly trained professionals questioning these extremists and terrorists. In other words, we got professionals

who are trained in this kind of work to get information that will protect the American people. And by the way, we have gotten information from these high-value detainees that have helped protect you.

And finally, the techniques that we use have been fully disclosed to appropriate Members of the United States Congress. The American people expect their Govern-

ment to take action to protect them from further attack. And that's exactly what this Government is doing, and that's exactly what we'll continue to do.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:54 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

The President's Radio Address *October 6, 2007*

Good morning. One important commitment of the Federal Government is to help America's poorest children get access to health care. Most of these children are covered by Medicaid, which will spend more than \$35 billion to help them this fiscal year. For children who do not qualify for Medicaid but whose families are struggling, we have the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP.

Washington is now in the midst of an important debate over the future of this vital program. I strongly support SCHIP. My administration has added more than 2 million children to SCHIP since 2001. And our 2008 budget increases SCHIP funding by 20 percent over 5 years.

Unfortunately, more than 500,000 poor children who are eligible for SCHIP coverage are not enrolled in the program. At the same time, many States are spending SCHIP funds on adults. In fact, based on their own projections for this fiscal year, Minnesota, Illinois, New Jersey, Michigan, Rhode Island, and New Mexico will spend more SCHIP money on adults than they do on children. And that is not the purpose of the program.

This week, congressional leaders sent me a deeply flawed bill that would move SCHIP even further from its original purpose. Here are some of the problems with Congress's plan. Under their plan, one out

of every three children who moves onto Government coverage would drop private insurance. In other words, millions of children would move out of private health insurance and onto a Government program. Congress's plan would also transform a program for poor children into one that covers children in some households with incomes up to \$83,000. Congress's plan would raise taxes on working people. And Congress's plan does not even fully fund all the new spending. If their plan becomes law, 5 years from now Congress would have to choose between throwing people off SCHIP or raising taxes a second time.

Congress's SCHIP plan is an incremental step toward their goal of Government-run health care for every American. Government-run health care would deprive Americans of the choice and competition that comes from the private market. It would cause huge increases in Government spending. It would result in rationing, inefficiency, and long waiting lines. It would replace the doctor-patient relationship with dependency on bureaucrats in Washington, DC. And it is the wrong direction for our country.

Congress knew that I would veto this bill, yet they sent it anyway. So on Wednesday, I vetoed the SCHIP bill. And I asked Members of Congress to come together and work with me on a responsible bill

that I can sign, so we can keep this important program serving America's poor children.

When it comes to SCHIP, we should be guided by a clear principle: Put poor children first. I urge Republicans and Democrats in Congress to support a bill that moves adults off this children's program and covers children who do not qualify for Medicaid, but whose families are struggling. If putting poor children first takes a little more than the 20-percent increase I have proposed in my budget for SCHIP, I am willing to work with leaders in Congress to find the additional money.

Ultimately, our Nation's goal should be to move children who have no health insurance to private coverage, not to move children who already have private health insurance to Government coverage. By working

together, Republicans and Democrats can strengthen SCHIP, ensure that it reaches the children who need it, and find ways to help more American families get the private health coverage they need.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 5, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to H.R. 976, the "Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007." The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Representative Jo Ann Davis *October 6, 2007*

Laura and I are deeply saddened that Representative Jo Ann Davis lost her courageous battle with breast cancer today. Her determination to fight the disease is an inspiration to all of us.

Over the course of her four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, she was an effective advocate for the people of her district and a strong supporter of our men and women in uniform. She was a fine

example of a public servant who worked hard to cut Government waste to ensure the people's money was used wisely. Her commonsense values will be missed on Capitol Hill.

Laura and I send our thoughts and prayers to her husband Chuck, their two sons, and the rest of the Davis family during this difficult time.

Remarks at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland *October 7, 2007*

Thank you all. Thank you. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. David, thank you very much for your introduction. Nothing better than being introduced by

an old fire chief. And I thank you for your service, Dave.

It is such an honor to be here. I was telling Laura on the phone—she didn't make it, and I apologize, and so does she—

but I said, I'm going down the hill—I was up at Camp David—I'm going down the hill to be with some remarkable people and their families and to honor those who served. I said, I can't wait to go and to—be in their midst because I hold the firefighters in such high regard. I have a deep respect in my soul for people who serve our communities.

As David mentioned, far too often we go to sites that have been devastated by natural disaster, for example. Every time, the firefighters are there—every time. It's clear that the people here who wear the uniform have a different view of jurisdiction than a lot of our citizens. You know, from New York after 9/11 to New Orleans after Katrina, there were firefighters from around the country there to help. The bond between the firefighters is obviously unique; it is definitely a source of strength. And it's a reminder that the work here is a calling, not a job.

I want to thank the foundation for working hard to ensure that the families of those who have died in—are well treated. I want to tell you today that the Hometown Heroes Act will be fully implemented. This program will be administrated the way it was intended to be administrated. That's the least we can do as we honor the families of those who have died in the line of service.

I also am amazed at the compassion I see amongst those who wear the uniform for their comrades. Anyway, thanks for having me. I'm sorry it's under these circumstances that we have to be together. I hope our presence can help heal your hearts just a little bit. And I'm looking forward to giving you a hug if you want a hug or smiling for a picture if you want to smile for a picture. But most of all, I'm looking forward to honoring your loved ones.

I want to thank Steny Hoyer for joining us. He is—he respects you like I respect you, and he can pay tribute about as eloquently as anybody I have heard. I appre-

ciate Roscoe Bartlett—he's the Congressman from this district—for joining us as well.

I want to thank the mayor of Emmitsburg, Mayor Hoover, for joining us. I appreciate Chief Cade. I want to thank my friend Hal Bruno, who is the chairman of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. I want to thank the members of the board of directors who are here. I appreciate you all coming.

You know, it takes a special kind of person to be a firefighter. It begins with a different sense of direction. When an area becomes too dangerous for everybody else, you take it over. When others are looking for the exits, our firefighters are looking for the way in. When the frightened occupants of a burning building are rushing down the stairwell, our firefighters are going the opposite direction, up the stairs and toward the flames.

And you wonder where people like this get their courage. I'm sure a lot of it has to do with how they were raised or the examples of other firefighters in the communities in which they live. But the truth of the matter is that courage also comes from the community of firefighters. You work as teams; you share meals together. And when tragedy strikes, your dedication to one another ensures that no family will ever have to face the pain alone.

Your presence here is a sign of that camaraderie. I see grieving widows sitting side by side with a firefighter in uniform—it's the camaraderie of respect and compassion. Today 91 new names go up on this memorial. It is sometimes said of your fallen comrades that they lost their lives in the line of duty. On this day, at this place, we say more accurately: The men and women we honor are people who gave their lives in the line of duty.

We honor the service and sacrifices of firefighters like Kevin Apuzzio of New Jersey. Kevin started his career at age 16 when he joined an emergency medical unit. In college, he signed up for the East Franklin

Volunteer Fire Company. Kevin was killed when he was trying to rescue a 75-year-old woman from her burning home. At Rutgers University, where Kevin was a student, they have named a public safety training center after him. And the president of the school put it simply: "We want people to know that a hero walked on this campus."

We honor the service and sacrifice of firefighters like Amy Schnearle-Pennywitt of Michigan. Amy grew up dreaming of becoming a firefighter, and she achieved that dream. On a freezing morning in 2006, the Ann Arbor Fire Department responded to a crash on an icy highway. And Amy arrived on the scene and then was fatally struck by a pickup truck that had skidded out of control. In a tribute, the local newspaper called firefighters like Amy the backbone of our society. I believe that too. The editorial put it this way: "We call them. And they come."

We honor the service and sacrifice of firefighters like Destry Horton. Destry worked for two fire departments in Oklahoma, the local department in Chickasha and the Grady County Fire Department. Destry was killed because he gave up a day of golfing so he could go help his comrades battling the wildfires in southern Oklahoma. He suffered terrible burns, and those burns would take his life. I found it interesting that at his funeral, a contingent of firefighters from New York showed up to pay their respects. Here's what one of them said, he said, "It's sort of payback from after September the 11th when we had firefighters from around the world who came to show their support for us. This is a brother, and we wanted to be here."

We are here this afternoon for the same reason. That's why we're here. We're here for the friends and neighbors who risked their lives to keep us safe. And we're here for the colleagues who answered a call and did not come home. We're here for the brave moms and dads who left behind fam-

ilies that now need our love and our strong support.

Families of our fallen firefighters have suffered a terrible loss. No words can ease the ache in your hearts. At this difficult time, we will try to help by taking you in our arms. We offer you our heartfelt and sincere compassion. We hope it is some comfort to know that your loved ones will live on forever in the memory of the communities they served so well.

To the colleagues of those who have fallen: Your fellow firefighters knew the risks when they took the oath of service. Take pride in the example they have set. Honor their memory by carrying on the fine work that they were so proud to do by your side.

And to all Americans: Across our great country, homes still stand and families can go about their lives because firefighters put themselves in harm's way to protect us. So when you walk by a firehouse or see an ambulance on a street corner, take a moment to go up and say thank you. I ask my fellow Americans to pray for their safety, and pray that we live lives worthy of the sacrifices made by those whose names we add to this memorial today.

I appreciate you having me. I ask for the Almighty's blessings on you, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to R. David Paulison, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency, who introduced the President; Mayor Jim Hoover of Emmitsburg, MD; Gregory B. Cade, Federal Emergency Management Agency Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Fire Administration; Richard L. McCormick, president, Rutgers University; and Richard Schmidt, firefighter, New York City Fire Department.

Remarks Following a Meeting on the No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization *October 9, 2007*

Secretary Spellings and I are so pleased to welcome you all to the Roosevelt Room. With us today are a group of concerned citizens from a variety of groups, here to discuss the No Child Left Behind Act. People around this table care deeply about making sure every child gets a good education. We're deeply concerned about school systems that don't focus on each individual. Some school systems are just moving kids through, and as a result, our education system is letting too many children down, too many families without hope. So we're going to strategize and work together to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act is reauthorized and made stronger.

And so I want to thank you all for coming. I love your passion. I appreciate the fact that you care deeply about the future of this country and that you believe, like I believe, every child can learn, and we have an obligation to teach every child how to read and write and add and subtract.

So thank you for joining us. We'll see you all in the Rose Garden here in a minute.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In

his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Also participating in the meeting were the First Lady; John C. Brittain, chief counsel and senior deputy director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Roslyn McCallister Brock, vice chairman, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People National Board of Directors; Michael Casserly, executive director, Council of the Great City Schools; Wade Henderson, president and chief executive officer, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Lawrence Hernandez, founder, chief executive officer, and principal, Cesar Chavez Academy, Pueblo, CO; Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League; Janet Murguia, president and chief executive officer, National Council of La Raza; Dianne Pich, executive director, Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights; Sonia Rodriguez, chairperson, Coalition for Access to Educational Resources; Ricki Sabia, associate director, National Down Syndrome Society Policy Center; Amy Wilkins, vice president for government affairs and communications, The Education Trust; and Peter Zamora, cochair, Hispanic Education Coalition.

Remarks on the No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization *October 9, 2007*

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank Secretary Spellings for joining me here. And I appreciate you all—the leaders of the civil rights community and advocates for minority and disadvantaged students—for joining us as well.

We just had a meaningful discussion about our joint commitment to closing an

achievement gap that exists in America. We discussed why reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act is vital in ensuring that we have a hopeful America. We don't necessarily agree on every issue, but we do agree that education is a basic civil right and that a good education is important for America.

We agree that our Nation has reached a defining moment in our struggle to secure a good education for every child. And we've come a long way since the days when children were simply shuffled through the schools, just moved grade to grade, whether or not they were learning. See, we believe every child can learn. We don't accept a system that simply shuffles children through the schools. We believe in setting high standards. And we believe that by setting high standards, we encourage greater results for every child. And now the question is whether or not we will finish the job to ensure that every American child receives a high education—a high-quality education.

Our Nation made an historic commitment nearly 6 years ago when Republicans and Democrats came together to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. The philosophy of the law is this: The Federal Government will invest in education, and in return, we seek results. Instead of just hoping for the best, we've asked States to set clear standards and hold schools accountable for teaching every child to read and do math at grade level. That doesn't seem like too much to ask. In return for taxpayers' money, we expect schools and school districts and States to measure, to show us whether or not a child can read at grade level or do math at a grade level.

And the key to getting good results is measuring. Measuring results helps teachers catch problems early, so children who need help—extra help can get that help. In other words, you can't determine whether a child needs extra help unless you measure. One of the key components of No Child Left Behind, it says, if a child is falling behind, we will provide supplemental services to help that child catch up. Measuring results empowers parents with valuable information about schools, so they can push for change if it's needed. Measuring results means schools are working to close the achievement gap, instead of looking the

other way when a student is struggling or falling behind.

No Child Left Behind is helping replace a culture of low expectations with a commitment to high achievement for all. And the hard work being done by principals, teachers, parents, and students across our country is producing results. Last month, we learned that fourth graders earned the highest math and reading scores in the history of our Nation's Report Card, and that's good news. I'm able to report that because we actually measure now in the schools. We learned that eighth graders set record highs for math scores.

We also learned that scores for minority and poor students and students with disabilities are reaching alltime highs in a number of areas. As a result, the achievement gap is beginning to narrow, and the promise of America is expanding for children of all backgrounds. In short, No Child Left Behind is working for all kinds of children in all kinds of schools in every part of the country.

There is more work to be done. So long as there is an achievement gap, we have work to do. Our goal is to have every child reading and doing math at grade level by 2014. That seems reasonable to me. It seems like a reasonable thing to ask, is to have every child reading at grade level by 2014 or being able to do math at grade level by 2014. So now is the time not to roll back the accountability or water down standards.

It's reasonable to set an important goal such as that because as the global economy becomes more competitive, a good education will become even more important for getting a good job. Unfortunately, nearly half of African American and Hispanic students still do not graduate from high school on time. We need to raise the bar for our high schools as well as for our junior highs and elementary schools. We need to give all our children the skills they need to compete. So I'm going to work with

Congress to reauthorize and strengthen the No Child Left Behind Act this year.

My administration has offered several proposals to strengthen this law. By giving local leaders more flexibility and resources, we can help them turn around troubled schools. By giving families with children stuck in low-performing schools the opportunity to choose someplace better, we can raise student achievement. At the same time, we need to increase access to tutoring programs for students who struggle and make sure these children get the special help they need. We need to reward good teachers who improve student achievement in low-income schools. We need to make sure that our country is more competitive and that our children can take advantage of the best jobs this new century has to offer by expanding access to Advanced Placement courses and strengthening math and science education.

As we move forward, we'll continue to welcome new ideas. And I appreciate the ideas I heard today. Yet there can be no compromise on the basic principle: Every child must learn to read and do math at or above grade level. And there can be no compromise on the need to hold schools accountable to making sure we achieve that goal. I'll call on Members of Congress to come together to pass bipartisan legislation that will help us achieve this goal. By working together, we can raise standards even higher, expand opportunity for all Americans of all backgrounds, and build a future where no child is left behind.

Thank you very much. Thank you all for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation *October 10, 2007*

Good morning. In August, Congress passed the Protect America Act, a bill to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978. This new law strengthened our ability to collect foreign intelligence on terrorists overseas, and it closed a dangerous gap in our intelligence. Since this important measure took effect, our intelligence professionals have been able to gather critical information that would have been missed without this authority. And keeping this authority is essential to keeping America safe.

Unfortunately, when Congress passed the Protect America Act, they set its provisions to expire in February. The problem is, the threat to America is not going to expire in February. So Congress must make a choice: Will they keep the intelligence gap closed by making this law permanent, or

will they limit our ability to collect this intelligence and keep us safe, staying a step ahead of the terrorists who want to attack us?

My administration will work with Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to reach an agreement on a bill that will allow us to protect our country. The final bill must meet certain criteria. It must give our intelligence professionals the tools and flexibility they need to protect our country. It must keep the intelligence gap firmly closed and ensure that protections intended for the American people are not extended to terrorists overseas who are plotting to harm us. And it must grant liability protection to companies who are facing multibillion-dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in the

efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

When Congress presents me with a bill, I will ask the Director of National Intelligence whether it meets these criteria. And if it does, I will sign it into law.

Today the House Intelligence and Judiciary Committees are considering a proposed bill that instead of making the Protect America Act permanent would take us backward. While the House bill is not final, my administration has serious concerns about some of its provisions, and I am hopeful that the deficiencies in the bill can be fixed.

Congress and the President have no higher responsibility than protecting the American people from enemies who attacked our country and who want to do so again. Terrorists in faraway lands are plotting and planning new ways to kill Americans. The security of our country and

the safety of our citizens depend on learning about their plans. The Protect America Act is a vital tool in stopping the terrorists, and it would be a grave mistake for Congress to weaken this tool.

On another issue before Congress, I urge Members to oppose the Armenian genocide resolution now being considered by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. We all deeply regret the tragic suffering of the Armenian people that began in 1915, but this resolution is not the right response to these historic mass killings, and its passage would do great harm to our relations with a key ally in NATO and in the global war on terror.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H. Res. 106.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month October 10, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. *Sientese. Gracias. Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca, tambien el jardin de las rosas.* It's a beautiful day. I'm glad you're here. Thanks for coming as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Every year at this time, we recognize the rich cultural traditions of the Hispanic American community and the great contributions of Hispanic Americans to our country and our character. That's why we're here.

I appreciate so very much Ambassador Sue Schwab, who is the U.S. Trade Representative, for joining us. We're proud you're here, Madam Ambassador. I'm going to say something positive about trade, so I'm glad you came. I appreciate my friend—my dear friend former Attorney General of the United States Al Gonzales. I appreciate Anna Cabral, U.S. Treasurer,

and Victor. Thank you all for coming. I'm proud that other members of my administration have joined us. Sarah, it's good to see you; thank you for being here.

I thank my friend Emilio Estefan, who has provided the entertainment. I'm going to say something about the entertainment a little later, but Israel, we're glad you're here.

I appreciate the members of the diplomatic corps. I appreciate the Ambassadors coming. We're proud you're here. Thanks for taking time.

I have just met a remarkable woman that I want to introduce to you. Yamile Llanes Labrada and her daughter Shirlen Garcia have joined me in the Oval Office. Yamile is the wife of a political prisoner in Cuba, Dr. Jose Luis Garcia Paneque. The doctor was a plastic surgeon. He did nothing more

than advocate for freedom, and he's now in prison. And not only is he in prison, he's ill. And so one of the messages I have for the Cuban leader is, free this man and free other political prisoners. He's not a threat to you. Let him be reunited with a woman who loves him dearly and his four children. So, Yamile, thanks for coming. We're proud you're here. Sure glad you're here. *Y que Dios les bendiga a su familia y tambien su esposo.*

Citizens of Hispanic descent are the fastest growing population in America. Hispanic Americans strengthen our Nation with their commitments to *familia y fe*. Hispanic Americans enrich our country with their talents and creativity and hard work. Hispanic Americans are living the dream that has drawn millions to our shores, and we must ensure that the American Dream remains available for all. It's an important part of our past, and it's a central part of our future that people from all walks of life feel welcomed and given the opportunity to realize the blessings of America.

Realizing the promise of this good country requires a good education. You know, I worked hard with Republicans and Democrats to pass what's called the No Child Left Behind Act. That's an important piece of legislation because it raises standards and it holds schools to account. And the law is working. It's a good piece of legislation. It's working because I can report to you that last month, we saw the results from what's called the Nation's Report Card. The Report Card showed record performance in fourth and eighth grade math and fourth grade reading. And the report showed that Hispanic students scored alltime highs in a number of areas. And so we need to build on that progress. It's good that we've got a good report card; we want excellent report cards for every child.

I met yesterday with civil rights leaders. See, I believe a good education is a civil right. And we talked about how we can

work together to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act is not only reauthorized but is made stronger. The Congress needs to make sure we don't lower standards. Congress needs to make sure we raise standards and hold people to account, so that every child, every child can learn in the United States of America.

Realizing the promise of America requires a growing economy. Last week, we got more good news on this front. The economy added 110,000 new jobs in September, giving us 49 straight months of job growth, and that's a new record. We are now enjoying the longest period of uninterrupted job creation in the history of the United States. The growing economy is the result of good policies, like low taxes, but it's also mainly the result of hard work of workers and entrepreneurs, including hundreds of thousands of Latino businessowners.

And so to keep the economy growing, we've got to make sure we don't raise your taxes. And to keep the economy growing, we've got to open new markets for goods and services. One of the most important markets is in our own hemisphere. Many Hispanic-owned businesses in our country depend on trade with Latin America. Trade with the region strengthens ties of friendship and commerce. Free trade helps our neighbors prosper.

And so to expand trade with Latin America, we negotiated—and Congress approved—a free trade agreement with five Central American countries as well as the Dominican Republic. And this agreement is working. It's helped American workers. It's new markets for products made here, right here in the United States. And it's helped our neighbors. We want everybody to do well in our neighborhood. We want prosperity to abound.

And that's why we've negotiated new free trade agreements with Peru and Colombia and Panama. For the sake of our businesses and sake of our workers and for the sake of prosperity in the neighborhood, the

United States Congress needs to approve these three very important trade agreements.

Realizing the promise of the country requires strong communities where people care for each other in times of need. Yamile found help in the United States from people who care about the condition of her husband. A total stranger that didn't know Yamile before she came to the United States said, how can I help you; what can I do? That happens all across our country when Hispanic Americans run soup kitchens and drug treatment clinics and hear the call—God's call—to love our neighbors as we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We see this spirit in Hispanic Americans who volunteer as Little League coaches or serve as Big Brothers and Big Sisters or give their time and energy to improve the lives of people that live across the street from them. By caring for others, Hispanic Americans make ours a better and more compassionate nation, and America appreciates the example they set.

Finally, realizing the promise of America requires a secure country. We honor the many Hispanic Americans who wear the uniform here at home, the police and firefighters and emergency rescue personnel who risk their lives each day to protect our homeland and our communities. And we honor the 200,000 Hispanic Americans who serve in our Armed Forces, who are working to spread liberty so we can be secure here in America, who are doing the hard work today so our children and grandchildren can grow up in peace. I appreciate the fact that they have volunteered in a time of danger, and I'm proud to welcome members of the United States military with us today. Thank you all for coming.

So during Hispanic Heritage Month, we celebrate the diversity that makes our country stronger and the heritage and the spirit

that Hispanic Americans bring to this great democracy. To help us celebrate the heritage and spirit, we have an incredible talent, Cachao. He was born in Havana only in 1918. That was before my time. During the late 1930s, he helped popularize the mambo, and over the past half century, he has won a lot of Grammy Awards—most recently in 2005, believe it or not. So if you do the math, you can figure out this man hasn't stopped working. [Laughter] He's still clicking, and he's still making good music. And so we're proud to welcome Israel Lopez, better known as Cachao, to here—to the White House. Thank you for coming, sir.

[At this point, Israel Lopez performed.]

The President. I know you'll join me in thanking Cachao for coming. Guess when the first he was here; 1948 he played for President Harry Truman. Welcome back. We're sure glad you're here.

Thank you all for coming. I want you to say hello to Yamile again *una mas vez*. We certainly pray for the speedy release of your husband, and we're glad you're here at the White House. No better place to come and recognize the great beauty of freedom. And we want to thank you all for joining us as we celebrate the great diversity and freedom of the United States.

Que Dios les bendiga. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Victor G. Cabral, husband of U.S. Treasurer Anna Escobedo Cabral; Emilio Estefan, Jr., president, Estefan Enterprises, Inc.; and President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba. The National Hispanic Heritage Month proclamation of September 12 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message on the Observance of Eid al-Fitr *October 1, 2007*

I send greetings to Muslims in the United States and around the world celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the Festival of Breaking the Fast.

The great faith of Islam has enhanced our society and brought comfort and strength to generations in America and around the world. The three day festival of Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan and is a time to look forward with a spirit of renewal and hope, and celebrate the rich Islamic tradition of charity and giving. During this holiday, Muslims gather with family and friends to share in traditional food, thank God for His blessings, and reach out to the less fortunate.

Our Nation is proud to be a land of many beliefs, and our society is enriched by our Muslim citizens. On the first day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar, may people of all faiths reflect on the values we hold in common, including love of family, the importance of community, and gratitude to God.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyful celebration. Eid Mubarak.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 11. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks Following a Meeting on the National Economy *October 11, 2007*

I just had a meeting with members of my economic team, and I thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank Director of the OMB Jim Nussle for his briefing on the newest numbers regarding our deficit.

You know, last February, it was projected that our deficit would be \$244 billion, and today the Director informed us that the deficit—actual deficit is \$163 billion. In other words, as a result of the hard work of the American people, this economy is growing; the growing economy has yielded more tax revenues than anticipated. And because of fiscal restraint, those tax revenues went to reduce our deficit.

The deficit today is at 1.2 percent of GDP, which is lower than the average of the last 40 years. In other words, we have told the American people that by keeping taxes low, we can grow the economy, and

by working with Congress to set priorities, we can be fiscally responsible and we can head toward balance. And that's exactly where we're headed.

Now the fundamental question is whether the United States Congress will work constructively with the administration to keep taxes low and to keep spending sound. I look forward to working with members of both parties to continue keeping this—keeping our fiscal house in order, to continue to head for a balanced budget. But it's going to require the Congress to show fiscal restraint, fiscal discipline. One of the reasons why the Constitution wisely gave the President the veto is to help them exercise fiscal discipline and fiscal constraint.

It's very important for Congress to also understand that they should not be trying to take money out of the pockets of the small-business owners and working people.

One of the reasons why this economy is robust is because taxes are low. And in order to keep making sure that this economy grows, we've got to keep them low. After all, people are working here in America. We've had 49 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth, which is a record. And we intend to keep breaking

that record by good fiscal policy here in Washington, DC.

I want to thank you all for your briefing. Thanks for coming by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:04 p.m. in Room 3015 of the New Executive Office Building.

Remarks in Miami, Florida October 12, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Thank you. Thank you for the warm welcome. It's great to be in Miami. I've been looking for my little brother. [*Laughter*] He must have finally found work. I thank—[*laughter*]. Just kidding, Jeb.

I thank the Center for Hemispheric Policy and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce for sponsoring this event. And I appreciate you all coming. I appreciate the support that you give for enterprise here in south Florida.

I know you know that—as business leaders and foreign policy thinkers, that one of the pivotal issues facing our country is expanding trade and investment. And that's what I want to talk to you about today. And it's a timely message because Congress has some important decisions coming up. I've made up my mind about the importance of trade and investment, and now Congress is going to have to make up its mind about trade and investment, especially when it comes to free trade agreements with Peru, Panama, and Colombia.

These agreements will level the playing fields for businesses, workers, and farmers here in the United States. These agreements will help our friends in neighborhoods, and help them lift them out of poverty. These agreements will counter the false populism promoted by some nations in the hemisphere. These agreements will strengthen the forces of freedom and de-

mocracy throughout the Americas. I urge the congressional leaders to pass these three Latin American agreements as soon as possible.

And I appreciate you giving me a chance to come here and explain why they're important.

I want to thank my friend Senator Mel Martinez for introducing me. I appreciate his willingness to serve in the United States Senate. I know this is a nonpartisan meeting, but let me just tell you, he's doing a fine job.

I want to thank three members from the congressional delegation who are here, the Diaz-Balart boys—Lincoln and Mario—as well as Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. I'm honored you all are here. Thanks for coming.

I appreciate so very much Manny Diaz for joining us today. Mr. Mayor, I'm honored you are here. I thank you for your time. I want to thank the other State—[*applause*—thank the State and local officials who have joined us. I really appreciate former Secretary Donna Shalala, who happens to be the president of the University of Miami, for sponsoring this event. I thank Hank Klein, the chairman of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, as well for hosting this. And I thank my friend Chuck Cobb, who's the chairman of the Florida Free Trade Area of the Americas, Inc., which is a group of citizens concerned about free trade.

We meet at an historic time for this country's economy. Last week, we learned that September was America's 49th consecutive month of job creation—that's the longest uninterrupted period of job growth on record. And just yesterday, we learned that the American economy set new records for exports in a single month. More exports support better and high-paying jobs, and that's important for our citizens to understand. People who work for companies which export have a higher paying job than someone who doesn't. And so I believe strongly, to make sure that the historic records we've set in the last couple of days continue, that we've got to expand trade.

In Miami, you know what I'm talking about. You see, you see the value of trade every day. This city is known as the "Gateway to the Americas." Your openness to Latin America has helped make this city a vibrant center of culture and commerce and enterprise. People who know something about Miami understand the importance of trade to this city's future. Last year, \$72 billion in trade passed through the Miami area, and nearly half of it went to our neighbors in the south. That trade helped the greater Miami economy grow at 6.7 percent in 2005; that's more than twice the national average. And the unemployment rate here has dropped to 4.1 percent; that is below the national average.

I think the case for trade is unmistakable in Miami, and we need to make that case all over the country. I've come to a place that has benefited from trade so others around the country can understand it can happen in their areas as well. Expanding trade and investment has been a commitment—longstanding commitment of the United States. I'm not the first President to ever stand up and say, we need to expand trade. As a matter of fact, Presidents from Eisenhower to Kennedy to Reagan and Clinton have worked to seize the opportunities of free and fair trade. Opening up foreign markets for America's goods and services has been a high priority of my

administration. In January 2001, America had free trade agreements in force with just three countries. Now we have agreements in force with 14 countries, including 7 in Latin America.

Unfortunately, if we can just talk about trade around America, I don't know what it's like here in Miami, but when you're discussing trade around America, you hear troubling signs. There is a protectionist sentiment that are—is beginning to gain strength in America and in Congress. Recent trade agreements have passed by slim margins. Deals that were really good for the American economy barely passed the Congress. Advocates of economic isolationism in Congress have claimed the agreements I've just talked about would be "bad for American workers." One Congressman offered this prediction: If the agreements passed, "U.S. college grads will increasingly see a future in flipping hamburgers." That's the kind of rhetoric we're dealing with when it comes to whether or not this Nation ought to be confident and open up markets for goods and services around the world.

The results of the agreements are beginning to come in, and they're proving the critics wrong. In the 4 years since we implemented a free trade agreement with Chile, American exports to that country have more than doubled. In the 4 years since we implemented a free trade agreement with Singapore, American exports to that country have increased by about 50 percent. And in just 1 year since we began implementing a free trade agreement with Central America and the Dominican Republic, American exports to that region have grown by 13 percent.

And meanwhile, the U.S. economy has continued to grow and job expansion has been strong and hourly wages are on the rise and the job market for college graduates is bright. When trade expands, American workers gain because our workers are making products for people around the

world who want to buy products that say “Made in the U.S.A.”

Congress now has an opportunity to build on the success by passing new free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, and Panama. Today, all three of these countries enjoy duty-free access to U.S. markets for virtually all their products. They’re shipping their goods our way, and most of those products enter America duty free. Yet when we ship our products their way, most of our products face significant tariffs. Our free trade agreements would knock down many of these barriers and level the playing field for our businesses and farmers and workers. Together, these agreements would expand access to 75 million new customers with a combined GDP of \$245 billion. This May, my administration and Democratic leaders in Congress came together to forge a bipartisan consensus to consider these trade deals. And now it is the time to move forward with these progrowth, prodemocracy agreements.

And the stakes are high. As Congress debates, people across the hemisphere are watching to see if America will uphold its commitment to free and fair trade. In a recent letter to congressional Democrats, former Secretary Shalala—and I thank you for your leadership on this issue—and dozens of her Democratic colleagues wrote this: “Latin America is up for grabs. We fully recognize that asking the United States Congress to vote on these trade agreements is politically charged. Nonetheless, rejecting these agreements would set back regional U.S. interests for a generation. We must not walk away now.”

Others who signed the letter include former Senators Bob Graham, Sam Nunn, and Bennett Johnston, as well as many others from the Clinton administration. Those who signed the letter are absolutely correct. Members of both parties in Congress should view these trade agreements for what they are, an historic opportunity to strengthen our economy at home and advance democracy and prosperity throughout

our hemisphere. And Congress should approve these agreements soon, so that people across the Americas can see the benefits.

The first new Latin American trade agreement that my administration completed is with Peru. This agreement has great promise because Peru has one of the fastest growing economies in South America. Last year alone, Peru’s economy expanded by 8 percent. And with greater prosperity in both our countries, trade between the United States and Peru has doubled over the past 3 years.

The free trade agreement with Peru would ignite even greater opportunities for both our nations. It would be especially beneficial to businesses and workers and farmers here at home. The free trade agreement would immediately eliminate most of Peru’s industrial tariffs as well as many of the barriers to U.S. agricultural exports. It would also provide new market access and fair treatment to U.S. companies that provide services and invest in Peru. Here’s what that would mean. If you’re a Miami company exporting electronics to Peru, you would go from paying thousands of dollars in tariffs on the products you shipped to no tariff at all. In other words, your product would become more competitive. It would make it more likely you’d be able to sell into a new market. It would instantly make the products affordable. It would give our businessperson more money to invest here at home. The workers would be more likely able to keep their jobs.

A free trade agreement with Peru would strengthen our partnership with an important democracy in South America. Last year, Peru held two rounds of free and fair elections. And through their representatives, the Peruvian people have made it clear they want to increase their ties to the United States. The Peruvian Legislature passed the free trade agreement by an overwhelming margin. And now the United States Congress should show America’s commitment in return by passing the Peru

agreement quickly and with a strong bipartisan majority.

The second of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration completed is with Colombia. Colombia is home to 44 million potential customers, more than the population of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina put together. After years of hardship, Colombia's economy is strong and growing, with 6.8 percent expansion last year alone. Colombia is now our fifth largest trading partner in Latin America. And Colombia is the largest market for U.S. agricultural exports in South America.

The free trade agreement would open up Colombia's growing economy to our producers. It would immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American industrial and consumer goods exports. It would provide significant new duty-free access for American crops. The effects would be far-reaching. In Colombia, families would enjoy higher standards of living thanks to more affordable American products and more reliable access to our markets. Here at home, about 8,000 U.S. companies that export to Colombia would find new buyers for their goods and services. And for the first time in history, they would be able to compete in Colombia on a level playing field.

The strategic implications of this agreement are as important as the economic benefits. Colombia is one of America's strongest allies in the Western Hemisphere. It has been under assault by a formidable network of terrorists and drug traffickers, which has put its democracy at risk. In recent years, Colombia's democratically elected President has taken courageous steps to stop drug traffickers and rein in paramilitary groups and enforce the law.

The United States has supported President Uribe's efforts through an initiative called Plan Colombia, which was launched by President Bill Clinton and strongly supported by my administration. The results are striking. Since 2000, kidnappings and ter-

rorist attacks and murders have all dropped substantially. Convictions have increased. Colombia has extradited hundreds of drug traffickers and terrorists to the United States. And the Colombian people are taking back their country from the narco-terrorists.

Some in Congress have expressed concern over violence in Colombia, particularly attacks on trade unionists. President Uribe takes these concerns seriously, and he has responded decisively. He's established an independent prosecutors unit to investigate and punish homicides against labor unionists. He's allowed the International Labor Organization to station a permanent representative in Bogota. He's worked to offer young Colombians better alternatives to a life of violence and drugs, including the new jobs and economic opportunities that would come from a trade agreement with the United States.

Colombia's record is not perfect, but the country is clearly headed in the right direction and is asking for our help. Both Houses of the Colombian Legislature have expressed overwhelming support for the trade agreement with the United States. And now they're waiting to see if we will uphold our end of the deal. If Congress were to reject this committed ally, we would damage America's credibility in the region and make other countries less willing to cooperate in the future. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada put it, "If the United States turns its back on its friends in Colombia, this will set back our cause far more than any Latin American dictator could hope to achieve." By its bold actions, Colombia has proved itself worthy of America's support, and I urge the United States Congress to pass this vital legislation as soon as possible.

The third of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration completed is with Panama. Panama has the fastest growing economy in Central America, with a growth rate of more than 8 percent last year. Our nations have strong

ties dating back to the construction of the Panama Canal. Trade has always been a key part of our relationship. Last year alone, our nations exchanged nearly \$3 billion worth of goods.

The free trade agreement with Panama will build on this vibrant trade relationship. It will immediately eliminate tariffs on 88 percent of our industrial and consumer goods exports to Panama. It will open a new market for American farmers and ranchers, including fruit growers here in Florida. It will increase access to Panama's service sector, including its key financial services market. It will open opportunities for American businesses to participate in the Panama Canal expansion project. This is a good agreement, and we will continue to work closely with Congress and the Government of Panama to address the issues necessary to get it approved.

Collectively, these three trade agreements have the potential to boost our economy and strengthen our allies and spread prosperity throughout our region. We want people to be prosperous in our neighborhood. It's in the interests of the United States that prosperity spread throughout the—Latin America and South America. And yet many of our citizens feel uneasy about competition, and they worry that trade will cost jobs. You know, I understand why. I understand that if you're forced to change a job halfway through a career, it can be painful for your family. I know that. And that is why I'm a big believer in trade adjustment assistance that helps Americans make the transition from one job to the next.

In other words, I believe there is a role for the Federal Government, and that is, when a person loses a job because of trade, there's help for that person and family, help to get that person a new education—the community college system, for example, to be able to train that person for jobs which actually exist. Additional college enhances a worker's productivity. And when your productivity is enhanced, so your

wages go up. And so rather than focus on—only on the risks or the negative, I think it's important for this country to focus on the much larger benefits of trade. We'll help those whose—lost a job because of trade. But it's important for our country to understand, trade yields prosperity, and prosperity means people will more likely be able to find work.

In the debate ahead, Members of Congress should keep in mind the American businesses and workers and farmers who will gain, who will benefit from a level playing field for their goods and services. They should keep in mind that American consumers will enjoy more choices and better prices that come with trade. They should keep in mind the millions in our hemisphere who will be lifted out of poverty. And above all, Members of Congress should have confidence in the ability of the United States to compete in the world. And they should show that confidence by approving these trade agreements with bipartisan votes.

In addition to these agreements, my administration will continue working to promote trade in other ways. At the national level, we will work closely with Congress to pass a landmark free trade agreement with South Korea. This agreement alone is projected to add more than \$10 billion to our economy, and like our agreements in Latin America, it would strengthen our relationship with a democratic ally in a critical part of the world. At the regional level, we're seeking broad trade agreements in the Americas and Asia Pacific. And at the global level, we're pushing hard for a successful conclusion to the Doha round of trade talks, which has the potential to lower trade barriers across the world.

All of this will bring us closer to a world that lives in liberty, a world that grows in prosperity, a world that trades in freedom. In our hemisphere, that means an Americas where democratic nations work together to advance peace and justice and security; where the opportunity to succeed is as real

in Lima as it is in Los Angeles, in Bogota as it is in Boston; where the opportunity for people to realize dreams is just as real in Panama City, Panama, as it is in Panama City, Florida. [Laughter]

And the vision I have for our hemisphere includes a free and democratic Cuba. [Applause] Thank you. Sit down. Thank you.

Audience member. Viva Bush! [Laughter]

The President. I'm not through yet. [Laughter]

In Havana, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing an end. As Cuba enters a period of transition, nations throughout the hemisphere and the world must insist on free speech, free assembly; they must insist that the prisoners in Cuba be free, and ultimately, we must insist on free and competitive elections. [Applause] *Sientese.* [Laughter]

I appreciate all you're doing to help make the vision of a free and prosperous Americas possible. That's why I've come to thank you. As business leaders who invest in new products and trade with your neighbors, you add to the vitality and dynamism of this region, and that helps our

country. As scholars, people who study how to advance freedom and peace and prosperity, you've helped people understand the benefits of free trade, and I appreciate what you're doing.

I ask you to do one thing more, and that is to make sure your voices are heard to Members of the United States Congress. You don't need to worry about these three; don't waste your time. [Laughter] But there are people who need to hear from you. I would ask you to tell them that the free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, and Panama are essential to our economy. I would ask you to remind them they are essential to our security, and I'd ask you to tell them that they're important for our moral interests.

Thank you for giving me a chance to come by. I appreciate you. *Que Dios los bendiga.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. at the Radisson Miami Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba.

Statement on Representative Ralph S. Regula's Decision Not To Seek Reelection October 12, 2007

Ralph Regula is a distinguished public servant who has dedicated his life to helping the citizens of Ohio's 16th Congressional District and our Nation. As a sailor, teacher, and legislator, he has worked tirelessly to make America stronger.

While serving for over three decades in Congress, Ralph has returned weekly to his family farm and never lost sight of the issues that matter most to the people of Ohio. He has long had a commitment to creating jobs, strengthening schools, sup-

porting small businesses, and protecting Ohio's natural treasures. As the longest continuously serving U.S. Representative in his State's history, Ralph will retire with the respect of his peers and the appreciation of his constituents.

Laura and I are grateful for his service and appreciate his friendship. We wish Ralph, Mary, and the entire Regula family all the best.

The President's Radio Address *October 13, 2007*

Good morning. This is an historic time for our Nation's economy. Last week, we learned that September was America's 49th consecutive month of job creation—the longest uninterrupted period of job growth on record. And on Thursday, we learned that the American economy set a new record for exports in a single month. Millions of American jobs depend on exports. More exports support better and higher paying jobs, and to keep our economy expanding, we need to keep expanding trade.

This week, I traveled to Miami to discuss the importance of trade and to call on Congress to pass new free trade agreements. In January of 2001, America had trade agreements in force with three countries. Now we have agreements in force with 14 countries, including 7 in Latin America. And Congress now has an opportunity to increase America's access to markets in our hemisphere by passing three more free trade agreements in Latin America with Peru, Colombia, and Panama.

These three agreements will expand America's access to 75 million customers. These 75 million customers are the equivalent of the populations of California, Colorado, Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, and Massachusetts combined.

The first of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Peru. This agreement would level the playing field for American businesses and workers and farmers. While almost all Peruvian exports to the United States now enter duty-free, most American exports to Peru face significant tariffs. The free trade agreement would immediately eliminate most of Peru's industrial tariffs, as well as many of its barriers to U.S. agriculture exports, and make American products more affordable and more competitive in that country.

The second of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Colombia. Colombia is now our fifth largest trading partner in Latin America and the largest market for U.S. agricultural exports in South America. The free trade agreement with Colombia would immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American industrial and consumer exports. It would provide significant new duty-free access for American crops, and for the first time in history, U.S. companies would be able to compete on a level playing field.

The third of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Panama. This agreement will immediately eliminate tariffs on 88 percent of our industrial and consumer goods exports to Panama. It will increase access for American farmers and ranchers, and it will open opportunities for American businesses to participate in the multibillion dollar project to expand the Panama Canal.

As we work to pass these trade agreements with nations in Latin America, we'll also work to pass a landmark free trade agreement with an ally in the Far East, South Korea. This agreement would open up one of the world's most powerful economies to more American goods and services exports. This agreement is projected to add more than \$10 billion to America's economy. And like our agreements in Latin America, this agreement would strengthen our relationship with a democratic partner in a critical part of the world.

I know many Americans feel uneasy about new competition and worry that trade will cost jobs. So the Federal Government is providing substantial funding for trade adjustment assistance that helps Americans make the transition from one job to the next. We are working to improve Federal job training programs, and we are

providing strong support for America's community colleges, where people of any age can go to learn new skills for a better, high-paying career.

Expanding trade will help our economy grow. By passing these trade agreements, we will also serve America's security and moral interests. We will strengthen our ties with our friends. We will help counter the false populism promoted by hostile nations. And we will help young democracies show their people that freedom, openness, and the rule of law are the surest path to a better life. So I call on Congress to act

quickly and get these agreements to my desk.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at Stribling Packaging, Inc., in Rogers, Arkansas October 15, 2007

The President. One of the reasons I've stopped by this facility here in Arkansas is to remind people that small business is the backbone of our economy. These good folks are making a living; more importantly, they're providing labor for people here in this facility. And that's what we want. We want people working in America. We've gone through now 49 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth; that's a record for the United States.

And one of the reasons why is our small-business owners are working hard. And another reason why is we've got people in the United States Congress who understand the role of government, and that is not to get in the way of business, but it's to create an environment where businesses flourish. And when people are buying this

man's boxes, it also means they're buying product at the retail level.

And so I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by.

Bill Stribling. Absolutely.

The President. And appreciate the opportunity to meet your workers. As I was walking around, I was shaking the workers' hands. He said, "That's good that you're meeting them. After all, they're the reason this business is growing." And I appreciate a man who understands that. Thanks for your hospitality.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Stribling, president, Stribling Packaging, Inc.

Remarks on the Federal Budget and a Question-and-Answer Session in Rogers

October 15, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I may just take off my jacket, if that's all right. [Laughter] I hope I didn't spill any sauce on my shirt after I had barbecue at the Whole Hog. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. Thanks for giving me a chance to share some thoughts with you about what's going on in Washington, and then I'll be glad to answer some questions, if you have any.

First, I do want to say thank you to John Paul Hammerschmidt for a lot of things, one, being a good friend of my dad's and—but more importantly, setting such a fine example for what public service should be about, which is honesty, integrity, and the willingness to serve something greater than himself. John Paul, I'm honored you're here; thanks for—[applause].

And you got followed by a pretty good fellow there in John Boozman. I'm proud to call him friend. I hope you're proud to call him Congressman, because he's doing a fine job. And I—[applause].

I want to thank the mayor of Rogers, Steve Womack. Thanks for your service to your community; thanks for being in the United States military. I appreciate you joining me for lunch and enjoyed our conversation, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for what you're doing.

I want to thank members of the state-house who are here and local government who's here. I want to thank Raymond Burns, the president and CEO of the chamber of commerce, for hosting this event. I hope you find it to be informative. One of the things the President has to do is travel around the country explaining the situation and why things are happening, at least from my perspective. I'm looking forward to explaining it.

I do appreciate very much the members of the chamber of commerce who've enabled me to come by to visit with you. I want to thank the chancellor of the mighty University of Arkansas, John White, for being here today. He hosted—the guy keeps pointing to his Razorback—I understand. Look, I'm just a simple Texas guy who—[laughter]—who knows full well that it was a lot of times an unpleasant experience for the Longhorns to come up here and play. [Laughter] But we're not going to talk about those old games, are we? We're talking about the future.

I appreciate Bill Stribling. He's the president of Stribling Packaging. I went by earlier today to his business, and I had a chance to say hello to his employees. I did so because I wanted to remind America that in order for this economy to remain strong, we got to be mindful of the needs of small-business owners. He's expanding his job base, and he's like thousands of other entrepreneurs around the country who are wondering whether or not the Government is going to put policy in place that could affect his capacity to grow. And I want to spend a little time talking about that.

We've actually had an historic couple of days. We're now in our 49th consecutive month of uninterrupted job growth. That's the longest—[applause]. That's a record. That's the longest number of months in a row where new jobs have been created. And that's because our small businesses are doing well. And then the fundamental question is, are we wise enough to keep policy in place to keep the small-business sector strong?

The worst thing we could do is run up taxes as this economy is growing. It's the worst thing we could do to the small-business

owner, is to change the depreciation schedules or raise individual rates, particularly if you're a subchapter S or a limited partnership. And yet when you listen carefully to the budget debate, that's what you're fixing to get stuck with: a tax raise. Unless, of course, I prevent them from raising your taxes, which I fully intend to do.

The other historic fact was that our deficit as a percent of GDP is at 1.2 percent. Those are just numbers, but to put it in perspective, that's lower than the 40-year average. In other words, we're beginning to get control of that deficit. And the reason why is, is that a growing economy yields additional tax revenues, and then when you work with Congress to set priorities on how we spend your money—in other words, we're fiscally sound on the expense side—you can reduce your deficit without raising taxes. And that's what we proved is possible. The deficit is 163 billion. That's about 60-some-odd-billion lower than we anticipated in February of this year, because we're growing the economy.

And we've also set priorities. One of the hardest things in Washington, DC, to do that small businesses have to do all the time is to set priorities. Every program sounds like a great program, but without setting priorities, the temptation is to overspend. The job of the President is to make sure that we don't overspend, and at the same time, keep taxes low. That's why I submitted a budget that will balance the Federal budget by 2012 without raising taxes.

Now, that's not what the leadership in the Congress wants me to do. They want the executive branch to accept an increase in spending over the next 5 years to \$205 billion. To put that in perspective, that's \$1,300 in new spending every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year for the next 5 years. That's about \$13,000, as long as it took me to say that—[laughter]—\$205 billion of additional spending will mean they're going to

have to raise taxes to pay for it. I think that would be bad for the economy. I don't think it makes sense to be taking money out of the pockets of the individuals in America or money out of the pockets of small businesses, particularly if we set priorities, we can fund that which we need to fund.

And so you're fixing to see what they call a fiscal showdown in Washington. One of the reasons why they—[applause]—the Congress gets to propose, and if it doesn't meet needs, as far I'm concerned, I get to veto. And that's precisely what I intend to do.

I wish Congress would get me some appropriations bills. I don't know if the people in Rogers understand our calendar, but the fiscal year ended on September the 30th. And yet I hadn't seen one appropriations bill. I think we're, like, 15 days into the fiscal year, and not one appropriations bill has made it to my desk.

Congress needs to be responsible with your money, and they need to pass these appropriations bills, one at a time. And then we can work together to see whether or not they make fiscal sense for the United States. I don't think it makes sense, though, for a new Congress to come in and make promises about how they're going to be wise about what they're going to do with your money and get bills to my desk and not being able to perform.

So I'm looking forward to getting back to Washington and remind people in the United States Congress that they said they were going to do a better job with getting these bills to my desk, and I'm going to remind them they hadn't got one yet. Not one bill has come out of United States Congress that appropriates your taxpayers' money.

Recently, I did make a decision to veto a piece of legislation. I want to spend a little time talking about why, and then I'll be glad to answer some questions. There's a—what's called SCHIP—it's a Children's Health Insurance Program—made it to my

desk, and I vetoed it. And I'm going to tell you why—[*applause*—let me tell you why.

First of all, it's important for our citizens to understand that we spend \$35 billion a year for poor children's health care through Medicaid—\$35 billion. So if you hear rhetoric out of Washington saying we're not taking care of poor children in America, they're just not reminding you of the fact that because of your generosity, we're spending 35 billion a year.

Secondly, a program was created to help poorer children with struggling families. When I was the Governor of Texas, I supported it, and as President, I support it. But the piece of legislation I got doesn't focus on the poorer children. Many Americans don't understand, there are a half a million kids eligible for this program that aren't getting help under the program.

The bill sent to me didn't say, we're going to focus on those half-million that are eligible; the bill sent to me said, we can expand eligibility for the program up to \$83,000. Now, I want you to think about that. If you're making up to 83,000 in certain States, you're eligible for the program, and yet half a million poorer children aren't being helped. My attitude is, let's help the poorer children, let's make sure the program does what it's supposed to do.

Now, there's some in Washington, DC, who genuinely believe that the best health care policy is to expand the role of the Federal Government. I don't subscribe to that. I think the best health care policy is to encourage private medicine, is to make sure the decisions are between doctors and patients. And yet if you're saying you can make up to \$83,000 and be a part of this program, it sounds like to me, somebody wants to extend the reach of the Federal Government into medicine. That's what it sounds like to me.

Another factor that came into my thinking was not only a half a million children not being taken care of under the program and not only is the eligibility requirements

being expanded way beyond the scope of the program—which sounds like there's a nationalization of medicine going on here—but in six or seven States, more money is spent on adults than children. In other words, these States have taken that money and hadn't used it for its initial purpose.

So I vetoed the bill. The House is going to decide whether or not they're going to sustain my veto, and if they should sustain my veto, I call upon the leadership in the Congress to come to the table and let us make sure we get money to those families that are—that the program was intended to help first and foremost.

And so that's what I wanted to report to you. I thank you for giving me a chance to come and say hello. I'll be glad to answer some questions if you have any. And if not, I can keep talking, believe me. [*Laughter*]

You got one? Good. Thank you. Yes, sir. Yell it. If I don't like it, I'll just interpret it. [*Laughter*] Yes.

President's Values

Q. First of all, thank you for being here. And I've got two children. I was talking with my 15-year-old son about what would be a great question to ask the President had I—if I had the opportunity, and we settled on this. In this day of information that's so accessible to all of us, if you're a 15-year-old looking for the truth—which is often hard to get—an adult looking for the truth in election time or nonelection time, where would you recommend someone that's hungry for the truth to go to get the truth about potential elected officials, programs to support, that kind of information?

The President. Yes, it's a great question. I guess if I was advising a 15-year-old child where to seek the truth, I would say, go to your mother and father, is where I would ask them to seek the truth. And that's really one of the questions our society faces: Will a mom and dad be available for a child? Now, we all have different

views of the truth. That's fine, I understand that. But the most important responsibility for a mom and dad is to really love that child with all their heart and all their soul and all their might.

And so as far as you finding the truth, hopefully, you're wise enough and old enough and experienced enough to be able to discern that which is true and not true. I'm sure you are. You wouldn't have come here to listen had you not been interested in coming up—getting enough data points so you could come to your own conclusions.

That's the great thing about our society, is that we expect our individual citizens to be involved, and you can reach your own conclusion you want to reach. And it's up to people like me to explain it as simply as possible so that, hopefully, you can understand. If I were advising somebody running for my job, or any job, I'd explain the philosophy behind my beliefs. See, I think what the American people really need to know is, what do you believe in, in order for you to be able to make the wise kind of judgment on who to listen to.

I'd be glad to share some of my beliefs. I believe in the universality of freedom. So when you hear me talking about foreign policy, I want you to keep in mind the principle that I believe is true, and that I believe there's an Almighty, and I believe a gift of the Almighty to each man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth, regardless of their religion or the color of their skin, is liberty. That's what I believe.

And a second belief I have is that you can spend your money better than the government can. We have needs in Washington. I mean, we've got to fund a military; we got to fund help for the poor. But I do believe that the government has got to understand that the more money you have in your pocket, the better off our economy can be, and that the more money you have in your pocket, the more likely it is that you'll be able to realize hopes and dreams for your family because you set the priorities with your money. And

there's just a fundamental difference of opinion.

So to answer your question, I'd be asking people, what's your value system like? And then, hopefully, you're wise enough to discern.

Okay. Yes, sir.

Transportation

Q. I have a transportation question for you—Raymond Burns with the Rogers-Lowell Chamber. For business to continue to grow in northwest Arkansas, we're going to have to have some help with our transportation infrastructure. Apparently, that's our number-one issue. Given that we collect taxes on gasoline by the gallon and fuel efficiency means there will be less taxes collected, going forward, what will the priority for transportation help be, sir?

The President. The—step one, in order to make sure that that which we collect gets spent equitably, is to make sure that the committees in the House and Senate that appropriate the monies don't take a lot of the money as special projects. In other words, what happens is, is that the Public Works Committee is the largest committee in the House. Are you on the Public Works, Boozman? Yes. [*Laughter*] It sounds like I better be diplomatic in the answer. [*Laughter*] So what happens is, these members say, "Okay, I want this for my district; I want this for my district; I want this for my district," so they get a unanimous vote out of the committee—was it unanimous last time? Yes, that's what I thought. [*Laughter*] And then—so the money isn't equitably distributed. So step one is to make sure that the committees do their jobs the right way.

Step two is to give States flexibility so that if they so choose—which I think exists today—that if you decide to have a highway for truckers paid for by fees, that you're encouraged to do so.

I mean, you're right; fuel efficiency is going to make it harder to collect gasoline taxes. Therefore, the next question is,

what's the next best user fee? In other words, gasoline tax is a user fee. Is there a better way to collect money, a better user-fee system? And one thing, I think, is that if you've got a freeway, you ought to be able to parallel that freeway with a way to collect user fees, a toll way. And so people have a choice. You know, a trucker, if he's interested in moving through northwest Arkansas in expedition fashion, will pay a little extra money to be able to do so.

My attitude is, so long as the taxpayer has got a free alternative, I don't see why it makes—why it's a problem to have the paying option available as a way to collect user fees to modernize the highway system. And so that's an idea for you right there.

Yes, sir.

No Child Left Behind Act

Q. Mr. President, first of all, I'd like to commend you on your steadfastness in your faith and not letting anybody waver you on your faith with key political issues and key principles.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I think that's very, very commendable. Second of all, as a private preschool administrator, with your No Child Left Behind initiative, is there any possibility of funds for grants or stipends or something to utilize for private institutions as well as private preschools?

The President. Probably not. Anyway—[laughter]. Let me explain No Child Left Behind. We're spending money at the Federal level in public schools. And it seems like it makes sense that we ask the question whether or not the money is being spent wisely. In other words, if you're spending money trying to help a child get the fundamentals necessary to advance in life, I strongly believe that it makes sense, on your behalf, that we say, "Why don't you show us whether a child can read and write and add and subtract."

I think it's important to set goals with high expectations. I don't think it's too

much to ask the school systems of America to teach a child to read by third grade and keep him at grade level. I don't think it's too much to ask, unless you don't believe every child can read—has the capacity to learn to read, I mean. In other words, if you believe certain children can't learn, then I can understand why you support a system that just shuffles them through. But that's unacceptable to me, to have a system that said—doesn't demand accountability.

And so the No Child Left Behind Act says, you bet there will be Federal expenditures—not nearly as much as the State; after all, it's a local responsibility. But in return for whatever money we spend, we want to know whether or not a child can read at grade level by the third grade, and if not, we expect there to be remedial help.

And that's where the private sector can come in, in terms of supplemental services. That means we're going to use the accountability system. In other words, we're going to measure. You bet we are. We're going to find out whether a child can read, write, and add and subtract. And if they're coming up short on standards, then there's money available for extra help early, before it's too late. And that's the place where private providers can compete with the public school system, in order to help after-school—in after-school programs, tutorial programs.

There's a lot of objections to No Child Left Behind; I understand that. People say, "How dare you measure." My attitude is, you got to measure. To solve a problem, you got to understand whether or not we have a problem in the first place. People say, "Well, they're just teaching the test." Uh-uh, we're teaching a child to read so they can pass a reading test.

I happen to believe this piece of legislation is an important piece of civil rights legislation. If you're interested in making sure our society provides hope for everybody, then you want to make sure every single child in America has the capacity

to read, write, and add and subtract at grade level. That's what you want if you're interested in having an America that holds out its promise for every single citizen.

And that's the basis of No Child Left Behind. I believe in local control of schools. That's up to you to chart the path to excellence, but it's up to us to make sure your money is spent wisely.

You know, we have an achievement gap in America, and that means our—white kids are reading at a certain level here at—in the fourth grade, and African Americans or Latino kids are reading down here. That's not good enough for our country. And that achievement gap is beginning to grow. It's amazing what happens when you raise standards and hold people to account.

And so my—any effort to weaken No Child Left Behind Act will get a Presidential veto. I believe this piece of legislation is important, and I believe it's hopeful, and I believe it's necessary to make sure we got a educated group of students who can compete in the global economy when they get older.

Yes, sir.

Alternative Fuel Sources/Border Security/Immigration Reform

Q. Mr. President, I'm a third-generation dairy farmer. We milk 300 cows out west of town. And we're very concerned with immigration and the ag jobs and also the economic impact that the ethanol—the Government subsidy on ethanol production has had on feed costs. And agriculture is still number one in Arkansas, even with all this fantastic economic growth that we've got in this area.

The President. Right, thank you, sir.

Q. Could you please comment, sir?

The President. I will. First of all, I'm guilty on promoting ethanol. And the reason why is, is because I think it's in our interests to diversify away from oil. And the reason why it's—I know that's hard for a Texan to say. But the reason why we've got to diversify away from oil is that we

end up with dependency on oil from certain parts of the world where people don't particularly like us. And secondly, given the globalization of the world today and disruption of oil, you know, in one part of the world is going to cause the price of your gasoline to go up. And so I promoted ethanol and still believe it's important for the future.

I'm also promoting research that will enable us to make ethanol out of something other than corn because I fully understand the constraints on corn. I mean, I hear it everywhere I go, that the people like yourself who rely upon reasonable feed prices know full well that demand for corn as a result of the demand for ethanol going up is costing your—making it harder for you to make a living. And one of these days we're going to be able to make ethanol out of wood chips or switchgrass. It's called cellulosic ethanol. And we're spending a lot of money to develop the technologies that will enable us to use something other than corn.

The first part of the question was immigrant—immigration. As you know, I'm a person who believes strongly in comprehensive immigration reform. I agree with our citizens who say that we've got to do a better job of enforcing the laws of the country. And the laws of the country is, you know, you can't employ somebody who is here illegally—knowingly employ somebody who is here illegally—and that you've got a border for a reason, a Border Patrol for a reason, to enforce the border. And I'm for that, and I supported congressional efforts to modernize our border, and we are. It's a long, hard border to enforce, but we've doubled the Border Patrol; we're using technologies to find people sneaking in here.

But I also recognize this: that in order to truly, effectively work the border in a way that most Americans want, you've got to have a program that will enable somebody to come here and legally work on

a temporary basis, because if you're somebody who's got a starving family at home and you're interested in putting food on the table, you'll go to great lengths to come to America to do jobs Americans aren't doing. And so therefore, in order for us to have good border policy, it makes sense to have a worker policy: a temporary-worker plan with verifiable, tamper-proof cards to allow somebody to come here to do a job Americans aren't willing to do.

You got a lot of people up here that are working jobs Americans aren't willing to do. There are not a lot of Americans who want to pluck chickens. I don't know what they're doing on your place, but I'm sure it's hard work, and it's hard to find workers. But if you find somebody who's got a hungry family, it's amazing how hard they'll work. And so it seems like to me that in order to have good border policy, we got to have a tamper-proof card available for temporary workers to come.

And then the big issue is, what are we going to do with the 11 million people already here? Well, you can't kick them out. Some people say, you can kick them out. I don't think you can kick them out. I don't think it's realistic policy. On the other hand, I think it's a mistake to have instant citizenship. The reason I don't believe you should have instant citizenship is because it will cause the next 11 million to want to come. And we're trying to make sure they have an orderly immigration policy.

And so I supported the plan in the Senate that gave people an opportunity over time to prove their worth as a citizen, to show that they pay taxes and were—they had the ability to be a constructive citizen. Give them a chance to get at the back at the line. That's what I thought we ought to do. But it didn't pass, and it was a mistake that the Congress didn't pass comprehensive immigration reform. That's why it's still an issue. That's why the President comes to speak in Rogers, and he stands up and says, "What are you going to do about the problem?" Congress, by passing

on the problem, obviously means this is going to be around for a while.

This debate needs to be constructed in a way that upholds the proud traditions of America. We are a land of immigrants. Whether or not some of us want to admit it, this is a country that was founded by immigrants. And many in this hall's parents or grandparents were immigrants to the United States. And when people come to our country to work hard and realize dreams, it renews our soul, it makes us a better place. And so however this debate is played out here in Rogers or anywhere else, it needs to be conducted by treating people with dignity and people with honor.

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Proud member of the VFW.

Presidential Election

Q. Yes, sir. I was sitting—I had the honor of sitting up front when you addressed the national convention of VFW in Kansas City.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. After all—

The President. Were you the guy that was sound asleep? [Laughter]

Q. No, sir. I'm not the guy.

The President. Okay, good. [Laughter]

Q. After all of the Presidential hopefuls had paraded through for 3 days before you got there and you gave your wonderful speech, the straw poll throughout the entire room, sir, was that we wish you could run for another 4 years.

The President. Thank you. Yes. Well, I can't, and it's time for new blood. After 18—15 more months, I'm going to sprint to the finish; you don't have to worry about that.

Q. Okay, sir.

The President. I'm going to give it my all. And there's nothing better for a democracy than to renew itself by elections and new leadership. So anyway, thanks for saying it. Plus, I'd be single. [Laughter]

*President's Commission on Care for
America's Returning Wounded Warriors*

Q. Mr. President, we all thank you for your Wounded Warriors Commission——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——on a national basis. The final report in July—31 July to you from that wonderful Commission headed by Senator Bob Dole was absolutely the future bible for Veterans Affairs and veterans' handling throughout the United States. Sir, thank you again for being a veterans advocate number one.

The President. Thank you, sir. Yes, thanks. You're kind to say that. Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala are going to be at the White House tomorrow. And as the person who have asked these brave young men and women to go into combat, I feel a special obligation to make sure that our veterans, particularly those who've served under my watch, get the absolute best care. I'm—I marvel—isn't it interesting, by the way, it's the first military question—just an observation point—[laughter]—I marvel at our military, and I marvel at the kids who are in the military. Not only kids, but—at 62, you can call them “kids”—61, you can call them “kids.”

We've got a military of highly trained, highly skilled people who understand the stakes of the struggle between ideologues who murder to achieve their objectives and those of us who want there to be long-term peace. The reenlistment rates are remarkable. The number of people willing to say, “I want to go back in to serve my country and to the theater in this global struggle,” it's just amazing.

And therefore, we as a government have a solemn duty to, one, support their families, and two, when they come out as veterans, is to give them what they need—get them what they need, to make sure if they're wounded they can get back on their feet. Give them what they need, if they've got posttraumatic stress syndrome, the help, the mental help.

These are remarkable citizens, and my commitment is very strong to our veterans. And I thank you for bringing it up. And I asked Bob Dole and Donna Shalala to make sure that if there was any bureaucratic obstacles between somebody going from DOD to the Veterans Affairs, that we identified them and came up—come up with solutions to make sure our kids, our troops have what they need. And that's what we're going to do.

So thanks for bringing it up, and thanks for serving. Appreciate the example you set.

Veterans Administration

Q. ——Rogers. I'm a Vietnam veteran, and here comes your second question——

The President. Did they name this city after you? [Laughter]

Q. Did they, Mayor? [Laughter]

The President. I don't think so.

Q. Here's your second question about the military.

The President. Okay.

Q. As a wounded Vietnam veteran, come back, I go over to the VA hospital, and I've seen it in Fayetteville, the remarkable money that's been placed on the veterans of building that hospital up to take care of us. And I love it. But I had a time period there where after the war was over with, the conflict was over with—of which we're going to come through too—it seemed like we were forgotten. Is the administration or the Government not going to forget these people that's over in Iraq that has stood over there for many times——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——and went back—if you could answer that.

But I also want to say, thank you very much for being my President for the last 7 years.

The President. Thank you, sir. Yes. There's a fundamental attitudinal difference, it seems like to me, now than when you served. One of the main reasons why is because we have a volunteer army.

And the fundamental question facing policymakers is, how do you make sure that that Volunteer Army is robust and well-trained? And the answer is, pay people well, but also remember that the spouse makes a big decision as to whether or not people are willing to serve or at least stay in that Volunteer Army or serve in the first place.

And that's why we've improved housing. And that's why we've made sure that a spouse can communicate with his or her loved one on a real-time basis if they're in Iraq or Afghanistan. In other words, there's a lot of effort that goes into making sure that this Government takes care of the family members.

And part of making sure that we remain a volunteer army is to make sure that the Veterans Administration is well-organized and treats people with respect and the programs address the veterans' needs. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

And that's precisely what this man was talking about. He said, we put together a Commission to make sure that we addressed any shortfalls in the Veterans Administration. It's the six—they've got six points in there that make a lot of sense. For example, you don't want your people having to argue against your own Government about whether or not they receive a certain level of disability. You might have had to do that. Well, we're going to try to make sure the process is not adversarial for our veterans. After all, they serve; they volunteered to serve.

And so you're giving me a chance to say what I really tried to say for this fellow over here, and that is, you bet we'll support our veterans. One, we owe it to them. But two, in order to make sure this Volunteer Army is robust and can continue to be active in this global war against these ideologues and strong enough to be able to do it, we got to say to somebody who's going in, when you come out, you're going to get the respect and the support you need.

Thank you.
Yes, sir.

Federal Aviation Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I want to say, thank you very much for taking your time to come to northwest Arkansas. The people in this room really appreciate it. It means a lot to us, and we're very honored and privileged by your presence. I want to tell you that, first of all.

The President. Thank you. Glad to be here.

Q. Second of all, I wanted to talk to you about House bill 1125, on the House side—the Senate bill is Senate bill 65. I have a brother; his name is Robert Barnett. He lives in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. He's fixing to lose his job—

The President. I don't want to interrupt you, but I have no earthly idea what those numbers mean. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. It has to do with the pilots losing their jobs at turning age 60, the—

The President. The what?

Q. The commercial airline pilots—they're losing their jobs—that are turning age 60. And those bills reflect the policy. And I know Marion—Mary Peters and Marion Blakey have endorsed the age change, but we're losing over 200 pilots a month in this country. And they can go to foreign airline carriers and fly in the United States. We let people of 65—these pilots have lost their pensions. They're—most of them are military trained—

The President. Yes.

Q. —we've spent over \$2 million each. They're in good physical shape, and they want to keep their jobs. They've got kids in college; they need the incomes. Just wanted to get your response on that, sir.

The President. Well, I'm glad you told me Mary Peters is for it. If she's for it, I'm probably going to be for it too, since I named her as head of the Transportation Department. I'll be frank with you—this

may come as an admission that you probably never heard a President hear—it hadn't made it to my desk yet. I'm really not sure about the issue, but I'll look into it. I have all the respect for Mary Peters, and if she said she supports raising the age—is that what you told me she said—I bet it's going to happen. At least I bet you she'll have my support.

One of the things in a complex environment like the Presidency is, you got to surround your people—surround the President, or surround myself, with people whose judgment you trust. And I listen to my Cabinet Secretaries, and I bring them into the Oval Office. They've got access to me. They've got to be able to come in and say, "Here's what I believe." The temptation of politics is for somebody to walk in when you're not looking so good, and walk in the Oval Office and say, "Man, you're looking beautiful," when you're not. You got to have Cabinet Secretaries who can walk in and say, "Here's what's on my mind." And I bet you if I ask Mary and she gives me the reason why she's for it, I bet you I support it.

And so thanks for bringing that up.

Yes, ma'am. Let's get a little diversity here. Yes, get up there.

U.S. National Guard and Reserve Deployments/War on Terror

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. No.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. I don't think the National Guard is close to being the Regular Army. A matter of fact, they have been a integral part of working alongside the Army.

There will be no chance for a draft under my watch. I'm against a draft. I don't think we need a draft. I'm a strong supporter of the Volunteer Army. I am for making sure that our Guard ends up with rotations that are known. In other words, we got to make sure that when we make

a promise to somebody in the Guard, that if you're in for a year, you're out for a certain set period of time. I am for that.

The Regular Army is carrying the bulk of this fight, and the Guard is being a very important part of helping. A couple of things about the Guard. One is that if you're an employer here giving a Guard member or a Reserve member a chance to go to help this country secure itself, I thank you. You're making a vital contribution to the security of the United States of America. And I do appreciate our Guard a lot. I appreciate what they've done. I appreciate the sacrifices they and their families have made.

And those sacrifices are necessary because we face an enemy that would like to harm us again. And we've got a two-prong strategy to protect you. You got to just understand that after September the 11th, I made up my mind I would do everything in my power to protect the American people. Secondly—[applause]. And on the one hand, that means finding these people before they come and hurt us. In other words, defeat them overseas so they can't come here to hurt us. That means—and so I just want to explain some of the policies. That means we've got to have good intelligence sharing to find out where they are hiding and have the flexibility and the desire to go rout them out of their hiding places, to bring them to justice before they come and hurt us again.

Believe me, they want to. It's one of the lessons of September the 11th, is that while we grew up thinking everything was fine, that we could be protected by oceans, the enemy came and killed 3,000 of our people and others from other nations on our soil. So I think a lot about how to protect you. And that's why I think it's very important that we have techniques that protect your civil liberties, but at the same time, listen to known Al Qaida folks and try to get to figure out what they're doing.

People have got to understand that the programs we'll put in place will protect

your right as an American citizen, but if you're talking to Al Qaida, we want to know why, in order to protect the American people. It makes sense for us, when we capture one of these folks on the battlefield, one of these extremists, a person who murders to advance an ideology that is so foreign to America that sometimes we just dismiss it as implausible, that we ought to have techniques available to find out what they know without torture. See, what I'm talking about is a lot of what you're reading in the newspapers. But what we're doing is all aimed to protect you, to get information, actionable intelligence so we can move.

This is a war that we're not used to in America. We're not fighting a nation-state. We're fighting a movement of people who have a set of beliefs and are willing to murder the innocent to achieve their objectives and can do so with weapons that hardly cost anything. They know full well that when they destroy innocent life, it gets on our TV screens. And we are a nation that believes in life. We're compassionate people, and it horrifies our fellow citizens to see the violence. And they're trying to shake—not only shake our will, but shake the will of the people in Afghanistan or the people of Iraq. And yet the only way to defeat them is to find them and bring them to justice. That's the short-term strategy.

The long-term strategy is to defeat their ideology with a more hopeful ideology, and that's an ideology based upon liberty. I told you—I was setting it up, setting his answer up when I said, I believe in the universality of freedom. I wasn't surprised when 12 million Iraqis went to the polls. If given a chance to be free after a brutal tyranny, people will say, "I want to be free." The question is, how fast can they get their Government working? And that's what we're trying to help them do.

I will remind you, the Articles of Confederation in our own history is indicative of how hard democracy can be. But success in Iraq and success in Afghanistan are vital

for the struggle against extremists because ultimately, it's going to be liberty that provides us the peace we want.

I was telling some folks at lunch today about the relationship I had had with Prime Minister of Japan Koizumi. He's a—you might remember, he's the fellow that asked Laura and me to take him to Elvis's place in Memphis. [Laughter] It's a pretty interesting request. [Laughter] And we went. I sit at the table with the man, and we were talking about how liberty can transform enemies to allies. My dad fought the Japanese. Sixty years later, his son is talking peace with the Prime Minister of the former enemy. Something happened. Freedom has got the capacity to bring the peace we want.

And the same thing is going to happen in the Middle East unless we lose our will and our vision. People want to live in a free society. And one of the lessons of history is, liberty is transformative. In other words, liberty can help an enemy become an ally. Liberty can take a region of hopelessness and convert it to a region of hope. And the enemy preys upon hopelessness. And so it—whether it be the brutality of tyranny or the scourge of disease and hunger, it's in the interest of the United States to help the world deal with that for our own peace, for our own security.

It's one thing if the enemy couldn't hit us here at home; we could just let them—let the world run its course; just let everything happen that's meant—that it may be meant to happen, you know, just let it go. But what matters—what happens overseas matters here in the homeland. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th.

I also happen to believe it's in our moral interest to help people dying of HIV/AIDS live. I believe it's in our moral interest to do that as well as our security interest. I believe it's in the interest of our soul. To whom much is given, much is required. We've been given a lot, and when we find hungry children, it's in our interests—it's

in our security interest, but it's also in the interest of the very, kind of, moral fabric of America.

One of the things Laura is working on is to help people deal with malaria. We could solve the malaria issue. The solution is right at hand. It just takes will and determination. There's no reason for little babies to be dying of mosquito bites around the world. There's just no reason. So the United States has taken the lead—and Laura has taken the lead in our house—to get us to focus on solving problems. It's in the Nation's interest to do that.

A couple of more, then I got to go. Yes, sir.

Situation in Burma

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned freedom. What do you think are the right next steps for democracy and freedom in Burma?

The President. Yes, great question. Enormous international pressure to make it clear to the generals that they will be completely isolated and not accepted into the international community of nations. It's—Aung San Suu Kyi is a great woman who gets a huge vote and yet is now under house arrest. And so she serves as a classic example of why the world needs to work together to help save societies. Her example is one of bravery being confined by unelected military junta.

And by the way, those examples exist. I met with a woman in the Oval Office the other day whose husband was a doctor, plastic surgeon, in Cuba. And he wrote some—I guess wrote some stuff on freedom, and he's now in a prison. He now weighs 106 pounds. She, by the way, brought her four children to the United States of America to be able to raise them in freedom. And she's wondering whether or not we have that same passion toward Cuba that we have with Burma. And the answer, I told her, absolutely. As a matter of fact, America must have passion for political prisoners wherever they exist, for the

human condition is important to the future of this country.

And so, sir, to answer your question, whether it be the people in Burma who are being brutalized by the military junta or the people in Cuba or the people in other tyrannical societies, it's in our interest to rally the world and to pressure and to keep the focus and use our respective bully pulpits—those of us in free societies—use our respective bully pulpits to remind people of the condition, the human condition in these societies that are being deeply affected by tyrannical regimes.

And so I talk about Burma all the time to leaders. I spend a lot of time rallying the world—at least rallying my fellow leaders on issues such as Burma and Cuba and Sudan and Iran. And so thanks for bringing up the question. I just hope we get good results. Sometimes international bodies are nonconsequential. In other words, they're good talking, but there's not a consequence. At some point, there has to be consequences.

So, along the lines in Burma, we have sanctioned individuals within Burma and are considering additional sanctions. But sanctions don't mean anything if we're the only sanctioner. They just find safe haven somewhere else, in trade, for example.

And so it's a tough question, a tough issue, and the United States must always confront these tyrannical situations. It's in our interest that we do so.

Yes, sir.

Environment/Alternative Fuel Sources/ Energy

Q. [*Inaudible*—welcome to northwest Arkansas. We have a little local mom-and-pop retailer by the name of Wal-Mart that's leading the charge—

The President. Now you're bragging. [*Laughter*]

Q. —leading the charge on sustainability in the environment. And local governments all across the country are trying to do the same thing. What can the Federal

Government do to step up and bring the United States back into a role of leadership in sustainability and in environmental protection?

The President. Yes. The fundamental question is whether or not we will be able to grow our economy and be good stewards of the environment at the same time. I'm interested in good policy. Kyoto, I thought, was bad policy because Kyoto would have basically said—[applause]—basically would have said that we would have had to ground our economy down in order to achieve—maybe achieve some positive changes in greenhouse gases.

And so I came with a different approach, sir, and that is, I asked a question: How best to develop new technologies that will enable us to meet our responsibilities as stewards of the environment—of being responsible stewards of the environment? That's why—here, the way I'll do this is, there's three basic aspects to the environment: One is how we generate electricity; two is how we drive our cars; and three is how we build our buildings. We've got good conservation policies available for building construction.

Two, I've just explained to the man who's trying to raise dairy cows, and he's now not so happy with the cost of corn, that we've taken a very aggressive approach on how—on providing alternatives to gasoline. So in other words, dependency on oil is a national security issue, it's an economic security issue, but it's also an environmental issue. The less oil we use, the better stewards of the environment we will be. So that's why I'm a big promoter of ethanol, and I've set a mandatory goal for the country of reducing our gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years.

Finally, electricity, and that's the interesting issue because, one, we got a lot of coal. And it seems like to me that we want to make sure that if we're going to have economic—you can't, by the way, be good stewards of the environment if you're broke. You just can't. This is an expensive

proposition, to make sure that we've got enough cashflow in our society to develop new technologies. So we've got a lot of coal, and it's a plentiful supply. That's why we're spending about \$2 billion of your money for clean coal technologies. In other words, we want to be able to power our economy and be good stewards of the environment, so why don't we work for zero-emission coal-fired plants, which is precisely what we're doing.

Secondly, we've got a strong nuclear power initiative going. If you're truly—if you're truly an environmentalist, you'll support nuclear power because it will enable you to generate the electricity necessary to generate the wealth necessary to invest in technologies and, at the same time, have zero greenhouse gases. And so we've got a comprehensive approach.

I will tell you this: Unless all economies, major economies are at the table, it's a—this is a venture that will not work. So that's why I called together the leaders of the major economies, including China, and said, okay, why don't we sit down at the table and come up with a goal, a reduction of greenhouse gases over a period of time? See, if you can get somebody to agree on a goal, you can begin to get them to agree on a solution. But if certain nations aren't at the table, they're not going to participate.

Secondly, I think each nation is going to have to develop its own strategy. We're different from other countries in the world. We have shown, however, that you can grow your economy and reduce greenhouse gases. You ask what the Federal Government is doing. Whatever we're doing is working because last year, we grew our economy, and the gross amount of greenhouse gases we put in the environment actually went down. And so it's a—you know, this is an important issue.

My principle is, I want to make sure that whatever we do doesn't hamper our capacity to grow. I want our people working. I want people realizing their dreams.

I want people to be able to put food on the table. And I believe you can have economic growth and good economic—environmental stewardship through technologies. And that's exactly what we're doing right now. And thanks for bring up the question.

Yes, ma'am.

Health Care

Q. My question is, Mr. President, do you invest money in health care buses to go around the world and give health insurance to people without it?

The President. Here's what I'm going to try to do. First of all, if you're poor, the Government is going to help you. If you're old, the Government has an obligation—elderly, excuse me—the Government—[laughter]—I'm old; you're elderly—[laughter]—I should have listened to my mother, shouldn't I have, yes—is to make sure a Medicare system fulfills its promise. But I firmly believe that private medicine is the best health care. And the reason I do is because health care needs innovation and it needs professionalism. And our system is—of private medicine does encourage innovation and does encourage professionalism.

I know—I'm sure you've—everybody has got a complaint about health care in America, but it's a great health care system. Is there a need for improvement? You bet, but the quality of health care in America is fabulous compared to the rest of the world. It really is.

Secondly, I believe government ought to incent people to go—to be able to have available—ought to incent—ought to change the system to make sure an individual can get into the marketplace and be able to better afford private insurance. Rather than help people through public policy, government programs, is to encourage people through private insurance.

One of my problems with SCHIP, by the way, is that expanding eligibility meant one-third of all families that would sign up

on to it would go from private care into the public. That's the exact opposite direction we ought to be moving people, it seems like to me. We ought to be encouraging private medicine and private care.

So I—look, this is a long answer for you, sorry. It's a complex subject, though. We ought to change the Tax Code. Right now if you're working for corporate Wal-Mart, you're—you benefit, rather than somebody who's trying to buy insurance in the private market. That health care—the taxes in health care says, if you're working for a big company, you do fine; if you're working for a small company or you're unemployed or you're individual sole proprietorship, you're paying health care with after-tax dollars. So the Tax Code needs to be changed.

One option is to say, you deduct the first \$15,000 for a family of two—I mean, for a married couple—deduct \$15,000 off your expense, \$15,000 of your income—on your income. Or another option some are considering in Congress is a tax credit. Either way, it's all intended to get people into the private markets. In other words, the incentive has got to be not to be part of government. The incentive has got to be to have the private sector work.

One of the problems we face is, many people pay your bills for you. This is a third-party payer system. And therefore, you don't really have much to say—if somebody is going to pay it, you don't ask what's the price or what's the quality. There's very little consumerism in health care. And yet consumerism can help with price and quality. And so the question is, can government help consumerism become a part of health care? And one way we do—we buy a lot of health care, and so we then insist upon transparency. We say, if you're going to take government money as a hospital, we expect you to put your prices up there for everybody to see, and then encourage programs like HSAs to put the consumer in charge of the purchasing.

It's a long answer to a simple question; I apologize. But it's a complex subject. And

the truth of the matter is, the debate is whether or not the Federal Government is going to run your health care, or whether or not we're wise enough to not let that happen. And for the next 16 months, I can assure you we're wise enough to not let that happen, and that's—[*applause*].

Last question.

Presidential Election/President's Decisionmaking

Q. Mr. President, when do you think there will be a girl President for the Republican Party?

The President. Well—[*laughter*—I think—I do think—yes, you took my line. [*Laughter*] I think a lady will be President, yes, and she'll be a Republican. [*Laughter*] Look, I—yes, I do. I believe—I absolutely believe it. Look, I—one of the things I benefited from is the advice of strong women, not only in my own house—[*laughter*—but at the Cabinet table. And I've seen women who are plenty capable of being President of the United States and capable of making the hard decisions and capable of making sure they stick to principle.

See, one of the hardest things about making good, solid decisions is—one of the worst things you can do is to try to chase

a poll or a focus group. In order to make decisions that will yield the peace, you got to make them based upon certain fundamental principles and certain values.

And I hope you got a sense of the values and principles by which I'm making decisions today. I'm honored you let me come by. I'm heading to Memphis, believe it or not, and I thank you for the chance to share my thoughts with you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Rep. John P. Hammerschmidt of Arkansas; former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochair, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and Yamile Llanes Labrada, wife of Cuban political prisoner Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, who was arrested in Cuba on March 18, 2003. A participant referred to former Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Marion C. Blakey; and H.R. 1125 and S. 65.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors
October 16, 2007

Good afternoon. Thanks for coming. Welcome to the Rose Garden. I appreciate Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala and other members of their Commission for joining me today. Welcome.

I just finished an inspiring meeting with Secretary Gates and Acting Secretary Mansfield, with servicemembers who were rebuilding their lives after being severely wounded in the service of our country. I

wish all Americans could hear the servicemembers talk about their strong desire to not only rehabilitate but to enter—be productive citizens here in America. I was most impressed by your spirit and your courage, and I—welcome here to the White House.

I appreciate the fact that they are helping to find a—to define a culture that says,

we're going to judge people by their potential, not their disabilities. I appreciate the fact that they are demonstrating the great breakthroughs in technologies that are now available for the wounded. I don't know if you noticed, two of them came in on a Segway.

Medical advances have enabled battlefield medics and hospitals to provide our wounded warriors with care that would have been unimaginable just a decade ago. Yet our system for managing this care has fallen behind. It's an old system; it's an antiquated system; it's an outdated system that needs to be changed.

You know, that's what happened at Walter Reed Army Medical Center earlier this year. First of all, the care that's provided there is magnificent. Our doctors and nurses at Walter Reed are great healers and caregivers, and they've saved a lot of lives. But there were serious problems caused by bureaucratic delays and administrative failures, and we're not going to let those problems continue.

We took immediate steps to address the problems at Walter Reed. The building where outpatients were living that was substandard was shut down. They were moved to high-quality housing, and those responsible were held to account. And to ensure wounded troops at Walter Reed and other facilities across America get the care they deserve, I asked Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala to chair a bipartisan Presidential commission. The Commission conducted a comprehensive review of the care provided to servicemembers returning from the global war on terror from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life.

At the end of this review, the Commission submitted specific recommendations for modernizing and improving our system of care. My administration strongly supports the Commission's recommendations. We've taken steps to implement them where we can through administrative action. And today we're sending Congress legislation to

implement the recommendations that require legislative action.

The legislation will help us achieve three important goals. First, this legislation will modernize and improve the way we evaluate disabilities and award compensation for injured servicemembers. Right now the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs both have their own systems for making these determinations. The Commission found that this process is difficult to navigate and confusing for servicemembers and their families. We need to streamline the system.

So this legislation will assign both Departments clear and separate roles. The Defense Department will determine whether wounded warriors are still fit for service. Those unable to serve will receive a pension from the Defense Department based on their rank and length of service. Then they will move directly into the Veterans Affairs system, where they will receive compensation for their disabilities. This compensation will take into account both loss of earnings and the overall impact on the quality of life resulting from a servicemember's injury or disability.

This new system will also emphasize rehabilitation and retraining. It will provide new support and financial incentives for therapy and education. It will help our wounded warriors rejoin their communities. Look, these men and women want to be productive, and they want to be active members of our society, and this legislation will help them achieve that goal.

Secondly, this legislation will strengthen support for families during the recovery process. When our servicemembers suffer wounds, their families suffer with them. They pray beside hospital beds, they discuss the options with the doctors, and they help injured loved ones readjust to everyday life. These commitments often require family members to take long leaves of absence from work, yet many family members cannot get this time off without losing their jobs.

Our military families deserve better. So this legislation will give many parents and spouses the opportunity to take up to 6 months of unpaid leave when their loved ones are seriously wounded in combat. It provides severely wounded servicemembers with aid and attended care services—for instance, up to 40 hours per week of in-home help from an assistant—so their families do not have to shoulder the responsibilities of caring alone.

Third, this legislation will improve treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. The Commission found that many servicemembers still worry about the stigma associated with this serious condition. We need to end this stigma by encouraging those suffering to get help. This legislation will make it easier for our troops to receive care for this disorder, and it will help affected servicemembers to move forward with their lives.

The need to enact these reforms into law is urgent, and I call on both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to come together and pass a good bill that I can sign into law. We also need to complete the Veterans Affairs appropriations bills that funds veterans' benefits and other ongoing programs. I fully recognize Congress and I have our differences on other appropriations bills, but the Veterans Affairs bill is one where we agree. I ask the House and Senate to work together to pass a bill that I can sign, and send it to my desk by Veterans Day.

As we work with Congress on this legislation, my administration will continue to institute the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission that do not require congressional approval. We're acting on the Commission's recommendations to form a new corps of well-trained recovery coordinators. These coordinators will work with families to establish recovery plans and monitor the healing process, facilitate the transition to civilian life, and ensure wounded servicemembers do not get lost in the system.

We're also acting on the Commission's recommendations to ensure health professionals working at the Defense Department and Veterans Affairs facilities can easily share patient information. This will allow us to provide patients with better care as they move through the system. We're also developing a new secure web portal, where servicemembers will be able to access all their medical files and benefit information in one place.

We're acting on the Commission's recommendation to create incentives for medical professionals and administrators to work at Walter Reed. One out of every five wounded servicemembers passes through this hospital. And while Walter Reed is set to close at 2011, we will ensure it remains a state-of-the-art facility until the last day of operation.

By taking these steps, we'll honor a shared commitment to care for those who defend our freedom. One of those people is Ryan Groves. While serving with the Marines in Iraq in 2004, he lost his left leg and severely injured his right leg in a rocket attack. Today, he refuses to allow his disability to stop him from living his life. He's going to Georgetown. He wants to be a lawyer. He travels using the Segway. He's an amazing fellow. He's an inspiration for all Americans. And we need to build a system of care that is worthy of the sacrifice that he and others have made.

I look forward to working with Congress to achieve this goal. Together, we can give our wounded warriors the best possible care and help them build their lives of hope and promise.

And now it's my honor to introduce Secretary Donna Shalala.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. The

transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Co-chairs Dole and Shalala.

The President's News Conference October 17, 2007

The President. Good morning. We're now more than halfway through October, and the new leaders in Congress have had more than 9 months to get things done for the American people. Unfortunately, they haven't managed to pass many important bills. Now the clock is winding down, and in some key areas, Congress is just getting started.

Congress has work to do on health care. Tomorrow Congress will hold a vote attempting to override my veto of the SCHIP bill. It's unlikely that that override vote will succeed, which Congress knew when they sent me the bill. Now it's time to put politics aside and seek common ground to reauthorize this important program. I've asked Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, National Economic Council Director Al Hubbard, and OMB Director Jim Nussle to lead my administration's discussions with the Congress. I made clear that if putting poor children first requires more than the 20-percent increase in funding I proposed, we'll work with Congress to find the money we need. I'm confident we can work out our differences and reauthorize SCHIP.

Congress has work to do to keep our people safe. One of the things Congress did manage to get done this year is pass legislation that began modernizing the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. FISA is a law that our intelligence professionals use to monitor the communications of terrorists who want to do harm to our people. The problem is that Congress arranged for the measure they passed to expire this coming February. In addition, the House is now

considering another FISA bill that would weaken the reforms they approved just 2 months ago. When it comes to improving FISA, Congress needs to move forward, not backward, so we can ensure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to protect us.

Congress has work to do on the budget. One of Congress's basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet Congress has not sent me a single appropriations bill. Time is running short, so I urge the Speaker and the leader of the Senate to name conferees for six of the annual appropriations bills that have already passed the House and the Senate. The two Houses need to work out their differences on these bills and get them to my desk as soon as possible. They also need to pass the remaining spending bills, one at a time and in a fiscally responsible way.

Congress has work to do on education. As we saw from the recent Nation's Report Card, the No Child Left Behind Act is getting results for America's children. Test scores are rising. The achievement gap is beginning to close. And Congress should send me a bipartisan bill that reauthorizes and strengthens this effective piece of legislation.

Congress has work to do on housing. Back in August, I proposed a series of reforms to help homeowners struggling with their mortgage payments. More than 6 weeks later, Congress has yet to finish work on any of these measures. These are sensible reforms that would help American families stay in their homes, and Congress needs to act quickly on these proposals.

Congress has work to do on trade. Earlier this year, my administration reached out to the Congress, and we forged a bipartisan agreement to advance trade legislation. Now Congress needs to begin moving on trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These agreements expand access to overseas markets, they strengthen democratic allies, and they level the playing field for American workers, farmers, and small businesses.

Congress has work to do for our military veterans. Yesterday I sent Congress legislation to implement the Dole-Shalala Commission's recommendations that would modernize and improve our system of care for wounded warriors. Congress should consider this legislation promptly so that those injured while defending our freedom can get the quality care they deserve.

Congress also needs to complete the Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that funds veterans' benefits and other ongoing programs. Look, we have our differences on appropriations bills, but the veterans' bill is where we agree. So I ask Congress to send me a clean bill that will fund our veterans, a bill without unnecessary spending in it. And they need to get this work done, and I hope they can get it done by Veterans Day. It seems like a reasonable request on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

Congress has work to do for law enforcement and the judiciary. I want to thank the Senate Judiciary Committee for beginning hearings today on Judge Mukasey's nomination to serve as the Attorney General. I urge the committee to vote on that nomination this week and send it to the full Senate for a vote next week. The Senate also needs to act on the many judicial nominations that are pending and give those nominees an up-or-down vote. Confirming Federal judges is one of the most important responsibilities of the Senate, and the Senate owes it to the American people to meet that responsibility in a timely way.

With all these pressing responsibilities, one thing Congress should not be doing is sorting out the historical record of the Ottoman Empire. The resolution on the mass killings of Armenians beginning in 1915 is counterproductive. Both Republicans and Democrats, including every living former Secretary of State, have spoken out against this resolution. Congress has more important work to do than antagonizing a democratic ally in the Muslim world, especially one that is providing vital support for our military every day.

It's little time left in the year, and Congress has little to show for all the time that has gone by. Now is the time for them to act. And I look forward to working with members of both parties on important goals that I've outlined this morning.

And now I look forward to taking some of your questions, believe it or not. [*Laughter*]

Turkey/Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, Turkey's parliament is debating sending military forces into Iraq to pursue Kurdish rebels. Do you think that Turkey has the legitimate right to stage a cross-country offensive—cross-border offensive?

The President. I've talked to Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus about this issue this morning. We are making it very clear to Turkey that we don't think it is in their interests to send troops into Iraq. Actually, they have troops already stationed in Iraq, and they've had troops stationed there for quite awhile. We don't think it's in their interests to send more troops in.

I appreciate very much the fact that the Iraqi Government understands that this is a sensitive issue with the Turks, and that's why Vice President Hashimi is in Istanbul today talking with the Turkish leaders to assure them that Iraq shares their concerns about terrorist activities, but that there's a better way to deal with the issue than having the Turks send massive troops into the

country—massive additional troops into the country.

What I'm telling you is, is that there's a lot of dialog going on, and that's positive. We are actively involved with the Turks and the Iraqis through a tripartite arrangement, and we'll continue to—dialoguing with the Turks.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Matt [Matt Spetalnick, Reuters].

Dalai Lama's Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony

Q. Thanks. Why are you going to attend the congressional award ceremony for the Dalai Lama today when China—

The President. Why am I—when am I, or why am I?

Q. Why are you going to, when China has expressed outrage about it? And what, if any, potential damage do you see to U.S.-China relations, considering that you need their support on dealing with Iran and North Korean nuclear issues?

The President. One, I admire the Dalai Lama a lot. Two, I support religious freedom; he supports religious freedom. Thirdly, I like going to the gold medal ceremonies. I think it's a good thing for the President to do, to recognize those who the Congress has honored. And I'm looking forward to going.

I told the Chinese President, President Hu, that I was going to go to the ceremony. In other words, I brought it up. And I said, I'm going because I want to honor this man. I have consistently told the Chinese that religious freedom is in their nation's interest. I've also told them that I think it's in their interest to meet with the Dalai Lama and will say so at the ceremony today in Congress. If they were to sit down with the Dalai Lama, they would find him to be a man of peace and reconciliation. And I think it's in the country's interest to allow him to come to China and meet with him.

So my visit today is not new to the Chinese leadership. As I told you, I brought it up with him. I wanted to make sure he understood exactly why I was going. And they didn't like it, of course, but I don't think it's going to damage—severely damage relations. A matter of fact, I don't think it ever damages relations when the American President talks about religious tolerance and religious freedom is good for a nation. I do this every time I meet with him.

David [David Gregory, NBC News]. Welcome back.

Israel and Syria

Q. Mr. President, last time you used that line and we were here—[laughter]—

The President. But you know something, the interesting thing about it is, it works every time because—[laughter]—

Q. I know.

The President. —because there's a grain of truth. [Laughter] I won't use it again, though. [Laughter]

Q. There's a report today from Israel Army Radio indicating that the Syrians have confirmed that the Israelis struck a nuclear site in their country. You wouldn't comment on that before, and I'm wondering if now, on the general question, you think it's appropriate for Israel to take such action if it feels that the—there is mortal danger being posed to the state?

The President. David, my position hadn't changed.

Q. Can I ask you whether you—

The President. You can ask me another question.

Q. Did you support Israel's strike in 1981 on the Iraqi reactor outside Baghdad?

The President. You know, Dave, I don't remember what I was doing in 1980. Let's see, I was living in Midland, Texas; I don't remember my reaction that far back.

Q. Well, but as you look at it as President now—

The President. —private citizen back there in 1981 in Midland, Texas, trying to make a living for my family and——

Q. But you're a careful—someone who studies history——

The President. Student of history? I do, yes. No, I don't remember my reaction, to be frank with you.

Q. But I'm asking you now, as you look back at it, do you think it was the right action for Israel to take?

The President. David, I'm not going to comment on the subject that you're trying to get me to comment on.

Q. Why won't you? But isn't it a fair question to say, is it—given all the talk about Iran and the potential threat—whether it would be appropriate for Israel to act——

The President. Hey, Dave—Dave——

Q. —in self-defense——

The President. I understand——

Q. —if Iran were to——

The President. I understand where you're trying to take——

Q. —develop nuclear weapons?

The President. I understand where you're trying to take. It's a clever ruse to get me to comment on it, but I'm not going to. Thank you.

Q. Well, I'm just wondering why you think it's not appropriate to make that judgment when it's a—it is a real-world scenario, as we know, since they apparently took this action against Syria——

The President. Dave, welcome back. [Laughter]

Iran-Russia Meeting

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you. I don't know if you saw the picture on the front page of one of the papers this morning of Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad and Vladimir Putin.

The President. I did.

Q. It looked like they were getting along pretty well. And they are among five leaders——

The President. Surprised they weren't, kind of, fighting each other on the front page of the paper? No, man, come on. [Laughter]

Q. They looked like they were enjoying each other's company. And I'm wondering, since there were leaders of five Caspian Sea region nations that have now declared each country will not be used as a base to attack the other, A, what do you make of their growing relationship; B, does it complicate what the United States can do in the region; and C, would you characterize that arrangement as some sort of "Caspian Sea Truman Doctrine" or something like that?

The President. You know, I think it's hard to judge how their conversations went from a picture. Generally, leaders don't like to be photographed scowling at each other or making bad gestures at each other. So I'm not surprised that there was a nice picture of them walking along. I try to make sure that when I'm with foreign leaders, there's a pretty picture of the two of us walking down the colonnades, or something like that, to send a good message. And so——

Q. Are you saying it's not so warm?

The President. Well, I don't know yet. What I'm about to tell you is, is that I'm looking forward to getting President Putin's readout from the meeting. I think one of the—the thing I'm interested in is whether or not he continues to harbor the same concerns that I do. And I say "continues" because when we were in Australia, he reconfirmed to me that it is—he recognized it's not in the world's interest for Iran to have the capacity to make a nuclear weapon. And they have been very supportive in the United Nations, and we're working with them on a potential third resolution.

So that's where my concerns—I don't worry about the pictures. I understand why they meet. I am—will continue to work with Russia, as well as other nations, to keep a focused effort on sending Iran a message that—"You will remain isolated if

you continue your nuclear weapons ambitions.”

Q. But this declaration doesn't speak to that, Mr. President. This declaration doesn't suggest isolation for Iran; just the opposite, that Russia and Iran are going to do business.

The President. Well, we'll find out. See, that—you're trying to get me to interpret the meeting based upon a news story or a picture. I'd rather spend some time with Vladimir Putin finding out exactly what went on. Thank you.

Six-Party Talks

Q. Let's stay with the nuclear thing here. When North Korea tested a nuclear device, you said that any proliferation would be a grave threat to the U.S., and North Korea would be responsible for the consequences. Are you denying that North Korea has any role in the suspected nuclear facilities in Syria?

The President. See, you're trying to pull a Gregory.

Q. Yes, I am.

The President. Okay, well, I'm not going to fall for it. But I'd like to talk about—

Q. Don't Americans have a right to know about who is proliferating, especially when you're negotiating with North Korea?

The President. No, you have a right to know this, that when it comes to the six-party talks, proliferation—the issue of proliferation is—has equal importance with the issue of weaponry, and that North Korea has said that they will stop proliferating, just like they have said they will fully disclose and disable any weapons programs.

Step one of that has been dealing with shuttering Pyongyang. Step two will be full declaration of any plutonium that has been manufactured and/or the construction of bombs, along with a full declaration of any proliferation activities. And in my judgment, the best way to solve this issue with North Korea peacefully is to put it in the—keep it in the context of the six-party talks. And the reason why is that diplomacy only

works if there are consequences when diplomacy breaks down. And it makes sense for there to be other people at the table so that if North Korea were to have said to all of us, “We're going to do x, y, or z,” and they don't, that we have other—people other than the United States being consequential.

There's a lot of aid that goes on with—between North Korea and China, or North Korea and South Korea, and therefore, if they renege on their promises—and they have said—they have declared that they will show us weapons and get rid of the weapons programs as well as stop proliferation—if they don't fulfill that which they've said, we are now in a position to make sure that they understand that there will be consequences.

And I'm pleased with the progress we're making. There's still work to be done? You bet there's work to be done. Do I go into this thing saying, well, you know, gosh, the process is more important than results? I don't. What matters most to me are whether or not we can achieve the results that I've said we're hoping to achieve. And if not, there will be consequences to the North Koreans.

Q. Was Syria part of those talks? Is Syria part of the talks?

The President. Proliferation is a part of the talks.

Q. Including Syria?

The President. Elaine [Elaine Quijano, Cable News Network].

Look, in all due respect to you and Gregory, this is not my first rodeo. [Laughter] And I know where you're trying to get me to comment. I'm not going to comment on it, one way or the other.

Elaine.

Q. But, Mr. President, your administration has talked about mushroom clouds in the—

The President. Thank you, Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News]. Martha, thank you. Elaine.

Military Operations in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, on Iraq, you've talked repeatedly about the threat of Al Qaida in Iraq. And we've also heard a lot about the military progress that's been made against that group. Can you tell Americans how close the United States is to declaring victory against that group? And if you're not able to do so, does that suggest that your critics are correct that this war cannot be won militarily?

The President. The Iraq situation cannot be won by military means alone. There has to be political reconciliation to go with it. There has to be a emergence of a democracy. That's been my position ever since it started.

Al Qaida is still dangerous. They're dangerous in Iraq; they're dangerous elsewhere. Al Qaida is not going to go away anytime soon. That's why it's important for us to be finding out what their intentions are and what are their plans, so we can respond to them. This is a—this war against Al Qaida requires actionable intelligence. That's why this FISA bill is important. And they still want to do us harm, Elaine, and they're still active. Yes, we've hurt them bad in Iraq, and we've hurt them bad elsewhere. If you're the number-three person in Al Qaida, you've had some rough goes—you've been captured or killed. And we're keeping the pressure on them all the time.

And so yes, we're making progress. But, no, I fully understand those who say you can't win this thing militarily.

Q. Sir, does that suggest—

The President. That's exactly what the United States military says, that you can't win this military. That's why it's very important that we continue to work with the Iraqis on economic progress as well as political progress.

And what's happened is—in Iraq is, there's been a lot of political reconciliation at the grassroots level. In other words, people that hadn't been talking to each other are now talking to each other. They're be-

ginning to realize there's a better future than one of—that one—with a country with deep sectarian divide. And what's going to end up happening is, is that the local reconciliation will affect the national Government. In the meantime, we're pressing hard to get the national Government to complete the strategic partnership with the United States as well as pass meaningful legislation, like the de-Ba'ath law or the Provincial government law or the oil revenue sharing law.

Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Troop Levels in Iraq

Q. Sir, given that—what you just laid out, should the American people be prepared for a large number of U.S. forces to remain in Iraq after you are finished with your Presidency?

The President. The troop levels in Iraq will be determined by our commanders on the ground and the progress being made. Thank you.

Iran-Russia Meeting

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to follow on Mr.—on President Putin's visit to Tehran, not about the image of President Putin and President Ahmadi-nejad, but about the words that Vladimir Putin said there. He issued a stern warning against potential U.S. military action against Tehran—

The President. Did he say "U.S."?

Q. Yes.

The President. Oh, he did?

Q. And he said—well, at least the quote said that. And he also said, quote, he "sees no evidence to suggest Iran wants to build a nuclear bomb." Were you disappointed with that message? And does that indicate possibly that international pressure is not as great as you once thought against Iran abandoning its nuclear program?

The President. I—as I say, I look forward to—if those are, in fact, his comments, I look forward to having him clarify those, because when I visited with him, he understands that it's in the world's interest to

make sure that Iran does not have the capacity to make a nuclear weapon. And that's why on—in the first round at the U.N., he joined us, and second round, we joined together to send a message. I mean, if he wasn't concerned about it, Bret, then why did we have such good progress at the United Nations in round one and round two?

And so I will visit with him about it. I have not yet been briefed yet by Condi or Bob Gates about, you know, their visit with Vladimir Putin.

Iran

Q. But you definitively believe Iran wants to build a nuclear weapon?

The President. I think so long—until they suspend and/or make it clear that they—that their statements aren't real, yes, I believe they want to have the capacity, the knowledge, in order to make a nuclear weapon. And I know it's in the world's interest to prevent them from doing so. I believe that the Iranian—if Iran had a nuclear weapon, it would be a dangerous threat to world peace.

But this is—we got a leader in Iran who has announced that he wants to destroy Israel. So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding world war III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. And I take the threat of Iran with a nuclear weapon very seriously, and we'll continue to work with all nations about the seriousness of this threat. Plus, we'll continue working the financial measures that we're in the process of doing. In other words, I think—the whole strategy is, is that at some point in time, leaders or responsible folks inside of Iran may get tired of isolation and say, "This isn't worth it." And to me, it's worth the effort to keep the pressure on this Government.

And secondly, it's important for the Iranian people to know we harbor no resentment to them. We're disappointed in the

Iranian Government's actions, as should they be. Inflation is way too high; isolation is causing economic pain. This is a country that has got a much better future; people have got a much better—should have better hope inside Iran than this current Government is providing them.

So it's a—look, it's a complex issue, no question about it. But my intent is to continue to rally the world to send a focused signal to the Iranian Government that we will continue to work to isolate you, in the hopes that at some point in time, somebody else shows up and says, it's not worth the isolation.

Yes, ma'am.

Middle East Peace Process/Iran

Q. Mr. President, you are sponsoring the international peace conference. President Abbas said he is not going to come unless there is a timetable.

The President. Who said that?

Q. President Abbas.

The President. Oh, yes.

Q. Secretary Rice said that failure is not an option. You talked about substantial issues need to be discussed. What is the minimum expectation from you that you will call this conference a success? And what you're offering the Arab nations to encourage them to participate?

The President. Right. Well, that's why Condi is making the trip she's making, is to explain to people in private, as well as in public, that, one, we're for comprehensive peace; two, that there is a—the meeting, the international meeting will be serious and substantive. In other words, as she said the other day, this isn't going to be just a photo opportunity. This is going to be a serious and substantive meeting.

We believe that now is the time to push ahead with a meeting at which the Israelis and Palestinians will lay out a vision of what a state could look like. And the reason why there needs to be a vision of what a state could look like is because the Palestinians, that have been made promises all these

years, need to see there's a serious, focused effort to step up a state. And that's important so that the people who want to reject extremism have something to be for.

So this is a serious attempt. And I'm pleased with the progress. And the reason I'm pleased is because it appears to me that President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert are, one, talking—I know they're talking a lot—but they're making progress. And in order for there to be lasting peace, the deal has to be good for the Palestinians as well as the Israelis. Our job is to facilitate the process.

Another reason I have an international meeting is to get Arab buy-in for a state. In other words, part of the issue in the past has been that the Arab nations stood on the sidelines, and when a state was in reach, they weren't a part of the process encouraging the parties to move forward. And so this is a—that's what I mean by comprehensive. It's comprehensive not only for what the state will look like; it's comprehensive in getting people in the region to be a part of the process. And so I'm feeling pretty optimistic about it.

Q. [Inaudible]—would discuss refugees and Jerusalem and security and other issues that are—

The President. They are—the important issue—the important thing—I have discussed those publicly, as you know, early on in my Presidency, when I articulated a two-state solution. The important thing is for the Israelis and the Palestinians to be discussing them. That's the important issue. The United States can't impose peace. We can encourage the development of a state. That's precisely what I have been doing since the early stages of my Presidency. In order for there to be a Palestinian state, it's going to require the Israelis and the Palestinians coming to an accord. We can facilitate that, but we can't force people to make hard decisions. They're going to have to do that themselves.

And I'm encouraged; I'm encouraged from what Condi tells me is going on in

the Middle East, that there is a—the attitude is, let's work together to see if we can't lay out that vision for the sake of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And it's possible. I believe that we will see a democratic state, and I understand how hard it is. And the reason it's hard, by the way, is because there are extremists who don't want there to be a democracy in the Middle East, whether it be in Iraq or Lebanon or in the Palestinian Territories. That's the struggle, that when you see people trying to blow up the opportunity for a state to exist, you just got to understand, it's broader than just the Palestinian Territory. It's a part of this struggle, this ideological struggle in which we're engaged. We've got to ask ourselves, why don't they want there to be a democracy? And the answer is, because it doesn't fit into their ideological vision, "they" being the extremists.

Another issue with Iran, by the way, that is of great concern to us is their willingness to fund groups that try to either destabilize or prevent the rise of a democracy. And so anyway, I'm optimistic this can be achieved, and we'll continue working to that end.

Yes, Ed [Edwin Chen, Bloomberg News].

National Economy/Housing Market/Tax Reform

Q. Mr. President, could I ask you about a domestic matter?

The President. Sure.

Q. The Commerce Department reported today that the housing starts last month fell to the lowest level since 1993. How concerned are you that this housing recession will spill over into the broader economy, and what more can be done to prevent that from happening?

The President. Ed, I'm encouraged by the rate of inflation, the job growth. We've had 49 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth, which is a record here in America. I'm pleased with the fact that

our deficit is shrinking. But like our Secretary of the Treasury, I recognize there's softness in the housing market. By the way, we had growth in the GDP because of exports. In other words, there's positive elements of our economy. But no question, the housing is soft.

And the fundamental question is, what do we do to help homeowners? I don't think we ought to be providing bailouts for lenders, but I do think we ought to put policy in place that help people stay in their home. And that's why this FHA modernization bill is really important, because it'll extend the reach of the FHA and to help more people be able to refinance their homes.

Part of the issue in the housing market has been that as a result of asset bundling, that it's hard sometimes for people to find somebody to talk to, to help them refinance. In other words, in the old days, you go into your savings and loan, your local savings and loan, and sit down and negotiate a house deal, and the person with whom you negotiated would be around if you had financial difficulties, to say, can't you help me restructure? Today, the originator of the note no longer owns the note in many cases.

And the securitization of mortgages actually provided a lot of liquidity in the market, and that's a good thing. But it also creates a issue here in America, and that is, how do we get people to understand the nature of the mortgages they bought, and how do you help people refinance to stay in home—stay in their home? And so that's what Secretary Paulson, Secretary Jackson have been working on, particularly with the private sector, to facilitate the ability to people to refinance.

And finally, we need to change the tax laws. You're disadvantaged if you refinance your home. It creates a tax liability. And if we want people staying in their homes, then it seems like to me, we got to change the Tax Code. That's why I talked to Senator Stabenow the other day and thanked

her for her sponsorship of an important piece of tax legislation that will enable people to more likely stay in their homes.

So there's some things we can do, Ed. In the meantime, you just got to understand, it's going to have to work out; when you got more houses than you got buyers, the price tends to go down. And we're just going to have to work through the issue. I'm not a forecaster, but I can tell people that I feel good about many of the economic indicators here in the United States.

Peter [Peter Baker, Washington Post].

Russia-U.S. Relations/Democracy in Russia

Q. Mr. President, following up on Vladimir Putin for a moment. He said recently that next year, when he has to step down—according to the Constitution—as President, he may become Prime Minister, in effect keeping power and dashing any hopes for a genuine democratic transition there. Senator McCain said—

The President. I've been planning that myself. [Laughter]

Q. Senator McCain said yesterday, sir, that when he looks into Putin's eyes, he sees a K, a G, and a B, and he would never have invited—

The President. Pretty good line.

Q. —and he would never have invited him to Kennebunkport. And he said it's time we got a little tough with Vladimir Putin. I'm wondering if you think—is Senator McCain right? And what would it mean for Russian democracy if, when you leave power, assuming you do, in January 2009—[laughter]—if Vladimir Putin is still in power?

The President. Yes. You know, one of the interesting—well, my leadership style has been to try to be in a position where I actually can influence people. And one way to do that is to have personal relationships that enable me to sit down and tell people what's on my mind without fear of rupturing relations. And that's how I've tried to conduct my business with Vladimir Putin. We don't agree on a lot of issues;

we do agree on some. Iran is one; nuclear proliferation is another. Reducing our nuclear warheads was an issue that we agreed on early.

But I believe good diplomacy requires good relations at the leadership level. That's why, in Slovakia, I was in a position to tell him that we didn't understand why he was altering the relationship between the Russian Government and a free press—in other words, why the free press was becoming less free. And I was able to do—he didn't like it. Nobody likes to be talked to in a way that may point up different flaws in their strategy. But I was able to do so in a way that didn't rupture relations. He was able to tell me going into Iraq wasn't the right thing. And to me that's good diplomacy. And so I'm—and I'll continue to practice that diplomacy.

Now, in terms of whether or not it's possible to reprogram the kind of basic Russian DNA, which is a centralized authority, that's hard to do. We've worked hard to make it appear in their interests—or we made it clear to them that it is in their interests to have good relations with the West. And the best way to have good long-term relations with the West is to recognize that checks and balances in government are important or to recognize there are certain freedoms that are inviolate. So Russia's a complex relationship, but it's an important relationship to maintain.

Q. Will you be disappointed if he stays in power after you're gone?

The President. I have no idea what he's going to do. He—I asked him when I saw him in Australia. I tried to get it out of him, who's going to be his successor, what he intends to do, and he was wily. He wouldn't tip his hand. I'll tip mine: I'm going to finish—I'm going to work hard to the finish. I'm going to sprint to the finish line, and then you'll find me in Crawford.

Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg, New York Times].

Cooperation With Congress/Legislative Agenda

Q. Yes, Mr. President, I'd like to turn your attention back to Capitol Hill. A year ago, after Republicans lost control of Congress, you said you wanted to find common ground. This morning you gave us a pretty scathing report card on Democrats. But I'm wondering, how have you assessed yourself in dealing with Democrats this past year? How effective have you been in dealing with them on various issues, and do you think you've done a good job in finding common ground?

The President. We're finding common ground on Iraq. We're—I recognize there are people in Congress that say we shouldn't have been there in the first place. But it sounds to me as if the debate has shifted, that David Petraeus and Ryan Crocker's testimony made a difference to a lot of Members. I hope we continue to find ground by making sure our troops get funded.

We found common ground on FISA. My only question is, why change a good law? The way that law was written works for the security of the country. That's what the American people want to know, by the way. Are we passing laws that are beneficial to the American people? This law is beneficial because it enables our intelligence experts to—and professionals to find out the intentions of Al Qaida. Now, the law needs to be changed, enhanced by providing the phone companies that allegedly helped us with liability protection. So we found common ground there.

Hopefully, we can find common ground as the Congress begins to move pieces of legislation. The reason I said what I said today is, there's a lot to be done. As you recognize, I'm not a member of the legislative branch; probably wouldn't be a very good legislator. But as the head of the executive branch, it makes sense to call upon Congress to show progress and get results. It's hard to find common ground unless

important bills are moving. They're not even moving. And not one appropriations bill has made it to my desk. How can you find common ground when there's no appropriations process?

We found common ground on a trade bill—trade bills, really important pieces of legislation, as far as I'm concerned. One of the reasons why is, exports helped us overcome the weakness in the housing market last quarter. If that's the case, it seems like it makes sense to continue and open up markets to U.S. goods and services. And yet there hadn't been one—there haven't been any bills moving when it comes to trade.

Veterans Affairs is an area where we can find common ground. I've called in—I asked Bob Dole and Donna Shalala to lead an important Commission, a Commission to make sure our veterans get the benefits they deserve. I was concerned about bureaucratic delay and the—concerned about a system that had been in place for years, but this didn't recognize this different nature—a different kind of war that we're fighting.

I don't like it when I meet wives who are sitting by—beside their husbands' bed in Walter Reed and not being supported by its Government, not being helped to provide care. I'm concerned about PTSD, and I want people to focus on PTSD. And so we sent up a bill, and I hope they move on it quickly. There's a place where we can find common ground, Sheryl.

Cooperation With Congress/State Children's Health Insurance Program

Q. Is it all their fault that these bills aren't moving, that you've got these veto threats out?

The President. I think it is their fault that bills aren't moving, yes. As I said, I'm not a part of the legislative branch. All I can do is ask them to move bills. It's up to the leaders to move the bills. And you bet I'm going to put veto threats out. Of course, I want to remind you, I put a lot

of veto threats out when the Republicans were in control of Congress. I said, now, if you overspend, I'm going to veto your bills, and they listened, and we worked together. Whether or not that's the case, we'll find out.

And by the way, on the SCHIP bill, we weren't dialed in in the beginning. The leaders said, okay, let's see if we can get something moving. And I'm surprised I hadn't been asked about SCHIP. It's an issue that hadn't been—

Q. How far are you willing to go?

The President. I'm surprised I hadn't been asked about SCHIP yet. It's a—I made it abundantly clear why I have vetoed the bills. I find it interesting that when Americans begin to hear the facts, they understand the rationale behind the veto. First of all, there are 500,000 children who are eligible for the current program who aren't covered. And so, to answer your question on how far I'm willing to go, I want to provide enough money to make sure those 500,000 do get covered. That's the—that ought to be the focus of our efforts.

Six or seven—in six or seven States, they spend more money on adults than children. And finally, the eligibility has been increased up to \$83,000. And that doesn't sound like it's a program for poor children to me. And I look forward to working with the Congress, if my veto is upheld, to focus on those who are supposed to be covered. That's what we need to get done.

Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, USA (Ret.)

Q. Sir—

The President. Yes.

Q. —I wonder if you felt blindsided by the very blistering criticism recently from retired General Ricardo Sanchez, who was one of your top commanders in Iraq. He told a news conference last week that there's been glaring, unfortunate display of

incompetent strategic leadership within our national leaders on Iraq.

The President. Right.

Q. Seems like quite a lack of common ground there, sir.

The President. You know, look, I admire General Sanchez's service to the country. I appreciate his service to the country. The situation on the ground has changed quite dramatically since he left Iraq. The security situation is changing dramatically. The reconciliation that's taking place is changing. The economy is getting better. And so I—I'm pleased with the progress we're making. And I admire the fact that he served. I appreciate his service.

Q. Should the American people feel disturbed that a former top general says that?

The President. Massimo [Massimo Calabresi, Time].

Military Contractors in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As Commander in Chief, are you in control of and responsible for military contractors in Iraq? And if not, who is?

The President. Yes, I'm responsible, in that the State Department has hired those military contractors.

Q. Are you satisfied with their performance? And if not, what are you doing to satisfy yourself that—

The President. I will be anxious to see the analysis of their performance. There's a lot of studying going on, both inside Iraq and out, as to whether or not people violated rules of engagement. I will tell you, though, that a firm like Blackwater provides a valuable service. They protect people's lives. And I appreciate the sacrifice and the service that the Blackwater employees have made. And they too want to make sure that if there's any inconsistencies or behavior that shouldn't—that ought to be modified, that we do that. And so we're analyzing it fully.

Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

State Children's Health Insurance Program

Q. Well, I wanted to ask you about SCHIP and why you even let that get to a situation where it had to be a veto. Isn't there a responsibility by both the President and congressional leadership to work on this common ground before it gets to a veto?

The President. Right. As I said, we weren't dialed in. And I don't know why. But they just ran the bill, and I made it clear we weren't going to accept it. That happens sometimes. In the past, when I said, look, make sure we're a part of the process, and we were. In this case, this bill started heading our way—and I recognize Republicans in the Senate supported it. We made it clear we didn't agree, and they passed it anyway. And so now, hopefully, we'll be in the process. That's why the President has a veto. Sometimes the legislative branch wants to go on without the President, pass pieces of legislation, and the President then can use the veto to make sure he's a part of the process. And that's—as you know, I fully intend to do. I want to make sure—and that's why, when I tell you I'm going to sprint to the finish and finish this job strong, that's one way to ensure that I am relevant; that's one way to sure that I am in the process. And I intend to use the veto.

Wolffe [Richard Wolffe, Newsweek].

U.S. Policy on Detainees in the War on Terror/Congress

Q. Thank you, sir. A simple question.

The President. Yes. It may require a simple answer.

Q. What's your definition of the word "torture"?

The President. Of what?

Q. The word "torture." What's your definition?

The President. That's defined in U.S. law, and we don't torture.

Q. Can you give me your version of it, sir?

The President. Yes. Whatever the law says.

Q. You talked about sprinting to the finish, and then you also, just a moment ago, sounded a bit resigned to the fact that if legislators don't move bills there's not much you can do to it. So are you——

The President. Well, I'm doing it right now. See, that's—not to interrupt you—but it's called the bully pulpit. And I hope to get your—I was trying to get your attention focused on the fact that major pieces of legislation aren't moving, and those that are, are at a snail's pace. And I hope I did that. I hope I was able to accomplish that.

Q. One more on veterans, sir?

The President. Go ahead—he hasn't asked his question yet. I rudely interrupted him.

*The Presidency/Cooperation With Congress/
State Children's Health Insurance Program*

Q. Do you feel as if you're losing leverage and that you're becoming increasingly irrelevant? And what can you do about that to keep——

The President. Quite the contrary. I've never felt more engaged and more capable of helping people recognize—American people recognize that there's a lot of unfinished business. And I'm really looking forward to the next 15 months. I'm looking forward to getting some things done for the American people. And if it doesn't get done, I'm looking forward to reminding people as to why it's not getting done.

But I'm confident we can get positive things done. I mean, you shouldn't view this as somebody who says, well, this is impossible for Congress and the President to work together. Quite the contrary. I just named some areas where we have worked together. And we're going to have to work together. We're going to have to make sure our troops get the money they need. We're going to have to make sure America is protected.

Having said that, I'm not going to accept a lousy bill, and the American people don't want there to be a lousy bill on this issue. The American people want to know that our professionals have the tools necessary to defend them. See, they understand Al Qaida and terrorism is still a threat to the security of this country. In other words, they're still out there, and they're still plotting and planning. And it's in our interest to have the tools necessary to protect the American people. It's our most solemn duty.

So there's a lot of areas where we can work together. This just happens to be a period of time when not much is happening. And my job is to see if I can't get some of that movement in the right direction and, at the same time, make sure that we're part of the process. And one way the executive branch stays a part of the process is to issue veto threats and then follow through with them. And so we—that's what you're going to see tomorrow, as to whether or not the Congress will sustain my veto on a bill that I said I would veto and explained why I'm vetoing it.

And again, I want to repeat it so the American people clearly understand: One, there are half a million children who are eligible under this program but aren't being covered today; two, States are spending—some States are spending more money on adults than children. That doesn't make any sense if you're trying to help poor children.

By the way, in Medicaid, we spend about 35 billion a year on poor children. So if somebody is listening out there saying, well, they don't care about poor children, they ought to look at the size—the amount of money we're spending under Medicaid for poor children.

And finally, to increase eligibility up to 83,000, in my judgment, is an attempt by some in Congress to expand the reach of the Federal Government in medicine. And I believe strongly in private medicine. Now, I think the Federal Government ought to help those who are poor, and it's one of

the reasons why I worked so hard on Medicare reform, was to make sure that we fulfilled our promise to the elderly. But I don't like plans that move people from—encourage people to move from private medicine to the public, and that's what's happening under this bill. And so I'm looking forward to working with the Congress to make sure the bill does what it's supposed to do.

Listen, thank you all for your time. I enjoyed it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:45 a.m. in the James S. Brady

Press Briefing Room at the White House. 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; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia; President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama *October 17, 2007*

Madam Speaker and Senator Byrd; Mr. Leader; members of the congressional delegation, particularly Senators Feinstein and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen; Senator Thomas—God rest his soul; distinguished guests, particularly our friend Elie Wiesel; and Your Holiness: Over the years, Congress has conferred the gold medal on many great figures in history, usually at a time when their struggles were over and won. Today Congress has chosen to do something different. It has conferred this honor on a figure whose work continues and whose outcome remains uncertain.

In doing so, America raises its voice in the call for religious liberty and basic human rights. These values forged our Republic. They sustained us through many trials, and they draw us by conviction and conscience to the people of Tibet and the man we honor today.

Nearly two decades have passed since the Dalai Lama was welcomed to the White House for the very first time. Members of both of our political parties and world leaders have seen His Holiness as a man of faith and sincerity and peace. He's won

the respect and affection of the American people, and America has earned his respect and affection as well.

As a nation, we are humbled to know that a young boy in Tibet—as a young boy in Tibet, His Holiness kept a model of the Statue of Liberty at his bedside. Years later, on his first visit to America, he went to Battery Park in New York City so he could see the real thing up close. On his first trip to Washington, he walked through the Jefferson Memorial, a monument to the man whose words launched a revolution that still inspires men and women across the world. Jefferson counted as one of America's greatest blessings the freedom of worship. It was, he said, "a liberty deemed in other countries incompatible with good government and yet proved by our experience to be its best support."

The freedom of belief is a yearning of the human spirit, a blessing offered to the world, and a cherished value of our Nation. It's the very first protection offered in the American Bill of Rights. It inspired many of the leaders that this rotunda honors in

portraits and in marble. And it still defines our way of life.

Consider where we gather today. This great symbol of democracy sits quietly near a Catholic parish, a Jewish synagogue, a Muslim community center, a Greek Orthodox cathedral, and a Buddhist temple—each with faithful followers who practice their deeply held beliefs and live side by side in peace. This diversity is not a source of instability, it's a source of strength. This freedom does not belong to one nation, it belongs to the world.

One of the tragic anomalies of the past century is that in an era that has seen an unprecedented number of nations embrace individual freedom has also witnessed the stubborn endurance of religious repression. Americans cannot look to the plight of the religiously oppressed and close our eyes or turn away. And that is why I will continue to urge the leaders of China to welcome the Dalai Lama to China. They will find this good man to be a man of peace and reconciliation.

Throughout our history, we have stood proudly with those who offer a message of hope and freedom to the world's down-trodden and oppressed. This is why all of us are drawn to a noble and spiritual leader who lives a world away. Today we honor him as a universal symbol of peace and tolerance, a shepherd for the faithful, and a keeper of the flame for his people.

I congratulate His Holiness on this recognition. I'm so honored to be here with you, sir. Laura and I are—join all Americans in offering the people of Tibet our fervent prayer that they may find days of prosperity and peace.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Nobel Prize winner, Holocaust survivor, and author Elie Wiesel.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia

October 18, 2007

President Bush. It is such an honor to welcome back to the Oval Office the President of our friend and ally Liberia. Madam President, thanks for coming. Thanks for your very strong spirit and your deep desire to enhance democracy and improve the lives of your people in Liberia.

We had a good discussion. I want to emphasize a couple of points that we discussed. First of all, we are committed to helping you relieve your debt. This weekend, IMF will be meeting in Washington, DC, and it's very important for our friends in the IMF to recognize that debt relief is—for Liberia is a part of our agenda, and I would hope that they would help you

with debt relief. I think it's important. And so Secretary Paulson will be taking that message to the IMF.

Secondly, I want to thank you very much for your dedication and focus on helping the children of Liberia get a good education. You've worked extremely hard to encourage parents to send their children to school, and we want to help you to the extent that you ask for help. The United States believes it's important that young boys and girls get a good education not only here in America but around the world. And the President is committed to universal education in Liberia and have made great strides since the days of your civil strife.

I also am very dedicated to helping you on malaria. Laura and I care deeply about the fact that young babies die on the continent of Africa and elsewhere needlessly. They die simply because of a mosquito bite. And so the President and I talked about our desire to put in place a malaria initiative that will save lives in Liberia. And we're going to—we'll be sending a person on the ground there pretty soon to help implement the malaria initiative, and that initiative will mean spreading nets and insecticides throughout the country so that we can see a reduction in death of young children that—a death that we can cure.

And finally, the Peace Corps has been gone from Liberia, and we talked about the fact that now we'll be able to—we're going to move the Peace Corps back in. And the Peace Corps has been in touch with our State Department and the Liberia folks, and it looks like we're going to start moving some teams pretty quickly back into Liberia. And the reason why we feel comfortable doing that is because of the leadership of this strong person right here.

And so, Madam President, proud to call you friend and proud to welcome you back to the Oval Office.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Mr. President, thank you. We're so pleased to be back here.

Liberia continues to make progress, despite the many challenges we face, and this progress we owe a lot to you and to Mrs. Bush for the support we've received. The State Department, National Security Council, Treasury have all just been there for us. Whether we're working on debt relief, or whether we're trying to improve our educational system or get our infrastructure fixed, we've always had a willing hand. The Ambassador has been supportive and been a real partner on the ground with us.

We were very pleased, Mr. President, that you granted the delayed enforced departure for some of our citizens who couldn't go back home because we weren't prepared to receive them—

The President. Right.

President Johnson Sirleaf. —with the jobs and the homes and the basic services they needed. So the 18-month reprieve you've given them gives them time to prepare themselves and enable us to prepare to receive them at some point.

Liberia was included among three other African countries in the special education initiative, and we're very pleased about that. And we've just discussed today that you'll be behind us as we try to fight malaria. Malaria is one of the greatest killers in our country, particular among our young children. And so we'll be working to make sure that we get a program where we can have some measurable actions so we can reduce this scourge that afflicts our children.

Overall, we're just so pleased with the relationship. Liberians are very proud that you were one of the first ones that set us on this road to peace and a road that's enabled us to get the progress we have today. We are committed to make Liberia a postconflict success story. We want it to be part of your legacy. We want you to be able to look back and say, when I was there, I helped Liberia to be a success, to come out of the ashes of war and to be a successful economy responding to the needs of its people. Thank you for being there for us.

President Bush. Madam President, thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Johnson Sirleaf referred to U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Donald E. Booth.

Directive on Public Health and Medical Preparedness October 18, 2007

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/
HSPD-21

Subject: Public Health and Medical
Preparedness

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes a National Strategy for Public Health and Medical Preparedness (Strategy), which builds upon principles set forth in *Biodefense for the 21st Century* (April 2004) and will transform our national approach to protecting the health of the American people against all disasters.

Definitions

(2) In this directive:

(a) The term “biosurveillance” means the process of active data-gathering with appropriate analysis and interpretation of biosphere data that might relate to disease activity and threats to human or animal health—whether infectious, toxic, metabolic, or otherwise, and regardless of intentional or natural origin—in order to achieve early warning of health threats, early detection of health events, and overall situational awareness of disease activity;

(b) The term “catastrophic health event” means any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in a number of ill or injured persons sufficient to overwhelm the capabilities of immediate local and regional emergency response and health care systems;

(c) The term “epidemiologic surveillance” means the process of actively gathering and analyzing data related to human health and disease in a population in order to obtain early warning of human health events, rapid characterization of human disease events, and overall situational awareness of disease activity in the human population;

(d) The term “medical” means the science and practice of maintenance of

health and prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and alleviation of disease or injury and the provision of those services to individuals;

(e) The term “public health” means the science and practice of protecting and improving the overall health of the community through disease prevention and early diagnosis, control of communicable diseases, health education, injury prevention, sanitation, and protection from environmental hazards;

(f) The term “public health and medical preparedness” means the existence of plans, procedures, policies, training, and equipment necessary to maximize the ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events, including efforts that result in the capability to render an appropriate public health and medical response that will mitigate the effects of illness and injury, limit morbidity and mortality to the maximum extent possible, and sustain societal, economic, and political infrastructure; and

(g) The terms “State” and “local government,” when used in a geographical sense, have the meanings ascribed to such terms respectively in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).

Background

(3) A catastrophic health event, such as a terrorist attack with a weapon of mass destruction (WMD), a naturally-occurring pandemic, or a calamitous meteorological or geological event, could cause tens or hundreds of thousands of casualties or more, weaken our economy, damage public morale and confidence, and threaten our national security. It is therefore critical that we establish a strategic vision that will enable a level of public health and medical preparedness sufficient to address a range of possible disasters.

(4) The United States has made significant progress in public health and medical

preparedness since 2001, but we remain vulnerable to events that threaten the health of large populations. The attacks of September 11 and Hurricane Katrina were the most significant recent disasters faced by the United States, yet casualty numbers were small in comparison to the 1995 Kobe earthquake; the 2003 Bam, Iran, earthquake; the 2004 Sumatra tsunami; and what we would expect from a 1918-like influenza pandemic or large-scale WMD attack. Such events could immediately overwhelm our public health and medical systems.

(5) This Strategy draws key principles from the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (October 2007), the *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* (December 2002), and *Biodefense for the 21st Century* (April 2004) that can be generally applied to public health and medical preparedness. Those key principles are the following: (1) preparedness for all potential catastrophic health events; (2) vertical and horizontal coordination across levels of government, jurisdictions, and disciplines; (3) a regional approach to health preparedness; (4) engagement of the private sector, academia, and other non-governmental entities in preparedness and response efforts; and (5) the important roles of individuals, families, and communities.

(6) Present public health and medical preparedness plans incorporate the concept of “surging” existing medical and public health capabilities in response to an event that threatens a large number of lives. The assumption that conventional public health and medical systems can function effectively in catastrophic health events has, however, proved to be incorrect in real-world situations. Therefore, it is necessary to transform the national approach to health care in the context of a catastrophic health event in order to enable U.S. public health and medical systems to respond effectively to a broad range of incidents.

(7) The most effective complex service delivery systems result from rigorous end-

to-end system design. A critical and formal process by which the functions of public health and medical preparedness and response are designed to integrate all vertical (through all levels of government) and horizontal (across all sectors in communities) components can achieve a much greater capability than we currently have.

(8) The United States has tremendous resources in both public and private sectors that could be used to prepare for and respond to a catastrophic health event. To exploit those resources fully, they must be organized in a rationally designed system that is incorporated into pre-event planning, deployed in a coordinated manner in response to an event, and guided by a constant and timely flow of relevant information during an event. This Strategy establishes principles and objectives to improve our ability to respond comprehensively to catastrophic health events. It also identifies critical antecedent components of this capability and directs the development of an implementation plan that will delineate further specific actions and guide the process to fruition.

(9) This Strategy focuses on human public health and medical systems; it does not address other areas critical to overall public health and medical preparedness, such as animal health systems, food and agriculture defense, global partnerships in public health, health threat intelligence activities, domestic and international biosecurity, and basic and applied research in threat diseases and countermeasures. Efforts in those areas are addressed in other policy documents.

(10) It is not possible to prevent all casualties in catastrophic events, but strategic improvements in our Federal, State, and local planning can prepare our Nation to deliver appropriate care to the largest possible number of people, lessen the impact on limited health care resources, and support the continuity of society and government.

Policy

(11) It is the policy of the United States to plan and enable provision for the public health and medical needs of the American people in the case of a catastrophic health event through continual and timely flow of information during such an event and rapid public health and medical response that marshals all available national capabilities and capacities in a rapid and coordinated manner.

Implementation Actions

(12) *Biodefense for the 21st Century* provides a foundation for the transformation of our catastrophic health event response and preparedness efforts. Although the four pillars of that framework—Threat Awareness, Prevention and Protection, Surveillance and Detection, and Response and Recovery—were developed to guide our efforts to defend against a bioterrorist attack, they are applicable to a broad array of natural and manmade public health and medical challenges and are appropriate to serve as the core functions of the Strategy for Public Health and Medical Preparedness.

(13) To accomplish our objectives, we must create a firm foundation for community medical preparedness. We will increase our efforts to inform citizens and empower communities, buttress our public health infrastructure, and explore options to relieve current pressures on our emergency departments and emergency medical systems so that they retain the flexibility to prepare for and respond to events.

(14) Ultimately, the Nation must collectively support and facilitate the establishment of a discipline of disaster health. The specialty of emergency medicine evolved as a result of the recognition of the special considerations in emergency patient care, and similarly the recognition of the unique principles in disaster-related public health and medicine merit the establishment of their own formal discipline. Such a discipline will provide a foundation for doctrine, education, training, and research and

will integrate preparedness into the public health and medical communities.

Critical Components of Public Health and Medical Preparedness

(15) Currently, the four most critical components of public health and medical preparedness are biosurveillance, countermeasure distribution, mass casualty care, and community resilience. Although those capabilities do not address all public health and medical preparedness requirements, they currently hold the greatest potential for mitigating illness and death and therefore will receive the highest priority in our public health and medical preparedness efforts. Those capabilities constitute the focus and major objectives of this Strategy.

(16) *Biosurveillance*: The United States must develop a nationwide, robust, and integrated biosurveillance capability, with connections to international disease surveillance systems, in order to provide early warning and ongoing characterization of disease outbreaks in near real-time. Surveillance must use multiple modalities and an in-depth architecture. We must enhance clinician awareness and participation and strengthen laboratory diagnostic capabilities and capacity in order to recognize potential threats as early as possible. Integration of biosurveillance elements and other data (including human health, animal health, agricultural, meteorological, environmental, intelligence, and other data) will provide a comprehensive picture of the health of communities and the associated threat environment for incorporation into the national “common operating picture.” A central element of biosurveillance must be an epidemiologic surveillance system to monitor human disease activity across populations. That system must be sufficiently enabled to identify specific disease incidence and prevalence in heterogeneous populations and environments and must possess sufficient flexibility to tailor analyses to new syndromes and emerging diseases. State and local government health officials, public

and private sector health care institutions, and practicing clinicians must be involved in system design, and the overall system must be constructed with the principal objective of establishing or enhancing the capabilities of State and local government entities.

(17) *Countermeasure Stockpiling and Distribution*: In the context of a catastrophic health event, rapid distribution of medical countermeasures (vaccines, drugs, and therapeutics) to a large population requires significant resources within individual communities. Few if any cities are presently able to meet the objective of dispensing countermeasures to their entire population within 48 hours after the decision to do so. Recognizing that State and local government authorities have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, the Federal Government will create the appropriate framework and policies for sharing information on best practices and mechanisms to address the logistical challenges associated with this requirement. The Federal Government must work with nonfederal stakeholders to create effective templates for countermeasure distribution and dispensing that State and local government authorities can use to build their own capabilities.

(18) *Mass Casualty Care*: The structure and operating principles of our day-to-day public health and medical systems cannot meet the needs created by a catastrophic health event. Collectively, our Nation must develop a disaster medical capability that can immediately re-orient and coordinate existing resources within all sectors to satisfy the needs of the population during a catastrophic health event. Mass casualty care response must be (1) rapid, (2) flexible, (3) scalable, (4) sustainable, (5) exhaustive (drawing upon all national resources), (6) comprehensive (addressing needs from acute to chronic care and including mental health and special needs populations), (7) integrated and coordinated, and (8) appropriate (delivering the correct treatment in

the most ethical manner with available capabilities). We must enhance our capability to protect the physical and mental health of survivors; protect responders and health care providers; properly and respectfully dispose of the deceased; ensure continuity of society, economy, and government; and facilitate long-term recovery of affected citizens.

(19) The establishment of a robust disaster health capability requires us to develop an operational concept for the medical response to catastrophic health events that is substantively distinct from and broader than that which guides day-to-day operations. In order to achieve that transformation, the Federal Government will facilitate and provide leadership for key stakeholders to establish the following four foundational elements: Doctrine, System Design, Capacity, and Education and Training. The establishment of those foundational elements must result from efforts within the relevant professional communities and will require many years, but the Federal Government can serve as an important catalyst for this process.

(20) *Community Resilience*: The above components address the supply side of the preparedness function, ultimately providing enhanced services to our citizens. The demand side is of equal importance. Where local civic leaders, citizens, and families are educated regarding threats and are empowered to mitigate their own risk, where they are practiced in responding to events, where they have social networks to fall back upon, and where they have familiarity with local public health and medical systems, there will be community resilience that will significantly attenuate the requirement for additional assistance. The Federal Government must formulate a comprehensive plan for promoting community public health and medical preparedness to assist State and local authorities in building resilient communities in the face of potential catastrophic health events.

Biosurveillance

(21) The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish an operational national epidemiologic surveillance system for human health, with international connectivity where appropriate, that is predicated on State, regional, and community-level capabilities and creates a networked system to allow for two-way information flow between and among Federal, State, and local government public health authorities and clinical health care providers. The system shall build upon existing Federal, State, and local surveillance systems where they exist and shall enable and provide incentive for public health agencies to implement local surveillance systems where they do not exist. To the extent feasible, the system shall be built using electronic health information systems. It shall incorporate flexibility and depth of data necessary to respond to previously unknown or emerging threats to public health and integrate its data into the national biosurveillance common operating picture as appropriate. The system shall protect patient privacy by restricting access to identifying information to the greatest extent possible and only to public health officials with a need to know. The Implementation Plan to be developed pursuant to section 43 of this directive shall specify milestones for this system.

(22) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall establish an Epidemiologic Surveillance Federal Advisory Committee, including representatives from State and local government public health authorities and appropriate private sector health care entities, in order to ensure that the Federal Government is meeting the goal of enabling State and local government public health surveillance capabilities.

Countermeasure Stockpiling and Distribution

(23) In accordance with the schedule set forth below, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall develop templates, using a variety of tools and including private sector resources when necessary, that provide minimum operational plans to enable communities to distribute and dispense countermeasures to their populations within 48 hours after a decision to do so. The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall ensure that this process utilizes current cooperative programs and engages Federal, State, local government, and private sector entities in template development, modeling, testing, and evaluation. The Secretary shall also assist State, local government, and regional entities in tailoring templates to fit differing geographic sizes, population densities, and demographics, and other unique or specific local needs. In carrying out such actions, the Secretary shall:

(a) within 270 days after the date of this directive, (i) publish an initial template or templates meeting the requirements above, including basic testing of component distribution mechanisms and modeling of template systems to predict performance in large-scale implementation, (ii) establish standards and performance measures for State and local government countermeasure distribution systems, including demonstration of specific capabilities in tactical exercises in accordance with the National Exercise Program, and (iii) establish a process to gather performance data from State and local participants on a regular basis to assess readiness; and

(b) within 180 days after the completion of the tasks set forth in (a), and with appropriate notice, commence collecting and using performance data and metrics as conditions for future public health preparedness grant funding.

(24) Within 270 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security and the Attorney General, shall develop Federal Government capabilities and plans to complement or supplement State and local government distribution capacity, as appropriate and feasible, if such entities' resources are deemed insufficient to provide access to countermeasures in a timely manner in the event of a catastrophic health event.

(25) The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall ensure that the priority-setting process for the acquisition of medical countermeasures and other critical medical materiel for the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is transparent and risk-informed with respect to the scope, quantities, and forms of the various products. Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs, shall establish a formal mechanism for the annual review of SNS composition and development of recommendations that utilizes input from accepted national risk assessments and threat assessments, national planning scenarios, national modeling resources, and subject matter experts. The results of each such annual review shall be provided to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism at the time of the Department of Health and Human Services' next budget submission.

(26) Within 90 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish a process to share relevant information regarding the contents of the SNS with Federal, State, and local government health officers with appropriate clearances and a need to know.

(27) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of State, Defense, Agriculture,

Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall develop protocols for sharing countermeasures and medical goods between the SNS and other Federal stockpiles and shall explore appropriate reciprocal arrangements with foreign and international stockpiles of medical countermeasures to ensure the availability of necessary supplies for use in the United States.

Mass Casualty Care

(28) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall directly engage relevant State and local government, academic, professional, and private sector entities and experts to provide feedback on the review of the National Disaster Medical System and national medical surge capacity required by the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA) (Public Law 109-417). Within 270 days after the completion of such review, the Secretary shall identify, through a systems-based approach involving expertise from such entities and experts, high-priority gaps in mass casualty care capabilities, and shall submit to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism a concept plan that identifies and coordinates all Federal, State, and local government and private sector public health and medical disaster response resources, and identifies options for addressing critical deficits, in order to achieve the system attributes described in this Strategy.

(29) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall:

(a) build upon the analysis of Federal facility use to provide enhanced medical surge capacity in disasters required by section 302 of PAHPA to analyze the use of Federal medical facilities as a foundational element of public health and medical preparedness; and

(b) develop and implement plans and enter into agreements to integrate such facilities more effectively into national and regional education, training, and exercise preparedness activities.

(30) The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall lead an interagency process, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security and the Attorney General, to identify any legal, regulatory, or other barriers to public health and medical preparedness and response from Federal, State, or local government or private sector sources that can be eliminated by appropriate regulatory or legislative action and shall, within 120 days after the date of this directive, submit a report on such barriers to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

(31) The impact of the “worried well” in past disasters is well documented, and it is evident that mitigating the mental health consequences of disasters can facilitate effective response. Recognizing that maintaining and restoring mental health in disasters has not received sufficient attention to date, within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, shall establish a Federal Advisory Committee for Disaster Mental Health. The committee shall consist of appropriate subject matter experts and, within 180 days after its establishment, shall submit to the Secretary of Health and Human Services recommendations for protecting, preserving, and restoring individual and community mental health in catastrophic health event settings, including pre-event, intra-event, and post-event education, messaging, and interventions.

Community Resilience

(32) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and

Homeland Security, shall ensure that core public health and medical curricula and training developed pursuant to PAHPA address the needs to improve individual, family, and institutional public health and medical preparedness, enhance private citizen opportunities for contributions to local, regional, and national preparedness and response, and build resilient communities.

(33) Within 270 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Commerce, Labor, Education, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security and the Attorney General, shall submit to the President for approval, through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, a plan to promote comprehensive community medical preparedness.

Risk Awareness

(34) The Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall prepare an unclassified briefing for non-health professionals that clearly outlines the scope of the risks to public health posed by relevant threats and catastrophic health events (including attacks involving weapons of mass destruction), shall coordinate such briefing with the heads of other relevant executive departments and agencies, shall ensure that full use is made of Department of Defense expertise and resources, and shall ensure that all State governors and the mayors and senior county officials from the 50 largest metropolitan statistical areas in the United States receive such briefing, unless specifically declined, within 150 days after the date of this directive.

(35) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and

Human Services, and the Director of National Intelligence, shall establish a mechanism by which up-to-date and specific public health threat information shall be relayed, to the greatest extent possible and not inconsistent with the established guidance relating to the Information Sharing Environment, to relevant public health officials at the State and local government levels and shall initiate a process to ensure that qualified heads of State and local government entities have the opportunity to obtain appropriate security clearances so that they may receive classified threat information when applicable.

Education and Training

(36) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall develop and thereafter maintain processes for coordinating Federal grant programs for public health and medical preparedness using grant application guidance, investment justifications, reporting, program performance measures, and accountability for future funding in order to promote cross-sector, regional, and capability-based coordination, consistent with section 201 of PAHPA and the National Preparedness Guidelines developed pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8 of December 17, 2003 ("National Preparedness").

(37) Within 1 year after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, and consistent with section 304 of PAHPA, shall develop a mechanism to coordinate public health and medical disaster preparedness and response core curricula and training across executive departments and agencies, to ensure standardization and commonality of knowledge, procedures, and terms of reference within the Federal Government that also can be communicated to State and

local government entities, as well as academia and the private sector.

(38) Within 1 year after the date of this directive, the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Defense, in coordination with the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security, shall establish an academic Joint Program for Disaster Medicine and Public Health housed at a National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. The Program shall lead Federal efforts to develop and propagate core curricula, training, and research related to medicine and public health in disasters. The Center will be an academic center of excellence in disaster medicine and public health, co-locating education and research in the related specialties of domestic medical preparedness and response, international health, international disaster and humanitarian medical assistance, and military medicine. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense authorities will be used to carry out respective civilian and military missions within this joint program.

Disaster Health System

(39) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall commission the Institute of Medicine to lead a forum engaging Federal, State, and local governments, the private sector, academia, and appropriate professional societies in a process to facilitate the development of national disaster public health and medicine doctrine and system design and to develop a strategy for long-term enhancement of disaster public health and medical capacity and the propagation of disaster public health and medicine education and training.

(40) Within 120 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the President through the Assistant to the President

for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, and shall commence the implementation of, a plan to use current grant funding programs, private payer incentives, market forces, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services requirements, and other means to create financial incentives to enhance private sector health care facility preparedness in such a manner as to not increase health care costs.

(41) Within 180 days after the date of this directive, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretaries of Transportation and Homeland Security, shall establish within the Department of Health and Human Services an Office for Emergency Medical Care. Under the direction of the Secretary, such Office shall lead an enterprise to promote and fund research in emergency medicine and trauma health care; promote regional partnerships and more effective emergency medical systems in order to enhance appropriate triage, distribution, and care of routine community patients; promote local, regional, and State emergency medical systems' preparedness for and response to public health events. The Office shall address the full spectrum of issues that have an impact on care in hospital emergency departments, including the entire continuum of patient care from pre-hospital to disposition from emergency or trauma care. The Office shall coordinate with existing executive departments and agencies that perform functions relating to emergency medical systems in order to ensure unified strategy, policy, and implementation.

National Health Security Strategy

(42) The PAHPA requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services submit in 2009, and quadrennially afterward, a National Health Security Strategy (NHSS) to the Congress. The principles and actions in this directive, and in the Implementation Plan required by section 43, shall be incorporated into the initial NHSS, as appro-

priate, and shall serve as a foundation for the preparedness goals contained therein.

Task Force and Implementation Plan

(43) In order to facilitate the implementation of the policy outlined in this Strategy, there is established the Public Health and Medical Preparedness Task Force (Task Force). Within 120 days after the date of this directive, the Task Force shall submit to the President for approval, through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, an Implementation Plan (Plan) for this Strategy, and annually thereafter shall submit to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism a status report on the implementation of the Plan and any recommendations for changes to this Strategy.

(a) The Task Force shall consist exclusively of the following members (or their designees who shall be full-time officers or employees of the members' respective agencies):

- (i) The Secretary of Health and Human Services, who shall serve as Chair;
- (ii) The Secretary of State;
- (ii) The Secretary of Defense;
- (iii) The Attorney General;
- (iv) The Secretary of Agriculture;
- (v) The Secretary of Commerce;
- (vi) The Secretary of Labor;
- (vii) The Secretary of Transportation;
- (viii) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs;
- (ix) The Secretary of Homeland Security;
- (x) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget;
- (xi) The Director of National Intelligence; and
- (xii) such other officers of the United States as the Chair of the Task Force may designate from time to time.

(b) The Chair of the Task Force shall, as appropriate to deal with particular subject matters, establish subcommittees of the Task Force that shall consist exclusively of members of the Task Force (or their designees under subsection (a) of this section),

and such other full-time or permanent part-time officers or employees of the Federal Government as the Chair may designate.

(c) The Plan shall:

- (i) provide additional detailed roles and responsibilities of heads of executive departments and agencies relating to and consistent with the Strategy and actions set forth in this directive;
- (ii) provide additional guidance on public health and medical directives in *Bio-defense for the 21st Century*; and
- (iii) direct the full examination of resource requirements.

(d) The Plan and all Task Force reports shall be developed in coordination with the Biodefense Policy Coordination Committee of the Homeland Security Council and shall then be prepared for consideration by and submitted to the more senior committees of the Homeland Security Council, as deemed appropriate by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

General Provisions

(44) This directive:

(a) shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and the authorities of executive departments and agencies, or heads of such departments and agencies, vested by law, and subject to the availability of appropriations and within the current projected spending levels for Federal health entitlement programs;

(b) shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals; and

(c) is not intended, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

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

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in Colombia *October 18, 2007*

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the emergency declared with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia is to continue in effect beyond October 21, 2007.

The circumstances that led to the declaration on October 21, 1995, of a national emergency have not been resolved. The actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and to cause unparalleled violence, corruption, and harm in the United States and abroad. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to maintain economic pressure on significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia by blocking their property and interests in property that are in the United States or within the possession or control

of United States persons and by depriving them of access to the U.S. market and financial system.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 18, 2007.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Reporting on Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain Transactions Related to Burma *October 18, 2007*

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the “Order”) that expands the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, and takes additional steps with respect to that national emergency.

In 1997, the United States put in place a prohibition on new investment in Burma in response to the Government of Burma’s large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in that country. On July 28, 2003, those sanctions were expanded by steps taken in Executive Order 13310, which contained prohibitions implementing sections 3 and 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–61) and supplemented that Act with additional restrictions. I have now determined that the Government of Burma’s continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, manifested most recently in the violent response to peaceful demonstrations, the commission of human rights abuses related to political repression, and engagement in public corruption, including by diverting or misusing Burmese public assets or by misusing public authority, warrant an expansion of the existing sanctions.

The order incorporates existing designation criteria set forth in Executive Order 13310, authorizing the Secretary of the

Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate any person determined to be a senior official of the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, or any successor entity to any of the foregoing. The order blocks the property and interests in property in the United States of persons listed in the Annex to the order and provides additional criteria for designations of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to be responsible for, or to have participated in, human rights abuses related to political repression in Burma; to be engaged, or to have engaged, in activities facilitating public corruption by senior officials of the Government of Burma; to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, any successor entity to any of the foregoing, any senior official of any of the foregoing, or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310 or section 1(b)(i)–(v) of the order; to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property

and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310 or section 1(b)(i)–(v) of the order; or to be a spouse or dependent child of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order or Executive Order 13310.

The order leaves in place the existing prohibitions on new investment, the exportation or reexportation to Burma of financial services, and the importation of any article that is a product of Burma, which were put into effect in Executive Order 13047 and Executive Order 13310.

I delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the authority to take such actions,

including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and section 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 18, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Situation in Burma *October 19, 2007*

Laura, thank you for joining—and Madam Secretary. In the last few weeks, the world has been inspired by the courage of the Burmese people. Ordinary men and women have taken to the streets in peaceful marches to demand their freedom and call for democratic change. The world has also been horrified by the response of Burma's military junta. Monks have been beaten and killed. Thousands of prodemocracy protesters have been arrested. And Burma's dictator, Than Shwe, continues to hold captive the leader of Burma's largest democratic party, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Burma's rulers continue to defy the world's just demands to stop their vicious persecution. They continue to dismiss calls to begin peaceful dialog aimed at national reconciliation. Most of all, they continue to reject the clear will of the Burmese people to live in freedom under leaders of their own choosing.

Last month, the United States tightened economic sanctions on the leaders of Burma's regime and imposed an expanded visa

ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights, as well as their family members. The Treasury Department designated 14 top leaders of the Burmese regime for sanctions, including Than Shwe and his deputy, Vice Senior General Maung Aye. And the State Department added 260 names of Burmese officials and their family members to the visa ban list.

In light of the ongoing atrocities by these men and their associates, the United States has today imposed additional sanctions.

First, the Treasury Department has designated 11 more leaders of the Burmese junta for sanctions under existing authorities.

Second, I've issued a new Executive order that designates an additional 12 individuals and entities for sanctions. This Executive order grants the Treasury Department expanded authority to designate for sanctions individuals responsible for human rights abuses, as well as public corruption,

and those who provide material and financial backing to these individuals or to the Government of Burma.

Third, I have instructed our Commerce Department to tighten its export control regulations for Burma.

Burmese authorities claim they desire reconciliation. Well, they need to match those words with actions. A good way to start would be to provide the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations access to political prisoners, to allow Aung San Suu Kyi and other detained leaders to communicate with one another, and to permit Special Envoy Gambari to enter their country immediately. And ultimately, reconciliation requires that Burmese authorities release all political prisoners and begin negotiations with the democratic opposition under the auspices of the United Nations.

We will continue to review our policies and consider additional measures if Burma's leaders do not end the brutal repression of their own people whose only offense is the desire to live in freedom. Business as usual is unacceptable. So I applaud the efforts of the European Union and nations like Australia that have announced targeted sanctions on the Burmese regime. I commend nations such as Japan that have cur-

tailed their assistance to Burma in response to the atrocities. I appreciate nations such as Singapore and the Philippines and Indonesia, who have spoken out against the atrocities. I ask other countries to review their own laws and policies, especially Burma's closest neighbors: China, India, and others in the region.

The people of Burma are showing great courage in the face of immense repression. They are appealing for our help. We must not turn a deaf ear to their cries. They do have many friends around the world, including Laura. I am proud of Laura for all she has done to awaken the conscience of the world to the plight of the Burmese people. I believe no nation can forever suppress its own people. And we are confident that the day is coming when freedom's tide will reach the shores of Burma.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to First Lady Laura Bush; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; and United Nations Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari. The President also referred to Executive Order 13448.

Statement on the Resignation of Mel R. Martinez as Chairman of the Republican National Committee *October 19, 2007*

Mel Martinez has served his party with the same distinction he serves his country. When Mel accepted the position as general chairman of the Republican National Committee, his goal was to ensure our party had the structure and resources in place for all Republican candidates in the 2008 elections to be successful. He has more than fulfilled that mission.

As general chairman of the Republican National Committee, Mel has effectively communicated our party's commitment to addressing the issues most important to all Americans. His message of hope and opportunity has resonated throughout America and strengthened support for our agenda. Because of his leadership, more Americans understand the Republican Party's efforts to grow our economy, support our

troops, strengthen our schools, and protect our country.

As his tenure at the RNC ends, Mel should be proud that he has represented the best of the Republican Party and its core values. I am grateful for his leadership at the RNC, his service in my Cabinet,

and his continued service as a Member of the United States Senate.

Mike Duncan has demonstrated that he is an effective chairman who will help our party win in the next election. I have confidence in Mike's leadership and look forward to continuing to work with him.

The President's Radio Address *October 19, 2007*

Good morning. This weekend, I will join millions of Americans in one of our favorite national pastimes, fishing. I'm going to be on the Chesapeake Bay. For those who love fishing, the most important thing is not the size of your catch, but the enjoyment of the great outdoors. Every year, millions of Americans grab their tackle boxes and head out to their favorite fishing holes. No matter where they drop their lines, they build memories that last a lifetime. And in the process, they contribute billions of dollars to our economy.

My administration is committed to protecting the environment that our sportsmen depend on. We believe that to meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century, we must bring together conservationists, fishermen, sportsmen, local leaders, and Federal, State, and tribal officials in a spirit of cooperation. I call this "cooperative conservation." Instead of the old environmental debates that pit one group against another, we're moving our country toward a system where citizens and government can come together to achieve meaningful results for our environment.

One way we are practicing cooperative conservation is through our efforts to preserve our fisheries. Almost 3 years ago, I announced an ocean action plan to promote an ethic of responsible stewardship that will make our waterways cleaner, healthier, and more productive. Last year, I was proud to establish a marine conservation area in

the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. This is the single largest conservation area in the history of our Nation and the largest protected marine area in the world. We're also working to clean up marine debris and to address harmful fishing practices in international waters that destroy corals and other vital habitats. Earlier this year, I signed a law that will help end overfishing and create market-based regulations to replenish our fish stocks so we can keep them strong for generations to come.

Prior to my fishing trip, I am signing an Executive order that will preserve two of our Nation's most popular recreational fish, striped bass and red drum. These two species were once abundant in American waters, but their stocks have been overfished. The Executive order I sign will protect striped bass and red drum caught in Federal waters by moving to prohibit their commercial sale. It will promote more accurate scientific records about fish population levels. And it will help the Federal Government work with State and local officials to find innovative ways to ensure these two species are conserved for future generations.

As we work to protect our Nation's fisheries, we're also working to help migratory birds thrive. Each year, more than 800 species of birds make their way south for the winter and then return home to their breeding grounds the following spring. Their ability to survive these long journeys

depends on stopover habitat. Unfortunately, some of the areas where birds once stopped and rested on their great migrations have been lost to development. So we're working to protect these species by restoring or replacing their stopover habitats.

One key way we're doing this is by expanding our national wildlife refuges, creating new ones, and restoring and improving hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat for migratory birds. At the same time, we're bringing together Federal, State, and tribal agencies to work with private groups and corporations to improve habitat on private lands. The Department of the Interior is also working with cities across our Nation to build stopover habitats in urban areas. And this weekend, I'm announcing new policies, including new efforts with Mexico, to foster greater habitat conservation for the migratory birds.

America's national parks also play a vital role in our conservation efforts. Earlier this week, Laura spoke at the first-ever leadership summit of the National Park Foundation. She discussed the National Parks Cen-

tennial Initiative, a public-private partnership to raise funds for the Park System's 100th anniversary in 2016. This initiative will support many vital projects to improve habitats for local wildlife, including some that will directly benefit birds.

As Americans, we've been given a beautiful country to live in, and we have an obligation to be good stewards of the environment. With the cooperative conservation policies we have put in place, we show our commitment to preserving our Nation's heritage. By making responsible choices today, we will ensure that our children and grandchildren will enjoy a cleaner and more vibrant environment.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 19 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland October 20, 2007

The President. Listen, thank you all for coming. I appreciate the hospitality you've shown us here at Patuxent Research Refuge. I want to thank all the good folks who work here from the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the U.S. Geological Survey.

One of the things we've discussed here is a significant environmental challenge we face here in America, and that is, birds are losing the stopover habitats they need and depend on for their annual migrations. And therefore, I've come to discuss a strategy to enhance those habitats, without which many birds could become severely challenged.

To me, this is a national issue that requires national focus. And so I appreciate very much you all giving me a chance to describe our strategy and thanks for your—thanks for working for the country.

I am proud to be here with Laura, bird-watcher extraordinaire. I appreciate Secretary Dirk Kempthorne running our Interior Department. I do thank Wendy Paulson, who's joined us. She's on the board of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Some of the recommendations—or all the recommendations that I'm describing today were brought to our attention by Wendy and a friend of mine from Texas named Rusty Rose, both of whom serve on this

important university lab—the board of the lab. I appreciate Judd Howell, the Director, who gave us a tour. And Brad, thank you very much for joining us.

I also want to thank George Fenwick—he's the president of the American Bird Conservancy—for joining us as well. Appreciate the staff members here who worked on this initiative. Thanks for your hard work and your—and bringing what I believe the American people will find is a commonsense policy that makes sense for our future.

I don't know if you know this or not, but each year, more than 800 species of migratory birds brave stiff winds, harsh weather, and numerous predators to fly thousands of miles. Their final destination is the warm climate of the American South or the Caribbean or Mexico, where they stay for the winter. These amazing travelers will then return to their breeding grounds in the north. And as they span these distances, they fascinate and bring joy to millions of our citizens. A lot of folks across the country love to watch birds.

For these migratory birds, surviving their long journey depends on a stopover habitat. That basically means they got to find a place to rest, a safe place to prepare to continue their journey. Unfortunately, expanding civilization has made it harder for these birds to find places to stop and to rest.

And so that's the challenge we face. And, you know, one area that—one reason we came here is because the national wildlife refuges like this one provide stopover habitat, and they play a really important role in our conservation efforts. My administration has supported the National Wildlife Refuge System. We've expanded some of the existing sites; we created 10 new ones; and we restored and improved hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat for migratory birds. In other words, we recognize the refuge system is an important part of preserving our bird populations.

And we've set a goal that by the time I leave office, we will improve another 200,000 acres. And I appreciate, Mr. Secretary, you joining us and committing your Department to achieving that goal.

In addition to the wildlife refuges, we're also working to improve habitat for migratory birds in our national parks. We've increased funding. But we've got a new initiative that I want to—want the American people to be aware of, and it's called the National Parks Centennial Initiative. And the idea is to match taxpayers' money with private donations to the tune of \$3 billion, so that we can improve our national parks. And some of that money is going to go to restoration, to the restoration of a variety of wildlife habitats, including some that directly benefit birds.

Improving our Nation's long-term protections for migratory birds requires conservation beyond the boundaries of our national parks and refuges. And so one of the things this administration has done is to bring together citizens and private groups and officials from every level of government in the spirit of cooperation. In other words, we recognize that the Federal Government alone cannot provide the habitat necessary for migratory birds. We call this program "cooperative conservation," and part of the emphasis is to restore critical habitat.

One of the most important cooperative conservation efforts has been what they call joint venture programs for water fowl. This program has brought together Federal, State, and tribal agencies with private groups and corporations to improve habitat on private lands. It's worked so well for water fowl that we're now using it for other migratory birds. We've had—we have 18 joint ventures now underway, and next year, we're going to add 3 more to help conserve birds along the Rio Grande corridor, the Appalachian Mountains, and on the northern Great Plains.

Here's the way they work. Each venture—joint venture brings together a team of biologists and land managers—these are

the experts—and they make—and then they work with the bird conservationists in a particular region to design and carry out critical habitat improvement. To enhance habitat conservation, we're going to put forth next week an innovative policy called recovery credit trading. This policy will provide incentives for landowners to improve habitat for migratory birds and other species. Landowners can earn recovery credits for the habitat they improve, and then they can sell those credits. The idea is to provide incentive for our private landowners to help deal with the concern that I started the speech with, and that is to make sure there's critical habitat available for migratory birds.

There's something else we can do. I asked Congress to provide tax incentives to reward landowners who donate conservation easements. Conservation easements are a good way to ensure the long-term preservation of habitat. They allow people to give up the right to develop parts of their land and then count the value of that right as a charitable contribution. The proposal would allow good citizens who give these conservation easements—allow them to deduct a higher portion of the donation from their income taxes, both in the year they donated and the years that follow. In other words, this is additional incentives for landowners to become a part of this comprehensive national strategy, and Congress needs to pass this piece of tax legislation.

You know, another important measure we've taken is in the conservation title of the farm bill. This title encourages farmers and ranchers to set aside critical habitat through a program called Conservation Reserve Program, or the CRP. And our proposal to Congress as they rewrite the farm bill, we're asking them to dedicate \$50 billion over 5 years to make sure that this program continues in effect. The program has been effective for our farmers and ranchers and, equally importantly, for our bird populations. And my hope is that Con-

gress recognizes its effectiveness and will continue to fund this program.

We're making progress in rural areas, but there needs to be some work in urban areas. And so we've got an interesting program underway to help five cities turn parks and local backyards into stopover bird habitats over the next 2 years. In other words, what we're trying to do is to make sure that we have a successful strategy in five cities that could become the blueprint for cities all around the country.

Many species of birds live part of their lives here in the United States and part in Mexico. So we have a strategy to work with Mexico to enhance bird habitats in their country. I've talked about this issue with President Calderon. He shares my concern about making sure there's critical habitat available for our migratory birds. The Secretaries of State, Interior, and Commerce are working with their counterparts in the Mexican Government. Non-governmental partners are working to undertake important habitat projects in Mexico as well.

One of the things we have done is we've identified five priority habitats in Mexico. We listened to the experts who pointed us to five important areas, and we have provided \$4 million to support conservation initiatives there. I also directed Federal Agencies to increase our Nation's participation in an international effort to protect coastal and marine migratory birds such as albatrosses and petrels. Restoring habitats at home and abroad is going to help us achieve the objectives and goals I have set out, which is providing critical habitat for migratory birds.

Our efforts to restore habitats are strengthening bird populations. Since 2004, the Department of Interior has improved the status of five migratory bird species, and the Department is helping ensure that more than 62 percent of our Nation's migratory bird species are healthy and at sustainable levels. But that's not good enough; 62 percent is good, but we can do better.

And so I've asked the Secretary to—Secretary Kempthorne to focus on the status of five more species over the next 5 years. And to achieve this goal, we need good data. I mean, we just don't want to be guessing about bird populations, we want to measure. And so I've asked the Secretary to produce a State of the Birds report by 2009. This report will chart our progress. It'll identify species that need additional protections and help us bring more of America's bird species into a healthy and sustainable status.

And, Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your commitment.

Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. Absolutely.

The President. I appreciate the fact that you understand America's greatness is not measured by material wealth alone; it's measured by how we manage and care for all that we have been given. We're people united by our belief that we must be good

stewards of our environment. The cooperative conservation policies that we have put in place show our commitment to protecting America's migratory birds, conserving the habitat they depend on, and ensuring that generations of Americans will enjoy the beauty of birds for decades to come.

I appreciate you all joining me. I want to thank you for your interest. God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Endangered Crane Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Wendy Paulson and Rusty Rose, administrative board members, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Judd Howell, Director, U.S.G.S. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center; Brad Burns, president, Strippers Forever; and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on Protection of Striped Bass and Red Drum Fish Populations in St. Michaels, Maryland

October 20, 2007

Thank you all. Stuart, thanks for the introduction. Thanks for the invitation here to the Maritime Museum. It's a beautiful site you got here. I can see why people want to live in St. Michaels, and I do want to thank the good citizens of this community for coming out and greeting me and Laura. By the way, Laura is not here. She's headed over to the Vice President's house. They've kindly invited us for lunch. I guess you could say she's the taster. *[Laughter]*

The Vice President tells me there's a lot of fine fishing here, and I'm looking forward to going out and trying to catch some. I love to fish. And the good news is—there's a lot of good fishing here—is because the Secret Service won't let me go hunting with him. *[Laughter]*

I'm going to sign an Executive order today to protect our striped bass and red drum fish populations; that's what I'm here to do. The Executive order is part of our commitment to end overfishing in America and to replenish our Nation's fish stocks and to advance cooperative conservation and responsible stewardship. And this is a good place to come and sign the Executive order. And I thank you all for coming up and letting me say hello to you and witness this Presidential act.

I want to thank the Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, for joining us today. He cares about our waters and our fish stocks, just like I do. And I appreciate Carlos Gutierrez—he's the Secretary of Commerce—for joining us as well. He's in charge of NOAA, as is Conrad

Lautenbacher—run NOAA—you’ve got a fancy title: Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. That means he runs NOAA. *[Laughter]* And I appreciate your concern about our waters, Conrad, and I want to thank you for your service to the country.

I appreciate Wayne Gilchrest; he’s the Congressman from this district. Mr. Congressman, I’m honored you’re here. Thank you for taking time; appreciate you welcoming us.

I want to thank all the State and local folks who’ve joined us. Particularly, I want to thank people who care about fishing, and thank you for being here. I want to thank the different groups represented here.

I want to say one—there’s a fellow up here named Walter Fondren. He’s a fellow Texan. He had a lot to do with making sure conservation efforts on the Texas gulf coast worked. He proved, as have others here, that if you get together with responsible officials, you can help get these fishing stocks back to robust. We were losing our red fish in Texas, and he along with other concerned citizens came together and said, “Let’s do something about it.” And as a result, red fishing is good again. But we want to make it as good as possible all throughout the country because fishing is important to the country.

Listen, it’s important to be a commercial fisherman; I understand that. But the commercial fishermen and the sport fishermen don’t have to be antagonistic. It’s not a zero-sum game. Good policy will help our commercial fishermen, and good policy will help our sports fishermen. And that’s what we’re here to talk about. And it’s important to recognize here in America that sport fishing is a important industry; a lot of people make a living because of sport fishing. I don’t know if people know this, but millions of Americans are spending about \$40 billion a year on sport fishing. I know in our State, Walter, there’s a lot of people, a lot of entrepreneurs making a good living;

they’re fishing guides. A lot of bait shops and small-business owners are doing well as a result of good sport fishing policy.

And so we’re here today to talk about sport fishing. As a matter of fact, I’m fixing to go do some sport fishing. I can’t guarantee I’m going to catch anything. I hope that frogman out there does his job. *[Laughter]*

I want to talk about a little bit of the comprehensive strategy we’ve put in place. In 2004, our administration released an Ocean Action Plan, the whole purpose of which was to make the oceans and the Great Lakes and the coast cleaner, healthier, and more productive. The plan is producing some positive results.

On—one of the results of the plan was the Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands that I declared. The action created the largest single conservation area in the history of the Nation. It is the largest protected marine area in the world. It is a visible sign that we care about conservation and good water policy.

I also signed the bipartisan Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. It’s a good piece of legislation. Many here worked on it, and I want to thank you for working the Halls of Congress to get this bill to my desk. The legislation closes loopholes in the law by setting a firm deadline to end overfishing in America by 2011. The law puts in place market-based incentives to help replenish our fish stocks by granting fisherman the right to catch a designated amount of fish during a specified season. The law increases enforcement and raises penalties for those who break our fishing laws. And this law improves data collection to help ensure our decisions are based on sound science. It was an important piece of legislation, and I want to thank the authors of the bill for getting it done. I think it’s going to help a lot when it comes to managing our fish stocks in a constructive, smart way.

In addition to the Magnuson-Stevenson Act, over the last couple of years, we've made a strong commitment to improve, restore, and replace our wetlands. I set out the goal that during my Presidency, we would restore—improve, restore, and replace 3 million acres of wetlands. The reason I did that is because wetlands act as what we call nature's nurseries by helping small fish survive before they head into deeper waters. We're going to make that goal. We will have replaced, improved, and restored over 3 million acres of wetlands during my Presidency.

Another significant problem is marine debris. And I was talking to Dirk Kempthorne, and he's going to host a symposium on the gulf coast to call our Nation's attention to this issue. Our strategy is going to be to work with the private sector to help clean up the debris. I don't know if you understand, it is a significant problem. Out there in the Hawaiian Island area that I set aside—Laura went out there, and a lot of birds are eating this stuff that gets washed up as a result of people just dumping whatever they want to in the ocean. It's like a—people kind of view it as, I guess, a giant garbage heap. And part of making sure that doesn't happen is to make it clear to our public the consequences of people just getting on our waters and just dumping whatever they feel like dumping out there.

And we're also going to work with the international community. A lot of the nets we're picking up out of that beautiful sanctuary in the—or the monument in Hawaii of—wash ashore because some trawler decides they don't want to mend the net or store the net or take care of the net. They just cut it and let her go, and the currents wash all that stuff ashore. We literally pulled out tons of material off these islands. And so we're going to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with this, and call people to account, and ask them to join in protecting our oceans and waterways.

We're also talking about today to make sure that not only we protect the waters, we're going to protect the marine life in the waters. And so I want to talk today about two of the most popular recreational fish, the striped bass and the red drum.

The striped bass—I don't know if our citizens follow the striped bass, but it's a good fish to catch. It's a lot of fun. It's also a good fish to eat. We've got to make sure we've got enough to catch as well as enough to eat, and we can do both in a smart way.

Striped bass range from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the St. John's River in Florida. They inhabit parts of the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. Some people call them stripers or rockfish. I guess we're going to call them rockfish today. [Laughter] They can live up to be 30 years old. In the old days, you could catch them up to 55 to 70 pounds pretty easily. And what we're trying to do is to make sure that the old days come back, that the striper is plentiful, and that you can catch some good-sized ones too—nothing like catching a big striper.

They were once so plentiful back in 1614 that Captain John Smith wrote this: He said, a man could cross over the water “dry-shod” by walking on the backs of all the fish. What's interesting is, the striped bass was also one of the first species to be protected by the American people. In 1639, Massachusetts forbade the use of striped bass as fertilizer. By the early 1980s, striped bass were significantly depleted by poor water quality and overfishing.

Over the years since that time, there's been some progress made to protect the striped bass, but not enough has been made. And so today we're going to try to make some more progress.

Red drum is another popular fish that has experienced overfishing. These fish are called reds or redfish or channel bass or spottail. What happened to this particular fish was that it became popular to eat. The restaurants found it to be good food, and

it became a popular dish, and they got overfished.

Now, we put protections in place both at State and Federal level to protect the red drum. Unfortunately, the red drum species is still trying to recover. That's why I'm going to take this additional step today, because the recovery is not complete. In the waters of—from North Carolina to the tip of Florida, the numbers are still too low. And in parts of our gulf, we're not sure of their status. So if you're not sure of the status, we ought to be taking special precaution. It's important that our fish stocks be full and robust and healthy.

And so I'm about to sign an Executive order, all aimed to help the Federal Government conserve striped bass and red drum in three key ways. First, the Executive order directs the Commerce and Interior Departments—that's why the two Secretaries are standing here—to work with our fishery management councils and commissions to protect—to prohibit the sale of striped bass and red drum caught in Federal waters.

Second, this Executive order encourages the periodic review of the status of the striped bass and red drum populations. This will ensure we have the most up to date information for determining whether breeding stocks are attaining healthy numbers and size in Federal waters.

Data is important when it comes to managing the fishing stocks. To improve the quality of our data, we're building a recreational saltwater registry that will collect information from sportsmen about local fish stocks, which will help us better protect striped bass, red drum, and all our fisheries. We're going to count on the people who really care about the fish stocks for—to get good, solid, sound information so we can do a better job not only today but tomorrow in making sure our fisheries are strong.

And finally, the Executive order encourages States to take a look at their own management of the fish stocks. See, we be-

lieve in cooperative conservation. That means cooperation at the Federal, State, and local levels. We believe in a collaborative approach, that the Federal Government ought to work with all stakeholders to achieve common consensus. And I respect the States' role in the management of the natural resources under their care. So I'm directing Federal agencies to work with State officials to find innovative ways to help conserve striped bass and red drum.

And one such way is to use the State designation of game fish where appropriate. I hope the State officials take a serious look at game fish designation; it is an effective tool to protect endangered or dwindling species. See, it prohibits commercial sales, which removes the incentive to catch the fish for anything other than recreational purposes. State designations of game fish have helped the recovery of species such as trout and large-mouth bass and tarpon and snook. People need to take a look at this tool to make sure that the fisheries are robust. Strong fisheries mean local sales. Local sales means better local economy.

And so the Executive order shows our commitment to conserving our Nation's resources. Our hope, everybody—the hope of everyone here is that decades from now, our children and grandchildren will see oceans, lakes, and rivers teeming with fish and sea life. I can't guarantee they're going to be able to walk across their backs—[laughter]—like John Smith observed, but I can guarantee that we're committed to taking care of that which we have been given. My hope is people look back at our oceans' policies and our record of conservation and say, "We're grateful that concerned citizens came together to protect our heritage."

And so I want to thank you all for coming and giving me a chance to visit with you about a vision that is a hopeful vision and an important vision. And I thank you for witnessing the signing of the Executive

order to protect the striped bass and red drum fish populations.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Stuart Parnes,

president, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum; and Walter W. Fondren III, chairman, Coastal Conservation Association. The President also referred to Executive Order 13449. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks in a Meeting With President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia October 22, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much. Welcome. Thank you.

Mr. President, thank you very much for joining us. Today we're going to sign an important agreement between the United States and our friend Mongolia. Before we sign the agreement, which is to codify a Millennium Challenge compact, I do want to say a couple of things.

First, Laura and I loved our trip to your country. It was most interesting. I still vividly remember the fierce-looking warrior on horseback. And I was reminded of how thankful I am I've never met him on a battlefield. *[Laughter]* I remember the skill of the horsemen. I remember the warm hospitality. I remember the yak's milk. *[Laughter]* And I remember your gracious and kind words there. And I want to thank you again, sir, and the people of your wonderful country for such warm hospitality for Laura and me.

I also want to thank you very much for your strong support in the war against radicals and extremists. After our Nation was attacked on September the 11th by cold-blooded murderers, you and your country stood in solidarity with the American people. And since then, you have been a stalwart in helping defeat extremists by helping young democracies survive and thrive. And I want to thank you and the Mongolian people for supporting the young democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's been hard work, but we're making progress. And

I know it's been hard for some in your society to see the benefits of free societies emerging, but I appreciate your vision, and I want to thank your troops. The Mongolian troops are well-trained, well-disciplined, and are a great credit to your country.

The Millennium Challenge Account is an important part of our foreign policy. It's an opportunity for the United States and our taxpayers to help countries that fight corruption, that support market-based economies, and that invest in the health and education of their people.

The Millennium Challenge compact encourages countries to make a firm commitment to basic principles, principles that mean the government will listen to their people and respond to the needs of the people. And today, Mr. President, we honor the success of your country and the commitment of your Government to basic principles. That's what we're doing. We hope that the \$285 million will help you modernize your railroad and infrastructures, all aiming to make sure that the market economy you put in place inures to the benefit of your people.

Congress must understand how important this program is for U.S. foreign policy. The Millennium Challenge Account has been effective. It's been effective across the world. It will be effective in Mongolia. And when the United States Congress considers full funding for the Millennium Challenge Account, they must think about countries

such as Mongolia and the long-term benefits that this program will mean for a solid friend.

And so, Mr. President, I welcome you to the mike. I want to thank you for coming, and then I look forward to signing the document.

President Enkhbayar. Mr. President, it's indeed a great pleasure to be here in Washington, DC, today, attending the ceremony which lays down the beginning of a new and important partnership between Mongolia and the United States. I am proud that our joint efforts, which started with the qualification of Mongolia in May 2004 into the list of the countries eligible for the Millennium Challenge Account have brought us to this very important stage.

On behalf of the entire nation, its Government, and the people of Mongolia, I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to President Bush for his initiative, to the Government, and the people of the United States for their confidence and support rendered to Mongolia. Thank you.

President Bush. Thanks very much.

President Enkhbayar. The idea of rewarding the successful democracies through supporting their goals inspired the Mongolians from the beginning of this initiative. We welcome the concept for—we sense that the initiative will eventually contribute to the betterment of the life of ordinary people. Mongolia also appreciates and upholds the principle of aid with accountability and ownership advocated by the Government of the United States. Indeed, the whole process through we have arrived at the signing of this compact today is a testimony to our shared commitment to ensuring the country ownership, good governance, and accountability to our citizens.

We have to always remember—and I know that those are the people who elect us and sometimes criticize us and say whatever they think about us.

President Bush. So it happens there as well? [Laughter]

President Enkhbayar. As a partner country of the MCC program, Mongolia has been truly in the driver's seat at every stage of identifying its own development priorities and investment needs and policy directions. This new approach to—of cooperation is the key to ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of the program. The compact prepared through the broad consultative approach in Mongolia will support our efforts to broaden and deepen the country's economic development, focusing on four key areas.

These areas are in the line with Mongolia's national development strategy, the draft of which was submitted to the parliament for their consultation and approval. The strategy sets out the vision of a democratic society centered on developing a healthy and educated citizen and a prosperous private sector-led economy, a society of true partnership and Mongol stakeholders, including the civil society.

I am confident that the compact program will have a truly transformational impact on Mongolia's poverty reduction efforts through investment in our human capital, rehabilitation of vital transportation infrastructure, and strengthening the institutional capacity of the public service agencies.

It should be noted that the compact is about opportunity and access. We want our people to seize this opportunity to improve their livelihood with training and employment, to participate and benefit from the country's economic growth, to have access to high-quality service and education.

“Hand-in-hand action has to have the trophy,” says a Mongolian proverb. I'm certain that this compact will inspire long-lasting, fruitful, and mutually beneficial cooperation between the United States of America and Mongolia. Now we will embark upon the task of successfully transforming our people's ideas and expectations into reality. Your support has been indispensable in reaching this point, and we

trust in your continued partnership in the future.

Mr. President, friends, and colleagues, thank you again for this memorable occasion. And I would like to again invite President Bush to visit Mongolia after he goes to Beijing Olympics. President Bush knows that it's not very far away from Beijing.

President Bush. That's right. [*Laughter*]

President Enkhbayar. And I hope that he will again enjoy the hospitality of the Mongolian people.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Congressional Action on Supplemental Appropriations October 22, 2007

Thank you all for joining me. I just finished visiting with veterans and members of military support organizations, the family of the fallen. Thank you all for being here. I'm proud you're here.

These patriots have come to the Oval Office to make sure and to make clear that our troops have the full commitment of our Government. And I strongly agree that we must provide our troops with the help and support they need to get the job done. Parts of this war are complicated, but one part is not, and that is, America should do what it takes to support our troops and protect our people. And today I sent Congress an updated supplemental war funding request that will do just that.

The majority of the supplemental funding is for day-to-day military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The bill provides for basic needs like bullets and body armor, protection against IEDs, and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. It also funds training missions, vital Embassy programs, improvements in Iraq and Iraqi security forces, and intelligence operations that protect our troops. These are urgent military necessities, and the supplemental was prepared in close consultation with our commanders on the ground. This funding is what General Petraeus and other military leaders say we need, and Congress ought to give it to them.

Our military commanders will use this money to continue carrying out their missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, our troops, NATO allies, and Afghan forces are making gains against the Taliban and Al Qaida. In Iraq, our campaign to provide security for the Iraqi people has been difficult and dangerous, but it is achieving results. Al Qaida and other extremists have been driven from strongholds in places like Anbar Province and parts of Diyala Province. In Baghdad, the number of Iraqi civilians murdered by terrorists and death squads is down sharply. Throughout Iraq, the number of American servicemembers killed in September was the lowest since July 2006. And the level of violence during Ramadan was down significantly from last year.

Last month, General Petraeus said he believes that our successes in Iraq mean we can maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces. I accepted this recommendation that we not replace about 2,200 marines who left Anbar last month. We expect to bring home another 3,500 soldiers by Christmas. The funds in the supplemental are crucial to continuing this policy of return on success. Every Member of Congress who wants to see both success in Iraq and our troops begin to come home should strongly support this bill.

I know some in Congress are against the war and are seeking ways to demonstrate that opposition. I recognize their position, and they should make their views heard, but they ought to make sure our troops have what it takes to succeed. Our men and women on the frontlines should not be caught in the middle of partisan disagreements in Washington, DC. I often hear that war critics oppose my decisions, but still support the troops. Well, I'll take them at their word, and this is the chance for them to show it, that they support the troops.

Along with support for our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, the supplemental also includes emergency funding for other critical national security needs. It includes money to improve medical care for our wounded warriors. It funds equipment repair and upgrades the strategic readiness of the Army. It provides crucial relief for Iraqi refugees. It supports the peace-keeping mission of the United Nations in Darfur. It delivers vital assistance for our partners in Mexico and Central America, who are working to break up drug cartels and fight organized crime and stop human trafficking. All of these are urgent priorities of the United States, and the Congress ought to fund them without delay.

One reason Congress can move the supplemental quickly is that it's had more than 8 months to study most of the provisions.

In fact, nearly 75 percent of the funding requested in the supplemental was submitted along with my annual budget in February. We took this step in direct response to requests from Congress. Members of Congress should consider the supplemental promptly. They should keep it focused on true necessities, not pet projects. And they should pass a good, clean bill as soon as possible. Congress should not go home for the holidays while our troops are still waiting for the funds they need.

In addition to passing the supplemental, Congress also needs to complete clean appropriations bills for the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. The House and the Senate have passed versions of both these bills, but leaders in the House have not yet named conferees. They should name them now so that Members of Congress can work out their differences and send me these vital bills as soon as possible.

I want to thank all those who are standing with me today for their strong support for our troops, our veterans, and our military families. May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriations for Ongoing Military and Intelligence Operations and Selected Other International Activities

October 22, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to my FY 2008 Budget

request that will provide additional resources for ongoing military and intelligence operations in support of Operation

Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and selected other international activities. These funds will support U.S. efforts to improve stability in these regions. This request is also consistent with the assessments provided by General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker last month and my Iraq Benchmark Assessment Report, as it contains funds to maintain the current pace of operations into FY 2008 and takes into account plans to redeploy five Army brigades by next summer, should conditions on the ground permit.

This request includes funds to improve the protection of our forces by procuring additional Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, which have proved highly effective in countering improvised explosive devices. It also supports pre-deployment training for ground forces; supports the repair, replacement, or supplement of equipment worn out or lost in military operations; upgrades equipment based on lessons learned to date; replenishes depleted prepositioned stocks; and fills shortages in non-deployed units caused by the creation of equipment pools in theater.

In addition, it helps support our military and their families by funding a range of

needed services. For example, the request funds the development of a sustainable medical and rehabilitation system to properly care for our wounded warriors. The request also funds enhanced support for servicemembers and their families to mitigate the effect of repeated and continued deployments of the all-volunteer force.

These amendments include funding for urgent and unanticipated international programs, including support for extraordinary security and operating costs associated with U.S. diplomatic activity in Iraq and Afghanistan, for assistance to internally displaced persons in Iraq and Iraqi refugees, and to help create political and economic stability in Afghanistan.

I hereby designate the specific proposals in the amounts requested herein as emergency requirements. This request represents urgent and essential requirements and I encourage you to take up this FY 2008 funding as soon as possible. The details of the request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy

October 22, 2007

Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration that a President can bestow. It recognizes gallantry that goes above and beyond the call of duty in the face of an enemy attack. The tradition of awarding this honor began during the Civil War. And many of those who have received the medal have given their lives in the action that earned it.

Today we add Lieutenant Michael Murphy's name to the list of recipients who

have made the ultimate sacrifice. Deep in the mountains of Afghanistan, this brave officer gave his life in defense of his fellow Navy SEALs. Two years later, the story of his sacrifice humbles and inspires all who hear it. And by presenting Michael Murphy's family with the Medal of Honor that he earned, a grateful nation remembers the courage of this proud Navy SEAL.

I welcome the Vice President; Senator Ted Stevens; Senator Chuck Schumer, from

Lieutenant Murphy's home State. I appreciate very much the fact that Congressman Tim Bishop, from Lieutenant Murphy's district, is with us today. Welcome. Thank you all for coming.

I appreciate the fact that Deputy Secretary Gordon England has joined us; Secretary Pete Geren of the Army; Secretary Don Winter of the Navy; Secretary Mike Wynne of the Air Force; Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations; and all who wear the Nation's uniform. Welcome.

I appreciate the fact that we've got Barney Barnum, Tom Kelley, Tommy Norris, and Mike Thornton, Medal of Honor recipients, with us today.

We do welcome Dan Murphy and Maureen Murphy, father and mother of Michael Murphy, John Murphy, his brother, and other family members that are with us today.

It's my honor to welcome all the friends and comrades of Lieutenant Michael Murphy here to the White House. And I want to thank Chaplain Bob Burt, Chief of Chaplains, for his opening prayer.

Looking back on his childhood in Patchogue, New York, you might say that Michael Murphy was born to be a Navy SEAL. SEALs get their name from operating by sea, air, and land, and even as a toddler, Michael could find his way through any obstacle. When he was just 18 months old, he darted across a neighbor's yard and dove into the swimming pool. By the time his frantic parents reached him, Michael had swum to the other side with a big smile on his face. As he grew older, Michael learned to swim from one side of a nearby lake to the other, and he developed into a talented all-around athlete.

But beyond his physical strength, Michael Murphy was blessed with a powerful sense of right and wrong. This sense came from devoted parents who taught him to love his neighbor and defend those who

could not defend themselves. Well, Michael took these lessons to heart. One day in school, he got into a scuffle sticking up for a student with a disability. It's the only time his parents ever got a phone call from the principal, and they couldn't have been prouder. Michael's passion for helping others led him to become a caring brother, a tutor, a lifeguard, and eventually, a member of the United States Armed Forces.

Michael's decision to join the military wasn't an easy one for his family. As a Purple Heart recipient during Vietnam, Michael's father understood the sacrifices that accompany a life of service. He also understood that his son was prepared to make these sacrifices. After graduating from Penn State with honors, Michael accepted a commission in the Navy and later set off for SEAL training. Fewer than a third of those who begin this intense training program graduate to become Navy SEALs. Yet there was little doubt about the determined lieutenant from New York. And in 2002, Michael earned his Navy SEAL Trident.

Michael also earned the respect of his men. They remember a wise-cracking friend who went by "Mikey" or "Murph." They remember a patriot who wore a New York City firehouse patch on his uniform in honor of the heroes of 9/11. And they remember an officer who respected their opinions and led them with an understated, yet unmistakable sense of command. Together, Michael and his fellow SEALs deployed multiple times around the world in the war against the extremists and radicals. And while their missions were often carried out in secrecy, their love of country and devotion to each other was always clear.

On June 28th, 2005, Michael would give his life for these ideals. While conducting surveillance on a mountain ridge in Afghanistan, he and three fellow SEALs were surrounded by a much larger enemy force. Their only escape was down the side of a mountain, and the SEALs launched a valiant counterattack while cascading from cliff to cliff. But as the enemy closed in,

Michael recognized that the survival of his men depended on calling back to the base for reinforcements. With complete disregard for his own life, he moved into a clearing where his phone would get reception. He made the call, and Michael then fell under heavy fire. Yet his grace and upbringing never deserted him. Though severely wounded, he said thank you before hanging up and returned to the fight before losing his life.

Unfortunately, the helicopter carrying the reinforcements never reached the scene. It crashed after being struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. And in the end, more Americans died in Afghanistan on June 28th, 2005, than on any other day since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. This day of tragedy also has the sad distinction of being the deadliest for Navy Special Warfare forces since World War II.

One of Michael's fellow SEALs did make it off the mountain ridge. He was one of Michael's closest friends. Petty Officer Marcus Luttrell of Texas, author of a riveting book called "Lone Survivor," put it this way: "Mikey was the best officer I ever knew, an iron-souled warrior of colossal and

almost unbelievable courage in the face of the enemy."

For his courage, we award Lieutenant Michael Murphy the first Medal of Honor for combat in Afghanistan. And with this medal, we acknowledge a debt that will not diminish with time and can never be repaid.

Our Nation is blessed to have volunteers like Michael who risk their lives for our freedom. We're blessed to have mothers and fathers like Maureen and Dan Murphy who raise sons of such character and courage. And we're blessed with the mercy of a loving God who comforts all those who grieve.

And now I ask Michael's parents to join me on stage, and the military aide will read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rear Adm. Robert F. Burt, USN, Chief of Navy Chaplains. Following the President's remarks, Maj. Mark Thompson, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citation.

Remarks at the National Defense University October 23, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Madam President—[laughter]—thank you for that kind introduction. Thank you for welcoming me back to the National Defense University. I really enjoy coming here. After all, this is a great American institution that has educated our Nation's top military leaders and national security thinkers for more than a century.

Today, you're training the next generation of leaders to prevail in the great ideological struggle of our time: the global war on terror. We're at war with a brutal enemy. We're at war with coldblooded kill-

ers who despise freedom, reject tolerance, and kill the innocent in pursuit of their political vision. Many of you have met this enemy on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq; you have served with valor in the defense of our country. Students here at NDU have earned 3 Purple Hearts and more than 90 Bronze Stars since the war on terror began. All of you who wear the uniform are helping to protect this country, and the United States of America is grateful for your service.

In this war, we're on the offense against the enemy, and that's the only way to be.

We'll fight them in foreign lands so we don't have to face them here in America. We'll pursue the terrorists across the world. We'll take every lawful and effective measure to protect ourselves here at home.

In an age when terrorist networks and terrorist states are seeking weapons of mass destruction, we must be ready to defend our Nation against every possible avenue of attack. I've come today to discuss the actions we're taking to keep our people safe and to update you on the progress of an initiative I announced on this very campus in 2001, and that is our efforts to defend America against a ballistic missile attack. My administration made a commitment to the American people then that we will defend you against all forms of terror, including the terror that could arrive as a result of a missile. And we're keeping that commitment.

Another topic of concern is the devastation caused by the wildfires in southern California. All of us across this Nation are concerned for the families who have lost their homes and the many families who have been evacuated from their homes. We send our prayers and thoughts with those who've been affected, and we send the help of the Federal Government as well.

Last night I declared an emergency, which will open up the opportunity for us to send Federal assets to help the Governor and those who are fighting these fires. Today I have sent Secretary Chertoff and Director Paulison of the FEMA to go out to California to listen and to develop an inventory of supplies and help that we can provide.

I appreciate very much the fact that the senior Senator from Alaska has joined us; no stronger supporter for the United States military than Ted Stevens. We're proud you're here, Senator. Thank you for coming. I appreciate—[*applause*]. I want to thank Congressman Todd Akin for joining us as well, from the State of Missouri. Proud you're here, Congressman. Appreciate both of you all taking your time.

There's a lot of high-ranking officials here, but I do want to single out one, that would be your Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States marine James "Hoss" Cartwright. General, thank you for coming. Appreciate you being here. Thanks for letting me come by.

The men and women of the National Defense University understand what is at stake in today's war. First of all, you understand we're in war. And secondly, you understand the stakes of this war. September the 11th, 2001, terrorists struck us 5 miles from this very spot; they crashed a plane into the Pentagon and killed 184 men, women, and children. And from this campus, you could see the smoke billowing across the Potomac. You lost one of your own that day, Navy Captain Bob Dolan, class of 1998, who was working in the Pentagon office when the plane hit it. With us today are four NDU students and one professor who helped with the rescue effort. These souls pulled victims from the wreckage, they provided emergency medical care, and they flew choppers to support recovery operations at the site of the attack. The attack that day was personal for people here at NDU. I took it personally as well.

With the presence—with the passage of time, the memories of September the 11th have grown more distant. That's natural. That's what happens with time. And for some, there's the temptation to think that the threats to our country have grown distant as well. They have not. And our job, for those of us who have been called to protect America, is never to forget the threat and to implement strategies that will protect the homeland. On 9/11, we saw that oceans which separate us from other continents no longer separates us from danger. We saw the cruelty of the terrorists. We saw the future they intend for us. They intend to strike our country again. Oh, some dismiss that as empty chatter; I'm telling you, they intend to strike our country again. And the next time, they hope

to cause destruction that will make 9/11 pale by comparison.

This new kind of threat has required a new kind of war, and we're prosecuting that war on many fronts. Our Armed Forces have captured or killed thousands of extremists and radicals. We have removed terrorist regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that had supported terrorists and threatened our citizens. In these two nations, we liberated 50 million people from unspeakable tyranny, and now we're helping them build stable democracies that can govern justly and protect their citizens and serves as allies in this war against extremists and radicals.

And one of the real challenges we face is, will we have confidence in the liberty to be transformative? Will we lose faith in the universality of liberty? Will we ignore history and not realize that liberty has got the capacity to yield the peace we want? And so this administration, along with many in our military, will continue to spread the hope of liberty in order to defeat the ideology of darkness, the ideology of the terrorists, and work to secure a future of peace for generations to come. That's our call.

In this new war, the enemy seeks to infiltrate operatives into our country and attack us from within. They can't beat our Army; they can't defeat our military. And so they try to sneak folks in our country to kill the innocent, to achieve their objectives. And that's one of the reasons we passed the PATRIOT Act. And over the past 6 years, our law enforcement and intelligence officers have used the tools in this good law to break up terror cells and support networks in California, in New York, in Ohio, in Virginia, in Florida, and other States.

In this new war, the enemy uses advanced technology to recruit operatives and to train suicide bombers and to plan and plot new attacks on our country. And so we passed the Protect America Act, which strengthened our ability to collect foreign

intelligence on terrorists overseas. It closed a dangerous gap in our intelligence. Unfortunately, this law is set to expire on February the 1st, 101 days from now. Yet the threat from Al Qaida is not going to expire 101 days from now. So I call on Congress to make sure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to keep us safe by strengthening the Protect America Act and making it the permanent law of the land.

In this new war, the enemy conspires in secret, and often the only source of information on what the terrorists are planning is the terrorists themselves. So we established a program at the Central Intelligence Agency to question key terrorist leaders and operatives captured in the war on terror. This program has produced critical intelligence that has helped us stop a number of attacks, including a plot to strike the U.S. Marine camp in Djibouti, a planned attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi, a plot to hijack a passenger plane and fly it into Library Tower in Los Angeles, California, or a plot to fly passenger planes into Heathrow Airport and buildings into downtown London.

Despite the record of success and despite the fact that our professionals use lawful techniques, the CIA program has come under renewed criticism in recent weeks. Those who oppose this vital tool in the war on terror need to answer a simple question: Which of the attacks I have just described would they prefer we had not stopped? Without this program, our intelligence community believes that Al Qaida and its allies would have succeeded in launching another attack against the American homeland. This CIA program has saved lives; it is vital to the security of the American people.

In this new war, the enemy seeks weapons of mass destruction that would allow them to kill our people on an unprecedented scale. So we're working with friends and allies to stop our enemies from getting

their hands on these weapons. We increased funding for a threat reduction program that is helping us to secure nuclear warheads and fissile materials in Russia. We launched the Global Threat Reduction Initiative that has removed enough material for more than 30 nuclear bombs from around the world. We launched the Container Security Initiative and other programs to detect and stop the movement of dangerous materials in foreign ports and intercept these materials before they are placed on vessels destined for the United States.

With Russia, we launched the Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism, a coalition of more than 60 nations that are using their own resources to stop the illicit spread of nuclear materials. We established the Proliferation Security Initiative, a coalition of more than 80 nations working to intercept shipments of weapons of mass destruction on land and at sea and in the air. With our allies, we're going after the proliferators and shutting down their financial networks. And through these and other efforts, the message should be clear to the enemy: We're not going to allow mass murderers to gain access to the tools of mass destruction.

The war on terror will be won on the offense, and that's where I intend to keep it, on the offense. Yet protecting our citizens is—also requires defensive measures here at home. It's a new kind of war. It's a different conflict that you're studying here at NDU. It requires us to use all assets to keep the pressure on the enemy. There should be no day where they do not feel the pressure of the United States of America and our allies.

But at home, we've got to put defensive measures in place, measures that we have never had to put in place before. Since 2001, we've taken unprecedented actions to protect our citizens. After all, it's our most solemn duty in Washington, DC, to protect the American people. We created the Department of Homeland Security. We

established a new Northern Command at the Department of Defense. We established new programs to protect our cities against biological and radiological attacks. We beefed up airport and seaport security at home. We've instituted better visa screening for those entering our country. Since September of 2001, my administration has provided more than \$23 billion to America's State and local first-responders for equipment and training and other vital needs.

One of the most important defensive measures we have taken is the deployment of new capabilities to defend America against ballistic missile attack. On 9/11, we saw the damage our enemies could do by hijacking planes loaded with jet fuel and turning them into missiles and using them to kill the innocent. Today, dangerous regimes are pursuing far more powerful capabilities and building ballistic missiles that could allow them to deliver these weapons to American cities.

The ballistic missile threat to America has been growing for decades. In 1972, just nine countries had ballistic missiles. Today, that number has grown to 27, and it includes hostile regimes with ties to terrorists. When I took office, our Nation had no capability to defend the American people against long-range ballistic missile attacks. Our research, development, and testing program was hampered by a lack of funding. Our efforts to develop and deploy missile defense were constrained by the ABM Treaty, a 30-year-old agreement negotiated with a Soviet Union that no longer existed.

So one of my administration's first national security initiatives was to reinvigorate our country's efforts to defend against ballistic missile attack. Here at the National Defense University, I announced America's intention to move beyond the ABM Treaty and deploy missile defenses to protect our people, our forces abroad, and our allies around the world against limited attacks. I also pledged that as we build these defenses, America would undertake significant

reductions in nuclear weapons, and that we would establish a new approach to deterrence that would leave behind the adversarial legacy of the cold war and allow us to prepare for the threats of the 21st century. Over the past years, we have delivered on those pledges.

The first step we took was to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. At the time, critics warned of a disaster, with some declaring that our—my decision could “give rise to a dangerous new arms race with Russia.” Russia did not agree with my decision to withdraw. Yet President Putin declared that the decision at the time “does not pose a threat to Russia.” And far from a new arms race, he announced that Russia would join the United States in making historic reductions in our deployed offensive nuclear arsenals.

The second step we took was to make missile defense operational, while continuing our research and development efforts. Instead of spending decades trying to develop a perfect shield, we decided to begin deploying missile defense capabilities as soon as the technology was proven ready and then build on that foundation by adding new capabilities as they matured. By the end of 2004, we had a rudimentary capability in place to defend against limited missile attacks by rogue states or an accidental launch. As new technologies come on line, we continue to add to this system, making it increasingly capable and moving us closer to the day when we can intercept ballistic missiles of all ranges, in every stage of flight, from boost to mid-course and terminal.

The third step we took was to reach out to the world and involve other nations in the missile defense effort. Since 2001, we’ve worked closely with countries such as Israel and Italy and Germany and Japan and the Netherlands and Britain and others on missile defense. Together with our friends and allies, we’re deploying early warning radars and missile interceptors and ballistic missile defense ships. We’re work-

ing to jointly develop new missile defense capabilities. As a result of this collaboration, missile defense has gone from an American innovation to a truly international effort to help defend free nations against the true threats of the 21st century.

Our decision to make missile defense operational was validated in July of last year, when North Korea launched a series of destabilizing ballistic missile tests, including testing a system our intelligence community believes is capable of reaching the United States. Had these tests taken place just a few years earlier, they would have underscored America’s vulnerability to a ballistic missile attack. Instead, because of the decisions we took in 2001 and because of the hard work of people in this room, our military had in place a capability to track the North Korean vehicle and engage it if it threatened our country. So a test North Korea intended to showcase its power became a demonstration that the pursuit of ballistic missiles will ultimately be fruitless, because America and our allies are building and deploying the means to defend against this threat.

Last month, the Missile Defense Agency conducted its 30th successful “hit to kill” test since 2001. We got a lot of smart people working on this project, and they’re proving that our vision can work. With this most recent success, our military commanders believe we can now have a credible system in place that can provide the American people with a measure of protection against threats emanating from Northeast Asia. The next step is to take a system that has passed demanding tests in the Pacific theater and deploy elements of it to Europe so we can defend America and our NATO allies from attacks emanating from the Middle East.

The need for missile defense in Europe is real, and I believe it’s urgent. Iran is pursuing the technology that could be used to produce nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles of increasing range that could deliver them. Last November, Iran conducted

military exercises in which it launched ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel and Turkey as well as American troops based in the Persian Gulf. Iranian officials have declared that they are developing missiles with a range of 1,200 miles, which would give them the capability to strike many of our NATO allies, including Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and possibly Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Our intelligence community assesses that with continued foreign assistance, Iran could develop an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States and all of Europe before 2015. If it chooses to do so and the international community does not take steps to prevent it, it is possible Iran could have this capability. And we need to take it seriously now.

Today, we have no way to defend Europe against the emerging Iranian threat, and so we must deploy a missile defense system there that can. This system will be limited in scope. It is not designed to defend against an attack from Russia. The missile defenses we can employ would be easily overwhelmed by Russia's nuclear arsenal. Russia has hundreds of missiles and thousands of warheads. We're planning to deploy 10 interceptors in Europe. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to do the math. *[Laughter]*

Moreover, the missile defenses we will deploy are intended to deter countries who would threaten us with ballistic missile attacks. We do not consider Russia such a country. The cold war is over. Russia is not our enemy. We're building a new security relationship, whose foundation does not rest on the prospect of mutual annihilation.

As part of the new relationship, we're inviting Russia to join us in this cooperative effort to defend Russia, Europe, and the United States against an emerging threat that affects us all. For his part, President Putin has offered the use of radar facilities in Azerbaijan and southern Russia. We believe these sites could be included as part of a wider threat monitoring system that

could lead to an unprecedented level of strategic cooperation between our two countries.

For our part, we're planning to deploy a system made up of 10 ground-based interceptors located in Poland and an X-band tracking radar located in the Czech Republic. Such a system would have the capacity to defend countries in Europe that would be at risk from a long-range attack from the Middle East. We're also working with NATO on developing capabilities to defend countries against short- and medium-range attacks from the Middle East. We want to work on such a system with Russia, including through the NATO-Russia Council, see. The danger of ballistic missile attacks is a threat we share, and we ought to respond to this threat together.

The effort to develop ballistic missile defenses is part of a broader effort to move beyond the cold war and establish a new deterrence framework for the 21st century. In 1960, President Eisenhower spoke to the students at this campus. He told them, "Our first priority task is to develop and sustain a deterrent commanding the respect of any potential aggressor." And during those early years of the cold war, deterrence required building a nuclear force large enough to survive and retaliate after a Soviet first strike.

Today, our adversaries have changed. We no longer worry about a massive Soviet first strike. We worry about terrorist states and terrorist networks that might not be deterred by our nuclear forces. To deal with such adversaries, we need a new approach to deterrence. This approach combines deep reductions in offensive nuclear forces with new, advanced conventional capabilities and defenses to protect free people from nuclear blackmail or attack.

So in 2001, I directed the Department of Defense to achieve a credible deterrent—a credible deterrent—with the lowest number of nuclear weapons consistent with our national security needs, including our obligations to our allies. These reductions

were eventually codified in the Moscow Treaty, which commits the United States and Russia to reduce our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 within 5 years from now.

Since the Moscow Treaty took effect, the United States has retired all of our Peacekeeper ICBMs and reduced our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads from more than 6,000 when I took office to fewer than 3,800 today. When the rest of the reductions we have set in motion are completed, the total U.S. nuclear stockpile will be one-quarter its size at the end of the cold war, the lowest level since the Eisenhower administration.

As we reduce our nuclear arsenal, we're investing in advanced conventional capabilities. These include new unmanned aerial combat vehicles and next-generation long-range precision weapons that allows us to strike enemies quickly, at great distances, without using nuclear weapons. We're investing in the next generation of missile defenses because these systems do more than defend our citizens; they also strengthen deterrence.

Think of it this way: A terrorist regime that can strike America or our allies with a ballistic missile is likely to see this power as giving them free rein for acts of aggression and intimidation in their own neighborhoods. But with missile defenses in place, the calculus of deterrence changes in our favor. If this same terrorist regime does not have confidence their missile attack would be successful, it is less likely to engage in acts of aggression in the first place. We would also have more options for dealing with their aggression if deterrence fails.

In addition to strengthening our deterrent, missile defense also strengthens our counterproliferation efforts. One reason for the dramatic proliferation of ballistic missile technology over the past 30 years is that America and our allies had no defense against them. By deploying effective de-

fenses, we reduce incentives to build ballistic missiles because rogue regimes are less likely to invest in weapons that cannot threaten free nations.

Missile defense also helps us dissuade nations from developing nuclear weapons. Through our missile defense partnerships with nations in Asia and Europe and the Middle East, we can help friends and allies defend against missile attack. These defenses will build their confidence, and these defenses will make it less likely that they will feel the need to respond to the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea by developing nuclear weapons of their own.

Missile defense is a vital tool for our security. It's a vital tool for deterrence. And it's a vital tool for counterproliferation. Yet despite all these benefits, the United States Congress is cutting funding for missile defense.

Congress has cut our request for missile defenses in Europe by \$139 million, which could delay deployment for a year or more and undermine our allies who are working with us to deploy such a system on their soil. Congress has eliminated \$51 million from the Airborne Laser program, a critical effort that will allow us to intercept missiles in the boost stage of flight when they're still over the country that launched them. Congress has slashed \$50 million from the Multiple Kill Vehicle program that will help us defeat both the incoming warhead and the decoys deployed to overcome our defenses. Congress has cut \$50 million from the Space Tracking and Surveillance System, a constellation of space satellites that can help us more effectively detect and track ballistic missiles headed for our country. Each of these programs is vital to the security of America, and Congress needs to fully fund them.

The greatest threat facing our Nation in the 21st century is the danger of terrorist networks or terrorist states armed with weapons of mass destruction. We're taking decisive action at home and abroad to defend our people from this danger. With

bold investments today, we can ensure that the men and women in this hall have the tools you need to confront the threats of tomorrow. We will ensure that you have the tools necessary to do the solemn duty of protecting the American people from harm.

I want to thank each of you for stepping forward to serve our country. You're courageous folks. Because of your willingness to volunteer in a time of war, there's no doubt in my mind we can prevail in this war. It requires determination, resolve, steadfast—steadfastness in the face of a brutal

enemy. And having served as the Commander in Chief for nearly 6¾ years, there's no doubt in my mind that the United States military has that resolve and has that courage.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Frances C. Wilson, USMC, president, National Defense University; Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California; and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol Amending the Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization *October 23, 2007*

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Protocol of Amendments to the Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization done at Monaco on April 14, 2005. The Protocol amends the Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization, which was done at Monaco on May 3, 1967, and entered into force for the United States on September 22, 1970 (TIAS 6933; 21 UST 1857; 752 UNTS 41). I am also transmitting, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Secretary of State on the Protocol.

The Protocol will facilitate the reorganization of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). The IHO, which is a technical and consultative international organization headquartered in Monaco, facilitates safe and efficient maritime navigation throughout the world. It accomplishes these objectives by facilitating the coordination of the activities of national hydrographic offices, promoting uniformity in the nautical charts and documents generated by such

offices, encouraging the adoption of reliable surveying methods, and fostering the development of the science of hydrography. Reorganization of the IHO will result in a more flexible, efficient, and visible organization.

Ratification of the Protocol would serve important U.S. interests. United States commercial shipping, the United States Navy, and the scientific research community rely heavily on hydrographic information collected and shared under the auspices of the IHO. The United States plays an important leadership role in the IHO and as a result enjoys expeditious and economical access to this information. Moreover, the United States has committed more resources than any other country to research, development, and evaluation of hydrographic instruments and therefore stands to benefit significantly from the efficiencies generated by this reorganization.

Article XXI of the Convention sets forth the procedure for the approval and entry into force of amendments: amendments that are adopted or "approved" by the Conference enter into force for all Contracting

Parties to the Convention 3 months after two-thirds of the Contracting Parties have notified the depositary of the their consent to be bound.

I recommend that the Senate give prompt and favorable consideration to the

Protocol and give its advice and consent to ratification.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 23, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 24.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting October 24, 2007

Southern California Wildfires

I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for being here today to discuss a lot of issues. I started off the meeting by summarizing a series of conversations that I've had regarding the fires in southern California. I had a conversation with Governor Schwarzenegger. My question to him was, are you getting what you need; are the people there in California getting the help they need from the Federal Agencies to help the good folks in California deal with these devastating fires? His answer was, yes. I assured him that if he needs anything and we're able to provide it, we'll do so.

I also had an opportunity to thank him, as well as California officials, for working hard to save houses, save lives. I appreciate very much the fact that they're willing to work in a collaborative fashion with the Federal Government. I've been meeting with my Cabinet Secretaries that are responsible for helping the State and local authorities fight these fires. I will report to you that I am—I believe the effort is well-coordinated. I know we're getting the manpower and assets on the ground that have been requested by the State and local authorities.

I wish we could control the wind, because one of the things that's hampering our joint capability of fighting these fires is the strong westerly winds. I'm told the

winds may be dying down soon, in which case it will make it—make this equipment we've got in place a lot more effective at helping fight the fires.

I initially declared an emergency declaration, which will enable us to send Federal equipment and manpower into the scene, including Department of Defense help. Today I've just signed a major disaster declaration, which will then enable Federal funds to start heading toward the families who have been affected by these fires.

Looking forward to going out to California tomorrow. I will continue to make sure that our efforts are coordinated, that we are responsive to the needs of people. But most importantly, I want the people in southern California to know that Americans all across this land care deeply about them. We're concerned about their safety; we're concerned about their property; and we offer our prayers and hopes that all will turn out fine in the end. In the meantime, they can rest assured that the Federal Government will do everything we can to help put out these fires.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California.

Remarks at the Department of State October 24, 2007

Thank you very much. *Gracias. Buenos dias.* I am pleased to be here at the State Department. I appreciate the work that's done here. Every day, the men and women of this Department serve as America's emissaries to the world. Every day, you help our country respond to aggressors and bring peace to troubled lands. Every day, you advance our country's mission in support of basic human rights to the millions who are denied them. Secretary Rice constantly tells me about the good work being done here at the State Department, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you for your hard work, and I'm pleased to be with you.

Few issues have challenged this Department—and our Nation—longer than the situation in Cuba. Nearly half a century has passed since Cuba's regime ordered American diplomats to evacuate our Embassy in Havana. This was the decisive break of our diplomatic relations with the island, a troubling signal for the future of the Cuban people and the dawn of an unhappy era between our two countries. In this building, President John F. Kennedy spoke about the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba's dictatorship. And it was here where he announced the end of the missile crisis that almost plunged the war—world into nuclear war.

Today another President comes with hope to discuss a new era for the United States and Cuba. The day is coming when the Cuban people will chart their own course for a better life. The day is coming when the Cuban people have the freedom they have awaited for so long.

Madam Secretary, thank you for your introduction. I'm pleased to be with you and Ambassador Negroponte and all who work here. Thanks for the hospitality. I'm pleased to be here with our Secretary of Commerce, Secretary Carlos Gutierrez,

born in Cuba. I appreciate other members of my administration who are here.

I particularly want to thank the Members of Congress who have joined us: Senator Mel Martinez, born in Cuba; Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, born in Cuba; Lincoln Diaz-Balart, born in Cuba; *su hermanito*—[laughter]—Mario Diaz-Balart. I want to thank Chris Smith for joining us, Congressman from Jersey; Thaddeus McCotter, Michigan; Debbie Wasserman Schultz from Florida, as well as Tim Mahoney from Florida. Appreciate you being here.

I thank the members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us. I appreciate the Ambassadors to the Organization of American States who are with us. I particularly want to thank the Cuban families who have joined me on the stage.

One of the great success stories of the past century is the advance of economic and political freedom across Latin America. In this room are officials representing nations that are embracing the blessings of democratic government and free enterprise. And the United States is proud and active to work with you in your transformations.

One country in our region still isolates its people from the hope that freedom brings and traps them in a system that has failed them. Forty-eight years ago, in the early moments of Cuba's revolution, its leaders offered a prediction. He said, and I quote, "The worst enemies which the Cuban revolution can face are the revolutionaries themselves." One of history's great tragedies is that he made that dark prophecy come true.

Cuba's rulers promised individual liberty. Instead, they denied their citizens basic rights that the free world takes for granted. In Cuba, it is illegal to change jobs, to change houses, to travel abroad, to read books or magazines without the expressed

approval of the state. It is against the law for more than three Cubans to meet without permission. Neighborhood watch programs do not look out for criminals. Instead, they monitor their fellow citizens, keeping track of neighbors' comings and goings, who visits them, and what radio stations they listen to. The sense of community and the simple trust between human beings is gone.

Cuba's rulers promised an era of economic advancement. Instead, they brought generations of economic misery. Many of the cars on the street predate the revolution, and some of—Cubans rely on horse carts for transportation. Housing for many ordinary Cubans is in very poor condition, while the ruling class lives in mansions. Clinics for ordinary Cubans suffer from chronic shortages in medicine and equipment. Many Cubans are forced to turn to the black market to feed their families. There are long lines for basic necessities, reminiscent of the Soviet bread lines of the last century. Meanwhile, the regime offers fully stocked foodstores for foreign tourists, diplomats, and businessmen in communism's version of apartheid.

Cuba's rulers promised freedom of the press. Instead, they closed down private newspapers and radio and television stations. They've jailed and beaten journalists, raided their homes, and seized their paper, ink, and fax machines. One Cuban journalist asked foreigners who visited him for one thing: a pen. Another uses shoe polish as ink—as a typewriter ribbon.

Cuba's rulers promised, quote, "absolute respect for human rights." Instead, they offered Cubans rat-infested prisons and a police state. Hundreds are serving long prison sentences for political offenses such as the crime of "dangerousness," as defined by the regime. Others have been jailed for the crime of "peaceful sedition," which means whatever Cuban authorities decide it means.

Joining us here are family members of political prisoners in Cuba. I've asked them

to come because I want our fellow citizens to see the faces of those who suffer as a result of the human rights abuses on the island some 90 miles from our shore.

One of them is Olga Alonso. Her brother, Ricardo Gonzalez Alonso [Alfonso],* has been harassed by Cuban authorities since he was 11 years old, because he wrote things that the Cuban authorities did not like. In 2003, Ricardo was arrested for his writings and sentenced to 20 years in prison. The authorities seized illegal contraband they found in his home. These included such things as a laptop computer, notebooks, and a printer. Olga, we're glad you're here, and thank you for coming.

Marlenis Gonzalez and her daughter Melissa are here. They recently arrived from Cuba, but without Melissa's father. Jorge Luis Gonzalez Tanquero dared to defend the human rights of his countrymen. For that, he was arrested for crimes against the state. Now he languishes in poor health inside a Cuban prison. *Bienvenidos*.

Damaris Garcia y su tia Mirta Pernet are with us today. Damaris calls the Cuban Government "a killing machine"—those are her words. They've seen relatives imprisoned for supporting liberty. One beloved family member, Omar Pernet Hernandez, was a poor man who sold candy on the streets of Havana. For advocating freedom, he is serving a sentence of 25 years. He's 62 years old, he's emaciated, yet he remains a determined advocate for human rights for the Cuban people. *Bienvenidos*.

Also with us is Yamile Llanes Labrada. Yamile's husband Jorge [Jose]* Luis Garcia Paneque was a surgeon and journalist. He was sentenced to 24 years in prison for daring speak the truth about the regime. Yamile herself was accused of espionage, and she feared for the safety of her four children. After Jose's arrest, a mob organized by state authorities surrounded their

* White House correction.

house. The mob carried sticks and threatened to set fire to the house with the family inside. Earlier this year, Yamile and her children made it off the island. They do not know when they'll see their father again. *Bienvenidos*, Yamile.

I want to thank each of you coming today. I thank you for allowing me to share your stories, and I thank you for your courage. I ask that God watch over you and your loved ones. *Que Dios les bendiga a ustedes y a su familias*. And I join your prayers for a day when the light of liberty will shine on Cuba.

These are just a few of the examples of the terror and trauma that is Cuba today. The "socialist paradise" is a tropical gulag. The quest for justice that once inspired the Cuban people has now become a grab for power. And as with all totalitarian systems, Cuba's regime no doubt has other horrors still unknown to the rest of the world. Once revealed, they will shock the conscience of humanity, and they will shame the regime's defenders and all those democracies that have been silent. One former Cuban political prisoner, Armando Valladares, puts it this way: It will be a time when "mankind will feel the revulsion it felt when the crimes of Stalin were brought to light." And that time is coming.

As we speak, calls for fundamental change are growing across the island. Peaceful demonstrations are spreading. Earlier this year, leading Cuban dissidents came together for the first time to issue the Unity of Freedom, a declaration for democratic change. They hear the dying gasps of a failed regime. They know that even history's cruelest nightmares cannot last forever. A restive people who long to rejoin the world at last have hope, and they will bring to Cuba a real revolution, a revolution of freedom, democracy, and justice.

Now is the time to support the democratic movements growing on the island. Now is the time to stand with the Cuban people as they stand up for their liberty. And now is the time for the world to put

aside its differences and prepare for Cuban's transition to a future of freedom and progress and promise. The dissidents of today will be the nation's leaders tomorrow. And when freedom finally comes, they will surely remember who stood with them.

The Czech Republic and Hungary and Poland have been vital sources of support and encouragement to Cuba's brave democratic opposition. I ask other countries to follow suit. All nations can make tangible efforts to show public support for those who love freedom on the island. They can open up their Embassies in Havana to pro-democracy leaders and invite them to different events. They can use their lobbies of the Embassies to give Cubans access to the Internet and to books and to magazines. They can encourage their country's nongovernmental organizations to reach out directly to Cuba's independent civil society.

Here at home we can do more as well. The United States Congress has recently voted for additional funding to support Cuban democracy efforts. I thank you all for your good work on this measure, and I urge you to get the bill to my desk as soon as we possibly can. I also urge our Congress to show our support and solidarity for fundamental change in Cuba by maintaining our embargo on the dictatorship until it changes.

Cuba's regime uses the U.S. embargo as a scapegoat for Cuba's miseries. Yet Presidents of both our political parties have long understood that the source of Cuba's suffering is not the embargo but the Communist system. They know that trade with the Cuban Government would not help the Cuban people until there are major changes to Cuba's political and economic system. Instead, trade with Cuba would merely enrich the elites in power and strengthen their grip. As long as the regime maintains its monopoly over the political and economic life of the Cuban people, the United States will keep the embargo in place.

The United States knows how much the Cuban people are suffering, and we have

not stood idle. Over the years, we've granted asylum to hundreds of thousands who have fled the repression and misery imposed by the regime. We've rallied nations to take up the banner of Cuban liberty, and we will continue to do so. We've authorized private citizens and organizations to provide food and medicine and other aid, amounting to more than \$270 million last year alone. The American people, the people of this generous land, are the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people in the entire world.

The aid we provide goes directly into the hands of the Cuban people, rather than into the coffers of the Cuban leaders. And that's really the heart of our policy: to break the absolute control that the regime holds over the material resources that the Cuban people need to live and to prosper and to have hope.

To further that effort, the United States is prepared to take new measures right now to help the Cuban people directly, but only if the Cuban regime, the ruling class, gets out of the way.

For example, here's an interesting idea to help the Cuban people: The United States Government is prepared to license nongovernmental organizations and faith-based groups to provide computers and Internet access to Cuban people, if Cuba's rulers will end their restrictions on Internet access for all the people.

Or the United States is prepared to invite Cuban young people whose families suffer oppression into the Partnership for Latin American Youth Scholarship Programs to help them have equal access to greater educational opportunities, if the Cuban rulers will allow them to freely participate.

We make these offers to the people of Cuba, and we hope their rulers will allow them to accept. You know, we've made similar offers before, but they've been rejected out of hand by the regime. It's a sad lesson, and it should be a vivid lesson for all: For Cuba's ruling class, its grip on

power is more important than the welfare of its people.

Life will not improve for Cubans under their current system of government. It will not improve by exchanging one dictator for another. It will not improve if we seek accommodation with a new tyranny in the interests of stability. America will have no part in giving oxygen to a criminal regime victimizing its own people. We will not support the old way with new faces, the old system held together by new chains. The operative word in our future dealings with Cuba is not "stability." The operative word is "freedom."

In that spirit, today I'm also announcing a new initiative to develop an international, multibillion dollar Freedom Fund for Cuba. This fund would help the Cuban people rebuild their economy and make the transition to democracy. I have asked two members of my Cabinet to lead the effort, Secretary Rice and Secretary Gutierrez. They will enlist foreign governments and international organizations to contribute to this initiative.

And here's how the fund will work. The Cuban Government must demonstrate that it has adopted, in word and deed, fundamental freedoms. These include the freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of press, freedom to form political parties, and the freedom to change the Government through periodic, multiparty elections. And once these freedoms are in place, the fund will be able to give Cubans—especially Cuban entrepreneurs—access to grants and loans and debt relief to help rebuild their country.

The restoration of these basic freedoms is the foundation of fair, free, and competitive elections. Without these fundamental protections in place, elections are only cynical exercises that give dictatorships a legitimacy they do not deserve.

We will know there is a new Cuba when opposition parties have the freedom to organize, assemble, and speak with equal access to the airwaves. We will know there

is a new Cuba when a free and independent press has the power to operate without censors. We will know there is a new Cuba when the Cuban Government removes its stranglehold on private economic activity.

And above all, we will know there is a new Cuba when authorities go to the prisons, walk to the cells where people are being held for their beliefs, and set them free. It will be a time when the families here are reunited with their loved ones and when the names of free people—including dissidents such as Oscar Elias Biscet, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, and Omar Rodriguez Saludes—are free. It will be a moment when Cubans of conscience are released from their shackles, not as a gesture or a tactic, but because the Government no longer puts people in prison because of what they think or what they say or what they believe.

Cuba's transition from a shattered society to a free country may be long and difficult. Things will not always go as hoped. There will be difficult adjustments to make. One of the curses of totalitarianism is that it affects everyone. Good people make moral compromises to feed their families, avoid the whispers of neighbors, and escape a visit from the secret police. If Cuba is to enter a new era, it must find a way to reconcile and forgive those who have been part of the system but who do not have blood on their hands. They're victims as well.

At this moment, my words are being transmitted into—live into Cuba by media outlets in the free world, including Radio and TV Marti. To those Cubans who are listening, perhaps at great risk, I would like to speak to you directly.

Some of you are members of the Cuban military or the police or officials in the Government. You may have once believed in the revolution. Now you can see its failure. When Cubans rise up to demand their liberty, they deserve—they—the liberty they deserve, you've got to make a choice:

Will you defend a disgraced and dying order by using force against your own people? Or will you embrace your people's desire for change? There is a place for you in the free Cuba. You can share the hope found in the song that has become a rallying cry for freedom-loving Cubans on and off the island: *Nuestro Dia Ya Viene Llegando*—our day is coming soon.

To the ordinary Cubans who are listening: You have the power to shape your own destiny. You can bring about a future where your leaders answer to you, where you can freely express your beliefs, and where your children can grow up in peace. Many experts once said that that day could never come to Eastern Europe or Spain or Chile. Those experts were wrong. When the Holy Father came to Cuba and offered God's blessings, he reminded you that you hold your country's future in your hands. And you can carry this refrain in your heart: *Su dia ya viene llegando*—your day is coming soon.

To the schoolchildren of Cuba: You have a lot in common with young people in the United States. You both dream of hopeful futures, and you both have the optimism to make those dreams come true. Do not believe the tired lies you are told about America. We want nothing from you except to welcome you to the hope and joy of freedom. Do not fear the future. *Su dia ya viene llegando*—your day is coming soon.

Until that day, you and your suffering are never far from our hearts and prayers. The American people care about you. And until we stand together as free men and women, I leave you with a hope, a dream, and a mission: *Viva Cuba Libre*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Leslie H. Southwick as United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit
October 24, 2007

The confirmation of Judge Leslie Southwick to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit is a victory for America's judicial system and for the citizens of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Today's bipartisan vote resolves a longstanding judicial emergency and will help ensure that the Fifth Circuit can operate more effectively. Judge Southwick is a man of character and intelligence who will apply the law fairly. I appreciate the Senate's approval of his nomination.

While today's vote resolves one judicial emergency, many of America's Federal

courts continue to have unnecessary vacancies. I have nominated highly qualified men and women to serve on these courts. Now the Senate must act. In the final 2 years of the past 3 administrations, the Senate has confirmed an average of 17 circuit court judges. But since January of this year, the Senate has confirmed only five circuit court nominees. The Senate has more work to do. I once again call upon the Senate to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities and promptly provide these nominees fair up-or-down votes.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation In or In Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
October 24, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

The situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been marked by widespread violence and atrocities that continue to threaten regional stability and was addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1596 of April 18, 2005, Resolution 1649 of December 21, 2005, and Resolution 1698 of July 31, 2006, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13413 of October 27, 2006, and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict.

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national

emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in that country, must continue in effect beyond October 27, 2007.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 24, 2007.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Departure for a Tour of Southern California Areas Damaged by Wildfires
October 25, 2007

Good morning. I'm on my way out to California. I'm looking forward to seeing Governor Schwarzenegger, to thank him for all the good work that the State and local authorities are doing to help the good people of southern California battle these wildfires. I will assure the people of California that the Federal Government will be deploying resources, assets, and manpower necessary to help fight these fires. As well, I will assure them that there's a—because of the declaration I signed yesterday, there will be help for the people of California. Evidently, the winds are more favorable today, which should be encouraging to the firefighters.

I'm also looking forward to spending some time with some of the firefighters. We've got some incredibly brave citizens who are risking their lives to protect people and property in California, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to our Nation's firefighters.

It's a sad situation out there in southern California. I fully understand that the people have got a lot of anguish in their hearts, and they just need to know a lot of folks care about them. And looking forward to my trip out there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Following a Tour of Areas Damaged by Wildfires and an Exchange With Reporters in San Diego, California
October 25, 2007

The President. The Senator and the Congressman and the Governor and I have come up here to survey firsthand the terrible devastations done by the fires here in the San Diego area. We've met the Jeffcoats, who came up this hill and went to what was their home. And we know how tough it is for you; 39 years of marriage, that's something that you didn't think you'd be dealing with after all this time. So we want to let you know that the American people care for people like you who are suffering. We appreciate your spirit; we really do. I think all of us who met you

were very impressed by your determination to deal with this tough moment in your life and rebuild your lives.

To the extent that people need help from the Federal Government, we will help. I am here, really, to make sure that the Federal effort works hand in glove with what the Governor has been doing. The Governor has taken the lead down here, and he's done a fine job. The thing I like about Governor Schwarzenegger, he says, "You show me a problem, I'll charge it; if you show me a hill, I'll go up it." And that's exactly what he's done.

And my job is to make sure that FEMA and the Defense Department and the Interior Department and Ag Department respond in a way that helps people get the job done. And that's what I'm here to listen to.

I want to thank the Senator for joining me. On the flight down, we had a good conversation. She's deeply concerned about the citizens of California. She asked the right kind of questions, and, you know, we're going to give her the answers.

And Congressman, thank you for joining us. This is his district. It's got to be tough for you to represent the good people here and know that people are suffering.

But anyway, thanks for being here, and God bless you all.

Kendra Jeffcoat. Thank you, President—

The President. God bless the people of this State. Thank you.

Mrs. Jeffcoat. Thank you very much.

Jay Jeffcoat. Thank you.

Federal Response to Southern California Wildfires and Hurricane Katrina

Q. Mr. President, a lot has been made about the contrast between this response and the Katrina response. Do you have any thoughts on that and how you're doing?

The President. You better ask the Governor how we're doing. I will tell you this: On all these responses, the thing that has amazed me most is the courage of our first-responders. The firefighters here in this part of the world are incredibly brave people. The police force has done a fabulous job.

And same in the Katrina area. I mean, I know there was a lot of criticism of effort, but remember, there was 33,000 people pulled off roofs by brave Coast Guard men and women flying those choppers. A lot of people's lives were saved.

Representative Brian Bilbray. San Diego County has a centralized disaster response team made up of the county chairman as the chairman of the Disaster Council and

every police chief and fire chief and mayor, so there's a network here that those of us in the Federal and the State level are able to come supplement. But the backbone of this response was the local providers, because they were organized. So the real heroes here are the providers, are the men and women working for the counties and the cities and the fire districts that really were here first and foremost, and we're just supplementing.

The President. Yes, see, that's an interesting question. I appreciate you asking it. My hearts are with the Jeffcoats right now, that's what I'm thinking. I'm thinking about people whose lives turned upside down. The experts can try to figure out whether the response was perfect or not. All I can tell you is, when the Governor calls, I answer his phone. When the Governor says, "We need this help; think about sending these troops here," I got on the phone; I called the appropriate people. I'm interested in helping him solve problems and helping the folks here at the county level. There's all kinds of time for historians to compare this response or that response, but those of us who are here from Government, our hearts are right here with the Jeffcoats; that's where we are.

And I'm looking forward—and I know the Senator and Governor and Congressman is eating lunch with the firefighters. We can't thank people enough for putting their lives at risk to help a neighbor, and that's exactly what's taking place. If there needs to be more firefighters, we'll send more firefighters. Those are the kind of questions that we're asking; what does it take to get the job done?

Fire-Suppression Equipped Airplanes

Q. Mr. President, Congressman Hunter tried to get some of the C-130s here, and they are here, but they are still on the ground, and the National Guard won't let them fly. What seems to be the problem? We really need those because the flames continue to fan.

The President. I'll find out. I'll find out.

Governor Arnold A. Schwarzenegger. I just want to add to this because I want to thank the President for coming out here today. I can tell you that when we saw on Monday the flames going out of control and it becoming really a major disaster, I told my assistant that we got to call the President and ask for help. And before I ever had a chance to make that phone call—I remember I was in the middle of a briefing—the President—I was in—I got the phone, they said, it's the President on the phone. And he called me, and he told me that he's really concerned about the fires here in California, and if anything he can do, anything that we need, we should let him know; that all his entire Cabinet and his whole staff, his team, everyone is available.

So I call this quick action, I mean, quicker than I expected, I can tell you that. And since then, we've been talking every day on the phone. And we asked him for an emergency declaration; they got it within 24 hours. We asked for a disaster declaration; we got that within 24 hours. And then he called me back, and he says, "I'm going

to come out because I'm really concerned about the people in California and what they are going through. We want to make sure that we help them get back on their feet." And here he is.

So I call this very unbelievable response from the Federal Government and the Bush administration, from everyone. And from Senator Feinstein—I want to thank you also for the great response, and she was calling us every hour and being concerned. So I would say this is really great response, and you cannot do this without everyone working together. And what we have seen here, unlike other disasters, I mean, how quickly the locals, the State, and the Federal Government came together, and everyone working together was really extraordinary to watch. So I want to thank everyone. I want to thank you again, President, for coming out here today and helping us.

The President. Okay, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Rancho Bernardo neighborhood. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Remarks in Escondido, California October 25, 2007

Governor, thank you very much. First thing I want to let the people know out here in southern California is that many across our Nation have been moved by the plight of the citizens who have lost their homes, lost their possessions, and particularly those who have lost their life. It's very important for those who are wondering about their future to know, there's a lot of good citizens all across America who are praying for your future and who really want to stand with you.

I appreciate the leadership of Governor Schwarzenegger. I said earlier, when we

were at the neighborhood, there's no hill he's not willing to charge, no problem he's not willing to solve. And we've got a big problem out here, and I appreciate his leadership. It makes a significant difference when you have somebody in the statehouse willing to take the lead. I've come to make sure that the Federal Government provides the help for people here at the local level.

I do want to thank Senator Feinstein for joining us. I want to thank the local mayors, statehouse folks, the Congresspeople for being with us as well.

Really, it's important for me to come out here and see firsthand the situation. And there's no question, a lot of people are suffering. And there's no question, there's been terrible losses.

I also am out here to make sure these firefighters behind me and the first-responders know how much I appreciate and how much the country appreciates their courage and bravery. Firefighters are on the scene and on the frontlines. The police have helped maintain order. Emergency medical teams have treated the sick. And our National Guard personnel is providing very important assistance. It turns out, when the President shows up, so does a lot of the other brass. I'm proud to be here with General Tuck [Blum],^{*} who runs the entire National Guard Bureau.

All of us associated with the Federal Government, Governor, are here to make sure that the resources at our disposal are deployed to help you. And that's why there's all kinds of people from all different Departments at the Federal level to assess the needs, to listen to the concerns, and to respond. And that's exactly what we've been doing, and that's exactly what we'll continue to do.

As the Governor mentioned, I did just issue an emergency declaration which allows Federal Agencies across the Government to help State and local authorities. It empowers FEMA to provide vital supplies as well as to pay emergency grants to help pay for the cost of firefighting, evacuation shelters, and traffic control.

Our Department of Agriculture and Interior have provided elite firefighters and equipment. As I mentioned, the Department of Defense is in this to help you through NORTHCOM. The military has got assets that we can help you with. General, thanks for coming. We've got a four-star general with us today. He runs NORTHCOM, and the reason he's here, Governor, is to listen to you, find out what

assets we can continue to deploy to help you.

As the Governor mentioned, yesterday I signed a second declaration to help California's recovery and rebuilding efforts. The major disaster declaration authorizes the release of Federal funds for debris removal and long-term assistance to individuals and businessowners. People affected by the fires can now apply for assistance for temporary housing and home repair and low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses.

Now, people here in this part of the world are wondering, is there a number they can call to get help? And here's the number: 1-800-621-FEMA. If you want to find out whether or not you qualify for help, Federal help, just call 1-800-621-FEMA or go to the web site FEMA.gov. And there's a third way that you can find out whether you get help, and that is through a mobile disaster recovery center that FEMA's deployed around this State. And Arnold Schwarzenegger's right. These fires are going to go out because of the bravery of the people behind us, but there's still going to be needs and concerns.

And the final reason I've come is to let you know, we're not going to forget you in Washington, DC; that we want the people to know that there's a better day ahead; that today your life may look dismal, but tomorrow life's going to be better; and to the extent that the Federal Government can help you, we want to do so.

I do want to thank all the volunteers who have stepped forth to help a neighbor in need. There's an impressive number of people that have heard the call that one of their neighbors needs help. And for all of those who are volunteering their time to help somebody get their feet back on the ground, I thank you from the bottom of our Nation's heart.

May God bless those who suffer, may God bless those who are helping the people who are hurting, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

^{*} White House correction.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in Kit Carson Park. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, USA, chief, National Guard Bureau; and Gen. Victor E.

Renuart, Jr., USAF, commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First-Responders in Escondido October 25, 2007

The President. Thank you all very much for letting us come by to say hello to you. I'm proud to be here with the Senator, the Terminator—[laughter]—do you still get called the Terminator?

Governor Arnold A. Schwarzenegger. Absolutely, especially my wife. [Laughter]

The President. You know why we're here—Brian Billbray, the Congressman from here—we're here to, hopefully, inspire you by thanking you from the bottom of our hearts for what you do. I'm telling you, there's a lot of folks that live up in these hills that have their houses because of you. And they're not in a position to thank you, but we are. And so we thank you for helping save lives and save property. We thank you for serving our country.

You know, one of the things I like to do is look in the eyes, to make sure you're getting rest, and I know you're not. [Laughter] I hope there's enough reinforcements coming to make sure that you get your shifts so you can get some sleep, because the citizens are going to count on you for you a while.

These fires are tough, but you know better than anybody how hard it is. And so we're here to compliment you on your courage and your compassion. I know you're working incredible hours, and you've got family members who wonder about you, and so one of the things that we can do is also hope you pass on our best regards to your family members. I'm confident they're inspired by you, but they're wondering about your health and your safety. And so please, when you talk to them, tell them the President, the Senator, the Governor, the Congressman, but most of all, the folks here in the San Diego area and around the State affected by the fires are really appreciative.

And finally, I'd like to ask God's blessings on you and to protect you and guard you. Thanks for being great Americans. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:56 p.m. in the Ray Love Picnic Area at Kit Carson Park. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo October 26, 2007

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome back to the Oval Office President Kabila. Thanks for coming, sir, the President of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo. The last time the President was here, we talked about his desire to have free and fair elections in his country. Since that time, his country has had free and

fair elections. And my first order of business today was to congratulate the President for garnering 58 percent of the vote.

We talked about the need to work together to help consolidate the gains. We talked about the need to—for the United States to partner with the country to help on economic development. One of the things the President recognizes is the need for there to be investment in his country, so people can find work and the stability that comes with economic development. And I appreciate your recognition of the opportunity to work together.

We talked about the eastern part of his country. And he shared with me his strategy to make sure that the Government's reach extends throughout the entire country and that there is stability throughout the country. And I want to thank you very much for sharing your thoughts with me.

I did bring up my desire to help our friend deal with malaria. Malaria is a great concern to me and my wife and the Secretary of State. This is an issue that can be solved. We hurt when young babies are dying from a mosquito bite, knowing full well that a strategy can help save lives. And so the President shares the same sense of compassion I do for people all throughout the world who are being affected by malaria.

Mr. President, you are—you've said that you wanted there to be free and fair elections, and you delivered. And I appreciate

that and congratulate you on being a man of your word. And we look forward to continuing to work with you, sir, to bring peace and stability to the neighborhood. So, welcome.

President Kabila. Thanks a lot. Well, Mr. President, thanks a lot. Of course, this is the second time that we meet in the Oval Office. And way back, yes, elections was high on the agenda in 2003. We organized those elections. And basically, our priorities have now changed from elections; it's now stability, and with stability, peace and development. And I emphasized and insisted on the fact that we need continued support from the United States in order to achieve these two remaining goals, which is peace and stability throughout the whole country, and embark on a very, very long journey of development and really try to combat poverty, which is the biggest issue not only in the Congo but in the region and on the African Continent.

So thanks a lot for the continued support that we've always had from the United States Government and the administration. And together, let's move further and further ahead.

President Bush. Yes, sir.

President Kabila. Thank you.

President Bush. Glad you're here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Congressional Action on the Legislative Agenda October 26, 2007

Good morning. I went out to California yesterday to meet with families affected by the wildfires and to thank the State and local officials for their outstanding work in this difficult time. While I was there, I saw the terrible destruction and heartbreaking loss. Yet I was also encouraged

by the spirit I found: the families determined to rebuild, the volunteers who stepped forward to help neighbors in need, and the first-responders who have shown such courage in battling the flames and caring for those who were displaced.

I returned to Washington late last night. And when I got back to the White House, I was disappointed by what Congress had been doing and even more disappointed by what they had not been doing. This week, the majority in the House passed a new SCHIP bill that costs more over the next 5 years than the one I vetoed 3 weeks ago. It still moves millions of American children who now have private health insurance into Government-run health care. It raises taxes to pay for it. And it fails to do what needs to be done: to put poor children first.

After I vetoed their last SCHIP bill, I designated members of my administration to work with Congress to find common ground. Congressional leaders never met with them. Instead, the House once again passed a bill that they knew would not become law. And incredibly enough, the Senate will take up the same bill next week, which wastes valuable time.

As the House was debating SCHIP, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee unveiled a massive tax package that raises taxes on more than a million small-business owners, among others. Earlier this week, Congress sent me a fiscally irresponsible water resources bill. The House version came in at \$15 billion. The Senate version came in at \$14 billion. So the House and Senate compromised and sent me a bill that costs \$23 billion. In Washington, they call that "splitting the difference."

And today Congress set a record they should not be proud of. October the 26th is the latest date in 20 years that Congress has failed to get a single annual appropri-

tions bill to the President's desk. And that's not the only thing congressional leaders have failed to get done.

They have yet to make the Internet tax moratorium permanent or even extend it, even though this moratorium is set to expire in just a few days. The House and Senate have both passed temporary extensions but have not agreed on a final bill. I urge Congress to keep the Internet tax-free and to get a bill to my desk that I can sign.

They have yet to move Judge Michael Mukasey's nomination to be Attorney General out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, even as Members complain about the lack of leadership at the Department of Justice.

They have yet to act on our emergency war funding supplemental, even though our troops on the frontlines depend on these vital funds to fight our enemies and to keep us safe at home.

This is not what congressional leaders promised when they took control of Congress earlier this year. In January, one congressional leader declared, and I quote, "No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol, while families in America struggle to get ahead." He was right. With only a few weeks left on the legislative calendar, Congress needs to keep their promise to stop wasting time and get essential work done on behalf of the American people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3963, H.R. 976, H.R. 3970, and H.R. 1495.

The President's Radio Address *October 27, 2007*

Good morning. On Thursday, I traveled to California to visit communities ravaged

by wildfires. I walked with a married couple through the charred remains of their

home. I met with emergency responders. I talked with displaced families at a disaster assistance center. And I made a pledge to the people of California on behalf of all Americans: We will help you put out the fires, get through the crisis, and rebuild your lives.

State and local authorities in California were well prepared for this crisis, and they responded quickly and effectively. Officials warned those in danger, moved residents out of the path of the flames, and set up dozens of shelters for thousands of people.

State officials also reached out to the Federal Government for help, and we responded. Shortly after the fires broke out, we started mobilizing and providing assistance, including the deployment of Federal firefighters and aircraft to drop fire retardant on the fires. As high winds spread the fires, Governor Schwarzenegger requested more Federal help. Within 1 hour of that request, we approved an emergency declaration that authorized Federal Agencies across the Government to help State and local responders save lives, protect property, and maintain public health and safety.

On Wednesday, I issued a second declaration. This action made additional Federal funding available to the residents of the counties affected by the wildfires so they can recover and rebuild. This Federal assistance includes grants for temporary housing and home repair, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, loans for small-business owners, and funding to help clean up debris.

I was impressed by the performance of the first-responders I met in California. Despite the challenges of high winds and dry weather, firefighters are gaining the upper hand and earning the gratitude of their fellow citizens. Many of these brave men and women have battled the blaze in triple-

digit heat. Some have worked around the clock. And more than once, firefighting teams were forced to take emergency shelter in their fire tents when threatened by approaching walls of flame. I was grateful for the opportunity to meet them, and I thank them for their courage.

I was also encouraged by the spirit of the families I met. At one recovery center, I met an amazing young girl named Alyssa Lamborn. Alyssa told me, "I lost my house, but I didn't lose my home because my family and my pets are safe." I saw this same spirit in many others who are grateful for their safety and determined to rebuild.

People like Alyssa and her family are receiving help from their fellow Americans. Some have opened their homes to strangers who were evacuated and could not find a hotel room. Doctors and nurses have answered the call to help seniors who were forced from their nursing homes. And volunteers from every walk of life have come forward to provide food, clothing, and blankets, and a shoulder to lean on.

I went to southern California with a message: We want you to know, the country cares for you. We're concerned about you, your neighborhoods, and your homes. Things may look dismal now, but there is a better day ahead. And we will not forget you in Washington, DC.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 26, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the House Republican Conference *October 30, 2007*

Thank you all. I just had a very constructive and important meeting with the leadership and the Republican Members of the United States House of Representatives. And I want to thank you all for coming down, and thank you for your leadership.

Congress is not getting its work done. We're near the end of the year, and there really isn't much to show for it. The House of Representatives has wasted valuable time on a constant stream of investigations, and the Senate has wasted valuable time on an endless series of failed votes to pull our troops out of Iraq. And yet there's important work to be done on behalf of the American people.

They have not been able to send a single annual appropriations bill to my desk, and that's the worst record for a Congress in 20 years. One of the important responsibilities of the Congress is to pass appropriations bills, and yet the leadership that's on the Hill now cannot get that job done.

They've also passed an endless series of tax increases. You know, they proposed tax increases in the farm bill, the energy bill, the small-business bill, and of course, the SCHIP bill. They haven't seen a bill they could not solve without shoving a tax hike into it. In other words, they believe in raising taxes, and we don't.

Spending is skyrocketing under their leadership; at least, proposed spending is skyrocketing under their leadership. After all, they're trying to spend an additional \$205 billion over the next 5 years. Some have said, "Well, that doesn't matter much; it's not that much money." Well, 205 billion over the next 5 years in the real world amounts to this: 4.7 million per hour, every hour for every day for the next 5 years. That's a lot of money.

And that doesn't even include spending that would actually pay for 2 million people to move from private health insurance to

an inefficient, lower quality, Government-run program. Despite knowing it does not have a chance of becoming law, the Senate will now take up the second SCHIP bill the House passed last week. I believe the Senate is wasting valuable time. This bill, remarkably, manages to spend more money over 5 years than the first bill did.

After going alone and going nowhere, Congress should instead work with the administration on a bill that puts poor children first, a bill that will take care of the poor children that the initial bill said we got to do, a bill that would stop diverting money to adults. You realize some major States in the United States spend more money on adults than they do on children? We want a bill that enrolls the more than 500,000 poor children currently eligible for the program who are not a part of the program.

We want to sit down in good faith and come up with a bill that is responsible, because Congress has been unable or unwilling to get its basic job done of passing spending bills.

There are now reports that congressional leaders may be considering combining the Veterans and Department of Defense appropriations bills and then add a bloated labor, health, and education spending bill to both of them. It's hard to imagine a more cynical political strategy than trying to hold hostage funding for our troops in combat and our wounded warriors in order to extract \$11 billion in additional social spending. I hope media reports about such a strategy are wrong; I really do. If they're not, if the reports of this strategy are true, I will veto such a three-bill pileup. Congress should pass each bill, one at a time, in a fiscally responsible manner that reflects agreement between the legislative branch and the executive branch.

I again ask Congress to send me a clean veterans funding bill that we have already agreed to by Veterans Day, so we can keep America's promise to those who have defended our freedom and are recovering from injury. I again urge them to pass a clean defense appropriations bill and a war supplemental bill to fund our troops in combat.

I know some on the Democrat side didn't agree with my decision to send troops in, but it seems like we ought to be able to agree that we're going to support our troops who are in harm's way. I know the Members feel that way, standing with me. I hope the leadership feels that way, and they ought to give me a bill that funds,

among other things, bullets and body armor and protection against IEDs and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. It would be irresponsible to not give our troops the resources they need to get their job done because Congress was unable to get its job done.

Again, I want to thank the Members here. I appreciate us working together for the good of the United States of America. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 a.m. on the North Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 976 and H.R. 3963.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda

October 30, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you for coming. Second time we have met here in the Oval Office, and I told the President that I remember distinctly his description of what life was like in Uganda, particularly when it comes to his raising cows; he's a cattleman, and it gave us something to talk about.

But we talked about other issues as well. I am very proud that the United States taxpayer has supported this President in his efforts to deal with HIV/AIDS. And Uganda is the epitome of the—of how one can implement a comprehensive ABC strategy to achieve concrete and specific results for the sake of humanity. And so, Mr. President, I assure you we'll continue to support you on HIV/AIDS, and equally important, we'll support you on fighting malaria.

President Museveni. Thank you.

President Bush. And I thank you for your determined efforts.

We also talked about the benefit of trade between the United States and the con-

tinent of Africa, and the President reminded me how important AGOA is to promote better lives in our respective countries. And so, Mr. President, thank you for that vision.

We talked about a lot of other subjects. We talked about the security in the region. The President has got good advice, and he's got good judgment when it comes to issues like Somalia and the Sudan. I assured him that we're committed to peace and stability. A matter of fact, I informed the President today that I spoke to the Secretary-General of the United Nations about Sudan, how I think it is important to continue putting the pressure on respective parties to come up with an agreement that will help end the genocide, and that it's important for the United Nations to get moving those troops into this Darfur region as quickly as possible.

And of course, we discussed about the peace between—the agreement between south and north of Sudan, and our desire

is to make sure we implement that agreement.

And finally, we talked about eligibility for Millennium Challenge. And I told the President this is a very important program. I hope that Congress fully funds Millennium Challenge, and that we'll work with Uganda on their eligibility.

And so, Mr. President, thanks for coming. It's really good to see you again.

President Museveni. Thank you.

President Bush. I appreciate you taking time to visit with me here in the Oval Office.

President Museveni. I thank President Bush for welcoming me here. As he told you, we are most pleased with AGOA, African Growth and Opportunity Act. This is where the United States opens their market for African value-added products, or products of all other types, for 6,500 products.

Now, this is a very big opportunity. As you know, the United States market is a big market, \$11 trillion market. The whole of the African market today is about half a trillion dollars, if it was integrated. Of course, it will grow, it will grow. As the purchasing power of Africa grows, our whole market will also grow.

However, in the short run, exporting to the U.S. market is a very good stimulus for our economies to grow fast. So we are very, very pleased with President Bush for sustaining this AGOA arrangement, which has helped our economies. Uganda is already exporting processed fish from Lake Victoria to the U.S. This is good also for the American consumers because this fish is very good for health. There's very little pollution in our part of the world, so it's very good for the American people also. So I thanked him for that.

I also thanked him for the Millennium Challenge Account. That money will now be used to develop infrastructure in the country of Uganda. So you have access to big markets in Africa, in the United States, in the European Union; even China has opened their market partially to us. They have offered us 440 products, tariff free, quota free. But you need a good infrastructure within a country like Uganda, as well as other African countries, so that you can produce goods at low cost. And because you have got low transport costs, you have got low energy costs; therefore, the cost of doing business are low, are reasonable. Therefore, you can be competitive in the expanded markets and also in the regional markets. So I thanked him again for that Millennium Challenge Account.

I thank him for the malaria and HIV fund. That one is very, very useful. We are working to get rid of the mosquito in Uganda. We are doing research to get rid of the mosquito larvae. And again, we have worked with the Center for Disease Control in the United States, whom you sent to us. There's a hope that we can get rid of the mosquito at the larvae stage because we have got some larvicide, which can kill it.

Of course, we also talked about security issues, but most important, AGOA, Millennium Challenge Account, malaria, and HIV. That's what we talked about mainly.

President Bush. Sir, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations.

Remarks on the Nomination of James B. Peake To Be Secretary of
Veterans Affairs
October 30, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome. Caring for our military veterans is a solemn responsibility of the Federal Government. It is our enduring pledge to every man and woman who puts on our Nation's uniform. And it is the daily work of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am pleased to announce my nomination of an Army doctor and combat veteran who will be a strong new leader for this Department, Lieutenant General James Peake.

Public service is a family commitment, and I'm especially grateful to Dr. Peake's wife Janice—a fellow Texan—who is with us today. I appreciate you supporting Jim once again as he does the Nation's work. I'm also proud to welcome Kimberly and Thomas. Thank you all for coming. We just met in the Oval Office, and there's no question in my mind, they're certainly proud of their dad.

Dr. Peake grew up in a home where service to country was a way of life. His father started out as an enlisted man in the Army and became an officer who spent most of his 30-year career in the Medical Service Corps. Doctor Peake's mom was an Army nurse. His brother was a naval aviator. And as a young man of 18, he set upon his own lifetime of service when he arrived at the United States Military Academy.

After graduating from West Point in 1966, Second Lieutenant James Peake was sent to Vietnam with the 101st Airborne. There he served as a platoon leader. He led men in combat and earned several medals for his courage, including the Silver Star. One of those who knows him best described his leadership this way: "End of a chow line officer—everyone else first."

In Vietnam, he also earned two Purple Hearts. While in the hospital recovering

from his second wound, he learned that he had been accepted to medical school. After completing his medical studies at Cornell University, he devoted his career as an Army doctor to improving care for our wounded service men and women. Long before the global war on terror began, Dr. Peake was changing the way we deliver medical care to our troops. As a result of his reforms, many who once might have died on the battlefield, now they come home to be productive, and they're having fulfilling lives.

As a medical officer and combat vet who was wounded in action, Dr. Peake understands the view from both sides of the hospital bed: the doctor's and the patient's. He brought that understanding to many jobs. These include command surgeon in the Army hospitals, commanding general of the largest medical training facility in the world, and Army Surgeon General, where he commanded more than 50,000 medical personnel, oversaw 16 hospitals across the world, and managed an operating budget of nearly \$5 billion.

Since leaving the Army, he is—served as executive vice president and chief operating officer of Project HOPE. There he helped one Navy hospital ship respond to the victims of the Asian tsunami and another that was sent to care for those hit by Hurricane Katrina. Most recently, he has served as chief medical director and chief operating officer with QTC Management, which provides military veterans with timely medical examinations as well as electronic medical record services.

When confirmed by the Senate, Dr. Peake will bring his unique set of skills and experiences to the Department of Veterans Affairs. He will be the first physician and the first general to serve as Secretary. He will apply his decades of expertise in

combat medicine and health care management to improve the veterans' health system. He will insist on the highest level of care for every American veteran.

One of Dr. Peake's first tasks as Secretary will be to continue to implement the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission on Wounded Warriors. And Senator, thank you for joining us. Some of their recommendations are the responsibility of the executive branch, and Dr. Peake will be a leader in carrying them out. Others require the approval of the United States Congress, and that's why this month, I sent a bill to Capitol Hill that will make those recommendations the law of the land.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Doctor Peake will be a powerful advocate for the prompt enactment and implementation of this vital legislation. And he will work tirelessly to eliminate backlogs and ensure that our veterans receive the benefits they need to lead lives of dignity and purpose.

In all these ways, Dr. Peake will build on the fine records of Secretary Jim Nicholson and Secretary Tony Principi. Jim is a West Point man who knows the meaning of duty, honor, and country. He's a Vietnam vet and a former Ambassador and a good friend. I thank him for his service, and I thank his wife Suzanne as well, and wish them all the very best.

Principi is with us. It's good to see you, friend, thanks for coming. He's a graduate of one of our military academies, although it's not West Point, it was the Naval Academy. Like the other two men here today, he is a combat veteran of Vietnam. And like the other two, he has served our veterans with dignity and integrity. And I appreciate your service.

Jim and Tony can be proud of their record at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under their leadership, Federal spending for veterans increased by more than two-thirds. We extended treatment to a million additional veterans, including hundreds of thousands returning from Iraq and

Afghanistan. We expanded grants to help homeless veterans across the country. These men have worked well with the VSOs, and I thank the leaders for joining us here today. Dr. Peake is going to work well with you too.

And speaking of working well, it's time for the Congress to do its job for the veterans. Congress needs to send me a clean VA appropriations bill that I can sign into law by Veterans Day.

I want to thank Acting Secretary Gordon Mansfield for leading the Department these last few weeks. He's done a fine job. He's earned the respect of all those who've worked under him. He's earned the gratitude of our Nation's vets.

I appreciate Dr. Peake's willingness to step forward at this important time for the Department. He's a man who's been tested in battle. He has proved himself as a soldier, as a physician, as a leader, and as a good family man. He will be a superb Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the United States Senate should promptly confirm him.

Doctor, I appreciate you stepping up again. On behalf of the United States of America, congratulations.

[At this point, Secretary-designate Peake made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, sir. Good job. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:09 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole, Cochair, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; and former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Peake.

Remarks at the Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association Fall Conference

October 31, 2007

Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated. Billy, thank you. I asked Billy where he works. He said, "Well, I run Sunny Delight Beverage Company." I said, "Well, Billy, I quit drinking." [Laughter] He said, "That's not that kind of—alcohol."

I thank you all for having me. Billy, thank you for your kind words. He's from Cincinnati. I was in Cincinnati the other day, stopped off and got some ribs, and he tried to ask me to compare Texas ribs with Cincinnati ribs. That's a little unfair. But they're awfully good, Billy.

I appreciate you having me for this fall conference. I'm thrilled to be a sitting President coming to visit with you. I didn't realize the last one was Eisenhower. I don't know if he came on Halloween, but I did. It's always an interesting day here in the Nation's Capital. This morning I was with the Vice President. I was asking him what costume he was planning. He said, "Well, I'm already wearing it." [Laughter] Then he mumbled something about the dark side of the force. [Laughter] He's doing well.

I want to talk today about health care. There's an interesting debate raging here in Washington, and it's an appropriate—Halloween is an appropriate day to talk about it, because there's a bill moving through the Congress that's disguised as a bill to help children, but I think it's really a trick on the American people. I'm going to spend some time explaining why I have made some decisions I have made regarding this piece of legislation.

The bill that I'm going to discuss would cause moms and dads to give up private insurance and—private insurance for their children and move them on to the Government rolls. It would move us closer to a health care system dominated by the Federal Government. It would fund massive new spending by raising taxes on the Amer-

ican working people. I believe the legislation I'm going to talk to you today—about which I'm going to talk to you today is a path to Government-run health care, which I believe is the wrong path for the United States.

And I vetoed a bill. As Billy noted, the spotlight can be quite bright when the President either shows up or does something. And I vetoed a piece of legislation. And I appreciate your giving me a chance to come by and explain to you and the American people why I did so.

But before I do, I do want to thank you all very much for giving me a chance to come by. It's a—the White House is a nice place to live, but sometimes it's good to get outside the White House, to be with people who are actually making a living—[laughter]—that are creating jobs; that are taking risk; that are really, I hope, living the American Dream.

Laura sends her best. She's doing great. I'm truly a lucky man to have married this great woman, and I think the country is lucky to have her as the First Lady.

I want to thank Mary Fallin from Oklahoma—Congresswoman from Oklahoma—for joining us. Mary, thank you for being here. I particularly want to say something about Cal Dooley. I worked with him when he was a Member of the United States Congress. I found him to be a good, honest guy. When he said he was going to do something, he would do it. And I don't know if this helps him or hurts him, but you made a pretty smart move to hire him. And I'm proud to be with you, Cal. Thanks for being here.

One of the reasons I've come by is to remind you how important you are to our economy. In other words, I'm the kind of person who believes that it's important for those of us in government to encourage

people to take risk and to take investment. I like to remind people, one of the key cornerstones of my philosophy is, I don't believe the role of government is to try to create wealth; it's to create the environment in which people are willing to risk capital to expand their businesses. And I appreciate the fact that every day, you're doing that. I appreciate the fact that you have to worry about what your customers think, that you tailor your goods and services to meet somebody else's demand. I appreciate the fact that by providing a place for people to work, you help American families. And I appreciate the fact that you've been a part of a remarkable economy.

Just this morning, we learned that the economic growth in the third quarter was 3.9 percent. You hear people talking about whether our economy is strong or not; well, here's an indication that it's strong. A lot of that has to do with the ability for people to dream big dreams and to follow through on those dreams. I love the fact that people say, I own a business. Ownership is a central part of making sure this country is a helpful—hopeful country.

I also am pleased to report to you that last September was America's 49th consecutive month of job creation. It's the longest period of uninterrupted job growth on record. A lot of that has to do with the fact that we cut your taxes. There's a huge debate in Washington about cutting taxes. I believe if you've got more money in your treasuries to spend, it's more likely somebody is going to find work. I believe when American families have more money in their pockets to save, invest, or spend, it helps keep the economy strong. I believe you can spend your money better than the Federal Government can spend your money.

That's the philosophy behind the tax cuts we have passed, and I appreciate you supporting progrowth economic policies. You understand that small businesses work best when there's more money at—in circulation amongst small businesses. Today, this after-

noon, I'm going to sign into law an extension of the Internet tax moratorium. We're making some progress in convincing people in Washington that low taxes ought to be memorialized in permanent policy.

Progrowth economic policies work. That's one of the things I want to share with you. In order to get out of a recession and recover from an attack on the United States, we cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes, because I'm not the kind of person that says, we're going to cut taxes on you because of your political affiliation and not because of you—on you because of yours. I believe if you cut taxes, the only way to—fair way to do so is to cut taxes on everybody who pays income taxes. And that's precisely what we did. And cutting taxes caused our economy to not only recover but grow, just like I told you, 3.9 percent in the third quarter for example.

And when the economy grows, it yields more tax revenues. And by holding down spending, it means—and by the way, setting priorities such as funding our troops when they're in the harm's way—it means you can keep taxes low, grow the economy, set fiscal priorities, and reduce the deficit. And that's what's happening as I speak. And it's important for Congress not to unwind this process by trying to raise your taxes. And I'm going to use my veto pen to prevent them from doing so.

I appreciate your support for free trade. That's another controversial subject. I believe opening markets for American goods and services will help us remain a prosperous nation. I worry about protectionist sentiments in America that say, well, we don't particularly think we can compete, so let's just wall us off. I believe that would be a mistake for the United States of America. So I look forward to working with Cal and your organization to convince the Congress to pass important free trade agreements that we have negotiated with Peru and Colombia and Panama and South Korea.

The United States of America must understand that there are millions of potential customers around the world. And it makes sense to open up markets for U.S. goods and services, so that—so we can compete on a level playing field. I want our cattlemen to understand that I spend a lot of time working to open up markets for U.S. beef around the world. I think it's good for agriculture to say, let's trade. And so we'll continue to press it. But I'm going to need your help convincing Members of Congress that it's in the national interest to be confident about our capacity to compete, and it's in our national interest to make sure we have free and fair trade.

We're going to work together to secure the food supply. I think it's in the Nation's interest to work to deal with childhood obesity.

And I think it's in the Nation's interest to expand investment in alternative energy sources. The reason why is, dependency on oil is not good for the United States of America. It's not good for economic security, nor is it good for national security. I really don't like to have our country in the position where if demand for oil goes up in the developing world, it causes your gasoline prices to go up. We shouldn't be in the position where if somebody decides to blow up a—oil infrastructure in another country, it causes your gasoline prices to go up. And I also understand that alternative sources of energy will make us better stewards of the environment.

And one way to become less dependent on oil is to be able to grow products that empower our automobiles. And that's why I'm such a big believer in ethanol. And I fully understand that folks out there are concerned about the price of corn. I hear from my hog-raising buddies that ethanol—driving cars with corn is causing them to have trouble feeding their hogs. And that's why we're spending some of your money on new technologies that will enable us to use wood chips or switchgrass to be able

to be the source for ethanol. It's called cellulosic ethanol.

You just got to know, you're talking to—you're listening to somebody—you're not talking; you're listening to somebody who has got great faith in the capacity of America to use technologies—to develop technologies and use technologies to deal with significant problems, so long as the Government makes it clear these are priorities. And I want to thank you for helping us on those issues.

We need a—[applause]. Speaking about agriculture, this afternoon I'm going to name a new Secretary of Agriculture. I'm not going to tell you who it is because I'm trying to—[laughter]—but I think you'll like him. He understands agriculture, of course, and he'll be a good follow-on to Mike Johanns, who did a superb job as the Secretary of Agriculture. And I'm going to ask the Senate, of course, to confirm this person as quickly as possible.

And now I do want to spend some time on health care. I'm fully aware that this is a topic that is of concern to you, as it should be. And it's a concern to all families across the country. It's a topic of heated debate here in Washington. And at the root of the debate is a philosophical disagreement over the direction American health care—good people who have a different opinion on what we ought to be doing.

Here's my philosophy, that Government ought to trust private medicine; that we've got a fabulous health care system. Does it have issues? Sure, it's got issues. But when you compare it to other health care systems in the world, the United States has got a fabulous health care system. We got great docs; we've got wonderful new technologies. Our system is so good that many people from around the world like to come here to get treatment. The goal of a good health care system is not to weaken the health care system, but strengthen it; and a goal is to bring as many Americans as possible into the private system of health

care. That ought to be a goal. And the reason why that ought to be a goal is because private coverage offers choice, which is good for consumers; flexibility, which is good for consumers; and quality of care that comes from competition. Private coverage puts the medical decisions in the right hands, and that's between the patient and the doctor. And that's where the decisions in health care should be.

There's a different view in Washington. They believe—those who have a different view believe that expanding Federal control is the key to improving health care. Again, I repeat, these are good folks; they care about our country as much as I care about our country. They just have a different vision about how to deal with the health issues. At the center of their belief is that folks in Washington are in a—the best position to decide which diseases should be treated, which procedures you can have, and which doctors you're allowed to see. That's the essence of federalization of health care. They believe that massive tax increases are the best way to fund their plans. The truth of the matter is, if you federalize health care, you're going to have to have a massive tax increase to pay for it.

For those who believe that, I would hope they would look around the world at other nations who have tried to nationalize their health care systems. I think what they would find is that socialized medicine has led to lower standards, longer waits, rationing of care. We've tried, by the way, here in Washington to have a major effort to put the Federal Government square in the center of health care in 1994, and the legislation didn't pass. I believe many of the Democrats in Congress who supported that legislation have learned from the experience. So instead of pushing to federalize health care all at once, they're pushing for the same goal through a series of incremental steps. With each step, they want to bring America closer to a nationalized

system where the Government dictates the medical coverage for every citizen.

The strategy is to expand programs for senior citizens to include younger citizens, to expand programs for children to include adults, and to expand programs for the poor to include the middle class. I'm not making it up. I would remind you that some in Congress recently proposed to lower the eligibility age for Medicare, which would allow younger citizens onto the Federal program. And we can now see the strategy clearly when you analyze the efforts to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program. That's the issue I was going to talk to you about; SCHIP it's called. SCHIP was created to provide coverage for poor and uninsured children whose parents make too much money to qualify for Medicaid. Now, let me make sure you understand the facts. When people say we're not providing money for poor children, they're overlooking the \$35.5 billion a year of your money we spend on poor children through Medicaid. There is a robust program to make sure poor children in America get health care. And that's good. If you're poor and can't afford health care, that's a good role of the Government is to help you.

SCHIP was to help people who couldn't quite qualify for Medicaid to get help, and I supported the program. I supported the program as the Governor of Texas, and I support the program as President of the United States. And that's why the budget I submitted this year increases SCHIP funding by 20 percent over 5 years. So you're looking at a supporter of the program. As a matter of fact, I sent a signal to Congress that if we need some more money to focus on poor children, we'll help them find the money, without raising your taxes.

And I said, we got to make sure it stays focused on poor children because a half

a million children who qualify for the program aren't on the program today. The program said, we're going to help poor children; there's a half a million children who qualify for the program who aren't enrolled. Now, it seems like to me, it makes sense that the Government ought to focus on enrolling those who qualify now and not expanding the program beyond its current reach.

But remember, the primary goal is to increase the Federal reach into health care. So earlier this month, they sent me a bill that would expand SCHIP far beyond its original purpose. Under the proposal that came to my desk, more than half the children in America could be eligible for Government health care. In other words, by expanding eligibility, it means that more than half the children in America would become eligible for this Federal program. And to fund it, they would raise taxes. That's bad health policy, as far as I'm concerned, it's bad tax policy, and it's going to take the country in the wrong direction.

And let me explain why. According to the Congress's own Budget Office, the bill Congress passed would lead one out of every three children who moves on to Government coverage to drop private health insurance. The Government provides incentives to join the Federal program, and people go from private health care to Government health care. That is the wrong direction if you believe that private medicine—private health care is the best medicine possible for the American people.

Some of those children's parents that would be moving make nearly \$62,000 a year. As a matter of fact, the bill I vetoed would raise eligibility in some places up to \$83,000 a year. That's not poor. That's an indication that there's a strategy afoot to expand the Federal reach into health care. In all, 2 million American children would move from private insurance to the Government program, and at the same time, as I told you, some of the poorest children who are eligible for SCHIP may

not be—may still not be enrolled. And adults would still be on the children's program. In about seven States in America, they've used the SCHIP money—they're spending more money on adults than they are on children. So adults would still be enrolled in the children's program. You might call that an extended trip to the fountain of youth. And the taxes they're going to raise to pay for it would fall on the working people.

So that's why I vetoed the bill. I believe that private medicine is in the best interest of the country. That's the principle on which I'm operating, and when I got a bill that would undermine that principle, I vetoed it. And my veto was sustained. And then I put out the word to Congress, I'd like to work with you on a better bill. And unfortunately, the good will has not yet been returned.

I named three members of my administration to hold discussions with Congress, two Cabinet officials and a senior adviser. I said: "Here's three people that can speak for me. I'd like them to come up and sit down with you in good faith to negotiate a way to make sure poor children get the help they need." Unfortunately, the leaders wouldn't meet with them, nor would their designated representatives. Instead, the House of Representatives made a few adjustments at the margins of the bill and passed it again.

Now, the bill has the same major flaws. It fails to cover poor children first, it shifts children with private insurance onto the Government rolls, and it uses taxpayers' dollars to subsidize middle class families, and finally, it raises taxes. But to be fair, there is one part of the bill that leaders in Congress changed. Somehow they managed to make this version cost even more over the next 5 years than the last version.

If Congress sends this bill back to me, I'm going to veto it again. They know this. I mean, they've made it—I made it perfectly clear that if you keep passing this piece of legislation, I'm going to keep

vetoing it, unless, of course, it's a piece of legislation that focuses on poor children and does not expand the reach of the Federal Government into health care.

They also understand that the veto that was sustained in the House will be sustained again. And yet, incredibly enough, the Senate is going to debate this issue. I view this as a pure political exercise, and I urge the Senate not to waste time on a bill that they know I will veto and will be sustained. Whatever our differences, we need to keep the important program going. I understand that. No poor child should lose health care because of Washington, DC, politics.

Philosophical divide isn't going to go away anytime soon, but there are some commonsense steps that Republicans and Democrats can take to help Americans who struggle with health care. There's some positive things that we can do.

For example, Congress should expand innovative products known as health savings accounts, which allow people to pay lower insurance premiums, to save tax-free for routine medical expenses, and to be able to take such an account from job to job.

You know, a startling statistic is that if you're 30 years old, you probably have worked five, six, or seven jobs by the time you reach 30. This is a very mobile workforce. And it seems like to me that we ought to have products that enable somebody to take their own insurance policy with them from job to job, and a health savings account is such a policy. And if you're a small-business owner, I strongly urge you to take a look at health savings accounts for your employees.

Congress should pass association health plans, which enables small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries, so you can buy insurance at the same discounts that large companies can. If Congress truly is worried about the rising cost of health care, they ought to enable small employers to pool risk, in other words, to be able to accumulate a large risk pool,

so you can better afford insurance for your employees.

Congress should pass medical liability reform. These junk lawsuits are running good doctors out of practice and are running up the cost of your health care bills. And if they want to address the rising cost in health care, they need to join me and pass substantive medical liability reform at the Federal level.

When I first came to Washington, I said, "Well, maybe this isn't the proper Federal role; we'll let the States handle it." And then when I began to analyze the cost to the Federal Government of these junk lawsuits, I determined it was a Federal role to do something about them. I mean, after all, we're a huge health care provider; we have Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, veterans' health care. Yet many of the doctors who we hire to provide services practice defensive medicine, so that if they get sued, they got a case in the courthouse that can defend them. These junk lawsuits are running up the cost of medicine for you, and they're running up the cost of medicine for the Federal Government, which is you. And if the Congress is seriously—wants to do something seriously about solving this problem, they ought to pass medical liability reform now.

The amazing thing about health care, it's—when it comes to information technology, they're light-years behind a lot of America. Perhaps the best way to describe it is, is that we still got doctors handwriting files. They don't write very well to begin with, and files get lost. Health care ought to be using information technology, and the Federal Government, by the way, is insisting that that be the case with the people with whom we interface. And Congress ought to focus on spreading information technology throughout health care. The dream is, is that all of us will have a—our medical records on a little disk, a little chip that we can carry with us, that will be secure from prying eyes, but nevertheless, will be a part of wringing out cost

inefficiencies in a industry that needs to have cost inefficiencies wrung out.

And finally, there ought to be more transparency. I mean, the whole purpose of reform is to have more consumerism in health care, not less, as a result of the Federal Government taking over the health care system. And in order to have consumerism, there has to be transparency in pricing and quality of care. And the best way to encourage consumerism is to change the Tax Code.

Right now our Tax Code discriminates against people who are trying to buy an individual policy. If you work for corporate America, you get a tax benefit. If you're on your own, you have to buy health insurance with after-tax money. And as a result of this discrepancy in the Tax Code, it is much harder for an individualized market to take root in America. And therefore, Congress ought to level the playing field for every American family, and to make sure that private medicine is enhanced by fairness in the Tax Code.

There are different opinions in Congress about which type of tax benefit would work the best: a tax deduction or a tax credit. Both of the proposals have their advantages, and either would be a lot better than federalizing health care in America.

Taken together, the comprehensive set of reforms I just outlined would do far more to reduce the ranks of the uninsured than SCHIP expansion would. They'd make private insurance more affordable for millions of Americans. And Congress, rather than passing legislation that's not going to pass—not going to become law, ought to focus on practical, commonsense reforms.

Especially a bad time for Congress to stage political theater on health care because it's got a lot of other work to do in other areas. We're now 10 full months into 2007, and the United States Congress has yet to pass a single one of the annual spending bills of the Federal Government. Considering how eager they are to spend your money, it's shocking it's taken so long

to do so. In fact, the leaders on Capitol Hill now hold a dubious record as the first United States Congress in 20 years that has failed to send a single annual appropriations bill to the President this late in the year. And time is running short. Members of Congress needs to pass these annual spending bills soon, one at a time.

They should start by sending me a clean bill to fund our veterans by Veterans Day. I feel a special obligation to make sure that our veterans get the full support of the Federal Government. And Congress needs to stop wasting time and get that VA bill to my desk. We have got troops in harm's way. And regardless of your opinion—or Members of Congress's opinion on this war, they ought to put aside those opinions and focus on those troops and their families. Instead of playing politics on the floor of the House and the Senate, they need to pass the defense appropriations bill now to support the troops.

This SCHIP debate is an important debate because it's going to send an important signal as these other appropriations bills move through Congress. If we overspend and raise taxes on this bill, it's going to create a bad habit for the Members of Congress. I think it's very important for people to understand that we can balance this budget and grow this economy if we're wise about how we spend your money, if we set priorities.

It's also important for Members of Congress to understand, with Federal revenues at an alltime high and the deficit declining, now is not the time to raise taxes. Running up the taxes on the American people would be bad for our economy; more importantly, it would be bad for American families. I want you to have more money, so you can make the decisions for your families and yourself that you think are necessary. I like it when the after-tax revenues—income are up. I think it's good for America that American families are able to save for their children's education or small businesses have more money to invest. And the surest way

to dilute that spirit of entrepreneurship is to run your taxes up. And that's why I'm going to use my veto pen to prevent people from doing it.

You know, we're living during challenging times. I view—but I view these as exciting times as well. I genuinely do. I think we're laying the foundation of peace for your children and grandchildren. I know it's necessary to do the hard work now so the first chapters of the 21st century will be positive chapters.

I firmly believe that the spread of liberty is going to make it such that when people look back at this period of time, they say, thank God America had faith in certain values, certain fundamental truths. And one of those truths is that there is an Almighty, and a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child is freedom. And another historical truth is, freedom yields the peace we want.

And at home, freedom for people to invest and to make choices is important for a hopeful America. Government must trust the American people. We must trust the American people with your money; we must trust the American people as you make important decisions in health care; and we must trust the American people to continue to be the compassionate people that we are.

It's an honor to represent you. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. at the Renaissance Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William B. Gyr, president and chief executive officer, Sunny Delight Beverages Company; and Cal Dooley, president and chief executive officer, Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association. He also referred to H.R. 976, H.R. 3678, and H.R. 3963.

Remarks on the Nomination of Edward T. Schafer To Be Secretary of Agriculture *October 31, 2007*

The President. Thank you all. Be seated. Good afternoon. I'm proud to announce my nomination of Ed Schafer to be the next Secretary of the Agriculture.

The Secretary of Agriculture heads a Cabinet Department of more than 100,000 employees. I rely on the Secretary to provide sound advice on issues ranging from our Nation's farm economy and food supply to international trade and conservation programs. To carry out these responsibilities, the Secretary of Agriculture needs to be someone who understands the challenges facing America's farmers, ranchers, and consumers.

Ed Schafer is the right choice to fill this post. He was a leader on agricultural issues during his 8 years as the Governor of North

Dakota. He worked to open new markets for North Dakota farmers and ranchers by expanding trade with China. He oversaw the development of the State's agricultural biofuels industry. He helped families recover from natural disasters, including drought, fires, and floods. And he pioneered innovative programs to increase economic opportunity in rural communities.

Ed also has extensive management experience in the private sector. Before running for public office, he was the president of the family-owned business that his dad started. He's also launched a number of entrepreneurial ventures on his own. At every stage of his career, Ed has shown wisdom, foresight, and creativity. Those same qualities will make him a valuable

member of my Cabinet, and they will make him a trusted friend to America's farmers and ranchers.

Ed's passion for agriculture has deep roots. His maternal grandparents were Danish immigrants who worked as farmers on the plains of North Dakota. Ed has always kept their story close to his heart. And they'd be proud to see their grandson rise to become our Nation's top agriculture official.

In his new job, Ed will carry on the work of another fine public servant, Mike Johanns. Mike became Secretary of Agriculture at the beginning of my second term. During his time in office, he helped open new markets for trade, promoted renewable fuels and conservation, and provided timely assistance to our farmers and ranchers devastated by natural disasters. Mike leaves a legacy of integrity and dedication. And Laura and I wish Mike and his wife Stephanie all the best on their return to Nebraska.

I also thank my friend Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Conner for serving as Acting Secretary during this time of transition. Chuck grew up on a family farm in Indiana. He has a deep knowledge of agricultural issues. He's done an outstanding job. Appreciate the fact that you'll remain as Acting Secretary until the Senate confirms Ed as Mike Johanns's permanent replacement. And thank you for joining us today.

Following Mike is not going to be easy, but Ed Schafer is up to the challenge. With Ed's leadership, we will work with Congress to pass a farm bill that provides farmers with a safety net, protects our lands and the environment, and spends Federal tax dollars wisely. Ed will also join other members of my administration to continue leveling the playing field for America's farm products by concluding the Doha round of trade negotiations. And he and I will continue to work hard to open up new markets for American beef.

As Ed takes on these new challenges, he will rely on the support of his caring family. Ed is blessed with a wonderful wife, Nancy, who came from North Dakota today. He is also blessed with four children and eight grandchildren. Their love will give Ed the strength to serve our country in his new capacity.

I urge the Senate to swiftly confirm Ed Schafer as the 29th Secretary of Agriculture. I look forward to having this good and decent man as a member of my Cabinet. Congratulations.

[At this point, Secretary-designate Schafer made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you, sir. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Schafer.

Remarks to the White House Press Pool and an Exchange With Reporters November 1, 2007

The President. Thanks. I wanted to highlight the speech I'm giving today to Heritage. I'm concerned that there are some who have lost sight of the fact that we're at war with extremists and radicals who want to attack us again. Part of the speech

is to remind people that even though we haven't been attacked since September the 11th, there's still an enemy out there that would like to attack us.

And therefore, it's important for Congress to pass law and/or confirm nominees

that will enable this Government to more effectively defend the country and pursue terrorists and radicals that would like to do us harm.

So in the speech, I'm going to call upon Congress to pass funding measures for our troops in harm's way—DOD appropriations bill as well as the supplemental. I'll remind the audience that Congress has had the details of the—75 percent of the details since last February. They've had ample time to study the request. And I strongly believe they need to get these funding measures passed quickly for the sake of our troops and for the sake of the operations that are ongoing and protecting the country.

Secondly, the Protect America Act is set to expire. If it were to expire, it would create an intelligence gap that, in my judgment, would jeopardize the security of the country. I call upon—and I give credit that the Senate Intel Committee has moved a bill; that is a very good start—and that in my speech, I call upon Congress to get a good bill to my desk quickly, so that an intelligence gap does not arise.

I then remind the audience that a key member of the national security team—a key member of the team that works to protect the American people is the Attorney General. I've submitted a highly competent, smart, independent nominee in Judge Mukasey to the Senate. I am disappointed that the process is taking so long to get his name to the floor.

I believe that the questions he's been asked are unfair; he's not been read into a program—he has been asked to give opinions of a program or techniques of a program on which he has not been briefed. I will make the case—and I strongly believe this is true—that Judge Mukasey is not being treated fairly. He's made the rounds on Capitol Hill; he's answered questions; he's been to hearings. I do thank the Senate for setting up what I hope will be a opportunity to move him out of Judiciary Committee to the floor on Tuesday. It is

time to get his nomination to the floor so the Senate can vote him up or down.

And then finally, I'll conclude the speech by reminding people that this concept of stability has—in other words, that foreign policy ought to promote stability as opposed to freedom has led to dangers; and that the only way to solve America's long-term security needs is to remember that the enemy that we face can only recruit when there's hopelessness and despair; and that liberty has got the capacity to transform societies from hopeless societies to hopeful societies; and that this administration will continue to press the freedom agenda. And obviously, that freedom agenda is being tested in places like Lebanon, Iraq, and the Palestinian Territories and Afghanistan.

All those examples I've just cited are illustrative of this struggle between extremists and radicals and people who want to live in freedom.

And so that's what the speech is. I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come and share some of my thoughts about why I'm giving it to you. I'll answer a couple of questions, if you got them.

Attorney General-designate Michael B. Mukasey/U.S. Treatment of Detainees

Q. Judge Mukasey is experienced in terrorism trials; he's been around. Why is it wrong for him—or why will you not let him say whether he thinks that waterboarding is illegal torture?

The President. He has not been read in—first of all, let me put this in perspective. The Congress did pass a law, the Detainee Detention Act, that I signed into law. The techniques we use informed that law and Members of the Senate and House—select Members of the Senate and House, both parties, have been briefed on the law.

Secondly, he doesn't know whether we use that technique or not. And thirdly, it doesn't make any sense to tell an enemy what we're doing. One of the fundamental

questions that the American people have got to know is that in order to protect America, if we capture somebody who may have data about whether or not he's going to—he is ordering an attack or there's an impending attack or there's a threat, we need to know that. And the techniques we use by highly trained professionals are within the law. That's what's important for America to know.

Q. Mr. President, is legal liability in U.S. or foreign courts a concern when it comes to this issue of waterboarding and—

The President. The main concern is, is that the American people must know that whatever techniques we use are within the law. And secondly, it doesn't make any sense—unless, of course, you don't think there's an enemy that's dangerous—it doesn't make any sense to broadcast to the enemy what they ought to prepare for and not prepare for.

Q. Are these concerns legitimate that are being raised, or is it playing politics?

The President. I think it's—I think this is—I'm just extremely disappointed that a good man with a good reputation, who has met with a lot of Senators, his nomination is being held up. You can listen to the voices that are out there talking as to whether or not this is politics or not. My point is, is that it's creating a—to have the Attorney General seat vacant for this long—there's an Acting Attorney General, of course, but not to have a confirmed Attorney General is not good for the country.

Okay, what else?

Turkey

Q. On Turkey, you're going to be meeting next Monday.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. Turkey wants the U.S. to take a lead in fighting the PKK. How are you going to—

The President. I look forward to visiting with Prime Minister Erdogan on this important subject as to how we can work together to prevent people from coming out

of mountain ranges to do harm to Turkish troops. And we will have a good, substantive discussion, as you would expect allies to do. And I'm looking forward to seeing him here in the Oval Office.

Attorney General-Designate Mukasey

Q. What do you think of the compromise proposed by McCain, Warner, and Graham on Mukasey, saying that—

The President. Mukasey just needs to get—get on the floor and get him an up-or-down vote. They've had plenty of hearings, plenty of ideas; get him out there and get him up and down.

U.S. Treatment of Detainees

Q. What is your own view about waterboarding?

The President. I'm not going to talk about techniques. There is an enemy out there. I don't want them to understand—to be able to adjust one way or the other. My view is this: The American people have got to understand the program is important and the techniques used are within the law. And Members of the House and Senate know what I'm talking about; they have been fully briefed.

War on Terror/Congress

Q. Do you think the Congress has forgotten we're at war, Mr. President?

The President. Well, I think there is a tendency for people to say, well, maybe—let me just say, there are some who say, "Don't call this a war on terror." And there are some who have accused me of using the words "war on terror" as a way to frighten people into voting booths. And I emphasize the word "some." As I'll say in this speech, those who say we're not in a war on terror are either disingenuous or naive. Either way, the attitude is dangerous, because I will have quoted the words of the enemy in the speech, an enemy that said, "We're going to come and kill you."

And I think—I'm not going to—this speech doesn't intend—this is a comprehensive speech about what Congress needs to do to make sure that we have the tools necessary and the people necessary to protect America. I will not in any way personalize this speech. I'm not going to say that an individual Member that may disagree with me is not a patriotic person. I am going to remind people, though, of the dangers that we face.

And I knew full well that if we were successful protecting the country, that the lessons of September the 11th would become dimmer and dimmer in some people's minds. Well, I just don't have that luxury and nor do the people that work

with me to protect America, because we have not forgotten the lessons of September the 11th. And I expect and the American people expect Congress to give us the tools necessary to protect them.

Okay?

Q. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. A reporter referred to Sens. John McCain, John W. Warner, and Lindsey O. Graham. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Heritage Foundation *November 1, 2007*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Ed, thanks. Thanks for the kind introduction. I'm looking forward to working with you for the next 14 months—but you better put on your running shoes because my spirits are high, my energy level is good, and I'm sprinting to the finish line.

I congratulate you on your 30th anniversary as the president—[*laughter*]. No such thing as term limits here. [*Laughter*] And rightly so, because Ed is a person who has taken the conservative movement from one that used to meet in a phone booth here in Washington—[*laughter*—to a robust group of folks who are shaping policy in Washington, DC. As a matter of fact, you've got a little bigger phone booth these days than you did 30 years ago. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate all you've done, and I really want to thank Heritage. One of the interesting things about the Heritage legacy is that the folks here have been tireless advocates, tireless champions of liberty and free enterprise and democracy and religious freedom. These are values that came under

attack on September the 11th, 2001. Our Nation was attacked by a brutal enemy that despises freedom, that rejects tolerance, that kills the innocent in the pursuit of a dark vision. These folks believe that it's okay to subjugate women and indoctrinate children and murder those who oppose their harsh rule. They have stated clearly they want to impose this ideology on millions. They're at war with America because they hate what they stand for, and they understand we stand in their way.

And so today I've come to talk to you about the war on terror, my firm commitment that we'll do everything in our power to protect the American people, and my call on the United States Congress to give us the tools necessary so we can do the job the American people expect.

I too want to thank the members of the Heritage Foundation board of trustees who've joined us. Thank you for supporting this important organization. I can't tell you how important it is to have good centers of thought in Washington, DC—people

who are willing to look at today's problems and come up with innovative solution based upon sound principle to solve those problems. And that's how I view Heritage.

I thank all the members and guests who've joined us today as well. It's a pleasure to be with you.

It's been now more than 6 years since the enemy attacked us on September the 11th, and we are blessed that there has not been another attack on our soil. With the passage of time, the memories of the 9/11 attacks have grown more distant. And for some, there's a temptation to think that the threats to our country have grown distant as well. They have not.

The terrorists who struck America that September morning intend to strike us again. We know this because the enemy has told us so. Just last year, Usama bin Laden warned the American people, quote, "Operations are under preparation, and you will see them on your own ground once they are finished." Seven months later, British authorities broke up the most ambitious known Al Qaida plot since the 9/11 attacks, a plot to blow up passenger airplanes flying over the Atlantic toward the United States. Our intelligence community believes that this plot was just 2 or 3 weeks away from execution. If it had been carried out, it could have rivaled 9/11 in death and destruction.

The lesson of this experience is clear. We must take the words of the enemy seriously. The terrorists have stated their objectives. They intend to build a totalitarian Islamic empire encompassing all current and former Muslim lands, stretching from Europe to north Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. In pursuit of their imperial aims, these extremists say there can be no compromise or dialog with those they call infidels, a category that includes America, the world's free nation, Jews, and all Muslims who reject their extreme vision of Islam. They reject the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the free world. Again, hear the words of Usama bin Laden last

year: "Death is better than living on this Earth with the unbelievers among us."

History teaches us that underestimating the words of evil, ambitious men is a terrible mistake. In the early 1900s, the world ignored the words of Lenin as he laid out his plans to launch a Communist revolution in Russia, and the world paid a terrible price. The Soviet Empire he established killed tens of millions and brought the world to the brink of thermonuclear war.

In the 1920s, the world ignored the words of Hitler as he explained his intention to build an Aryan super-state in Germany, take revenge on Europe, and eradicate the Jews, and the world paid a terrible price. His Nazi regime killed millions in the gas chambers and set the world aflame in war before it was finally defeated at a terrible cost in lives and treasure.

Bin Laden and his terrorist allies have made their intentions as clear as Lenin and Hitler before them. And the question is, will we listen? America and our coalition partners are listening. We have made our choice. We take the words of the enemy seriously. Over the past 6 years, we have captured or killed hundreds of terrorists. We have disrupted their finances. We have prevented new attacks before they could be carried out. We removed regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that had supported terrorists and threatened our citizens, and in so doing, liberated 50 million people from the clutches of tyranny.

With our allies, we're keeping the pressure on the enemy. We're keeping them on the move. We're fighting them everywhere they make their stand, from the mountains of Afghanistan to the deserts of Iraq to the islands of Southeast Asia and the Horn of Africa. On every battlefield, we're on the offense. We're keeping constant pressure. And in this war on terror, we will not rest or retreat or withdraw from the fight until this threat to civilization has been removed.

I fully understand that after 6 years, the sense of imminent danger has passed for

some, and it can be natural for people to forget the lessons of 9/11 as they go about their daily lives. I just want to assure you that I'll never forget the lessons of September the 11th and nor will the people with whom I work. I know that when I discuss the war on terror, some here in Washington, DC, dismiss it as political rhetoric, an attempt to scare people into votes. Given the nature of the enemy and the words of its leaders, politicians who deny that we are at war are either being disingenuous or naive. Either way, it is dangerous for our country. We are at war, and we cannot win this war by wishing it away or pretending it does not exist.

Unfortunately, on too many issues, some in Congress are behaving as if America is not at war. For example, in a time of war, it is vital for the President to have a full national security team in place, and a key member of that team is the Attorney General. The job of the Attorney General is essential to the security of America. The Attorney General is the highest ranking official responsible for our law enforcement community's efforts to detect and prevent terrorist attacks here at home.

I've selected an outstanding nominee to fill this vital role, Judge Michael Mukasey. Judge Mukasey has a long record of accomplishments in matter of law and national security. He has been praised by Republicans and Democrats alike as a man of honesty, intellect, fairness, and independence.

Judge Mukasey provided nearly 6 hours of testimony. He patiently answered more than 200 questions at the hearing. He has responded to nearly 500 written questions less than a week after his hearing. Yet the Senate Judiciary Committee has been holding up his nomination.

As a price for his confirmation, some on that committee want Judge Mukasey to take a legal position on specific techniques allegedly used to interrogate captured terrorists. As Judge Mukasey explained in a

letter to committee members, he cannot do so for several reasons.

First, he does not know whether certain methods of questioning are in fact used because the program is classified, and therefore, he is in no position to provide an informed opinion. He has not been read into the program and won't until he is confirmed and sworn in—won't be until he is confirmed and sworn in as the Attorney General.

Second, he does not want an uninformed opinion to be taken by our professional interrogators in the field as placing them in legal jeopardy.

Finally, he does not want any statement of his to give the terrorists a window into which techniques we may use and which ones we may not use. That could help them train their operatives to resist questioning and withhold vital information we need to stop attacks and save lives.

In the war on terror, intelligence is one of the most crucial tools for our defense. If a captured terrorist has information about a plot against our homeland, we need to know what he knows. And so that's why I put in place, under the CIA, a program to question key terrorist operatives and its leaders. Last year, Congress passed a law that allows the CIA to continue this vital program. The procedures used in this program are safe, they are lawful, and they are necessary.

Senior leaders in the House and the Senate, from both political parties, have been briefed on the details of this program. It's wrong for congressional leaders to make Judge Mukasey's confirmation dependent on his willingness to go on the record about the details of a classified program he has not been briefed on. If the Senate Judiciary Committee were to block Judge Mukasey on these grounds, they would set a new standard for confirmation that could not be met by any responsible nominee for Attorney General. And that would guarantee that America would have no Attorney General during this time of war.

By any measure, Judge Mukasey is eminently qualified to be the next Attorney General. And now, after allowing his nomination to languish for 41 days, the Senate Judiciary Committee has scheduled a vote for next Tuesday. Senate leaders must move this nomination out of committee, bring it to the Senate for—floor, and confirm this good man.

Congress has also failed to act on intelligence legislation that is vital to protect the American people in this war on terror. Stopping new attacks on our country requires us to make sure we understand the intentions of the enemy. We've got to know what they're thinking and what they're planning. And that means we got to have effective measures to monitor their communications.

This summer, Congress passed the Protect America Act, which strengthened our ability to collect foreign intelligence on terrorists overseas. And this good law closed a dangerous gap in our intelligence. Unfortunately, they made this law effective for only 6 months. The problem is that Al Qaida doesn't operate on a 6-month timetable. [Laughter] And if Congress doesn't act soon, the law will expire, and the gap in our intelligence will reopen, and the United States of America will be at risk.

We must keep the intelligence gap firmly closed. If the terrorists are communicating with each other and are plotting new attacks, we need to know what they're planning. We must ensure that the protections intended for the American people are not extended to terrorists overseas who are plotting to harm us. And we must grant liability protection to companies who are facing multibillion-dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in the efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

The Senate Intel Committee has approved a bipartisan bill that contains provisions to preserve our ability to collect intelligence on terrorists overseas, while protecting the civil liberties of Americans here

at home. This bill still needs some improving, but it's an important step in the right direction. Time is of the essence, and the full Senate and the House of Representatives need to get a—pass a good bill and get it to my desk promptly so our intelligence professionals can continue to use the vital tools of the Protect America Act to keep us safe.

Congress is also stalling on the emergency war supplemental to fund our troops on the frontlines in Afghanistan and Iraq. This crucial bill includes funds for bullets and body armor, protection against IEDs, and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. Congress should be able to move the supplemental quickly. There's no reason why they're not moving the supplemental. After all, it had more than 8 months to study most of its provisions. In fact, nearly 75 percent of the funding request in the supplemental was submitted along with my annual budget in February of this year. The supplemental is critical for our troops, and Congress should not go home for the holidays while our men and women in uniform are waiting for the funds they need.

Congress also needs to pass the Department of Defense spending bill as well as the funding bill for our Nation's veterans. There are reports that congressional leaders may be considering combining the funding bills for our military and our veterans together with a bloated labor, health, and education spending bill. It's hard to imagine a more cynical ploy than holding funding for our troops and our wounded warriors hostage in order to extract \$11 billion in wasteful Washington spending. If the reports of this strategy are true, I will veto such a three-bill pileup.

I ask Congress to send me a clean veterans funding bill by Veterans Day and to pass a clean defense spending bill. Congress needs to put the needs of those who put on the uniform ahead of their desire to spend more money. When it comes to funding our troops, some in Washington should spend more time responding to the

warnings of terrorists like Usama bin Laden and the requests of our commanders on the ground and less time responding to the demands of MoveOn.org bloggers and CODEPINK protesters.

Here's the bottom line. This is no time for Congress to weaken the Department of Justice by denying it a strong and effective leader. It's no time for Congress to weaken our ability to gather vital intelligence from captured terrorists. It's no time for Congress to weaken our ability to intercept information from terrorists about potential attacks on the United States of America. And this is no time for Congress to hold back vital funding for our troops as they fight Al Qaida terrorists and radicals in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the struggle against the terrorists and extremists, I hope I made my strategy clear today: that we will keep constant pressure on the enemy in order to defend the American people; we will fight them overseas so we do not have to fight them here at home. At the same time, we'll use every available tool of law and intelligence to protect the people here. That's our most solemn duty. It's a duty I think about every day.

In the long run, the only way to defeat the terrorists is to advance freedom as the great alternative to radicalism and repression. We can have confidence in this cause because we have seen the power of liberty to transform nations and secure peace before. Here at the Heritage Foundation, you understand this better than most. During the cold war, there were loud voices in Washington who argued for accommodation of the Soviet Union because they believed the watchword of our policy should be "stability." At Heritage, you knew that when it came to the Soviet Union, the watchword of our policy should be "freedom."

Together with a great President named Ronald Reagan, you championed a policy of rolling back communism oppression and bringing freedom to nations enslaved by Communist tyranny. And by taking the side

of dissidents, who helped millions across the world throw off the shackles of communism, you helped build the free and peaceful societies that are the true sources of stability and peace in the world.

And now we're at the start of a new century, and the same debate is once again unfolding, this time regarding my policy in the Middle East. Once again, voices in Washington are arguing that the watchword of the policy should be "stability." And once again, they're wrong. In Kabul, in Baghdad, in Beirut, and other cities across the broader Middle East, brave men and women are risking their lives every day for the same freedoms we enjoy. And like the citizens of Prague and Warsaw and Budapest in the century gone by, they are looking to the United States to stand up for them, speak out for them, and champion their cause. And we are doing just that.

We are standing with those who yearn for the liberty—who yearn for liberty in the Middle East because we understand that the desire for freedom is universal, written by the Almighty into the hearts of every man, woman, and child on this Earth.

We are standing with those who yearn for liberty in the Middle East because we know that the terrorists fear freedom even more than they fear our firepower. They know that given a choice, no one will choose to live under their dark ideology of violence and death.

We're standing with those who yearn for liberty in the Middle East because we know that when free societies take root in that part of the world, they will yield the peace we all desire. See, the only way the terrorists can recruit operatives and suicide bombers is by feeding on the hopelessness of societies mired in despair. And by bringing freedom to these societies, we replace hatred with hope, and this will help us to marginalize the extremists and eliminate the conditions that feed radicalism and make the American people more secure.

The lessons of the past have taught us that liberty is transformative. And I believe

50 years from now, an American President will be speaking to Heritage and say, thank God that generation that wrote the first chapter in the 21st century understood the power of freedom to bring the peace we want.

Thank you for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:47 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Edwin J. Feulner, president, the Heritage Foundation; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. He also referred to S. 2248.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Sudan *November 1, 2007*

To the Congress of the United States:

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Sudan that led to the declaration of a national emergency in Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997, and the expansion of that emergency in Executive Order 13400 of April 26, 2006, and with respect to which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 13412 of October 13, 2006, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Sudan and maintain in force the comprehensive sanctions against Sudan to respond to this threat.

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Sudan emergency is to continue in effect beyond November 3, 2007.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
November 1, 2007.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Arrival in Columbia, South Carolina *November 2, 2007*

The President. I want to thank the Governor and the Senators and Members of Congress for joining me.

I first do want to say how concerned Laura and I are for the families who lost loved ones at the fire in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina. I know people are hurting

when they think about the seven youngsters who had so much hope in their lives and had their life taken during that fire. I hope the families and loved ones can take comfort that in this great State and around the Nation, there's a lot of people praying for them.

I'm proud to stand with Senator Lindsey Graham. I've gotten to know him well. He deserves to be reelected to the United States Senate in—from South Carolina. He's tough; he is smart; he bases his votes on conservative principles. And Senator Graham, I'm proud to call you friend.

Senator Lindsey O. Graham. Thank you, sir.

The President. And I believe the people of South Carolina benefit from your leadership as the Senator from this important State.

Lindsey Graham understands that low taxes work when it comes to growing this economy. Earlier this week, we had the reports that progrowth economic policies that Senator Graham supports are making a difference for America. After all, the third quarter numbers were strong. Today we had further good news, that keeping taxes low works. This economy added 166,000 new jobs during the month of October, which is now our 50th consecutive month of uninterrupted job growth, the longest in the Nation's history. I appreciate your strong support for keeping taxes low on the working people in South Carolina, Senator.

Lindsey Graham is no better friend to the United States military and to our veterans. I'm looking forward to going to Fort Jackson today. It is fitting that I'm going with Senator Lindsey Graham. He cares deeply about those who volunteered to serve our Nation, and he's a strong supporter of the Nation's veterans.

And finally, I appreciate his work on the Judiciary Committee in the United States

Senate. I told the people of South Carolina if I became the President of the United States that I would put people on the bench who would strictly interpret the Constitution and not legislate from the bench. I've kept that pledge. And I've had no stronger supporter in the United States Senate than Lindsey Graham for putting good judges on the bench. The people of this State have got to understand that when I nominated John Roberts and Sam Alito, there was no better ally than Lindsey Graham to see to it that these two good men were confirmed.

There's going to be another fight on the Senate floor coming next week. The Senate Judiciary Committee has agreed to vote on the nomination of Michael Mukasey to be the Attorney General. And Senator Graham, I appreciate your strong support for Mike Mukasey. He's a good man, he's a fair man, he's an independent man, and he's plenty qualified to be the Attorney General. And I strongly urge the United States Senate to confirm this man, so that I can have an Attorney General to work with to protect the United States of America from further attack.

Proud to be with you, Senator. I strongly believe the people of South Carolina should send you back to the United States Senate.

Sen. Graham. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:39 a.m. at the Columbia Metropolitan Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mark C. Sanford, Jr., of South Carolina.

Remarks at a Basic Training Graduation Ceremony at Fort Jackson, South Carolina

November 2, 2007

The President. Colonel, thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here with you to have a chance to say, "Hooah!"

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I'm here to congratulate those of you who have completed your basic training. I thank—thanks to your families for supporting these fine Americans. I want to thank those who have worked hard to train you. You have stepped forward to volunteer to defend our country at a time of danger, and you need to know, you're making all Americans proud.

Over the past 3 weeks, you've endured obstacle courses, grenade throwing, fireguard duty. You even made it through Victory Forge. Now you have another tough assignment: You got to make it through my speech. *[Laughter]*

You are part of a storied military tradition. Over the last century, Fort Jackson has prepared countless young Americans to defend our country. Soldiers marched from these fields to battle fascists and dictators and terrorists. Those soldiers brought freedom to millions of people they never knew. And because of their efforts, America is stronger, America is safer, and America is free.

Once again, our Nation calls on brave Americans to confront our enemies and bring peace and security to millions, and you're answering that call. I thank you for your courage. I thank you for making the noble decision to put on the uniform and to defend the United States of America in a time of war.

Many of you will deploy to Iraq. You will help carry out a new strategy that, over the past few months, has taken the initiative from the enemy and driven them from key strongholds. Today I want to share with you and the American people some of the progress we are making in Iraq, what we

can expect in the months ahead. The fight for Iraq is critical to the security of the American people. And with the skill and valor of the soldiers standing before me, standing beside me, and standing behind me, it is a fight that we will win.

I thank Lieutenant Colonel Cotton for his introduction and thank him for his service. I'm proud to be with the Governor of the great State of South Carolina, Governor Mark Sanford.

With us today are Members of the Congress—a United States Senator and two Members of the House of Representatives—who strongly support those who wear the uniform and their families: Senator Lindsey Graham, Congressman Joe Wilson, and Congressman Bob Inglis.

I thank General Schwitters for his hospitality and his leadership. I thank Command Sergeant Major Brian Carlson for his leadership. I thank all those who wear the uniform. It's incredible to be the Commander in Chief of a nation that has produced such bravery and such decency and such compassion. We have the great—the greatest military on the face of the Earth, and we intend to keep it that way.

It is a great day of celebration, and I thank you for letting me come to celebrate with you. I know the moms and dads and family members are so proud of those who will be parading in front of us here in a minute. But it's also a time of war for our country. I wish I did not have to report that, but it's the truth, the way it is in this world in which we live. It's a moment when these soldiers prepare to assume responsibility for the security of our country and the safety of the free world.

Today, we face an enemy that is willing to kill the innocent to achieve their political objectives, an enemy that showed us the horrors they intend for us on September

the 11th, 2001, when the terrorists murdered nearly 3,000 innocent souls on our own country. You know, it's a day I'll never forget, and it's a day our country should never forget.

Some lessons that we must understand: First, conditions overseas matters to the security of the United States. When people live in hopeless societies, it's the only way that these evil perpetrators of violence can recruit. What matters overseas matters to the homeland. One of the lessons of September the 11th is, we can't hope for the best. We must stay on the offense. We must keep the pressure on the enemy. We must use all power of the United States to protect the American people from further harm—further harm, and that's what we're doing here today.

And as we keep pressure on the enemy, we must always remember that the ultimate path to peace will come from the spread of freedom and liberty; that freedom is the great alternative to the ideology of the murderers and the radicals; that by working help—to work to help others become free, that our noble military is laying the foundation for peace for generations to come.

And it is Iraq that is the central front in this struggle. In that country, a democratic ally is fighting for its survival. Our enemies have sought to build safe havens there from which to plot further attacks against our people. And those who will be parading in front of us soon will be called upon to stop them. By taking the fight to the enemy in Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists there so we do not have to face them in the United States.

America's new strategy to win that fight, including a surging U.N. forces—U.S. forces, has been fully operational for 4 months. I want to assure the loved ones here of something, and I want to assure those who wear the uniform of something: I will make decisions about our troop presence in Iraq and Afghanistan based upon the considered judgment of those who wear

the uniform, not based upon the Gallup Poll or political party considerations.

So I accepted the recommendations of General David Petraeus, and I want to report to you on some of the results. Our new strategy emphasized securing the Iraqi population as the foundation for all other progress in that country. And here's what I can report. First, the challenges: Parts of Iraq continue to be violent and difficult. The terrorists are still capable of murdering the innocent; that will get on our TV screens. The enemy remains determined, but what they have learned about the United States of America is, we are more determined. We're more determined to protect ourselves and to help people realize the blessings of freedom. With our help, the Iraqi people are going on the offense against the enemy. They're confronting the terrorists, and they're taking their country back.

As part of our strategy, we've sent forces into neighborhoods where Iraqis lived to rat out the extremists, to gain the confidence of the people. Together with Iraqi forces, we have captured or killed an average of more than 1,500 enemy fighters per month since January of this year. Since the surge of operations began in June, the number of IED attacks per week has declined by half. U.S. military deaths have fallen to their lowest level in 19 months. Iraqi forces have now assumed responsibility for security in 8 of Iraq's 18 Provinces. Across this country, brave Iraqis are increasingly taking more responsibility for their own security and safety.

We're seeing some of the most dramatic changes in Anbar Province. One year ago, many of the experts said Anbar had been lost to the enemy. As a matter of fact, at that time, Al Qaida staged a parade in the city streets to flaunt its power and its control. Last week, there was another parade in Anbar. This time it was a parade of Iraqi citizens and Iraqi forces who had reclaimed their homes and driven the terrorists out of their cities. And these changes

were made possible by the bravery and determination of our Iraqi partners and the incredible bravery of the men and women of the United States military.

Our enemies see the changes underway, and they increasingly fear they're on the wrong side of events. Usama bin Laden—who has to hide in caves because the United States is on his tail—understands—has said publicly that Al Qaida's recent setbacks are mistakes—the result of mistakes that Al Qaida has made. In other words, he recognizes the inevitable, that the United States of America and those who long for peace in Iraq—the Iraqi citizens—will not tolerate thugs and killers in their midst.

The Iraqis are becoming more capable, and our military commander tells me that these gains are making possible what I call return on success. That means we're slowly bringing some of our troops home, and now we're doing it from a position of strength.

Our new strategy recognizes that once Iraqis feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods, they can begin to create jobs and opportunities. And that is starting to happen. There's some challenges: Corruption remains a problem; unemployment remains high; and the improvements we are seeing in the Iraqi economy are not uniform across the country. But overall, the Iraqi economy is growing at a strong rate.

We're seeing improvements in important economic indicators. Inflation has been cut in half. Electricity production in September reached its highest levels since the war began—and higher than it was under Saddam Hussein.

Behind these numbers are stories of real people, some of whom our troops may meet, in some real cities where you may patrol. In Baqubah, the historic market has been reopened in a city that had been in a virtual lockdown a few months ago. In Fallujah, workers have turned an artillery factory into a civilian machine shop employing 600 people. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriya—an Al Qaida stronghold

until a few months ago—locals have returned and are reopening their shops.

Here's what progress means to one shopkeeper in the former Al Qaida stronghold of Arab Jabour. He's a local butcher. He says that as recently as June, he was selling only one or two sheep per week. Now, the terrorists cleaned out and residents returning home, he's selling one or two sheep per day. Slowly but surely, the people of Iraq are reclaiming a normal society. You see, when Iraqis don't have to fear the terrorists, they have a chance to build better lives for themselves. You must understand, an Iraqi mom wants her child to grow up in peace just like an American mom does.

Our new strategy is based on the idea that improvements in security will help the Iraqis achieve national reconciliation. There's some challenges. Reconciliation at the national level hasn't been what we'd hoped it'd been by now. While the central Government has passed a budget and has reached out to its neighbors and begun to share oil revenues with the Provinces, the Iraqi parliament still lags in passing key legislation. Political factions are still failing to make necessary compromises. And that's disappointing—and I, of course, made my disappointments clear to Iraqi leadership.

At the same time, reconciliation is taking place at the local level. Many Iraqis are seeing growing cooperation between Shi'a and Sunnis. These folks are tired of Al Qaida, and they're tired of Iranian-backed extremists. They're weary of fighting, and they are determined to give their families a better life.

In Baghdad, Sunni and Shi'a leaders in one of the city's most divided neighborhoods recently signed an agreement to halt sectarian violence and end attack on coalition forces.

In Anbar, Sunni sheikhs hosted Shi'a sheikhs from Karbala Province to discuss security and express their unity. And I can assure you—as can the soldiers who have been in Iraq—that 1 year ago such an event was unthinkable.

In Diyala Province, tribal groups come together for the first time to foster reconciliation. I'm going to tell you a story of interest to me. Extremists had kidnaped a group of Sunni and Shi'a leaders from Diyala; one of them was shot dead. According to a tribal spokesman, the extremists offered to release the Shi'a sheikhs, but not the Sunnis. And the Shi'as refused, unless their Sunni brothers were released as well. The next day, most of the hostages were rescued, and their captors are now in custody.

And the point I make is that given time and space, the normal Iraqi will take the necessary steps to put—fight for a free society. After all, 12 million people voted for freedom, 12 million people endorsed a democratic Constitution. And it's in our interest we help them succeed. It's in our interest we help freedom prevail. It's in our interest we deny safe haven to killers who at one time killed us in America. It's in our interest to show the world that we've got the courage and the determination necessary to spread the foundation for peace, and that is what we're here to honor today.

We're making progress, and many have contributed to the successes. And foremost among them are the men and women of the United States Army. Once again, American soldiers have shown the world why our military is the finest fighting force on Earth. And now that legacy falls to the proud graduates today. Earlier generations of soldiers from Fort Jackson made their way to Europe and liberated a continent from tyranny. Today, a new generation is following in their noble tradition. And one day, people will speak of your achievements

in Baqubah and Baghdad the way we now speak of Normandy and the Bulge.

This post was named for a great American President. He served his country in two major conflicts, including the American Revolution at the age of 13. Andrew Jackson was renowned for his courage, and that courage lives on at the base that bears his name. Troops from Fort Jackson have served with honor and distinction in today's war on terror, and some have not lived to make the journey home. And today we honor their sacrifices. We pray for their families. We remember what they fought for, and we pledge to finish the job.

And you are the ones who will carry on their work. Americans are counting on you, and their confidence is well placed. You've trained hard. You've prepared for battle. And when you take up your missions, you will give a new meaning to the slogan chanted by thousands of soldiers on this base in many wars and in many era: "Victory starts here."

May God bless you all, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Col. Reginald W. Cotton, USA, commander, 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, Fort Jackson, SC, who introduced the President; Brig. Gen. James H. Schwitters, USA, commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Brian L. Carlson, USA, post command sergeant major, U.S. Army Training Center & Fort Jackson, SC; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Water Resources Development Act of 2007”

November 2, 2007

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 1495, the “Water Resources Development Act of 2007.”

This bill lacks fiscal discipline. I fully support funding for water resources projects that will yield high economic and environmental returns to the Nation and each year my budget has proposed reasonable and responsible funding, including \$4.9 billion for 2008, to support the Army Corps of Engineers’ (Corps) main missions. However, this authorization bill makes promises to local communities that the Congress does not have a track record of keeping. The House of Representatives took a \$15 billion bill into negotiations with a \$14 billion bill from the Senate and instead of splitting the difference, emerged with a Washington compromise that costs over \$23 billion. This is not fiscally responsible, particularly when local communities have been waiting for funding for projects already in the pipeline. The bill’s excessive authorization for over 900 projects and programs exacerbates the massive backlog of ongoing Corps construction projects, which will require an additional \$38 billion in future appropriations to complete.

This bill does not set priorities. The authorization and funding of Federal water resources projects should be focused on those projects with the greatest merit that

are also a Federal responsibility. My Administration has repeatedly urged the Congress to authorize only those projects and programs that provide a high return on investment and are within the three main missions of the Corps’ civil works program: facilitating commercial navigation, reducing the risk of damage from floods and storms, and restoring aquatic ecosystems. This bill does not achieve that goal. This bill promises hundreds of earmarks and hinders the Corps’ ability to fulfill the Nation’s critical water resources needs—including hurricane protection for greater New Orleans, flood damage reduction for Sacramento, and restoration of the Everglades—while diverting resources from the significant investments needed to maintain existing Federal water infrastructure. American taxpayers should not be asked to support a pork-barrel system of Federal authorization and funding where a project’s merit is an afterthought.

I urge the Congress to send me a fiscally responsible bill that sets priorities. Americans sent us to Washington to achieve results and be good stewards of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars. This bill violates that fundamental commitment. For the reasons outlined above, I must veto H.R. 1495.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
November 2, 2007.

The President’s Radio Address

November 3, 2007

Good morning. On Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote on Judge Michael Mukasey’s nomination to be our next Attorney General. I thank the

committee for scheduling this vote. I urge them to approve this fine man’s nomination and send it to the full Senate as quickly as possible.

In a time of war, it is vital for the President to have a full national security team in place, and the Attorney General is a key member of that team. The Attorney General is America's top law enforcement officer, with critical responsibilities for preventing terrorist attacks and protecting our Nation.

Judge Mukasey is uniquely qualified to fill this vital role. He served nearly two decades on the Federal bench, and some of his most important legal experience is in the area of national security. He presided over the trial of the terrorist known as "the Blind Sheikh" and his codefendants in the conspiracy to destroy prominent New York City landmarks, including the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

And when the World Trade Center was attacked again on September the 11th, 2001, Judge Mukasey quickly reopened his court, even though it was just blocks from Ground Zero. He and other judges in his district worked day and night to ensure that applications for warrants were processed, investigations could proceed, and the rule of law was upheld.

This is the kind of leader America needs to head the Department of Justice at this important moment in our history. Judge Mukasey is a man of achievement. He is a man of character. And he has been praised by Republicans and Democrats alike for his honesty, intellect, fairness, and independence.

Since I sent his nomination to the Senate, Judge Mukasey has provided nearly 6 hours of testimony. He patiently answered more than 200 questions during his hearings, and he responded promptly to nearly 500 written questions. Yet some Senators are working against his nomination because they want him to take a position on the legality of specific techniques allegedly used to question captured terrorists.

As Judge Mukasey explained in a letter to Judiciary Committee members, he cannot give such a legal opinion for several reasons. First, he does not know whether

certain methods of questioning are in fact used because the program is classified. He's not been given access to that information, and therefore, he is in no position to provide an informed opinion.

Second, he does not want our professional interrogators in the field to take an uninformed opinion he has given in the course of a confirmation hearing as meaning that any conduct of theirs has put them in legal jeopardy.

Finally, he does not want an uninformed legal opinion to give terrorists a window into which techniques we may use and which we may not. That could help them train their operatives to resist questioning and withhold vital information we need to stop attacks and save lives.

Congressional leaders should not make Judge Mukasey's confirmation dependent on his willingness to make a public judgment about a classified program he has not been briefed on. If the Senate Judiciary Committee were to block Judge Mukasey on these grounds, it would set a new standard for confirmation that could not be met by any responsible nominee for Attorney General. And that would guarantee that America would have no confirmed Attorney General during this time of war.

Senate leaders should move Judge Mukasey's nomination out of committee and bring it to the Senate floor for an up-or-down vote. In this time of war, America needs the best people leading our efforts to protect the American people. With Judge Mukasey serving as Attorney General, our national security team will be stronger, and the Senate should confirm this good man as quickly as possible.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on November 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 2, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press

Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom *November 5, 2007*

The President. Good morning. Laura and I are thrilled to welcome you to the White House. We welcome the Members of Congress, the members of the Cabinet, and other distinguished guests. It's an honor to be with the Medal of Freedom recipients as well as their family members and friends. We're sure glad you're here.

The Medal of Freedom is the highest civil honor that a President can bestow. By an Executive order of John F. Kennedy, the medal is designed to recognize great contributions to national security, the cause of peace and freedom, science, the arts, literature, and many other fields. The eight men and women came to this distinction by very different paths. Each of them, by effort and by character, has earned the respect of the American people and holds a unique place in the story of our time.

Our first honoree, Dr. Gary Becker, once said: "Many intellectuals, many economists use obscure language when they write. Sometimes it's a way of disguising that they are not saying a heck of a lot." [*Laughter*] This economist, however, is different. Gary Becker's many books and articles and his 19 years as a weekly columnist have provided—proved him to be a thinker of originality and clarity.

Dr. Becker has shown that economic principles do not just exist in theory. Instead, they help to explain human behavior in fields well beyond economics. He has shown that by applying these principles to public policy, we can make great strides in promoting enterprise and public safety, protecting the environment, improving public schools, and strengthening the family. Dr. Becker has explained, as well, the real

value of investing in human capital. He knows full well that an educated and well-trained workforce adds to the vigors of our economy and helps raise the standard of living for all of us.

This longtime professor at the University of Chicago has helped train hundreds of talented economists. He has been a wise and challenging presence in the lives of his students, and they remain devoted to him. One close friend said, "A 15-minute conversation with Gary Becker can change your thinking forever." He is without question one of the most influential economists of the last hundred years. With today's honor, he is one of only two persons to have received both the Nobel Prize in Economics and the Medal of Freedom. The other was the late Milton Friedman. And I know that today Dr. Friedman would be very proud of his friend and student and colleague, Mr.—or Dr. Gary Becker. Congratulations.

The Medal of Freedom for Oscar Elias Biscet will be accepted this morning by his son Yan Valdes. His daughter Winnie is also present. Dr. Biscet is not with us today because he is a political prisoner of the regime in Havana. This ceremony at the White House is being broadcast live into Cuba. To the citizens of that land, I send the respect and good wishes of the United States.

Oscar Biscet is a healer known to 11 million Cubans as a physician, a community organizer, and an advocate for human rights. For two decades, he has told the world what he has seen in Cuba: the arrogance of a one-party state; the suppression

of political dissent; the coercion of expectant mothers. For speaking the truth, Dr. Biscet has endured repeated harassment, beatings, and detentions. The international community agrees that Dr. Biscet's imprisonment is unjust, yet the regime has refused every call for his release.

To the Cuban dictatorship, Dr. Biscet is a dangerous man. He is dangerous in the same way that Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi were dangerous. He is a man of peace, a man of truth, and a man of faith. In captivity for most of the last 8 years, he has continued to embody courage and dignity. His example is a rebuke to the tyrants and secret police of a regime whose day is passing.

Dr. Biscet is also a young man. God willing, he'll soon regain his freedom, as justice demands. He deserves to be reunited with his wife Elsa and all their family. And the land they call home deserves to be free. When that day arrives, the peoples of Cuba and the United States will stand together as free men and women, and the liberated country will honor a great man with a mighty heart, Oscar Elias Biscet.

When tyrannies fall, it's often the prisoners and exiles who are called forth to lead their people. We've seen this in our own time, in the lives of President Havel and President Mandela and Prime Minister Maliki and, in the Republic of Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

All of her life, President Sirleaf has been a pioneer. The daughter of a school teacher in Monrovia, she crossed the ocean as a young woman and earned three degrees in the United States. She has been a business executive, a development expert, a public official, and always a patriot. She loves Liberia, and she loves all its people. After a cabal seized power and plunged that country into years of upheaval and corruption and civil war, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf stood up for the democratic rights of her fellow citizens. She never wavered, even though the consequences were house ar-

rest, foreign exile, death threats, and imprisonment.

When free elections returned to Liberia, the voters made history. They chose her to be the first woman ever elected to lead a nation on the continent of Africa. She was inaugurated last year, with Laura and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as proud witnesses. I remember asking Laura and Condi what kind of person I'd be dealing with. They said to expect a woman of depth and ability who know how to get things done. They were right. See, when the President comes to the Oval Office, she walks in with a to-do list. [*Laughter*]

The President has the tough mind of a natural-born executive and the gentle instincts of a mother. Not surprisingly, the Liberian people have given her two affectionate nicknames. They call her the "Iron Lady," and they call her "Ma." She's begun an age of reform in a country with deep historic ties to the United States. As she said to a joint meeting of our Congress: "Liberia will become a brilliant beacon, an example to Africa and to the world of what the love of liberty can achieve."

Madam President, America is proud to stand with Liberia. And today America honors you as a woman of courage and a giver of hope. Welcome back to the White House, my friend, and congratulations.

Seventeen years ago, the Federal Government established a research project with the ambitious goal of mapping the entire human genome. The genome is best described as the code of life, the "3.1 billion-letter instruction book that conveys all kinds of information and all kinds of mystery about humankind." Those were the words of Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute and the man who led the Federal project to full and thrilling success.

Many discoveries yet to be made and many scientific triumphs yet to be achieved will be directly traceable to the work of the Human Genome Project. With genetic mapping, researchers know more than ever

before about the hereditary influences behind cancer and heart disease and diabetes and many other conditions. And that understanding holds the key to earlier detection of illness, individualized treatments, and even lifesaving cures.

In scope and long-term potential, the Human Genome Project has been compared to the Apollo project. And its leader, Dr. Collins, is a well-rounded man. Though he routinely works a 90-hour week, he is an accomplished singer and guitarist. [Laughter] I know this because I once heard him at the National Prayer Breakfast. You see, when a man can get up and sing in front of 3,000 people at 8 in the morning, there's something special in his DNA. [Laughter]

From his days being home-schooled by his mom on a farm in Virginia, Francis Collins has been relentless in the pursuit of knowledge. He said: "One of the strongest motivations of humankind is to seek answers to profound questions and [to understand] what is both seen and unseen." He has brought his extraordinary gifts to bear on the technical questions of genetics and on the ethical questions as well. Deep scientific understanding can be used for good or ill, and a lot turns on knowing the difference. Francis Collins is unafraid of the eternal questions, unswayed by fashion, and unwilling to overlook the distinction between right and wrong.

Dr. Collins has often noted that "at the DNA level, we're all 99.9 percent the same. All of us." It's a reminder that the Human Genome Project, with all the promise it holds for tomorrow, also confirms scientifically the timeless wisdom of the brotherhood of man. Americans are rightly proud this project succeeded in our own country, and we are proud of the wise and humane American scientist behind it, Francis Collins.

Brotherhood is perhaps the greatest theme in the life and character of Dr. Benjamin Hooks. The man has always had what his friend Dr. King called the strength to

love. As a civil rights activist, public servant, and minister of the Gospel, Dr. Hooks has extended the hand of fellowship throughout his years. It was not an always thing—easy thing to do, but it was always the right thing to do.

Benjamin Hooks grew up in a segregated South, where economic advantages and even common courtesies were often denied to African Americans. In the Army during World War II, he guarded European prisoners of war held in the United States. When it was time to get something to eat, whites-only restaurants would serve the prisoners, but not Sergeant Hooks. After the war, he wanted to study law, but not a single law school in Tennessee would admit a black man. So he went to DePaul University in Chicago, then came back home, determined to "break down that segregation, to end those days."

He became a lawyer and, in time, was also an ordained Baptist minister. He joined the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was an early crusader in that great movement. He also rose in the legal profession, becoming the first African American ever to serve as a judge of the Tennessee Criminal Court. He was named to the Federal Communications Commission by President Nixon.

The Nation best remembers Benjamin Hooks as the leader of the NAACP. For 15 years, Dr. Hooks was a calm yet forceful voice for fairness, opportunity, and personal responsibility. He never tired or faltered in demanding that our Nation live up to its founding ideals of liberty and equality. His testimony had special power—for the words that he spoke and for the example that he set as a man of decency and rectitude.

It's been a great journey, and he's traveled with a good and gracious woman at his side, Frances Hooks. They're a wonderful team. They've been married for 56 years.

Dr. Hooks once said, "You've got to believe that tomorrow somehow can be and

will be better than today.” Because he had that belief, because he held on to it, because he acted upon it, an old order has passed away. And all Americans can be grateful for the good works and the good life of Benjamin L. Hooks.

The story of an old order and the glimmers of humanity that would one day overtake it was unforgettably told in a book by Miss Harper Lee. Soon after its publication, a reviewer said this: “A hundred pounds of sermons on tolerance or an equal measure of invective deploring the lack of it will weigh far less in the scale of enlightenment than a mere 18 ounces of a new fiction bearing the title ‘To Kill a Mockingbird.’ ”

Given her legendary stature as a novelist, you may be surprised to learn that Harper Lee, early in her career, was an airline reservation clerk. Fortunately for all of us, she didn’t stick to writing itineraries. [*Laughter*] Her beautiful book, with its grateful prose and memorable characters, became one of the biggest selling novels of the 20th century.

Forty-six years after winning the Pulitzer Prize, “To Kill a Mockingbird” still touches and inspires every reader. We’re moved by the story of a man falsely accused, with old prejudice massed against him and an old sense of honor that rises to his defense. We learn that courage can be a solitary business. As the lawyer Atticus Finch tells his daughter: “Before I can live with other folks, I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.”

Years after “To Kill a Mockingbird” was put to film, the character of Atticus Finch was voted the greatest movie hero of all time. It won Gregory Peck the Oscar. He was said to believe the role “brought him closest to being the kind of man he aspired to be.” The great actor counted Harper Lee among his good friends, and we’re so pleased that Gregory Peck’s wife Veronique is with us today. Thank you for coming.

One reason “To Kill a Mockingbird” succeeded is the wise and kind heart of the author, which comes through on every page. This daughter of Monroeville, Alabama, had something to say about honor and tolerance and, most of all, love—and it still resonates. Last year, Harper Lee received an honorary doctorate at Notre Dame. As the degree was presented, the graduating class rose as one, held up copies of her book, and cheered for the author they love.

“To Kill a Mockingbird” has influenced the character of our country for the better. It’s been a gift to the entire world. As a model of good writing and humane sensibility, this book will be read and studied forever. And so all of us are filled with admiration for a great American and a lovely lady named Harper Lee.

Bob Hyde is here on behalf of his dad, the Honorable Henry J. Hyde, who was not able to be with us today. Congressman Hyde spent more than three decades as a towering figure on Capitol Hill. But he first name—made his name in Washington more than 60 years ago. He was on the Georgetown basketball team, and he played in the NCAA eastern championship game in 1943. After college and Navy service in World War II, he returned home to Illinois and earned a law degree and made his way into politics. This erudite, scholarly man has walked with kings and kept the common touch. He won 20 elections and gave steady service to the people of Illinois for 40 years.

In the House, Congressman Hyde rose to the chairmanship of two committees: Judiciary and International Relations. And from the first day, he was a commanding presence, and he was a man of consequence. Colleagues were struck by his extraordinary intellect, his deep convictions, and eloquent voice. In committee and in the House Chamber, the background noise would stop when Henry Hyde had the floor.

He used his persuasive powers for noble causes. He stood for a strong and purposeful America, confident in freedom's advance and firm in freedom's defense. He stood for limited, accountable Government and the equality of every person before the law. He was a gallant champion of the weak and forgotten and a fearless defender of life in all its seasons.

Henry Hyde spoke of controversial matters with intellectual honesty and without rancor. He proved that a man can have firm convictions and be a favorite of Democrats and Republicans alike.

Henry likes quoting the adage, "Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver, but the other is gold." To so many on Capitol Hill, Henry Hyde's friendship is gold. They're quick to say it's not the same Congress without him, but that we're a better country because he was there. And colleagues will always admire and look up to the gentleman from Illinois, Henry J. Hyde. And, Bob, please tell your dad a lot of us in Washington love him.

For nearly 30 years, the proceedings of the House of Representatives have been televised unfiltered, uninterrupted, unedited, and live. For this, we can thank the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, or C-SPAN. And for C-SPAN, we can thank a visionary American named Brian Lamb.

C-SPAN is not what you'd call exciting TV, though some of the call-in shows do have their moments. [Laughter] It is, however, a tool that enlivens democracy and informs and educates citizens of all ages, at all hours.

C-SPAN channels fill 17,000 broadcast hours a year. But you can watch for years and never hear anyone say the name Brian Lamb. Even Brian never says it.

With his low-key manner, this native of Lafayette, Indiana, likes to stick with substance. He's not there to provide commentary or give much reaction either way. Yet vast numbers of Americans consider themselves fans of Brian Lamb. A writer from the Washington Post called it a "cult

of nonpersonality." [Laughter] The truth is, we've all seen him, and he's conducted some of the most fascinating interviews we have ever heard. As one C-SPAN watcher said, when you listen to Brian "you feel like he's just like you, only smarter." [Laughter]

Brian Lamb has spent most of his life in broadcasting, in a career that has taken many turns. The first program he ever hosted, back in the Midwest, was called "Dance Date," a side we haven't seen much of. [Laughter] Brian Lamb is a Navy veteran, a former social aide here at the White House. In fact, when Brian was here a few months ago to interview a historian in the Lincoln Bedroom, the maitre d' of the residential staff of the White House remembered him from those days.

The network Brian Lamb created has been called "scrupulously nonpartisan" and "inherently patient." Committee hearings and campaign events and conferences and rallies are shown from beginning to end, without editorial comment or interpretation. C-SPAN has no agenda and only one assumption: That interested viewers are intelligent and can make up their own minds about what they see and what they hear.

An informed citizenry has been the strength of America since the days of the New England town hall. C-SPAN has revived the town hall spirit for a modern, continental nation. For his enormous achievement and his personal modesty, for his high standards and his contribution to our democracy, America is grateful to Mr. Brian Lamb.

Now I call on the military aide to read the citations for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Robert A. Roncska, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

The President. Thank you all for coming. Laura and I now invite you to a reception here in the State Dining Room. I hope

you've enjoyed this ceremony as much as I have. May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:01 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba; former President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic; former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and an Exchange With Reporters *November 5, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome back to the Oval Office. As usual, we had a very constructive conversation. Turkey is a strategic partner and strong ally of America. I value our friendship at the state level, at the personal level.

We had a long discussion about a common concern, and that concern is the PKK. PKK is a terrorist organization. They're an enemy of Turkey, they're an enemy of Iraq, and they're an enemy of the United States. We have talked about how we can work together to protect ourselves from the PKK.

We talked about the need to have better intelligence sharing. In order to chase down people who murder people, you need good intelligence. And we talked about the need for our military to stay in constant contact. To this end, the Prime Minister and I have set up a tripartite arrangement, for his number-two man in the military to stay in touch with our number-two man and General Petraeus.

The Prime Minister strongly urged that the United States work with leaders in Iraq to cut off money flows to the PKK. The point is, is that I made it very clear to the Prime Minister we want to work in a close way to deal with this problem.

We discussed a lot of other issues. I do want to thank Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey for hosting the Neighbors Conference. It was a very important conference to help the people of Iraq realize the blessings of liberty. Thank you, sir.

And finally, I briefed the Prime Minister on Secretary Rice's recent phone call with President Musharraf. I asked the Secretary to call him to convey this message: that we expect there to be elections as soon as possible, and that the President should remove his military uniform. Previous to his decision, we made it clear that these emergency measures were—would undermine democracy. Having said that, I did remind the Prime Minister that President Musharraf has been a strong fighter against extremists and radicals, that he understands the dangers posed by radicals and extremists. After all, they tried to kill him three or four times. And our hope is that he will restore democracy as quickly as possible.

And I thank you for your leadership and the strong example your country has set. And I've had a chance to personally congratulate you on your party's rather significant victory.

Welcome.

Prime Minister Erdogan. First of all, I'd like to thank the President. I would like to express that I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to meet after our brief discussions during the U.N. General Assembly.

The focus of our discussions today was mostly on terrorism, international terrorism, and also the PKK and the activities of the PKK terrorist organization in northern Iraq. As strategic partners, we are fighting jointly against international terrorism in the world.

As part of our joint efforts to combat terrorism, we spoke about what we can do against the separatist terrorist organization, which has deployed itself in northern Iraq.

As you know, on the 17th of October, the Turkish parliament overwhelmingly—almost every single member of the Turkish parliament—gave an authority to our Government—the authority, the mandate, in other words, to do a military cross-border incursion, if necessary. This is a mandate for a cross-border operation that solely aims the PKK. It cannot and it does not cover civilians.

On this point, of course, we place priority on intelligence sharing. It is important to work jointly and in solidarity with our strategic partner, the United States, because they have declared the PKK as a terrorist organization. And it is important that we fight jointly against the leaders, the murderers of this organization.

We are working not just to fight against terrorism; we're working together to establish peace in the world in general. For this, we worked together in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. We are currently engaged in a similar effort in Afghanistan. And we are of the opinion that it is necessary to continue to work to fight against international terrorism. I believe that this is what we must do to achieve peace and order in the region. And we have had an opportunity to extensively discuss these issues.

We have had an opportunity to discuss various issues, such as dissolving of the terrorist camps, the capture of leaders of the terrorist organization, or other steps that may be necessary: cutting off logistical support, et cetera. And we believe that it is very important for us to work jointly on a diplomatic, political, and military level and cooperate.

It is my wish that this work that we do take up jointly will yield results in the shortest time possible because this is also important for stability of Iraq itself and stability of northern Iraq, because their sta-

bility is our stability. And any kind of disorder or difficulty, there is also a difficulty, a disorder for us, a problem for us.

There is a lot of difficulty in the region in general. And I believe that it falls to us; it's a responsibility for us as strategic partners to work to ensure that we overcome these difficulties and solve them. I have also seen that the President and I agree on these points, and I'm very happy to see that.

With respect to Pakistan, it is also our desire to see a return to democracy in the shortest time possible. We as Turkey have always been against extremism, and we will continue to be against it, because the way out never is through extremism. The middle of the road is the correct way to go. And therefore, I believe it will be important to make sure people follow that path, as opposed to others. And we will share our views and opinion in our discussions with our Pakistani colleagues.

It will also be proper to have the elections take place in Pakistan as planned. And I believe that there lies the bright future for the country of Pakistan.

President Bush. Okay, thanks.

We'll take two questions a side. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press]. Hold on a second.

Pakistan

Q. Thank you, sir. It was just last week that you said again that your administration stands with people who yearn for liberty. How does that square with continuing to partner with Pakistan, given what's going on now and given that President Musharraf has gone back on promises before?

President Bush. As I said earlier in my statement, that we made it clear to the President that we would hope he wouldn't have declared the emergency powers he declared. Now that he's made that decision, I hope now that he hurry back to elections. And at the same time, we want to continue working with him to fight these terrorists and extremists who not only have tried to

kill him but have used parts of his country from which to launch attacks into Afghanistan and/or are plotting attacks on America.

You call on who you want. Yes.

Turkey and Iraq

Q. Mr. President, what would be your reaction if there would be a Turkish operation into northern Iraq?

President Bush. First of all, I don't like to answer hypothetical questions. But I can tell you that we—he asked what would my reaction be if there was an attack. Well, that's a hypothetical question. But what we did talk about is to make sure that there is good enough intelligence so that we can help deal with a common problem, and that problem is a terrorist organization called PKK. And we need to know, in any of these actions, who they are and where they are in order to make any strategy effective.

And therefore, step one is to make sure that our intelligence sharing is good. The problem oftentimes is that faulty intelligence means that we can't solve the problem. Good, sound intelligence delivered on a real-time basis, using modern technology will make it much easier to deal effectively with people who are using murder as a weapon to achieve political objectives.

As I said in my opening statement, the PKK is an enemy of Turkey, a free Iraq, and the United States of America. And it's in our joint interest to work effectively to deal with the problem.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Democracy in Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, you've called on President Musharraf to restore democracy as quickly as possible. What will be the consequences if he doesn't take your advice, and how seriously are you weighing a cut in U.S. aid?

President Bush. Once again, it's a hypothetical question. I certainly hope he does take my advice and the advice of the Prime Minister of Turkey and the advice of a

lot of other figures. And so that's—all we can do is continue to work with the President, as well as others in the Pak Government, to make it abundantly clear the position of the United States. And then obviously, we'll deal with it if something other than that happens.

Q. Do you have any leverage though?

Situation in Northern Iraq

Q. Mr. President, do we expect any concrete steps from U.S. against PKK in northern Iraq, especially in military way?

President Bush. Well, the first thing that happened was, as a result of the Prime Minister's good leadership, Turkish soldiers were released. I know this was very much on his mind. I know that because he has constantly talked to my Government about seeing if we can't work together to get these people released. And the point I bring up is that there is at least one effective measure for people in Turkey to see that when we work together, we can accomplish important objectives.

And so it's—again, I repeat to you, it's fine to speculate about what may not—what may or may not happen, but nothing can happen until you have good intelligence. And we need to know where people are hiding; we need to know what they're doing. We believe we can work closely with our Turkish allies as well as concerned citizens in Iraq to find that kind of intelligence.

I've assured the Prime Minister that we're working very carefully and closely with people in the Kurdish part of Iraq to help deal with the movement of these people, to help locate and find and stop the leadership of the PKK from continuing doing what they're doing. The first step in that direction was the release of the soldiers.

We understand there's transit issues in airports; we understand that there is issues with money. What the Turkish people need to come away with from this meeting is that, one, the Prime Minister has impressed

upon me the seriousness of the problem—I understand it; two, he expects there to be action, and I agree. And we've taken some steps along those lines.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, did you misjudge President Musharraf?

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:43 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to General David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the White House Forum on International Trade and Investment *November 6, 2007*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Good morning. Thank you for coming by the White House. I'm proud to be with you. I'm impressed by the fact that the men and women in this room lead some of our finest companies and trade organizations. I appreciate your engagement and interest in public policy. I appreciate your creativity in making sure our Nation remains the leading economic force in the world.

And I want to share with you some thoughts about an important debate that we're engaged in here, and I believe the outcome of this debate will determine whether we embrace new opportunities for free and fair trade or whether or not we'll become protectionists. My position is clear: We will work with Congress to open up new markets for American goods and services and farm products to make sure this economy continues to grow and our people have a high standard of living.

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet and team who are here. Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson has joined us—strong believer in free trade and open markets. Mr. Secretary, thank you. Ambassador Sue Schwab, who is responsible for opening up markets for U.S. goods and services, appreciate you coming, Ambassador. I want to thank Acting Secretary of the Agriculture Chuck Conner. If you're an American farm-

er or an American rancher, you ought to be supporting administrations and people in Congress who understand that your livelihood depends upon your capacity to sell overseas. We want people eating product grown here in the United States of America. That's what we want. I want to thank other administrative officials, and thank you all.

As I understand it, you understand how trade benefits this Nation. Free and fair trade allows your companies to sell more goods and more services. You understand what I understand: Free and fair trade means higher paying jobs for American workers. If you're a worker in a company that's selling overseas, you're more likely to be paid more than a counterpart.

Free trade helps provide American consumers with better choices at better prices. That's what we want for an American consumer. We want people to go in the marketplace and have a variety of choices. We want people competing for their dollar, and when people compete for the dollar, it means somebody is going to get a better price.

Trade is also one of the driving forces behind the strength of our economy. Last week, we learned our economy created 166,000 new jobs in October; that's the 50th straight month of job growth. That's the longest period of uninterrupted job

growth on record. Interestingly enough, we also learned that our economy grew at 3.9 percent in the third quarter. Much of the growth was the result of record exports. Our exports now account for a larger percentage of GDP than at any other time in our history. We need to keep the economy growing. We need to continue to open up markets.

When I took office, the United States had free trade agreements in force with just 3 countries, and now we have agreements in force with 14 countries. These agreements are expanding opportunities for businesses like yours. Take Caterpillar: Since we implemented our free trade agreement with Chile in 2004, Cat's exports to that country have more than doubled. And that's good if you're a worker at a Caterpillar plant. If that plant is selling more product overseas, it means you're more likely to get a pay raise and have stability in your job. Consumers around the world have a choice. The products they often choose say "Made in the United States of America."

Congress needs to open up new markets for trade and investment by improving free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. The first three of these agreements are with vital trade partners in our own hemisphere, in our own neighborhood. Together, Peru, Colombia, and Panama represent 75 million potential customers with a combined GDP of \$245 billion. Over the last 5 years, American exports to these countries have nearly doubled, yet our products still face significant tariffs when they enter these markets. By passing free trade agreements, we can eliminate many of the tariffs, we can level the playing field for our products, we can provide new legal—new opportunities and legal protections for our investors, and we can strengthen our friendship with fellow democracies.

Over the last three decades, most of Latin America has embraced democracy. That's positive. Now these young democ-

racies are trying to build a better life for their citizens. Leaders like President Uribe of Colombia have taken brave steps to fight terrorists and drug traffickers, to strengthen the rule of law, and to open up their economies.

These friends of America are waiting to see what Congress will do with the trade agreements we have concluded with our neighbors in the region. People are watching the actions of the U.S. Congress very carefully. Champions of false populism in the region are watching Congress. They will use any failure to approve these trade agreements as evidence that America will never treat democracies in the region as full partners.

The time has come for Congress to act. We've negotiated fair agreements, and now it's up to the Congress. It's time for the Congress to pass these trade agreements to help build a hemisphere that lives in liberty and trades in freedom and grows in prosperity. These trade bills are important economic measures, and they are important national security measures as well.

Last week, the House Ways and Means took a positive step by voting 39 to 0 in favor of our agreement with Peru. Now the full House and Senate needs to follow suit. I urge the Members to pass our agreement with Peru quickly, by a large bipartisan majority, and then bring our agreements with Colombia and Panama up for votes as soon as possible. It's not acceptable to pass one trade agreement and let the others languish. It's not fair to pick out one country and not support the trade agreement with the other two in our hemisphere.

As we expand trade in Latin America, we also need to pass a free trade agreement with a vital democratic ally in the Far East, and that's South Korea. South Korea is the seventh largest trading partner. Congress needs to approve this historic deal and make it easier for American companies to sell and invest in one of the world's most important markets. Opening up the markets

in South Korea will be good for American workers. It will mean somebody is more likely to have a higher paying job.

As we work to complete these new free trade agreements, we will also work to liberalize policies around the world. We welcome foreign investment in our country, and we want to ensure fair treatment for American investments abroad. All we ask is to be treated fairly. So we are pursuing investment treaty discussions with key emerging markets to protect private property rights, to require transparent and non-discriminatory government regulations, to ensure that disputes are settled under the protections of international law.

The best way to advance new opportunities for trade and investment is through the Doha round of trade talks. Doha gives us the opportunity to lower trade barriers across the world for America's goods and services. It also represents an historic opportunity to help millions of people climb out of poverty and despair. My administration will continue working to bring the Doha round of trade negotiations to a successful conclusion, and I appreciate the hard work of Ambassador Schwab. It's not an easy task to convince others to realize the benefits of free and fair trade, but we believe it's in the Nation's interests to conclude a positive agreement. And we will work tirelessly to do so. All we ask is that people treat us fairly.

In the long run, we know that more trade and investment expands opportunity. It raises the standard of living, but for the worker who has to change careers, it can be a painful experience. We have a responsibility to help workers. When a job goes overseas, somebody—some family hurts in America, and I understand that. And we can help, and that's why I believe in trade adjustment assistance. I think it's in the Nation's interest that we help somebody gain the skills to be able to work on an existing job if they happen to lose a job because of trade. I'm going to work with the Congress to reauthorize and improve

this important program. I want the program to focus on workers who have lost jobs as a result of trade.

I also will continue to work to improve Federal job training programs. I'm a big believer in community colleges. Community colleges are market-driven, economic opportunities. Community colleges enable a local community to design a curriculum to meet the needs of local businesses. And I know that when somebody gets additional education, their productivity goes up. When their productivity goes up, it means they're more likely to be able to find a good job at higher pay.

Some in our country are fearful about our capacities to compete in the global economy. I'm not. I believe that so long as the playing field is level, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere. But we need to do a better job of educating our people about the benefits of free and fair trade, and your companies and associations can lead the way. For example, at General Electric, employees and plant managers receive information packets explaining how pending trade deals with other countries will expand business and job opportunities here at home. Efforts like this program help build support for free trade policies that help us remain prosperous and competitive. And I strongly urge you to take up the cause of free trade with your employees.

I also ask you to take on another important assignment: Help educate the Members of the United States Congress. Help them understand that free trade is a vital national interest. Help them make the right decisions when these votes come up.

Thanks for letting me come by to say hello and to share with you some thoughts about free trade. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

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

nations support the democratic Government of Lebanon. We agree that reconciliation and democracy in Iraq are vital to the future of the Middle East. And our two nations condemn violations of human rights in Darfur, in Burma, and around the world.

France and the United States can meet great challenges when we work together, Mr. President. You and I share a commitment to deepen the cooperation of our two republics, and through this cooperation, we can make the world a better place.

I look forward to our discussions at Mount Vernon, where George Washington welcomed his friend Lafayette. And in the spirit of our friendship, I offer a toast to you and to some of America's oldest friends, the free people of France.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:35 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Sarkozy.

Interview With Patrick Poivre d'Arvor of TF1 Television of France November 6, 2007

France-U.S. Relations

Mr. d'Arvor. Mr. President, good evening.

The relations between France and the United States for a long time had cooled down for quite some time, for about 3 years, since the intervention in Iraq and since the opposition of three major countries: Russia, Germany, and France. And this quote was lent to your administration, whereby we should forgive Russia, forget Germany, and punish France—and France was punished for its rebelliousness. And number two, is the punishment over?

The President. First of all, I never really felt that a disagreement over Iraq should yield a rupture in relations. I fully understand why people disagree with my decision, and so I never really subscribed to that theory. So there's no punishment, really, in my—from my perspective.

Secondly, I value the relationship a lot. And the United States and France have had a long history. After all, much of our independence was achieved as a result of the aid of the French. And we have been through wars together; we've had our agreements and our disagreements. So I've

really worked hard to make sure the relationship was bigger than the individuals.

Having said that, you've got a new President who brings an energy level that is exciting——

President Nicolas Sarkozy of France

Mr. d'Arvor. Has that changed the situation somewhat, given the fact that Mr. Sarkozy has replaced Mr. Chirac?

The President. Of course, in the sense that every individual matters. In other words, I've dealt with a lot of foreign leaders, and some—and each person brings their own set of personalities and values. And President Sarkozy is a man of deep values. He's got a lot of energy. He's a lot of fun to be around. Plus, he's a serious man, and he wants to—so he's like me; he wants to solve problems—“Here is a problem, let's go solve it.”

And so I'm looking forward to visiting with him. The relationship is good, and I intend to work to keep it that way.

Iraq

Mr. d'Arvor. With distance, do you think that the French arguments at the time—whereby there were no weapons of mass destruction, which was proven; there's no

direct relationship with the September 11th attacks. So do you think that these arguments were justified? So don't you regret it after all?

The President. No, I don't at all. Absolutely, getting rid of Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do. Now, first of all, nobody ever said that the September 11th attacks were ordered by Saddam. That's myth. That was never part of my argument.

And secondly, I did go to the United Nations Security Council—and 1441 was supported by the French—which said, disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. You wouldn't say that if you didn't believe he had weapons of mass destruction.

Now, in hindsight, he didn't. Do I think the world is better off without him? Absolutely. I know Iraq is as well. And so my decision was the right decision.

Again, I understand why people don't like the use of armed force. That's natural. On the other hand, the liberation of 25 million people is noble. And now the question is, will we work together to help this young democracy survive in the face of extremists and radicals who kill the innocent in order to achieve their political objectives?

And I can't thank President Sarkozy enough for sending the Foreign Minister to Baghdad, which basically said, we want to help you survive. We think democracy is a great alternative to the ideology of mass murderers. And that's the question we're faced with, those of us who live in the free world: Are we willing to help others realize the blessings of freedom for the sake of peace?

Iraq/War on Terror/Spread of Democracy

Mr. d'Arvor. But your father, during the first gulf war, had stopped at the doors of Baghdad. He left Saddam in sight, weakened, in power. So why didn't you do the same thing as him? Did you speak with him? Did he tell you, son, you can do what I did not do 10 years ago? So ultimately, don't you wonder as to that may

not be what actually destabilized the region ultimately?

The President. No. I think there is—what we're witnessing is a great clash between radicals and extremists who murder and people who want to live in peace. And the situation was different in 1991 than it was in 2003. After all, the United States has been attacked, and I said that we're going to deal with threats before they fully materialize. It's one of the lessons of September the 11th.

Saddam Hussein was given a chance to disclose or disarm. He chose not to. He was the one who, once again, defied the world. He's the one who basically said, I don't care what the United Nations said and what France and the United States and everybody else on the Security Council said. And so I'm very comfortable with the decision I made.

But you say, does this cause there to be radicalism that causes the murder of the—causes people to lose their life? Absolutely not. What causes people to become radicals is when they become hopeless and frustrated and fall prey to the whims and desires of a bunch of ideologues who murder innocent people—whether it be in Iraq today or in Afghanistan today or whether it be in Lebanon or whether it be in the Palestinian Territories—all trying to stop the advent of democracy because they can't stand the thought of free societies in their midst.

And the challenge for those of us who live in free societies, like I said, and the challenge for President Sarkozy and George W. Bush and other leaders is, are we going to sit back and not care whether people live in freedom, or are we going to help them realize the blessings of liberty? Because liberty will yield the peace we want.

Iran

Mr. d'Arvor. So to a certain extent, you did contribute to giving greater power to Iran, because it no longer is facing its hated enemy on the other side. So now is there

a true threat in Iran, and are you ready now to invade Iran as you did with Afghanistan and Iraq? So it is indeed true that Vice President—is it true that Vice President Cheney has a plan for that?

The President. Gosh, I don't know where you're getting all these rumors—there must be some weird things going on in Europe these days—because I have made it abundantly clear, now is the time to deal with a true threat to world peace, that's Iran, and to do it diplomatically and peacefully. And that's what I'm going to spend a lot of time on with President Sarkozy. But of course, we want to solve these problems peacefully.

Mr. d'Arvor. But if it doesn't work, if the sanctions and the threats do not work, what happens?

The President. Well, we are going to—as I said, all options are on the table. But the objective is to make them work. I mean, I'm not so sure I agree with your hypothesis that—“if they don't work.” I'm the kind of guy that says, let's make sure they do work. And that's what I intend to talk to President Sarkozy about and Angela Merkel about, and that is to keep the international pressure and to keep the focus on the ambitions of an Iranian regime that has publicly declared its intention to destroy Israel, for example, and have defied the demands of the IAEA. And so they're not trusted—to be trusted with an enrichment program. We made that abundantly clear to them. And I believe we can solve this problem diplomatically.

But to say that to enhance a free society on Iran's border strengthens the Iranians is just not true. I simply don't buy into that logic—or illogic, in this case. I think a free society on Iran's border is going to be—make their life more difficult. I think that, ultimately, they're going to feel pressure about the type of government they have when their people look across the border and see a flourishing, free society.

And so our policy is to work with friends and allies to say to the people, here is

a problem, let's work collaboratively to address it, and now, early.

U.S. Image Abroad

Mr. d'Arvor. But in spite of all your efforts, the United States today have a worse image today than they had 7 years ago. People find Americans less likable pretty much everywhere in the world. Do you have your own share of responsibility, or is this inevitable because the United States is the most powerful country in the world?

The President. Look, first of all, I think most people respect America, and they like Americans. They may not necessarily like the President. And so—but I've always been the kind of person, Patrick, to make decisions based upon what's right, as opposed to trying to be the popular guy. I've always found the person who strives for popularity—

U.S. Foreign Policy/Freedom Agenda

Mr. d'Arvor. In the past, we used to say that the American Dream was freedom, but today it seems to be repression, more self-focused society.

The President. Oh, no, that's absurd. That's absurd to say the American Dream is repression. Freedom is the absolute we're helping people achieve. That's—think about what's happening with 25 million people in Iraq or 25 million people in Afghanistan or the fact that the United States is freeing people from the scourge of HIV/AIDS. We're spending \$30 billion, when Congress passes my budget, to help people on HIV/AIDS—or the fact that we've got a \$1.6 billion program to help people who are—families who are suffering as a result of a child dying from malaria. In other words, we've got a very aggressive freedom agenda. And if you come to the United States, you'll find that you can practice your religion any way you see fit, that this is an open society and a free society.

And so yes, I understand people's—the image may not be as good as one would like, but people respect what America

stands for. They may not like the decisions I have made, but I don't see how you can be a leader if you worry about public opinion polls all the time, particularly in a world in which there's a lot of problems that require strong leadership.

President's Legacy

Mr. d'Arvor. And what legacy, what record would you like to leave in history? You've spent 7 years in the White House. You'll be leaving in a year. What would you like the memory, the souvenir of you to remain?

The President. Well, certainly the fact that 50 million people have been liberated; that we've got a very strong relationship in the Far East; that we're friends with China, Japan, and South Korea—something that's been hard for other Presidents to do. I think we can help stand up a Palestinian state. I'm the first President ever to have articulated a two-party state, two states side by side in peace. Our HIV/AIDS initiative is very strong. I mean, we're leading the world when it comes to helping feed the hungry or take care of those who are ill. I think our malaria initiative will go down in history as a great initiative.

And at home, some of my education initiatives and the fact that our economy has grown, in spite of recession, corporate scandals, and war and the attack on America. See, I'm a tax cutter. I believe when people have more money in their pockets, they do better.

And so I'm—you know, it's an interesting thing about history. You're really not going to know the history of the Bush administration until long after you and I are dead. There's no such thing as accurate, short-term history. It takes a while for people to see the results of decisions having been made.

And so I'm very comfortable, Patrick. I feel comfortable that the decisions I have made have been in the best interests of the country. I've been comfortable that I've had to deal with some tough problems, and

I didn't shy away from the problems; I tackled them head on. And I love my country, and I love what we stand for.

2008 Presidential Election

Mr. d'Arvor. And last question, who would you like to see as your replacement in 1 year? A Republican? A Democrat?

The President. Of course a Republican. But I'm not—you're trying to get me to take sides.

Mr. d'Arvor. You prefer Republican.

The President. Absolutely, a Republican.

Mr. d'Arvor. A woman? An African American? A veteran? Do you have a choice? Are there any people that you like more than others?

The President. Now, see, you're trying to cleverly draw me into the race for the Presidency. And one of the things that I have told the American people is, I'm going to watch the Republican primaries unfold and not take positions and then go out and help my party's nominee win. And I think we will win the White House. I think whoever will get nominated from our party will win, because the big issues in America are who's going to be tough in this war on terror and who's going to protect our homeland and will they keep taxes low. And our candidates will be willing to take those positions in a way that appeals to the American people.

But anyway, nice try trying to get me to endorse a candidate.

President's Vacation/France-U.S. Relations

Mr. d'Arvor. We saw a French President spend his summer vacations this year in the United States. So when will George W. Bush spend his vacations in France?

The President. Thank you very much. As you know, I'm a—I've got a piece of property I love in Texas—

Mr. d'Arvor. It's large.

The President. —very much, and when I do, I like to go down there. But I would

love to come back to France. It's a beautiful country. I've had some really good experiences there, and I've found the people to be very friendly.

And, look, I understand there's disagreements. But from my perspective, the people of France really do respect what America has stood for and respect our alliance. And I was greeted with great respect when I went there. And so I'd like to come back sometimes.

And I'm looking forward to my meeting with President Sarkozy. It's going to be a constructive meeting.

Mr. d'Arvor. Once again, thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you very much for hosting us.

The President. Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. d'Arvor. Thank you very much.

The President. You bet.

Mr. d'Arvor. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:12 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner of France; and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. Mr. d'Arvor referred to former President Jacques Chirac of France. Portions of the Mr. d'Arvor's remarks were in French, and no translation was provided. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 7. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Interview With RTL Television and N-TV of Germany November 6, 2007

Chancellor Angela Merkel's Visit to the Bush Ranch

Q. Mr. President, in a couple of days, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, will come to your ranch, which I think is a special privilege. What will you do with her on the ranch on a weekend like that?

The President. Well, we will—if she wants—we'll do anything she wants. If she wants to go for a hike, I'll go for a hike. If she—I look forward to showing a piece of property I dearly love. But we'll have plenty of time to visit in a different setting. It's not very formal, but it will be conducive to a conversation amongst friends. I can't thank her enough for coming down there.

Germany/United Nations Security Council

Q. She had said some weeks ago at the United Nations that Germany wants to contribute more to the world and take on more responsibility by perhaps getting a perma-

nent seat in the Security Council. Will you support her in that?

The President. Well, I made my clear statement there at the U.N. that I'm for overall reform, and I do believe we ought to look at reforming the Security Council in a way that, you know, accomplishes some missions. And Germany clearly is an important country. I have not taken a stand on any specific country, except for Japan, and won't. But clearly, Germany is a very important country for a lot of reasons.

Q. Not a permanent member in the Security Council, you don't see her like that? You don't see Germany as—

The President. Well, I haven't made that endorsement one way or the other. And I pretty well kept my counsel. I just want to make sure the U.N. is functioning well, that it does—it needs a big-time reform, and so does the Security Council. And so we're open to ideas. It's not easy to get done. And the only one country that I've

endorsed has been Japan. And it's been a longstanding policy of the Government of the United States, and I continue that policy.

Germany-U.S. Relations

Q. What are the topics that you will be talking to her where you might need Germany to help you, the United States?

The President. Oh, me personally?

Q. No, not personally. I mean—personally, as well, but—

The President. No, but we definitely need Germany's help on issues like Iran so that we can, you know, solve this issue diplomatically. We need Germany's help on issues like Darfur. Germany is a crucial country in terms of, you know, building coalitions to deal with the threats we face. We need Germany's participation in Afghanistan. I know Angela went over there; I'm looking forward to hearing her report. And I'm pleased with our relationship.

Germany's Role in Afghanistan

Q. Germany doesn't want to contribute any forces to the south of Afghanistan, where it's really getting a little bit hotter than up in the north, where the Germans are right now. Are you having a problem with that?

The President. No, I understand. I mean, you know, people—everybody's parliaments or legislative bodies reacts to the challenges differently. I'm just so pleased that Germany is contributing forces there to help this Afghan democracy. These contributions are meaningful, and some countries are able to take on different assignments. And I fully understand that. And I'm not going to try to put Angela Merkel in a position that she nor her Bundestag is comfortable with.

Iran/Iraq

Q. You just mentioned Iran. Do you think that the nuclear threat that Iran poses right now is larger than the threat Iraq posed about 5 or 6 years ago?

The President. I think they were both dangerous. I think both of them could have been solved diplomatically. Saddam Hussein chose to ignore the demands of the free world and Security Council 1441, which, by the way, Germany voted for initially. And I think they're both dangerous. And I think, therefore, the lesson of Iraq is that we can work together and solve questions peacefully now.

And hopefully, we can—and hopefully, we can keep pressure on the Iranians to say, one, we respect your people; two, we respect your history; but your Government is making decisions that are isolating your country. And all they've got to do is suspend their enrichment program, and then there will be a dialog and a way forward. But it's up to the Government to make their choice.

Iran

Q. But you still have as a last option the military option. Do you think that that could be an option in the future? You even mentioned the possibility, the chance of third world war. You were serious about that?

The President. Oh, absolutely serious. I said, if you want to avoid world war III; I didn't say, I'm for world war III.

Q. Oh, no, I didn't say that. But you mentioned it in that respect, yes.

The President. But I said, if you—the reason I said that is because this is a country that has defied the IAEA—in other words, didn't disclose all their program—have said they want to destroy Israel. If you want to see world war III, you know, a way to do that is to attack Israel with a nuclear weapon. And so I said, now is the time to move. It wasn't a prediction nor a desire.

And do I think we can solve it? I do. Should all options be on the table? You bet. But I firmly believe we can solve this problem diplomatically and will continue to work to do so. And that's going to be an important topic with the Chancellor.

Q. Do you think there's a point where you'd say, only a military option is a possibility for us?

The President. I would never say that. I would say that we would always try to try diplomacy first. In other words, I—I've committed our troops into harm's way twice, and it's not a pleasant experience because I understand the consequences firsthand. And so I owe it to the American people to say that I've tried to solve this problem diplomatically. And that's exactly what I intend to do. And I believe we can do it, so long as the world works in concert. And Chancellor Merkel understands the dangers, and she wants to solve this issue peacefully.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. The U.S. has imposed some harsh sanctions on some parts of the Iranian Government.

The President. Yes.

Q. The Russians were pretty much against that. Do we see a new rift growing between Russia, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other hand?

The President. No, I don't think so. I mean, look, there's going to be—there's places where we disagree. No, it's a complicated relationship with Russia.

Q. Why that?

The President. Why is it? Just because we've got a history. It's not easy to eradicate history overnight. You might remember, we were quite antagonistic to each other for years. And so I've tried to work hard with Vladimir Putin to put the cold war behind us and focus on a positive future. There are still suspicions about U.S. intentions inside the Russian system.

You know, for example, as you know, I'm a big advocate of democracy. I believe democracies enhance peace, and I think that some view the democracy movement as a way to surround Russia. I try to work hard with Vladimir Putin and make it clear to him that this is nothing more than spreading peace. They didn't particularly

care for the expansion of NATO, which I'm a strong believer in.

And so we've had our friction, but, no, I wouldn't—

Q. And when you see him now testing new missiles or testing new bombs, is that flexing muscle, or is that just showing off? Or do you think it's serious?

The President. I don't view that as a threat. I really don't view Russia as a threat, a military threat. I don't think—I'm pretty confident President Putin does not want to have any military conflict. I think the bigger threat is the use of energy, which is really a direct problem for the EU.

As I say, I try not to have antagonistic relations with President Putin. We've got a good personal relationship. We don't always agree eye to eye. Kosovo is an area where we don't agree eye to eye. But that doesn't—just because you don't have a—just because you have a disagreement doesn't mean that you can't work together.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia/ Democracy in Russia

Q. You will probably see him longer as a, whatever, strong force in Russia—[inaudible]—right now.

The President. Yes. [Laughter]

Q. Isn't that fascinating? Is that something you would have expected, that he would stay in there as a Prime Minister, then? But he is not voted in yet, but it might happen.

The President. I know. I haven't had a really good chance to sit down and talk with him about his ambitions and plans. He did tell me that he wasn't going to run for President again. But clearly, he likes to be influential inside the Russian system, and I don't know what he's going to do.

My hope, of course, is, I've tried to work with him as best as I can to understand the checks and balances. And democracy requires a certain balance in society. And I would hope that he would make decisions

that enhanced institutional reform, enhanced the institutions necessary for a free society. As I say, sometimes he listens, sometimes he doesn't.

President's Agenda

Q. Almost a day to the date, in 1 year, we will have Presidential elections again in the United States. What are your three, let's say, main tasks, goals that you have set for yourself for the last 12 months of your Presidency?

The President. Oh, I appreciate that. One is to continue to protect our country from harm. I absolutely know for certain there is a group of extremists who would like to attack us again. Second—this is all on foreign policy initially—work with our friends and allies on Darfur, Burma—I'm afraid I'm going to leave something out—Iran. Continue to make sure our foreign policy in the Far East focuses not only on North Korea—and working, by the way, collaboratively with Japan and China and South Korea to deal with North Korea—but also to maintain good, constructive relations throughout the region.

Continue on the HIV/AIDS initiative. One of the really interesting initiatives that my wife and I are working on is a malaria initiative. There's just too many babies dying on the continent of Africa, for example, because of mosquito bites.

Q. Yes, I've talked to your wife about that.

The President. Oh, did you? Good. And then at home, keep taxes low and keep the economy growing.

The two big issues, by the way, for this Presidential campaign are who can best protect America from attack. Now, I don't know if—

2008 Presidential Election

Q. That's what I wanted to ask you next. What will be the three tasks for the next President?

The President. Well, who can keep people—same thing, and who can keep taxes

low. See, we've got a bunch of people here in America that want to raise taxes. I'm, as you know, a tax cutter. I believe the private sector is—needs to be enhanced by keeping the size of government reasonably in balance and keep taxes low; same thing for the next President.

You know, the biggest issue facing a President going forward will be whether or not we can deal with our, you know, our Social Security and Medicare, our health care and pension plans for the elderly, because like other parts of the world—I presume Germany as well—baby boomers relative to people contributing to the system—so you have baby boomers like me retiring and not enough young workers. And we need to get the systems in balance. And it's very hard to get done because a lot of the politicians here in America really don't want to confront the problem until it becomes immediate. So I tried for 7 years to get Congress to do the hard work. They didn't want to, and so the next President is going to have to try to do it.

Q. Who do you think it's going to be?

The President. Well, I can't tell you that because—I think it will be a Republican; I truly do. I think someone from my party will win, but, you know, I'm not going to speculate because the American press, of course, would take my speculation, you know, "Bush is"—

Q. Of course. But you think it's going to be a Republican?

The President. I really do, yes. The economy is in pretty good shape, and we've got some issues, but the economy is pretty strong, which—and the other side does want to raise taxes. And I do believe taxes are a big issue in America.

And then the foreign policy—and if you will listen to the debate, our candidates have got a strong, firm view of how to conduct foreign policy. And the American people innately understand that there's still threats out there. And our biggest job is to protect our—see, that's an interesting difference between, say, Germany and

America. We've been attacked. We feel like another attack is coming, and therefore, you know, our actions ought to be to protect our country. And you know, I'm not so sure that it's that same sense of anxiety in other parts of Europe or in Germany.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Well, we have some old fears. I mean, we were on the border of the cold war. I mean, we had this Iron Curtain in our country, in that respect. We know a little bit about that too. But I can understand your position as well, sure.

The President. You know, look, there's—and one of the things I would like to assure the German public about is that I really don't want to have increased tensions with Russia. As a matter of fact, I've worked hard to create an environment that is not hostile, but—

Missile Defense System/Russia-U.S. Relations/Iran

Q. Also with the missile shield—

The President. That's what I was about to describe, that this is not aimed at Russia. I mean, it—and frankly, it's absurd for somebody to say it is aimed at Russia, because the number of interceptors that would be there—the rockets to knock down the other rocket—will be limited in number, and therefore, somebody who has got a handful of rockets can overwhelm the system. It's just really aimed at, you know, a rogue nation that wants to hold a—

Q. Like Iran.

The President. —hostage. Like Iran, absolutely. And hopefully, again, you know, the system becomes moot or not needed by getting the Iranians to back off their ambitions.

And, you know, we did something really interesting with Russia on this Iranian issue. The Iranians said, it's our sovereign right to have nuclear power. And I said, yes, it is; it is your sovereign right. But we can't trust you to enrich because you've been hiding your program from inter-

national inspectors. And so therefore, we will join—we agree with Russia when they said, you can have a plant, and we, Russia, will provide you the fuel and collect the fuel, which I strongly support.

And so—the only reason I bring that up is I know that people think that our relations with Russia are, you know, may not be conducive to constructive action, but we got—we do—and there's no question, there's tensions on some issues.

Q. Okay.

The President. But we can work together as well.

President's Legacy

Q. Okay. Final question: You will have 1 year in office; how do you think you will be remembered as a President?

The President. I think I'll be remembered as a guy who, you know, was dealt some pretty tough issues to deal with, and I dealt with them head on, and I didn't try to shy away. I didn't, you know, I didn't sacrifice; I was firm, and that I made decisions based upon principles, not based upon the latest Gallup Poll. And that I helped this country protect itself and, at the same time, was unashamed, unabashed at spreading certain values to others, the main one being liberty, whether it be the freedom from forms of government or the freedom from disease and hunger. And that we had a very robust foreign policy in the name of peace.

And at home, that the cornerstone of my policy is to trust the individual American to make the best decisions for his or her family. And that I dealt with not only a tax but recession and a lot of other challenges to our economy, and yet our economy is very strong. We've had 50 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth, which is the longest in American history. So you know something—but I'll be dead before they finally figure out my administration because history—it takes a while to get the true history of an administration.

Q. Okay, first we both see how it's going to be. We might not be dead by then. [Laughter]

The President. I don't think so. I think—listen, they're still writing books analyzing George Washington.

Q. That's very true. That's right. And they come to different conclusions in every new book.

The President. They do. And so therefore, my attitude is, if they're analyzing the first President, the 43d President doesn't need to worry about it. The key thing that people need to know is, I make up my decisions based upon principles, not based upon politics, you know, what's good for a political party or trying to be popular. If you chase popularity, you can't lead. And

popularity is just like—it comes and goes. And I've never been one to really worry about that, you know? Because when it's all said and done, I think the key thing in life is to look in the mirror and say, I didn't compromise my core beliefs. And I believe people will say that about me.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. You're welcome. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:33 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

The President's News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Mount Vernon, Virginia November 7, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome. Thank you very much for coming here to Mount Vernon, and thank you for coming to the United States. I think it's safe to say that you've impressed a lot of people here on your journey. You bring a lot of energy, enthusiasm for your job, love of your country, and a strong set of universal values in your heart.

We've just had an extensive conversation, one that you'd expect good friends to do—to have. We talked about Iran and the desire to work jointly to convince the Iranian regime to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions for the sake of peace. We talked about the Middle East and the upcoming talks at Annapolis, Maryland. We spent some time on Kosovo, and I appreciate the President's leadership on Kosovo.

I can't thank the President enough for his willingness to stand with young democracies as they struggle against extremists and radicals. And one such democracy is

Afghanistan. Mr. President, your leadership on that issue for your country was very impressive. You sent a very clear message. It's clear that you're a man who does what he says he's going to do. It's the kind of fellow I like to deal with.

And so, Mr. President, I also want to thank your administration in your staunch, strong stance for human rights and human dignity. Whether they be to those who are oppressed in Burma or Darfur or on the island of Cuba, France's voice is important, and it's clear that the human rights of every individual are important to the world. And I look forward to advancing peace and freedom with you, Mr. President.

Our bilateral relations are important. They are strong, and we intend to keep them that way. And so welcome here to George Washington's old home. Proud to have you in America. Thanks for coming.

President Sarkozy. I want to thank President Bush, his administration, and all

Americans who have welcomed us in such exceptional fashion. I get the distinct sense that it is France that has been welcomed so warmly, with so much friendship, so much love. This was my hope, my ambition. And with Bernard Kouchner, Christine Lagarde, Rachida Dati, and myself, this is exactly what we wanted.

We've been very moved, deeply moved by your wonderful welcome, together with Mrs. Laura Bush, yesterday at the White House. I especially enjoyed the skit of the dialog between George Washington and Lafayette that we witnessed.

The tokens of friendship that we have seen since we've been here, your open-mindedness and the fact that we can address any and every subject, all those that you mentioned, sir, even though the European defense policy and NATO have also been addressed, environmental issues, which are close to our heart, and Afghanistan. I said that we would stay there because what is at stake is the credibility of the Atlantic alliance and the fight against terror.

We spent hours discussing very important issue, commercial, economic, and others. And I will say that we have done so in a spirit of openness and trust, and that is something I've been particularly struck by. And I can tell you that this visit, I think, has been very widely covered in France. So when I say that the French people love the American people, that is the truth and nothing but the truth.

Now, I expressed—I spoke at length this morning, and I think the best would be that after President Bush—whom I wish to thank once again—we could answer any questions you may have.

President Bush. Two questions a side. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press]. We'll go—

Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, you came down so hard on Burma and other nations for their crackdowns on prodemocracy demonstra-

tors. Yet you seem to be giving Musharraf a pass. So the question is, why are you going so soft on Musharraf? Is there a double standard?

President Bush. I spoke to President Musharraf right before I came over here to visit with President Sarkozy. And my message was that we believe strongly in elections, and that you ought to have elections soon, and you need to take off your uniform. You can't be the President and the head of the military at the same time. So I had a very frank discussion with him.

Look, our objective is the same in Burma as it is in Pakistan, and that is to promote democracy. There is a difference, however. Pakistan has been on the path to democracy; Burma hasn't been on the path to democracy. And it requires different tactics to achieve the common objective.

And as I told you, I just spoke to President Musharraf before I came here. And my message was very, very plain, very easy to understand, and that is, the United States wants you to have the elections as scheduled and take your uniform off.

You want to call on somebody?

President Sarkozy. You know, in France, I don't choose, I don't pick the journalists.

President Bush. You don't get to choose? Who chooses? I choose? [Laughter] Who would you like me to choose? [Laughter] Oh, he chose. Wait a minute. It didn't last very long, did it?

President Sarkozy. I didn't choose, I indicated a general direction. [Laughter]

Iraq/France-U.S. Relations/Pakistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My question is on Iraq. Mr. President, this morning you talked at length about Afghanistan, Iran, but not Iraq. And I wanted to ask both of you, is France reconciled with the United States as the United States is reconciled with France? So what about Iraq? Can France, for instance, help to get out of the Iraqi quagmire? And President Bush,

where do you stand on Iraq and your domestic debate on Iraq? Do you have a timetable for withdrawing troops?

President Bush. Yes. I don't—you know, "quagmire" is an interesting word. If you lived in Iraq and had lived under a tyranny, you'd be saying, "God, I love freedom." Because that's what's happened. And there are killers and radicals and murderers who kill the innocent to stop the advance of freedom. But freedom is happening in Iraq, and we're making progress.

And I can't thank the President enough for sending his Foreign Minister to Baghdad. It was a clear message that freedom matters, that when people are struggling to live in freedom, that those of us who have the comfort of a free society ought to help them.

We had a difference of opinion with your great country over whether or not I should have used military force to enforce U.N. demands. I reminded a TV reporter—I don't know if the person is here or not—but I said, I just want to remind you that 1441 was supported by France and the United States, which clearly said to the dictator, you will disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. Now, I'm the kind of person that when somebody says something, I take them for their word.

Having said that, we had a difference of opinion. But I don't sense any difference of opinion now that a struggling democracy wants help from those of us who live in the comfort of free societies. And, Mr. President, the strong gesture of sending your Foreign Minister there wasn't a message to the United States, because we're good friends; it was message to the Iraqi citizens that said: We hear your cries for freedom; we want you to succeed, because one of the lessons of history is, free societies yield peace.

And so I appreciate your leadership on that issue, and I want to thank your Foreign Minister for—I don't see your Foreign Minister. Look, the guy was here. [*Laughter*] Oh, there he is, yes, next to—look,

the President was blocking—next to Madam Rice. Anyway, thank you, sir.

President Sarkozy. Allow me to give you two answers in one. On Pakistan, yes, we're worried about the situation. It's worrisome, and we need to have elections as swiftly as possible. You cannot combat extremism using the same methods as extremists, and it is very important, it is of the essence that Pakistan organize elections. I, like President Bush, I wish this to take place as speedily as possible.

Let me remind you that this is a country of 150 million inhabitants who happens to have nuclear weapons. This is very important for us that one day we shouldn't wake up with a government, an administration in Pakistan which is in the hands of the extremists. And we should, each and every one of us, think about this, of the principles, the values that we uphold and that we defend and we must continue to uphold. And then there's the complexity, as it were, in the field. That's why it's important to convene election, call elections.

Now, on Iraq, Bernard Kouchner's trip to Iraq was very successful. What does France want? A united Iraq. No one—no, it is in no one's interest to see Iraq dismantled. We want a democratic Iraq. We want a diverse Iraq, where each component element of Iraqi society has learned to live with others; an Iraq which is—which can administer and govern itself and that has the means of ensuring the peace and security of every one of its citizens. And that is exactly Bernard Kouchner's message when he went to Iraq. And this is in the interest of one and all that it be thus, and that position is the position I will defend until the end.

President Bush. Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

Q. Mr. President, with—

President Bush. Which one?

Q. Both of you.

President Bush. Get moving, will you? [*Laughter*]

Oil Prices/Iran

Q. Okay. Mr. President, with oil approaching \$100 a barrel, are you concerned that your hard words for Iran on its nuclear program are helping drive up oil prices, which can end up hurting the U.S. economy?

President Bush. No. I believe oil prices are going up because the demand for oil outstrips the supply for oil. Oil is going up because developing countries still use a lot of oil. Oil is going up because we use too much oil, and the capacity to replace reserves is dwindling. That's why the price of oil is going up.

I believe it is important for us to send clear signals to the Iranian Government that the free world understands the risks of you trying to end up with a nuclear weapon. And therefore, we will work together to try to find if there's not rational people inside your Government who are tired of isolation and who believe there's a better way forward.

Every time I give a talk about Iran, I make sure I speak to the Iranian people. And I want them to hear once again that we discussed your country today; that we believe—that I believe that you've got a bright future; that we respect your history and respect your tradition. However, you are governed by people who are making decisions that are isolating you from the rest of the world, and you can do better than that.

The idea of Iran having a nuclear weapon is dangerous, and therefore, now is the time for us to work together to diplomatically solve this problem. And we spent a lot of time on the subject. And I thank the French President for his resolve on solving this issue peacefully.

Do you want to call on some—

President Sarkozy. I just wanted to say that we exchanged all the intelligence and information we had. It is unacceptable that Iran should have, at any point, a nuclear weapon. But Iran is entitled to the energy

of the future, which is civilian nuclear energy. I believe in the effectiveness of sanctions. I believe even in the need to toughen the sanctions. But in my mind, the two go together. In other words, the open—the outstretched hand of dialog, of continuing discussions, because Iran deserves a better fate than that isolation. And I cannot imagine that there are not people, leaders in Iran who will stop to think about the consequences of what is going on.

This is a great people and a great civilization, and we must be firm for as long as there is no gesture on their part. And we have to keep the way of dialog open, because we must do everything to avoid the worst-case scenario. And this is indeed—was the subject of a very lengthy conversation, which showed exactly how convergent our views were.

France's Role in Afghanistan/Lebanon's Presidential Election/Spread of Democracy

Q. Mr. President, with respect to your statements on Afghanistan and France's commitment on engagement, does this mean that France is going to be sending additional ground troops in to fight in the southern regions of Afghanistan, as the U.S. wishes them to do?

How do you feel about the fact that France has been engaging Syria on the upcoming Lebanese Presidential election? Do you think that's a good idea? And what are the chances that Lebanon will have a Presidential election by November 24th? Thank you.

President Bush. Thanks, good question. You want me to go first?

President Sarkozy. Well, on Afghanistan, I said what I thought and what I think. We've talked about it with President Bush. We will not pull out of Afghanistan because what is at stake here is the solidity of our alliance, and ultimately, what is at stake here is the fight against terror. We're thinking about the best way to help bring about a democratic Afghanistan. Is it by strength, in stepping up our training efforts so that

we lay the groundwork or the basis of a modern Afghan state? Or is it by other means? Maybe perhaps military means? We're still thinking about it.

President Bush. First of all, you know, the Syrian influence in Lebanon was something that the previous Government and I worked on to—collaboratively. And because France and the United States worked together, we passed 1551 Resolution out of the United Nations, which got Syria out of Lebanon, by and large. And so we spent time collaborating on how best to make sure that Syria doesn't influence the Presidential elections, that, in fact, the Presidency is picked by the Lebanese people.

And we're—I'm very aware that Mr. Hariri and Nabih Berry are in consultations as to whether or not they can come up with an acceptable candidate to them, not to Syria; whether or not the Lebanese people can be assured that their President is going to be representing the people of Lebanon, not the people—not the Government of Syria.

And I'm comfortable with President Sarkozy's Government sending clear messages that meet common objectives. And our common objective here is for this Lebanese democracy to survive, thrive, and serve as an example for others.

We will work with France and with others to see that this process be completed by November 24th. We believe it's in the interests of the Middle East that this Lebanese democracy survive.

I want Lebanon to serve as an example for the Palestinians, to show them what's possible. I believe in a two-state solution. I believe there ought to be two states living side by side in peace. So does the President; we discussed that today. There's nothing better for the Palestinians, to see what is possible with a stable democracy in Lebanon.

The interesting challenge we face in the world in which we live is there are murderers who will try to stop the advance of democracy, particularly in the Middle East. Isn't it interesting that the places where there's most violence is where there's young democracies trying to take hold, whether it be Iraq or Lebanon or in the Palestinian Territories?

And the call for nations such as ourselves is to support those who want to live in freedom. Freedom is the great alternative to the ideology of people who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives—by the way, the very same ones that came and killed 3,000 of our citizens.

And so what I'm telling you is—let me end this press conference by telling you this: I have a partner in peace, somebody who has clear vision, basic values, who is willing to take tough positions to achieve peace. And so when you ask, am I comfortable with the Sarkozy Government sending messages, you bet I'm comfortable.

Mr. President, thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:12 p.m. at the Mount Vernon Estate. In his remarks, he referred to President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner of France; and Parliament Member Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri and Speaker of Parliament and National Assembly President Nabih Berry of Lebanon. President Sarkozy referred to Minister of Economy, Finance, and Employment Christine Lagarde and Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals Rachida Dati of France. President Sarkozy and some reporters spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas

November 8, 2007

Thank you all very much for having me here today. If anybody were to come to this center, they would have to leave inspired and thankful: inspired by the service men and women who are recovering from wounds with such courage; thankful that there are instructors and preachers and volunteers who are helping these people get back on their feet and getting their lives together.

This center was funded entirely by contributions of more than 600,000 Americans through what's called the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. This center is a tribute to the generosity of the American people. Make no mistake about it, the American people support the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform. This center is a testament to our deep belief that someone wounded in the defense of America needs all the help he or she can get. The service men and women here have borne the burdens of battle. They have kept our country safe. We honor them and their families by helping them with all we can.

I am here to highlight one of the world's top rehabilitation facilities, right here in my home State of San Antonio, Texas. It's a partnership between the private sector and the Federal Government. The Center for the Intrepid makes use of the best available technologies to give severely injured servicemembers and amputees the opportunity to lead full and productive lives. That's the mission. The mission is to take a good man who I've met before and help him live a full and productive life.

This facilities include a pool, a—where's my man; there he is—a wave runner—by the way, this guy from Oklahoma handled those waves pretty well—an indoor running track, a two-story climbing wall, a prosthesis center, a virtual driving program that teaches patients how to control an automobile—

that was my driver, right there—a fully furnished apartment that helps patients learn to adjust to disabilities in the real-life world.

This center also provides compassionate support for the families. The Fisher House Program—and I want to thank the Fishers for joining us today—provides onsite housing for up to 57 families, who—they're here to visit their injured loved ones. The Fisher family, that has supported the Fisher Houses, is a remarkable family, and these good folks represent the true spirit of America, people coming forth to help a neighbor in need. Real proud you both are here.

Medical advances have enabled facilities such as this one to provide wounded warriors with care that would have been unimaginable just a decade ago. The technology that's being used here is state of the art. Our system for managing the care, however, has fallen behind. The technology has advanced; our system needs to be modernized.

We have an outdated system that can bog down some of those recovering in a maze of bureaucracy. And that's what happened at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The care at Walter Reed is fantastic. Our military doctors and nurses are some of the best in the world. The United States owes a huge debt of gratitude to the care providers at Walter Reed and at rehabilitation facilities like this one. However, there were serious problems caused by bureaucratic delays and administrative failures. And that is unacceptable. It's unacceptable to me as the Commander in Chief, it's unacceptable to the families of those who deserve the best care, and it's unacceptable to the American people.

And so at my request, I asked Senator Bob Dole, former Secretary of Health and

Human Services Donna Shalala to analyze the issue, to look at the problem, and to come up with specific recommendations for modernizing and improving our system of care. They came up with recommendations, and I strongly support them, and so should the United States Congress.

Now, many of the recommendations require administrative action, and that's precisely what this administration is doing. For example, over the next few weeks, the first Federal recovery coordinators will be hired. These coordinators will guide seriously wounded servicemembers through their recuperation. We don't want people to fall through the cracks of care. We don't want people to be confused by the system. We want people's families to be comfortable with the care that their loved one is receiving, and therefore, we'll have these specially trained people to stay with a person throughout their rehabilitation.

A pilot program to establish a single comprehensive disability exam is underway. This replaces the two difficult—two different, difficult exams that servicemembers must currently undergo through the Defense and Veterans Affairs Departments separately. It makes no sense. Somebody gets hurt, there ought to be one exam, not two. The whole purpose is to analyze somebody to make sure that they get that which they're entitled to as quickly as possible, without confusion.

We're working to aggressively prevent and treat Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. A new National Center for Excellence for PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury has just hired its first staff members and moved into temporary offices. The purpose is to develop best practices. The real purpose is to make sure we help those coming out of combat to be able to adjust to real life as a civilian.

The Defense Department is working to ensure that the best health professionals are kept on duty at Walter Reed. There's some concern that since Walter Reed will be shut down, that Walter Reed is not

going to have the best there is. They don't have to worry about it. We'll make sure that those at Walter Reed are incented to stay there until there's a new facility opened in Washington, DC.

And tomorrow the Department of Veterans Affairs will initiate two studies that will help provide the information necessary to modernize the veterans' disability system. The system needs to be modernized, and I want to make sure our men and women coming out of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq have a modern disability system. And that's what the studies are going to do.

Now, some of the recommendations put forward by Dole-Shalala Commission require legislative action. And we're working with the Congress. I look forward to having quick action by the Congress on the Dole-Shalala Commission recommendations, just like I expect the United States Congress to get the Veterans Affairs appropriations bill to my desk. Now, look, there's obvious—some disagreements between me and the Congress, but there's no disagreement over the amount of money we're going to spend for veterans. And they need to get the bill—to do their job. They need to get the bill to the desk of the President as a stand-alone piece of legislation, so the veterans of this country understand that we're going to support them.

Congress needs to take prompt action on measures that will send a clear signal that we support our troops in the field, and we support them when they're coming off the field; that we support those in harm's way, and that we support those through the best possible care and rehabilitation facilities.

Servicemembers being treated here and at other veterans' facilities are focused on what they have left to give, rather than what they have lost. And they have high hopes for their future.

Our country is inspired by Americans that we find in facilities like this. Christian Bagge is a guy I met over here at the

hospital. I'll never forget looking at Christian's eyes and wondering whether or not he was going to make it. See, both his legs were blown off, and he didn't look good. I knew he'd get the best possible care. I knew that this Government would do everything we could to help him heal. And after talking to him for a minute, I realized he had the courage necessary. He told me one thing—he looked at me, he said: "Mr. President, you don't need to worry about me. Someday I'm going to come to the White House and run with you on the South Lawn." I looked at him and said, "Come on, Christian, I'll be ready when you are," not sure whether or not this good man would really be able to do it; certain he wanted to, but unsure. And if you'd have been in my position, you would have too. After all, he'd just come off the battlefield and lost both his legs.

Sure enough, the phone call came to the White House. Christian came. Guy who had both legs blown off, as a result of the care and compassion and as a result of the courage in his heart, came to run with the

President at the White House. Plus, he outran me.

The spirit of America is strong in facilities like this. Our country is a remarkable country that has produced men and women who volunteer to protect our Nation in the face of danger. And there's no better example of finding those type of citizens than right here, citizens who have shown incredible courage, citizens who love our country, and citizens whose resolve is inspiring.

And so I appreciate you letting me come by. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:27 p.m. at the Center for the Intrepid. In his remarks, he referred to Arnold Fisher, honorary chairman, Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund; Kenneth Fisher, chairman and chief executive officer, Fisher House Foundation, Inc.; and former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

Statement on House of Representatives Approval of a Free Trade Agreement With Peru *November 8, 2007*

I am pleased that the House of Representatives today approved the free trade agreement with Peru with a strong bipartisan vote.

Expanding markets for our goods and services is crucial to continued economic growth and job creation here in America. Through free trade agreements, we establish rules that ensure the opportunities and benefits of trade are available to our workers, ranchers, farmers, and service providers.

For more than 14 years, Peru has benefited from broad access to our markets under the Andean Trade Preference Act.

This U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement will help level the playing field for American exporters and investors. Approval of this agreement will also send a strong signal that we are willing to support those who share our values of economic freedom and democracy.

By strengthening our trading relationships with important neighbors—including through our trade agreements with Colombia and Panama—we will significantly advance both our economic and national security interests. These democracies are trying to improve the lives of their citizens. We should embrace the strong commitment to

economic freedom of countries in our region and the efforts of Colombia to fight terrorists and drug traffickers and to strengthen the rule of law.

Today's vote in the House is the first on a free trade agreement since my administration and the leaders of both parties in

Congress agreed on a new bipartisan way forward.

I encourage the U.S. Senate to quickly approve this agreement and for Congress then to move promptly to consideration of our free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Michael B. Mukasey as Attorney General

November 8, 2007

I thank the Senate for its bipartisan vote confirming Judge Michael Mukasey as the Nation's 81st Attorney General. Judge Mukasey is a man of strong character and integrity with exceptional legal judgment. He was an accomplished prosecutor and, for more than 18 years, a distinguished Federal judge. Now he will be an outstanding Attorney General.

Judge Mukasey's confirmation comes at a critical moment for the Justice Department and for our Nation. As Attorney Gen-

eral, Judge Mukasey will lead the Justice Department as it works to protect the American people, whether from drug traffickers and other criminals on our streets or from terrorists who seek to attack our homeland.

Now that Judge Mukasey has been confirmed, I look forward to working with the Senate to fill the other senior leadership positions at the Justice Department so that America has the strongest, most capable national security team during this time of war.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction

November 8, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I transmit herewith notice of a 1-year continuation of the national emergency with respect to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that was declared in Executive Order 12938 of November 14, 1994, as amended.

The White House,

November 8, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 9. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

November 8, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Iran emergency declared in Executive Order 12170 on November 14, 1979, is to continue in effect beyond November 14, 2007.

Our relations with Iran have not yet returned to normal, and the process of implementing the January 19, 1981, agreements with Iran is still underway. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared on November 14, 1979, with respect to Iran, beyond November 14, 2007.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
November 8, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 9. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks During a Visit With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Crawford, Texas

November 9, 2007

President Bush. Laura and I are thrilled to welcome the Chancellor and Professor Sauer here to our place. In Texas, when you invite somebody to your home, it's an expression of warmth and respect, and that's how I feel about Chancellor Merkel. And so, Madam Chancellor, welcome. We're looking forward to having constructive talks as well as a chance to relax and visit.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, I would like to say a very warm thanks to you, George, for issuing this invitation to us. Already a first glance of the area shows us that this is, indeed, a wonderful place to be and a wonderful atmosphere. We have a number of issues that I think we will have now time to discuss later on. I'm very grateful

that we can do this in such a pleasant, such a wonderful atmosphere and that we can see each other here again. And I must say that I'm, again, very grateful to you, Mr. President, for the fact that we can have this exchange of views—and to you, Laura, as well. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you. Here we go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:32 p.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to Joachim Sauer, husband of Chancellor Merkel. Chancellor Merkel spoke in German, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's Radio Address *November 10, 2007*

Good morning. This weekend, Americans mark two important dates in our Nation's history. On Saturday, we celebrate the 232d birthday of the United States Marine Corps. And on Sunday, we celebrate Veterans Day and give thanks for all those who have worn the uniform of America's Armed Forces.

The Marine Corps was born in a Philadelphia tavern in 1775. Since then, the Marines have become one of the world's premier fighting forces. Their courage and valor in battle have earned them the respect of friend and foe alike. And today, a new generation of marines is writing another chapter in that proud tradition. Young marines are serving on the frontlines in the war on terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world. As the Marines celebrate their birthday, we join them in recognizing what their sacrifice and service has meant for our freedom.

America owes a debt of gratitude to all those who have served in our Armed Forces. On Veterans Day, we remember those who have served in previous wars, those who are serving today, and those who did not live to become veterans.

Veterans Day also reminds us of our solemn responsibility to care for those who have fought our Nation's wars. Under my administration, Federal spending for our veterans has increased by more than two-thirds. We have extended medical treatment to a million additional veterans, including hundreds of thousands returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. And we have expanded grants to help homeless veterans across the country.

These are the generous actions of a grateful nation. And to build on them, I nominated a good man to head our Department of Veterans Affairs, Doctor James Peake. Doctor Peake is an Army doctor, a retired lieutenant general, and a combat

veteran who was wounded twice in Vietnam and decorated for his valor.

When confirmed by the Senate, Doctor Peake will take on an important task: continuing my administration's work to implement the recommendations of the bipartisan Dole-Shalala Commission on Wounded Warriors. These recommendations are vital to ensuring better care for our veterans, and Congress needs to confirm Doctor Peake so he can lead the way in this crucial effort.

Some of the Commission's recommendations require legislative action, such as updating the disability system to fully meet the needs of our wounded warriors. So my administration has sent Congress a bill that would enact all the legislative steps recommended by the Commission. This is a good bill. Our wounded warriors and their families are counting on it, and I urge Democrats and Republicans to come together to pass it as quickly as possible.

Congress can also meet its responsibility to our veterans by passing a clean Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. Unfortunately, congressional leaders let the fiscal year end without passing this bill they know our veterans need. So I urged Congress to pass this bill by Veterans Day, and they still have failed to send me this vital legislation. The time to act is running out. There are now just 4 days left on the legislative calendar before Congress leaves town for their Thanksgiving break. The best way Members of Congress can give thanks to our veterans is to send me a clean bill that I can sign into law.

On this Veterans Day, I urge every American to take time to thank one of our Nation's 24 million veterans. They come from different generations and different backgrounds. But they are united by a commitment to honor, duty, and love of country that has kept America free. They continue

to strengthen and inspire our Nation. And we will never forget what we owe them.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on November 9 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on

November 9, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Crawford *November 10, 2007*

President Bush. I want to thank you for coming. The Chancellor and I have had a series of discussions on important subjects, starting with a dinner we had last night. And then we got up this morning and had the wonderful opportunity to walk across some of the ranch. It was a glorious morning. The sun was beginning to rise; the birds were beginning to chirp. And we were able to have a meaningful discussion on a lot of issues. And then we completed our discussions here in what is my office.

Madam Chancellor, I'm really glad you gave me an excuse to come down to Texas. And I'm really glad you and Professor Sauer came. You can imagine how conducive it is to have meaningful, strategic discussions in an environment outside of our respective capitals. And that's what we did.

We discussed Afghanistan. I do want to thank the German people for their strong support of this young democracy. And I appreciate the German troops who are far from home, who are helping people realize the blessings of liberty.

We discussed Iran and our deep desire to solve this important issue diplomatically. And I believe we can solve it diplomatically, and it is more likely we do so when the United States, Germany, and other nations work collaboratively to send a common and firm message to the Iranians that

it is—the free world does not think you should have the capacity to be able to make a nuclear weapon. And we will work according—together accordingly.

We talked about Iraq. I want to thank Chancellor Merkel for understanding that success in Iraq is important for Middle Eastern peace. I fully understand that our nations have had difference of opinion on this issue, but now that this Iraqi democracy is emerging, I really appreciate the fact that Germany has been a constructive partner in the compact—constructive partner with Iraq in the compact. And I appreciate very much the fact that the German Government is committed to help train police in the UAE.

I want to thank the Chancellor for her clear vision on issues such as Kosovo and Burma and Lebanon. We discussed the Middle Eastern peace. The upcoming Annapolis Conference is an important moment as we head toward two states living side by side in peace.

We had a very good discussion on Doha and the need for Germany and Europe and the United States to work closely together with developing nations such as Brazil and India to advance the Doha round. I appreciated very much the Chancellor's briefing on her trip to India. It helps a lot for

those of us who are engaged in international politics to get advice from people who have seen firsthand the attitudes and—of important players such as India.

And finally, we had a meaningful and long discussion on climate change. And once again, I assured Angela that I care deeply about the issue; that the United States is willing to be an active participant and try to come up with solutions that bring comfort to people around the world; that it is possible to have the technologies necessary to deal with this issue without ruining our economies. It's hard to deal with the climate change issue if you're broke. It's easier to deal with the climate change issue if you've got the revenues and finances that enable you to invest in new technologies that will change how we live and, at the same time, enable us to grow our economies and, at the same time, enable us to be good stewards of the environment.

And so, Madam Chancellor, the mike is yours.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, yes, thank you very much, Mr. President, dear George. First of all, allow me to thank you very warmly for the possibility to meet with you here in Texas and to have this exchange of views. I would also like to extend this word of gratitude to you on behalf of my husband, who accompanies me here to this, what we also in Germany would call a very beautiful spot—

President Bush. Thank you.

Chancellor Merkel. —a very beautiful part of this planet, of this world. It enables us to appreciate a little bit the vastness of the territory here and also the beauty and the sheer variety of species that you have here.

So we again were able to see this for ourselves this morning. Thank you again for making this possible, to have this stroll with you and to appreciate the beauty of this part and to have again an exchange of views on a number of subjects.

President Bush. Jawohl. [Laughter]

Chancellor Merkel. Let me say, first of all, that we did make the best possible use of our time to exchange our views on a number of issues. We did talk about Afghanistan, as the President already said, where we just recently were, and where we say that together with the Afghan Government, we need to do more in order to help them continue to build up the police and to continue to also build up the army there, improve that, and go on with the training that we have already embarked on.

We addressed the issue of Iran. We were at one in saying that the threat posed through the nuclear program of Iran is indeed a serious one. We both share this view, but that we also were of the opinion that we think that this issue can be solved through diplomatic means, that the next step then obviously would be a resolution. There is already work underway to prepare for this next step.

We have also been very clear in saying that if the talks with the representatives of Iran and Mr. Solana, as the representative on the European Union side, do not yield any results, then further steps will have to be made. Also, if the reports remain unsatisfactory—that the International Atomic Energy Organization puts on the table unsatisfactory—then we need to think about further possible sanctions. And we do not only need to think about them, but we also have to then talk and agree on further possible sanctions, if all of these conditions are [not] * met.

We then also said that Germany needs to look somewhat closer at the existing business ties with Iran. There are certain companies that have business with Iran. We have already done that. And we need to look, as the situation unfolds, whether we have to have a closer look again at that and possibly need to work together with our German business community. I will talk

* White House correction.

with them again on further possible reductions of those commercial ties, as we have already sort of launched that in that tendency already now.

We then addressed the issue of the Middle East. And I said that it is in the interest of the German Government—and we will indeed do everything we can to support all of the efforts that the American administration is making in order to turn the upcoming conference in Annapolis into a success. We want the peace process to make progress, and we think that the conference—the upcoming conference in Annapolis is indeed a possibility to bring this success about.

We then had an exchange of views on the current situation in Lebanon. Germany having a contingent there, serving with the UNIFIL mission, obviously has a very great interest in seeing the situation there stabilizing and progress being made in that country. And also, we assured the Government of Mr. Siniora of our continued support. We would like to—for this Government to be a strong one, and we think it is in our interests, in both of our interests that this situation remains stable.

On Kosovo, we did discuss this issue as well. There are currently talks going on, and indeed those talks are heading into a crucial phase. We call, at this point in time, on both the Kosovo side and the Serbian side to try their utmost to bring about a sensible solution to the problem there. And what we can do to foster that, we will do.

We did discuss also—the President raised this issue also with me of the world trade round. We then discussed also the issue of the United Nations reform of the Security Council, and there we do think that it will be necessary to have further exchanges on that particular issue. And we do hope that—some progress has been made already in this respect, and we hope further progress will be underway. We're going to continue to talk about that.

We then obviously also discussed the issue of the upcoming climate conference

in Bali. And I think that this is a very good chance of turning this conference into a success. There are a lot of things where the U.S. and the European Union share views, where we are at one, and where I think that possibilities for cooperation may unfold. There are still, admittedly, also areas where we do not completely agree yet, where there are differences of opinion, but I think that this is a very crucial time to really set the agenda for a post-Kyoto regime. And we do hope—and we will do everything we can in order—to turn this conference in Indonesia into a success.

Thank you.

President Bush. Two questions a side. John Yang [ABC News].

War on Terror/Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, this morning Benazir Bhutto said that the Pakistanis' people's passion for liberty is threatening to explode. First, have you had any more further discussions with General Musharraf? And are you concerned that the continuing unrest within Pakistan is distracting that country's leadership and military from the struggle against the Taliban and Al Qaida?

President Bush. First, on Al Qaida, we do share a common goal, and that is to eradicate Al Qaida. That goal obviously became paramount to the American people when Al Qaida killed 3,000 innocent souls on our soil. And since then, the United States of America, along with strong allies and friends, has been in pursuit of Al Qaida.

I vowed to the American people we'd keep the pressure on them. I fully understand we need cooperation to do so, and one country that we need cooperation from is Pakistan. That cooperation has been made easier by the fact that Al Qaida has tried to kill leaders in Pakistan several times. And so we share a common goal.

Secondly, we share a goal with the Pakistani people, and that is to live in a free society. I haven't spoken to President Musharraf since I did earlier this week,

but he knows my position, and he knows the position of the U.S. Government. I do want to remind you that he has declared that he'll take off his uniform, and he has declared there will be elections, which are positive steps.

We also believe that suspension of the emergency decree will make it easier for the democracy to flourish. And so our message is consistent and clear. Our message is also clear to Al Qaida: We will find you, and we'll bring you to justice before you can hurt innocent people.

Q. President—

President Bush. It's good to see you again.

Q. Thank you very much.

President Bush. You're looking like a cowboy. [Laughter]

Q. Yes, well, I try. The boots are missing.

President Bush. Yes, okay. [Laughter]

U.S. Foreign Policy/Iran

Q. But, Mr. President, is the—is it right to say that you have much more a multilateral approach towards the solutions of the problems of the world than you had maybe 2 years ago?

And the question to both of you: How much patience do you have with Iran? When is the time where diplomacy doesn't work anymore? And do you think that the Chinese and Russian Government is doing enough in the Iran crisis?

President Bush. I felt I was pretty multilateral the first 4 years of my administration. After all, I went to the United Nations on the Iraq issue and on the Afghanistan issue and said, we got a problem; let's work together to solve it. I would like to remind you that U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 was unanimously approved by 15 nations. And the declaration was, disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. And in the case of—in that case, the tyrant didn't disclose, and so he faced serious consequences.

I happen to be the kind of person that when somebody says something, they better

mean what they say. And although some nations didn't agree with that, there was a multilateral effort in Iraq from the get-go, and there's been a multilateral effort since the fall of Saddam Hussein. And it's important for the multilateral effort to continue, because democracies are the great alternative to the tyrannies espoused by coldblooded killers such as Al Qaida.

Now, on Iran, what the Iranian regime must understand is that we will continue to work together to solve this problem diplomatically, which means they will continue to be isolated. And what the Iranian people must understand is that we respect their heritage and respect their traditions and respect their potential, but it's their Government that has made the decisions that are denying them a bright future. And so we'll continue to work very closely together.

And finally, I don't feel comfortable answering your hypothetical question as to—

Q. China and Russia?

President Bush. Oh, excuse me; that's not hypothetical. [Laughter] I thought you were saying, how long. Yes, well, that falls in the hypothetical category.

China and Russia—we working hard with them. My last visit with the Chinese President was in Sydney, Australia, and I told him the top of my agenda is Iran. And I fully understand that China has got energy needs, but a sure way to disrupt energy supply not only in Iran and the Middle East, if the Iranians were to develop a nuclear weapon and decided to do something with it. And so therefore, now is the time to solve the problem.

And I had a good talk with Vladimir Putin on the very same subject. He understands that a nuclear-armed Iran will be dangerous to his security and the security of the world. And no responsible leader wants the Iranians to be able to threaten world peace.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, the next diplomatic step, after all, has already been devised, has already been envisaged and is

there to be taken, as it were. But for this next diplomatic step to work, we obviously then, again, will need the engagement; we will need the support of both China and Russia.

And let me say that I am deeply convinced that if the Security—if the United Nations Security Council were then to announce sanctions, that this would be the clearest message that you can get, that you can send, and the clearest message that you can convey to Iran, irrespective of the possibilities, obviously, of individual countries also sending that clear message, European countries as well. But I think at least that is true for me, at the center of all of our efforts has to be sanctions that will then be called by the United Nations Security Council.

Let me say also that I'm deeply convinced that the diplomatic possibilities have not yet been exhausted; that diplomatic possibilities are there; that we can solve this by using diplomatic means, and also, we want to solve this by diplomatic means.

President Bush. Steven Lee Myers [New York Times]. Would that be you?

Q. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Step forth, Steven Lee.

Q. I wanted to follow up a bit on Pakistan, if I may.

President Bush. Sure.

Pakistan

Q. Are you at all concerned that General Musharraf may not live up to the promises that you said he's made to you? And are you concerned, as Secretary Gates suggested yesterday, that the distraction, the internal turmoil in Pakistan is actually—or could have an effect on the effort in Afghanistan? Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, Steven Lee. I take a person for his word until otherwise. I think that's what you have to do. I mean, when somebody says this is what they're going to do, then you give them a chance to do it. I can tell you this, that President Musharraf, right after the attacks on Sep-

tember the 11th, made a decision, and the decision was to stand with the United States against the extremists inside Pakistan. In other words, he was given an option: Are you with us, or are you not with us? And he made a clear decision to be with us, and he's acted on that advice.

I want to remind you that if you're the chief operating officer of Al Qaida, you haven't had a good experience. There has been four or five number-threes that have been brought to justice one way or the other. And many of those folks thought they could find safe haven in Pakistan. And that would not have happened without President Musharraf honoring his word.

He fully understands the dangers of Al Qaida. Benazir Bhutto fully understands the dangers of Al Qaida. By far, the vast majority of people in Pakistan want to live in a free and peaceful society, and they understand the dangers of Al Qaida, because Al Qaida is a group of ideologues who murder innocent people to achieve their political objectives.

And so I believe that we will continue to have good collaboration with the leadership in Pakistan. My concern is for the Pakistani democracy—for the sake of the Pakistani people, proceed as—back on track as quickly as possible. President Musharraf said that he would take off his uniform; he said there will be elections after the new year. And our hope is that he would suspend this emergency decree to allow this society, which is on the path to democracy, to get back on the path to democracy.

And I think about this issue a lot. One of the things that I pledged to the American people is that we will continue the hunt for Al Qaida leadership. They're still plotting and planning attacks on the United States of America. And our most important responsibility is to protect the American people from attack. I will also remind people that the great alternative to their vision—their dark, dim vision for humanity—is freedom. Freedom has got the capacity to turn enemies into allies. Freedom has

got the capacity to bring peace. And that's why the work to help these young democracies is vital work for the peace for our children and grandchildren.

And that's why I applaud the Chancellor's efforts in Afghanistan and her concerns about the democracy in Lebanon and her desire for there to be a Palestinian democracy and to help—the willingness to begin to help this young democracy in Iraq. It's all part of this global struggle against extremists and radicals who murder people, who will kill people to achieve their objective. And the fundamental question is, will free societies have the will, the courage, and the determination to stand up to them? And one of the things I have found in this leader is she does have that vision. And I appreciate it a lot.

Germany/United Nations Security Council

Q. It's on reforming the United Nations. Could you tell us please, both, what kind of progress that you made in your talks on this issue? And more specific to you, Mr. President, the German Government, in the past, frequently declared to be ready to take more responsibilities within the United Nations, including a permanent seat in the Security Council. So far, you haven't been very positive on that. Tell us why.

President Bush. You're right; I've been studiously noncommittal. [Laughter] I have taken a position, which is the long-held position of U.S. Governments, and that is, Japan should have a seat. Beyond that, I've made no commitment, except this: that we're for U.N. Security Council reforms, and that I'm willing to listen to good ideas. And Angela brought up some good ideas today. And so—

Q. [Inaudible]

President Bush. It's up to her to tell you. I don't like to put words in leaders' mouths. I don't particularly like it when people put words in my mouth, either, by the way, unless I say it. But she can tell you what she came up with.

But I will tell you that it intrigued me, and my—as I said—listen, I stood up in front of the U.N. and said precisely what I'm telling you now, that we're open-minded. There's a good nonanswer for you. [Laughter]

Chancellor Merkel. Well, from my side, the people who know me, know me as a person who is sort of success oriented, in the sense that I don't think one ought to comment each step on the way towards a success. But the message that I received today, and that was a very heartening message, was that the President and the administration of the United States are interested in the reform of the U.N. Security Council. And in this overall complex of issues that relates to that, they will also, obviously, be of interest who will then be the members of that reformed Security Council.

I, for me personally, see this issue of a Security Council reform to be a very important one. But what is also important, obviously, is to try to enlist the support of the other very important countries who are members of the Security Council, and hear particularly those countries that have veto powers in the Security Council, to see to it that they have also a great interest in seeing the Security Council reformed.

So in this overall context, it has certainly been a good message that I heard today, that there is also an interest in that here. I found this with the President today. And now we will have to keep an eye on further steps to be taken along the way in order to achieve that goal. We will try and find allies for this cause. And again, it is in Germany's interest, as I said previously in public, to have a permanent seat on the Security Council. We will not call on each and every country that we talk to, to comment on each and every step along the way. We're going to continue to work towards reform. And I think it is of the essence that we have heard here today. And this is why this was such an important message there: that is not only in the interests of Germany, but it is also an interest that

was explained to us here and clearly stated by the U.S. administration.

President Bush. Yes. I'm now going to go feed the Chancellor a hamburger. [Laughter] Right here in Crawford, Texas. No, well, I mean back over there. Thank you all.

Chancellor Merkel. Obviously, for me, as a person who originally came from Hamburg—

President Bush. Yes.

Chancellor Merkel. —it's even more important. [Laughter]

President Bush. Hamburger.

Thank you.

Chancellor Merkel. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:45 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to Joachim Sauer, husband of Chancellor Merkel; President Pervez Musharraf and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan; President Hu Jintao of China; and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Chancellor Merkel referred to European Union Foreign Minister Javier Solana Madariaga; and Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon. Chancellor Merkel spoke in German, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at American Legion Post 121 in Waco, Texas November 11, 2007

Thank you. Clayton, thanks for inviting me. I'm really honored to be here with you. Congressman Edwards, thank you for your eloquence and your very moving remarks. Members of the Texas State Legislature, it's good to see you again. Distinguished mayors, thank you all for being here. Proud veterans and families of the fallen, it is a privilege to spend this Veterans Day with you and to join you in honoring four sons of the great State of Texas who gave their lives in freedom's cause.

The young men we remember today did not live to be called veterans. They died in a distant land fighting terror, spreading freedom, and protecting their fellow citizens from danger. The valor and selfless devotion of these men fills their families with immeasurable pride. Yet this pride cannot fill the hole in their loved ones' aching hearts or relieve the burden of grief that will remain for a lifetime. In their sorrow, these families need to know and families all across our Nation of the fallen need to know that your loved ones served a cause that is good and just and noble. And

as their Commander in Chief, I make you this promise: Their sacrifice will not be in vain.

I know all the veterans gathered here and across the Nation feel a special bond with our fallen soldiers and their families. Many experienced the heartbreak and tragic losses of war. Our veterans know that—what it's like to lose a brother on the field of battle. And many of them recall the determination they felt when a beloved comrade fell: the determination to pick up the mantle, to carry on the fight, and to complete the mission.

That's precisely what today's generation of soldiers is doing in the war on terror. Since the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, more than 2 million Americans have stepped forward to put on our Nation's uniform, and during that same period, 1.5 million American troops have made the courageous decision to reenlist and to stay in the fight. These men and women saw the future the terrorists intend for our country, and they said with clear voices, "Not on my watch." America is blessed to have such

brave defenders. They are tomorrow's veterans, and they're bringing pride to our country.

Their service is noble, and it is necessary. The enemies who attacked us 6 years ago want to strike our country again, and next time, they hope to kill Americans on a scale that will make 9/11 pale by comparison. By fighting this enemy in foreign lands, the men and women of our Armed Forces are helping to ensure we do not have to face them in our own land. And by spreading the hope of liberty to nations that have not known it, our troops are helping to defeat the ideology of the terrorists and secure a future of peace for generations to come.

As veterans, you have confidence in freedom's cause because you have seen with your own eyes the power of liberty to transform nations and secure the peace. The men and women gathered before me took an oath to defend America, and you upheld that oath with honor and decency and valor. You humbled tyrants, liberated continents, and freed millions from unspeakable oppression. And because of your serv-

ice and sacrifice, the world has been transformed in once unimaginable ways. Today, across Europe and Asia, former adversaries in war have become allies in the cause of peace. And in towns and villages on both continents, there are still men and women who talk of the day when the Americans arrived to free them from tyranny.

I thank our Nation's veterans for the fine example that you have set for our country. I thank you for your courage and your patriotism and your devotion to duty. I thank you for standing up for the men and women of our Armed Forces. And I thank you for all you do to support the families they leave behind during this time of war.

May God bless and keep all who have made the ultimate sacrifice. May God bless and keep our brave and honored veterans. May God bless those who are in harm's way. And may God continue to bless our Nation. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Clayton Hueske, commander, American Legion Post 121.

Remarks Following a Lunch Meeting With Business and Community Leaders in New Albany, Indiana *November 13, 2007*

Listen, I want to thank you all for joining me. Somebody told me Sam serves good food, and they're right. And it's good to be here in southern Indiana.

I was sitting with business leaders, civic leaders, community activists. I was listening to the concerns of the folks down here. I appreciate the spirit of entrepreneurship that exists. I'm glad people are working. I understand we got to deal with some of the issues, like high gasoline prices.

And it's been a real honor for me to visit with you. It's also good to be with an old family friend, Fuzzy Zoeller, who's

been a friend of my family's for a long time. And I forgot that Fuzzy was from these parts and was so thrilled to see him when I walked in here.

But thank you all for your time. Appreciate your consideration, and I love visiting with you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. at Sam's Tavern. In his remarks, he referred to Sam Anderson, owner, Sam's Tavern; and professional golfer Frank U. "Fuzzy" Zoeller, Jr.

Remarks on the Federal Budget in New Albany November 13, 2007

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. I needed that uplifting applause because I just finished eating lunch at Sam's. *[Laughter]* Had just a little too much chicken. *[Laughter]* But I'm honored to be with you. It's great to be back in New Albany. This is a fantastic hall. It is really special. I know you all are proud of it. I appreciate the great history of this part of the world. I appreciate the fact you got great people and great basketball. *[Laughter]*

It's also a good place to do business. And I thank One Southern Indiana for your efforts to strengthen the spirit of enterprise. I appreciate what you do. Your members create jobs, attract investment, and add to the vitality of this region and our country. People here know that customers should be treated respectfully, money should be spent carefully, and new taxes should be opposed strenuously.

And that's what I want to talk about today. Kerry, thanks for giving me a chance to come by. I appreciate it. I'm sorry my wife is not with me—so are most people when I travel. *[Laughter]* She's doing great, and she sends all her best.

I'm proud to be traveling today with Congressman Baron Hill. Congressman, thanks for coming. Good to see you, sir. He was reminding me of the days he was a point guard. He said, "Just don't remind them here in New Albany that I used to tear them up." So I won't. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor of the great State of Indiana, Becky Skillman, for joining us today. Governor, appreciate you coming. The mayor, James Garner, has joined us from New Albany. Mr. Mayor, I appreciate you coming. Thanks for being here. Mayor Rob Waiz of Jeffersonville is with us today. Proud you'd be here, mayor. I thank Mayor-elect

Greg Ballard of the city of Indianapolis that's joined us here. Mr. Mayor, thanks for coming. We've got other State and local officials. Former Congressman Mike Sodrel and Keta are with us today. Glad you're here.

And I thank you for letting me come by to share some thoughts about what's happening in Washington. It's an important time for our economy. In October, America created 166,000 new jobs. We now have had 50 straight months of job growth, the longest period of uninterrupted job growth on record. Since August of 2003, American businesses—American small businesses and large businesses, American entrepreneurs and dreamers and doers have created more than 8.3 million new jobs. The national unemployment rate is a low 4.7 percent. Here in Indiana, the unemployment rate is even lower, 4.5 percent. Thanks to America's workers and entrepreneurs, our economy grew at a vigorous rate of 3.9 percent in the third quarter. This economic vitality, this economic growth is lifting our Federal tax revenues, and that's driving down the deficit. The deficit today is at 1.2 percent of GDP, and that's low.

At the same time, this economy has got some strains, and you know it as well as I do: high oil prices, the housing market is challenged, the financial markets have got uncertainty. Families are working hard to meet rising mortgage payments and college and health care expenses and the cost at the gas pump.

These are serious challenges. But as we have seen in recent years, this economy of ours is resilient. And that's important for the American people to understand. Sure, there's some challenges facing us. But the underpinnings of our economy are strong, and we're a resilient economy.

Just a few weeks after the terrorist attacks of September the 11th, 2001, our

economy was growing. Think about that. After the worst attack on American soil, where nearly 3,000 of our citizens died, this economy recovered. That's a resilient economy. After Katrina—two quarters after the devastation of Katrina—our economy grew at a powerful rate of 4.8 percent. Despite the ongoing costs and uncertainty of war, the budget deficit is low. And the reason is clear: This economy is flexible; it is dynamic; and it is competitive enough to overcome any challenge we face. And the responsibility of Washington—in Washington—of people in Washington is to keep it that way. And that's what I want to talk about with you today.

One of the keys to meeting economic challenges is wise policy from your Federal Government. Wise policy helps keep us resilient; lousy policy will hurt the ability for this economy to grow. The decisions we make in Washington have a direct impact on the people in our country, obviously.

And as we debate the decisions, you got to understand there are two very different philosophies being played out. My philosophy is that the American people know how to spend their money better than the government can. That's the core of my philosophy, that I'd rather you have more of your own money to spend, save, and invest as you see fit. Every time the Government collects a dollar in taxes, it means you have a dollar less to invest in your business or to spend on your family or to put aside for the future. Government has certain responsibilities, such as protecting our citizens, and we're going to meet those responsibilities. But we must always remember that your paycheck belongs to you and that the economy thrives the more money you have in your pocket.

The philosophy has been the centerpiece of my economic policy since I've been honored to be your President. Since I took office, we've cut taxes for every American who pays income taxes. We've worked to restrain spending, while ensuring that we have the resources necessary to protect the

homeland and to make sure our military has what it needs to do the job. We set a goal to balance the budget by 2012, and we're on pace to meet that goal.

Now, there's a different philosophy in Washington. And I'm not saying these aren't good people; they are, but they just have a different point of view. Instead of trusting in the judgment of the people, they trust in the judgment of the Federal Government. They believe in a Federal solution to every problem, and somehow, that solution always seems to include raising your taxes.

Congress now sitting in Washington holds this philosophy. The majority was elected on a pledge of fiscal responsibility, but so far, it's acting like a teenager with a new credit card. [Laughter] This year alone, the leadership in Congress has proposed to spend \$22 billion more than my budget provides. Now, some of them claim that's not really much of a difference; the scary part is, they seem to mean it. [Laughter] Over 5 years, their proposed spending spree adds up to an extra \$205 billion. Put another way, that's about \$1,300 in higher spending every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year for the next 5 years.

Think about what it means for you. If you're driving a half hour to visit your grandparents, Congress would have spent an extra \$2.3 million. If you attend church for an hour, Congress will tally another \$4.7 million. If you watch a football game, Congress would rack up \$14 million; unless, of course, it goes into overtime. [Laughter]

It's easy for politicians to claim that this spending won't have much of an impact on you. But you got to understand that when the bill for all that spending comes due, Congress is going to turn to the working people and to the small-business owners and the entrepreneurs.

The conclusion does not require an active imagination. All you have to do is look at the record. For example, leaders in the majority recently proposed raising taxes on

millions of working Americans by increasing the tobacco tax. It can be tempting to view this as a one-time action aimed at an unpopular product, but that's not the way things work in Washington. Raising taxes is habit-forming; once you start in one area, it's hard to stop in others. In fact, in addition to the tobacco tax proposal, Congress has proposed to raise taxes on oil and natural gas, on dividends and capital gains, and stock and bond transactions.

If that's not enough, Congress's budget also allows the tax relief we delivered to be taken away. Here's what that would mean for the average taxpayer. If you have children, your taxes would rise \$500 per child. If you have a family of four making \$60,000 a year, your taxes would be more than \$1,800 higher. If you're a small-business owner, your taxes would increase almost \$4,000.

And they're not picky about how to raise taxes. To them, every bill on the floor is an opportunity for a tax hike. Congress has proposed tax increases in the farm bill, the energy bill, the small-business bill, and the children's health bill. If you find a bill that doesn't have a tax increase, just wait a while, they'll put one in there.

The price of these tax increases would not be paid in the Halls of Congress; it would be paid in the living rooms and shop floors and office buildings across America. Higher taxes would mean that you'd have to put in longer hours to bring home the same amount of money, which would lead to more time at work and less time with our families. Higher taxes would mean paying more to meet the priorities of the Washington politicians and less to meet the priorities of your family. And higher taxes would mean fewer opportunities for entrepreneurs, a tougher time for workers trying to get ahead, and a greater likelihood of a slowdown across our economy.

People—American people understand the cost of tax-and-spend policies. We had some interesting results at the ballot box last week. In the State of Oregon, voters

rejected the plan to raise tobacco taxes to further enlarge a government health program. In other words, when the voters were given a chance, they voted such a plan down in the State of Oregon. Right here in Indiana, voters in your capital voted for Greg Ballard and ousted an incumbent mayor, in large part because the incumbent mayor supported raising taxes. A newspaper report explained that the winning candidate, quote, "rode a wave of voter discontent over tax increases" to a stunning upset.

We need to make sure the message is heard in the Nation's Capital, and I've come to New Albany, Indiana, to let you know I'm going to do my part. Under the Constitution, the President has the power to veto bills he thinks are unwise. And with all the other pressures on our economy, raising taxes is one of the most unwise things Congress could possibly do. I hope the leaders in Congress will cooperate and send me reasonable spending bills that I can sign. But if they insist on trying to raise taxes on the American people, I will not hesitate to use my veto pen to stop them.

For all their plans to increase Federal spending, you would think that the leaders in Congress would be in a hurry to get the Government's annual spending bills to my desk. But that's not the case. It took until last week for Congress to send me the first of these spending bills. This was the latest date in 20 years that Congress has sent its first annual appropriations bill to the President's desk. I know they wanted to be remembered by history, but I don't think that's what they had in mind.

As of this morning, Congress has sent me only two annual appropriations bills. One is the spending bill for the Defense Department. This isn't a perfect bill; it includes some unnecessary spending. But this morning in the Oval Office, I signed that bill to make sure our military has the full support of the Federal Government.

The other spending bill is for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. This bill is 44 days late and nearly \$10 billion over budget and filled with more than 2,000 earmarks. Some of its wasteful projects include a prison museum, a sailing school taught aboard a catamaran, and a "Portuguese as a second language" program. Congress owes the taxpayers much better than this effort. And so today in the Oval Office, I vetoed this bill. Congress needs to cut out that pork, reduce the spending, and send me a responsible measure that I can sign into law.

While Congress was passing the bloated labor and health spending bill, it delayed action on a good bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill includes vital funds for veterans' benefits and care for our wounded warriors. It had almost unanimous support. The House passed the bill 409 to 2 in June, and the Senate passed it 92 to 1 in September. I urged Congress to show its commitment to our veterans by sending me this bill by Veterans Day. Well, they didn't listen. Our veterans have already waited longer than they should have to. At the very least, Congress should send me a clean veterans bill before leaving for its 2-week Thanksgiving vacation.

Another priority that Congress has failed to meet is energy. Leaders of both parties understand that America's dependence on oil creates problems for our economy, our environment, and our national security. When they were elected last November, majority leaders in Congress promised to pass an energy bill to reduce our dependence on oil. I consulted with members of both parties, and in my State of the Union Address, I proposed a plan to reduce America's gasoline consumption by 20 percent over 10 years. I call this plan 20-in-10 and asked Congress to pass it by beginning of the summer driving season.

Now the summer driving season is over, the price of oil has jumped to nearly \$100 a barrel, and Congress has not acted. America clearly needs legislation that ex-

pands the use of ethanol and biodiesel, promotes energy conservation, invests in advanced technologies like clean coal and nuclear power. Listen, breaking our reliance on oil and gas is not going to happen overnight.

Congress should also authorize environmentally responsible oil exploration offshore and in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. American consumers and businesses are looking to Washington for action on this issue. And Congress needs to pass a bill that encourages the development of more energy that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of oil, and they need to do it now.

Congress is grappling with another difficult issue. It's called the Alternative Minimum Tax. Decades ago, this section of the Tax Code was designed to ensure that the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes, but its provisions are not adjusted for inflation. As a result, it's become increasingly likely that middle class taxpayers will be subject to the AMT. This would come as an unpleasant surprise to many American families, who would be forced to calculate their income taxes twice and then pay the Government the higher amount.

In recent years, Congress has passed a temporary patch that prevents most middle class taxpayers from having to pay the AMT. But this year, Congress has not done so. With no relief in place, 25 million taxpayers would be subject to the Alternative Minimum Tax. On average, they would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS, which is a huge tax increase they do not expect and do not deserve.

Some in Congress have looked at this impending tax burden and used it as an opportunity to raise taxes. Last week, the House passed a bill that provides relief for AMT, but raises taxes on others. Preventing a tax increase in one area should not be an excuse for raising taxes in other areas. Congress should eliminate the tax increases in the bill and send the AMT relief to

my desk as soon as possible. That's what the American taxpayer expects.

The timing of congressional action on AMT relief is critical. I want to spend a little time explaining why. The longer Congress waits, the more difficult it will be to print and distribute tax forms on time. Last month, Treasury Secretary Paulson wrote a letter that said this: "To avoid confusion and delays for taxpayers, it is critical that an AMT patch be enacted by early November." Well, early November has come and gone, and Congress has not acted. If Congress does not act before Thanksgiving, \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks could be delayed.

Yet when the Senate majority leader was asked if he could pass an AMT patch before Thanksgiving, he said, "No." Well, that's not a good enough answer for the American taxpayer. Congress needs to protect the middle class from an unfair tax hike. They need to finish their business quickly; they need to make sure those who get their refunds get them on time.

When it comes to taxes and spending, they don't have a very good record, but here's a good way to start, is to make sure that Congress passes the war supplemental funds we need to give our troops the very best equipment possible in the theaters of Afghanistan and Iraq.

I think it's important for Members of Congress to hear the words of Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England when he wrote them why the funds, the supplemental funds to support the war effort—see, these are funds separate from the defense bill; these are funds specifically to support our troops in harm's way and other measures. And here's what he wrote: "If you"—he said, delaying could have this kind of, quote—in other words, what Congress is trying to do—some in Congress are trying to delay spending this money. Some of them in Congress want to say, we're going to spend some of the money, and by the way, tell you how to conduct the war. That's not going to work. We don't

need Members of Congress telling our military commanders what to do. We need our military commanders telling us what to do so we can win the war against these extremists and radicals.

See, I think it's important to get the advice from the military. I don't want our kids in uniform to think that the President is playing politics with their lives. I want those in the battle to understand that I'll be making decisions based upon the considered judgment of our military commanders. If you've got somebody in harm's way, you want the President being—making advice, not—be given advice by the military and not making decisions based upon the latest Gallup Poll or focus group.

And so they're delaying the money that needs—our troops need to have. And here's what the Deputy Secretary said: He said, it would have "a profoundly negative impact on the defense civilian workforce, depot maintenance, base operations, and training activities." In other words, there's a consequence for not funding this money.

Congress's responsibility is clear: It should not go home for the Christmas holidays without giving our troops on the front-line the funds they need to succeed. Now, look, I understand some of them in Congress didn't agree with my decision, and that's fine. I can understand that. That's what that democracy is all about. Nobody likes war; I understand that. And I understand some were critical of the decision I made, and that's okay. But whatever their position on the war is, we should be able to agree that our troops deserve the full support of those of us in Washington, DC.

By the way, look at these folks in uniform; I just got to tell you, I'm incredibly proud to be the Commander in Chief of such amazing citizens who volunteer to serve our country in the face of danger. What a remarkable country we have to have citizens such as these. Thank you, guys.

It's important for Congress to get their spending bills done. See, the strategy may

be to put them all in one big bill, kind of delay and delay and delay, and then send it all in one big package, and no telling what's going to be in there. The best way to get the business done—the people's business done is to pass these appropriations bills one at a time and get them to my desk in a expeditious way. Unfortunately, the number-two leader in the Senate, Democrat leader said this: "I don't think it's physically possible for us to do all the bills individually." That's frankly not good enough for the American people.

So obviously, I had something on my mind. And I thank you for giving me a chance to come and share it with you. It's a critical time. I have great respect for the process, and I've got respect for people in Washington, DC. But they're coming at you with new taxes, and I'm going to do everything in my power to stop them. We don't need to raise the taxes on the working people; we don't need to raise the taxes

on our farmers and ranchers; we don't need to raise taxes on the small-business owners. What we need to do is set clear priorities with the people's money, which is defend this homeland, support our troops, and make sure we reduce the deficit and keep this economy growing strong.

As I mentioned earlier in the speech, there's some uncertainty in the economy. But we have dealt with that before, and we can continue to deal with it, particularly if we keep the taxes low.

I'm honored to be back in southern Indiana. It's a thrill to be with you. Thank you for your hospitality. Thank you for being—loving your country. God bless you all. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:43 p.m. at The Grand. In his remarks, he referred to Kerry M. Stemler, chairman, One Southern Indiana; and Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana.

Statement on Signing the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2008 *November 13, 2007*

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 3222, the "Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2008." The Act appropriates funds needed to support the U.S. Armed Forces as they protect the United States and the American people and advance United States interests around the globe.

The Act contains certain provisions identical to those found in prior bills passed by the Congress that might be construed to be inconsistent with my Constitutional responsibilities (sections 8005, 8009, 8012(b), 8034(b), 8052, 8082, 8085, 8089, 8091, and 8116, and the provision concerning consolidation under the heading "Operation and Maintenance, Defense Wide"). To avoid such potential infirmities, I will interpret and construe such provisions

in the same manner as I have previously stated in regard to those provisions.

The Act also continues through December 14, 2007, funding for Government programs for which the Congress has not yet passed regular appropriations acts. However, the Act does not provide funds needed to support members of the U.S. Armed Forces deployed for combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I expect and urge the Congress to promptly present separate legislation to meet that urgent funding need.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

November 13, 2007.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008”

November 13, 2007

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 3043, the “Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008.”

This bill spends too much. It exceeds the reasonable and responsible levels for discretionary spending that I proposed to balance the budget by 2012. The Congress is on a path to spend \$205 billion more over the next 5 years than I requested. This puts a balanced budget in jeopardy and risks future tax increases. This year, the Congress plans to overspend my budget by \$22 billion, of which \$10 billion is for increases in this bill. Health care, education, job training, and other goals can be achieved without this excessive spending if the Congress sets priorities.

This bill continues to fund programs that are duplicative or ineffective. The Congress continues to fund 56 programs totaling more than \$3.2 billion that I proposed to terminate because they are duplicative, narrowly focused, or not producing results.

This bill does not sufficiently fund programs that are delivering positive outcomes. For example, Reading First, a critical initiative that is demonstrating results, receives

a 61 percent cut, even though low-income students enrolled in Reading First schools posted a more than 10-point improvement in reading proficiency from 2004 to 2006.

This bill has too many earmarks. I set out clear goals for the Congress to reform the earmarking process. The Congress chose not to put earmarks in bill text, instead including nearly all in report language, and they did not reach the goal of cutting the cost and number of earmarks by at least half. This bill contains more than 2,200 earmarks totaling nearly \$1 billion. Congressional earmarks divert Federal taxpayer funds to localities without the benefit of a merit-based process, resulting in fewer resources for national priorities or unnecessary spending above the requested level.

I urge the Congress to send me a fiscally responsible bill that sets priorities. Americans sent us to Washington to achieve results and be good stewards of their hard-earned tax dollars. Because the legislation violates that commitment, I must veto this bill.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
November 13, 2007.

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring America’s Promise Alliance

November 13, 2007

Good evening. Laura and I welcome you all to the White House; sure glad you’re here. Ten years ago, a group of spirited citizens came together in the hope that they could make a difference in the lives of our Nation’s children. In the decade that

followed, that hope became a dream, the dream became a mission, and that mission helped change the lives of countless children across our country.

Through your mentoring programs and your work with at-risk youth, America’s

Promise has given opportunity to young Americans who never had it. You have put hope in the eyes of children who have never known it, and you have helped make real the promise of our Creator, that there is value and purpose in every single human life.

The success of America's Promise is a tribute to the giving hearts of every person in this room, particularly those we honor with awards tonight. Yet I think all of us would agree that two people here deserve special mention, and they are Colin and Alma Powell.

Throughout their lives, the Powells have answered our country's call. They've served our Nation in times of peace and war, and they have led, taught, and inspired Americans along the way. Not a bad record for

two people who met 46 years ago only because their friends talked them into going into a—going on a blind date. [*Laughter*] Mr. Secretary and Alma, our country is fortunate that you both had such persuasive friends. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to propose a toast to America's Promise, in gratitude for your first decade of public service, and a toast to America's children and a future that brings them love and peace and possibility.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:43 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and his wife Alma, founding chair and current chair, board of directors, America's Promise Alliance.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Michael B. Mukasey as Attorney General

November 14, 2007

Thank you all very much. Good morning. I'm pleased to be back here at the Department of Justice and to join you for the swearing-in of Judge Michael Mukasey as the 81st Attorney General of the United States. We welcome Michael's wife Susan and their children Marc and Jessica, their son-in-law Corey, their grandchildren William and Benjamin, and other members of the Mukasey family. We share their pride in Michael on this important day. And I appreciate you all coming to witness it.

I particularly want to thank the Chief Justice of the United States, John Roberts, who is here to swear-in the General. I want to thank members of my Cabinet who have taken time off to come and welcome a new Cabinet member. I appreciate very much that Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, the ranking member on the Senate Judici-

ary Committee, has joined us, along with Sam Brownback and Senator Lindsey Graham. Thank you all for coming. And thank you for making sure this good man not only made it to the floor of the Senate, but was confirmed.

I want to thank former Attorney General John Ashcroft, and welcome John as well as former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh. Thank you all for coming.

The job of the Attorney General is one of the most important in our Nation's Government. The Attorney General must run the world's largest law firm and the central Agency for enforcement of our Federal laws. He must aggressively prosecute gun criminals and drug dealers, hold corporate wrongdoers to account, protect victims of child abuse and domestic violence, and uphold the civil rights of every American.

In this time of war, the job of the Attorney General is also vital to America's national security. The Attorney General is responsible for our law enforcement community's efforts to detect, prevent, and disrupt terrorist attacks here at home. He must make certain that our intelligence and law enforcement communities work hand in hand to protect the American people from terrorist threats. He must ensure that we do everything within the law to defend the security of all Americans, while at the same time protecting the liberty of all Americans.

Judge Michael Mukasey is the right man to take on these vital challenges. Michael understands the law from both sides of the bench. He served for more than 18 years as a U.S. District Court judge in New York, including 6 years as the chief judge. He was a lawyer in private practice. He served as an assistant United States attorney in Manhattan, where he headed the Official Corruption Unit.

Judge Mukasey also understands the challenges facing our Nation in this time of war. He has written wisely on matters of constitutional law and national security. He knows what it takes to fight the war on terror effectively, and he knows how to do it in a matter that is consistent with our laws and our Constitution. He will bring clear purpose and resolve to the job of Attorney General. I look forward to working with him as a member of my Cabinet and a key player on our national security team.

Our new Attorney General—as our new Attorney General, Michael Mukasey follows in the footsteps of a fine man and a fine American, Al Gonzales. I have known Al since our days working together in the State of Texas. As White House Counsel and as Attorney General in my administration, Al Gonzales worked tirelessly to make this country safer and to ensure that all Americans received equal justice before the law. Over many years, I have witnessed his integrity, his decency, and his deep dedication to the cause of justice. I am grateful

for his friendship. I thank him for his service to our Nation. And Laura and I wish him and his wife Becky and their children Jared, Graham, and Gabe, all the very best.

I also thank Peter Keisler, who has served as Acting Attorney General during Judge Mukasey's confirmation process. Peter delayed his plans to leave the Justice Department in order to ensure that the Department had strong leadership during these past months. I appreciate the job you've done.

With his departure, many of the most senior positions at the Department of Justice will now be vacant. In a time of war, it's vital that these positions be filled quickly. So in consultation with the Attorney General, I will announce tomorrow my nominations for several of these senior leadership positions. And I look forward to working with the Senate to fill these important positions at the Justice Department so that America has the strongest, most capable national security team in place.

As he embarks on his new responsibilities, Michael Mukasey has my complete trust and confidence. And he's going to have the trust and confidence of the men and women of the Department of Justice. The people here are good people, hard-working Americans. From the headquarters to U.S. attorneys offices to remote posts overseas, these fine Americans, judge, are working to keep the American people safe. They work every day to fulfill the most important function of the Federal Government, and that's to protect the American people from harm. Their efforts are essential to the security of America. The people who work for Justice deserve the very best leadership, and you're going to have it with Judge Michael Mukasey.

You'll find out what I found out. Judge Mukasey is a decent man, an outstanding lawyer, and a strong leader, and I am really looking forward to his wise counsel in the months ahead. Judge, I want to thank you for agreeing to serve our country once again, and congratulations.

And now I ask Chief Justice John Roberts to administer the oath of office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Great Hall at the Department of Justice.

The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Mukasey.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medal of Arts and National Humanities Medal November 15, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Good morning. Laura and I welcome you to the East Room for a joyous event, the presentation of two sets of important awards: the National Medals of the Arts and the National Humanities Medals. These medals recognize great contributions to art, music, theater, writing, history, and general scholarship.

We congratulate the medalists. We welcome your families. We thank your loved ones for supporting you. And on behalf of a grateful nation, we honor your great talent and accomplishments.

Obviously, I'm pleased to be here with my wife. [*Laughter*] I am proud to be here with Mrs. Lynne Cheney as well. I thank the Members of the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives for joining us as we honor our fellow citizens. I'm so pleased to welcome Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, and Dr. Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities. Thank you all for coming, and thank you for your leadership. I'm proud that a fellow Texan, Adair Margo—is the Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities—has joined us.

Our honorees represent the great strength and diversity of the American culture. The winners of the arts include a Native American poet, an orchestra conductor, a composer of choral music, a pioneer of electric musical instruments, and

a man whose last name is synonymous with fine American craftsmanship. Our honorees have created some of the emblematic images of our time, supported museums and theaters, and helped nurture young talent.

The winners of the humanities have also made great and lasting contributions to our society. They include scholars and historians and a philanthropist. These men and women have shaped our understanding of the past, chronicled stories of tyranny overcome by liberty, and helped preserve our cultural treasures for future generations.

Your accomplishments will remind us that freedom of thought and freedom of expression are two pillars of our democracy. These freedoms have helped our Nation build some of the finest centers of learning in the world. They've helped inspire new movements in art and literature, and they've helped fill our libraries and museums and theaters with great works for all our citizens to enjoy.

America is committed to supporting the arts and humanities. For more than four decades, the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities has helped enrich our culture and deepened our appreciation for the ideals that bind us together as Americans. Some interesting programs that are run out of these important institutions, like "We the People" and "American Masterpieces," that expose a new generation of Americans to American history and literature and art.

And Laura and I strongly support these programs.

It is now my privilege to present the National Medals of Art and the National Humanities Medals. Once again, I congratulate our honorees, because in your work, we see the creativity of the American spirit and the values that have made our Nation great.

And so now I ask the military aide to read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Dan Walsh, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President,

read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

The President. My wife.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lynne V. Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and Federal Aviation Administration Acting Administrator Robert A. Sturgell
November 15, 2007

Thanksgiving is a week from today, and Christmas will quickly follow. This is really a time of joy for our families. Unfortunately, this is also a season of dread for too many Americans. Holiday travelers faced with the prospect of long-delayed and canceled flights and lost baggage and other problems have become all too often an occurrence. In other words, there's a lot of people that are worried about traveling because they've had unpleasant experiences when they've been flying around the country.

And so this is a topic that I've just discussed with Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and the Acting Administrator of the FAA, Bobby Sturgell. It's one thing to analyze the problem, but the American people expect us to come up with some solutions. And that's what we've been talking about. And one of the reasons we have a sense of urgency about this issue is that these problems that we've been discussing are clear to anybody who has been traveling. Airports are very crowded; travelers are being stranded; and flights are delayed,

sometimes with a full load of passengers sitting on the runway for hours. These failures carry some real costs for the country, not just in the inconvenience they cause, but in the business they obstruct and family gatherings they cause people to miss.

We can do better. We can have an aviation system that is improved. And that's what we're talking about. Secretary Peters and Acting Administrator Sturgell have been working with the airline industry on practical improvements. I want to announce a series of preliminary actions to help address the epidemic of aviation delays.

First, the military will make available some of its airspace over the east coast for use by civilian airliners this Thanksgiving. These new routes will help relieve air congestion from Maine to Florida for nearly 5 full days surrounding the holiday.

Second, the FAA is taking new measures to head off delays. Bobby Sturgell will impose a holiday moratorium on all non-essential projects so that the FAA can focus its personnel and equipment exclusively on keeping flights on time. The FAA is also

partnering with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to reduce bottlenecks in the New York metro area, which is the source of most chronic delays.

Third, the Department of Transportation and the FAA are encouraging airlines to take their own measures to prevent delays. I'm pleased to get the report from Secretary Peters and Acting Administrator Sturgell. Airlines have agreed to make more staff available to expedite check-in and boarding, to set aside extra seats and even extra planes to help accommodate passengers affected by cancellations and delays. They agreed to bring in additional ticket kiosks and baggage handling gear as well as rolling staircases.

Fourth, the Federal Government is using the Internet to provide real-time updates on flight delays. People in America have got to know there's a web site called fly.faa.gov; that's where the FAA transmits information on airport backups directly to passengers and their families. If you're interested in making sure that your plans can—aren't going to be disrupted, you can get on the web site of fly.faa.gov. As well, if you want to, you can sign up to receive delay notices on your mobile phones. In other words, part of making sure people are not inconvenienced is there to be good transmission of sound, real-time information.

Fifth, we're proposing new regulations to help ensure that airline passengers are treated fairly. We're proposing to double the amount of compensation passengers receive when they're forced off overbooked flights. For example, a passenger forced to wait more than 2 hours for another flight would receive a minimum of \$800 under our idea, instead of the current \$400. We want people who are responsible for moving passengers to understand that there will be consequences for these delays, all aiming to get the system to work better.

We're proposing a requirement that airlines collect better data on flight delays and provide that data to the Department of

Transportation. We're evaluating a number of other recommendations for the airlines, including mandatory contingency plans to aid stranded passengers and penalties for chronically delayed flights.

Finally, the Department of Transportation and the FAA are working on innovative ways to reduce congestion in the long run. While short-term improvements in flight operations and passenger treatment can help, they do not cure the underlying problem. In certain parts of our country, the demand for air service exceeds the available supply. As a result, airlines are scheduling more arrivals and departures than airports can possibly handle, and passengers are paying the price in backups and delays.

The key to solving this problem is managing the demand for flights at overloaded airports, and there are a variety of tools to do this in a fair and efficient way. For example, fees could be higher at peak hours and at crowded airports, or takeoff and landing rights could be auctioned to the highest value flights. Market-based incentives like these would encourage airlines to spread out their flights more evenly during the day, to make better use of neighboring airports, and to move the maximum number of passengers as quickly and efficiently as possible.

This concept is called congestion pricing. It has shown results in other areas of our economy; in other words, other parts of our economy use congestion pricing. Some States offer discounts to drivers who use E-ZPass, which reduces long waits at the toll plaza. Phone and electricity companies balance supply and demand by adjusting their rates during peak usage hours. Applying congestion pricing to the aviation industry has the potential to make today's system more predictable, more reliable, and more convenient for the travelers. Over the past 7 weeks, Federal officials have raised this idea with airlines and airport representatives in the New York area. And I've asked Secretary Peters and Acting Administrator

Sturgell to report back to me about those discussions next month.

My administration will work swiftly to carry out the measures I've announced today. But to reform our aviation system in a way American consumers deserve, we need action from the United States Congress. In February, my administration sent Congress an FAA modernization bill that would improve the aviation system for all involved. The bill would upgrade aviation technology by adopting a safer and more automated air travel control system based on GPS technology, instead of the radar and radio-based systems designed during World War II.

In other words, if we really want to solve this problem, it's time for Congress to modernize the FAA, and we've given them a blueprint to do so. The bill would employ market pricing to reduce congestion and ensure that airports manage their schedules

efficiently. The bill would establish a new financing mechanism and governing structure to ensure that these reforms are carried out in wise and cost-effective ways.

There are people in Congress who understand the need to act, starting with Senators Trent Lott and Senator Jay Rockefeller. They're leaders in this area of modernization of our—of the FAA. They understand that business as usual is not good enough for American travelers. And so do I, and so does my administration.

I look forward to working with them to get a good bill passed as soon as possible. By working together, we can restore the confidence of America's consumers, improve the efficiency of America's airports, and bring order to America's skies.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:26 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Federalist Society's 25th Annual Gala Dinner *November 15, 2007*

Thank you all very much. Thank you. So much for the dress code. [*Laughter*] I'm honored to be with you. Thanks. I appreciate being with an organization that understands the value of free speech, so much so that Gene asked if I'd give one. [*Laughter*] I told him I'd be happy, but I warned him that if you invite me back for the 30th anniversary, it's going to cost some billable hours. [*Laughter*]

In just a quarter century, the Federalist Society has transformed itself from a student organization into a vital national institution. You've earned a reputation across the ideological spectrum for open debate and intellectual rigor. Members of the Federalist Society believe in a simple proposition: Our written Constitution means what it says. One would not call that a radical statement. I certainly don't see how holding

such a commonsense view could be considered controversial. I share your devotion to the Constitution, and I'm proud to be standing with you tonight.

I was also proud to stand yesterday at the Department of Justice with America's new Attorney General, Michael Mukasey. Attorney General Mukasey is a decent man, an outstanding lawyer, and a strong leader, and he needs a strong team to support him at the Department of Justice. And so in consultation with the Attorney General, earlier today I announced the individuals I will nominate to serve in five senior positions. And I look forward to working with the United States Senate to fill these positions as quickly as possible.

I'm proud to be in such distinguished company as Justice Antonin Scalia and, of course, Maureen. I'm proud to be here

with Justice Clarence Thomas and his wife Ginni; Justice Sam Alito and Martha. I'm fortunate to have been able to pick two members of the U.S. Supreme Court, and I'm very proud of the service rendered by Justice John Roberts and Justice Sam Alito.

I appreciate the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, joining us. And she kindly brought her husband, Senator Mitch McConnell; from the great State of Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions.

I appreciate the attendance of former Attorney General Ed Meese, former Attorney General Bill Barr. How about your master of ceremonies, my good friend Ted Olson. I thank Gene Meyer and Leonard Leo.

When the Founders drafted the Constitution, they had a clear understanding of tyranny. They also had a clear idea about how to prevent it from ever taking root in America. Their solution was to separate the Government's powers into three co-equal branches: executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. Each of these branches plays a vital role in our free society; each serves as a check on the others. And to preserve our liberty, each must meet its responsibilities and resist the temptation to encroach on the powers the Constitution accords to the others.

For the judiciary, resisting this temptation is particularly important because it's the only branch that is unelected and whose officers serve for life. Unfortunately, some judges give in to the temptation and make law instead of interpreting it. Such judicial lawlessness is a threat to our democracy, and it needs to stop.

Tonight I will discuss a judicial philosophy that is based on what our Founders intended. I'm going to talk about the importance of having good judges who adhere to this philosophy. And I will explain the need to reform a confirmation process that is making it more difficult to persuade decent and intelligence people to accept the call to public service.

The President's oath of office commits him to do his best to "preserve, protect,

and defend the Constitution of the United States." I take these words seriously. I believe these words mean what they say. And I ask my nominees to the Federal bench to take seriously their own oath to uphold the Constitution, and that is because I strongly believe our freedom depends on the willingness of judges to be bound by the Constitution and the law.

Others take a different view. Advocates of a more active role for judges sometimes talk of a "living Constitution." In practice, a living Constitution means whatever these activists want it to mean. They forgot that our Constitution lives because we respect it enough to adhere to its words. It is—[applause]. Ours is the oldest written Constitution in the world. It is the foundation of America's experiment in self-government, and it will continue to live only so long as we continue to recognize its wisdom and division of authority.

In his confirmation hearings before the Senate, one judge I nominated to the bench used the analogy of a baseball umpire. He said: "Umpires don't make the rules; they apply them. The role of an umpire and a judge is critical. They make sure everybody plays by the rules." But when people see the umpire rooting for one team, public confidence in our courts is eroded, the sense of unfairness is heightened, and our political debates are poisoned. So we will insist on legislatures that legislate, on courts that adjudicate, and on judges who call the game fairly.

To be a good judge takes a special kind of person. A judge needs to be someone who is learned, someone who has common sense, and someone who has a healthy respect for precedent and the law. In addition, a judge must be independent enough to resist the temptations of politics or favorable treatment in the media, and a judge must be modest enough to appreciate the limited role he plays under the Constitution. This combination of learnedness and independence and modesty is not always easy to find, especially here in Washington,

DC. [Laughter] But it is absolutely essential for a judge.

These are the qualities you'll find in my nominees to our 13 Federal appeals courts. These appellate courts play a vital role in our legal system. While the Supreme Court may decide fewer than 100 cases in a year, the Federal appellate courts decide more than 30,000. That means that for most criminal appeals, for most civil appeals, and on most constitutional issues, the decisions of the appellate courts will be the law of the land.

As President, I've nominated many fine Americans to these courts. They understand that their role is to be the servant of the law, not its sovereign. I'm proud of the kind of men and women we now have sitting on these courts, judges such as Priscilla Owen, Janice Rogers Brown, Bill Pryor, judges like Brett Kavanaugh and Leslie Southwick.

Today I announced seven more outstanding judicial nominees for the district and circuit courts. And I look forward to working with the United States Senate to confirm these good men and women as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the Senate has failed to act on many of my other nominees. At times, it has imposed a new and extraconstitutional standard, where nominees who have the support of the majority of the Senate can be blocked by a minority of obstructionists. As a result, some judge-ships go unfulfilled for years. This leads to what are called judicial emergencies, vacancies that cause justice to be degraded or delayed. When Americans go to court, they deserve swift and fair answers, and the United States Senate should not stand in their way.

Three of my nominees to the courts of appeals have been waiting for a vote for more than a year. They include one of the organization's founders—one of this organization's founders, a man who served our Nation nobly as the Acting Attorney General, Peter Keisler. These delays are wrong.

It is an abdication of the Senate's responsibilities under our Constitution. And I call on Senate leaders to give these nominees, and all my nominees, the up-and-down vote they deserve on the floor of the United States Senate.

Senate confirmation is a part of the Constitution's system of checks and balances. But it was never intended to be a license to ruin the good name that a nominee has worked a lifetime to build. Today, good men and women nominated to the Federal bench are finding that inside the beltway, too many interpret "advise and consent" to mean "search and destroy."

As a result, the Senate is no longer asking the right question: whether a nominee is someone who will uphold our Constitution and laws. Instead, nominees are asked to guarantee specific outcomes of cases that might come before the court. If they refuse—as they should—they often find their nomination ends up in limbo instead of on the Senate floor. This is a terrible way to treat people who have agreed to serve their nation. It's a sad commentary on the United States Senate, and every time it happens, we lose something as a constitutional democracy.

Our Constitution prohibits a religious test for any Federal office, yet when people imply that a nominee is unfit for the bench because of the church where he worships, we lose something.

When a bar association issues what it claims are objective ratings about a nominee's professional qualifications, yet suddenly and without explanation lowers the rating of a nominee on the eve of his confirmation hearing, we lose something.

When government officials do their jobs and make difficult legal decisions, only to find their decisions later become the source of outrageous partisan allegations, we lose something.

And when the wife of a distinguished jurist proudly attends his hearing and is brought to tears by ugly and unfounded

insinuations that her husband is secretly a bigot, we lose something.

Everyone in this room has watched a good person who has had his or her name unfairly tarnished by the confirmation process. What you do not see are the good men and women who never make it to the confirmation process.

Lawyers approached about being nominated will politely decline because of the ugliness, uncertainty, and delay that now characterizes the confirmation process. Some cannot risk putting their law practices—their livelihoods—on hold for long months or years while the Senate delays action on their nominations. Some worry about the impact a nomination might have on their children, who would hear dad or mom's name unfairly dragged through the mud, so they decide to remove themselves from consideration.

When people like this decline to be nominated, they miss out on a great calling. But America is deprived of something far more important: the service of fair and impartial judges.

This is bad news. There's also good news, and it's here in this room. Thanks in part to your efforts, a new generation of lawyers is rising. A new culture is taking root in our legal community. And principled men and women who understand the Constitution and are able to defend it are finding their way to our Nation's law schools and law faculties and law firms and even to the corridors of power here in Washington, DC.

One of these good men is someone you know well. He was nominated by my father, and his confirmation process is a tale of all that is nasty and unkind in Washington. It is also a tale of perseverance and triumph.

On the day this good man was to be sworn in as a Justice on our Supreme Court, he was driving to the White House with his wife. As they waited at an intersection to make a turn, an 18-wheeler came barreling up beside their car and came to an abrupt stop. After a few seconds of trepidation, husband and wife watched as the truck driver rolled down his window, broke into a smile, and gave them a big thumbs up. In the fine memoir he recently published, Justice Clarence Thomas describes the moment this way: "Virginia and I looked at each other in astonishment and then thanked God for the good people of this country."

My appeal to you is this: Have faith in the good people of this country. Be true to the principles that brought you here tonight. And never lose that sense of wonder you felt when you first beheld the truths and wisdom of our founding documents.

Thanks for having me, and may God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. at Union Station. In his remarks, he referred to Eugene B. Meyer, president, Theodore B. Olson, member, board of visitors, and Leonard A. Leo, executive vice president, Federalist Society.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan November 16, 2007

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the White House. I really appreciate the opportunity to get to know you better. I'm looking forward to our lunch.

This is an important visit. It's the first visit the Prime Minister has taken since he has assumed his important office. It's a recognition that our alliance is vital for peace and security. The alliance between

our two countries is rooted deeply in our strong commitments to freedom and democracy. The Prime Minister and I are going to keep it that way. One of the things we've decided to do is to continue to make sure the U.S.-Japanese relationship is the cornerstone of security and peace. And I appreciate you being here.

We'll continue to work together to advance freedom, security, and prosperity in our respective regions and beyond. We discussed a lot of ways that we can make the world a better place by working together. We discussed North Korea and the six-party talks. I appreciate Japan's participation in the six-party talks. Together with China, Russia, and South Korea, our two nations are pressing North Korea to fulfill its obligation to abandon all its nuclear weapons programs as well as its proliferation efforts. The six-party talks have delivered measurable results. The plutonium production facilities at Yongbyon are now being disabled, under six-party supervision.

Hard work still remains to be done. North Korea has agreed to provide a full declaration of all its nuclear programs and proliferation activities by the end of this year. Full declaration is one of the next steps North Korea must take to keep the six-party talks moving towards the goal of a Korean Peninsula without nuclear weapons.

We also discussed the issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea. I reminded the Prime Minister of one of the most moving moments of my Presidency, when the mother of a young girl who had been abducted by the North Koreans came to visit me. I told her, and I'm going to tell the Japanese people once again, we will not forget this issue. I understand, Mr. Prime Minister, how important the issue is to the Japanese people, and we will not forget the Japanese abductees, nor their families.

We discussed Afghanistan and Iraq. Japanese naval forces have made valued contributions to Operation Enduring Freedom,

which supports Afghanistan's young democracy. Over 6 years, Japanese vessels refueled ships from 11 coalition nations nearly 800 times.

Mr. Prime Minister, I appreciate the great leadership that you are showing as you work to reauthorize the Japanese refueling mission. Japanese air defense—Self-Defense Forces continue to serve bravely to support coalition efforts in Iraq. Japanese planes have flown more than 600 sorties, carrying more than half a million tons of cargo from many nations. And, Mr. Prime Minister, like I told you in the Oval Office, I appreciate the contribution that the Japanese people are making to help this young democracy.

We discussed the realignment of our military forces, and we'll continue to do so with Secretary Gates over lunch. Our two nations continue to implement changes in our force posture that will help our alliance meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We discussed Iran. The Prime Minister and I agree that a nuclear-armed Iran would threaten the security of the Middle East and beyond. Our two nations are united in our efforts to change the regime's behavior through diplomacy. We agreed that unless Iran commits to suspend enrichment, international pressure must, and will, grow.

We discussed Burma. The Prime Minister and I condemned the regime's crack-down on democratic activists. We call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners. We're for a genuine dialog between the regime and those who seek a democratic future for Burma. U.S. sanctions on the regime are in place. Japan has canceled an aid grant. The Prime Minister told me his Government is reviewing other aid projects to ensure that they directly benefit the people of Burma.

We discussed our strong economic relationship. Prime Minister Fukuda and I discussed his plans for economic reform in

Japan. We discussed Doha and will continue our discussions over lunch.

I think we're going to serve the Prime Minister—I hope we serve him some good U.S. beef, which is a good way to bring up the subject of beef. We hope we're able to have the Japanese market fully open to all U.S. beef and beef products, consistent with international guidelines.

We discussed climate change and energy security. Our two nations share a similar approach to addressing the issues of climate change and energy security. We see real promise in our ongoing efforts to bring major developed and developing economies together around key elements of a future global agreement on climate change and energy security. And the truth of the matter is, we need to be in the lead, Mr. Prime Minister, because it's going to be our economies and our nations that develop most of the new technologies that will enable us to be better stewards of the environment.

And finally, we discussed the G-8, and I want to thank you for taking the lead in the G-8. I'm looking forward to attending.

All in all, we had a great discussion that will be continued during lunch. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the United States, and I thank you for your friendship.

Prime Minister Fukuda. Well, on this first overseas trip after taking office, I have come to this one and only ally for Japan, the United States of America. And I had a very substantive meeting with President Bush just now. And I look forward to a further exchange of views with the President after this. But since this is a very good opportunity, I would like to express some of my views on the basis of the discussions we had earlier.

First of all, we agreed with—that Japan-U.S. alliance is playing an indispensable role in enabling Japan and the United States to address global issues together and also provides the basis for our active diplomacy vis-a-vis Asia.

For over half a century, Japan and the United States, at times, have overcome difficulties together and have built a solid and resilient alliance. And we today enjoy this relationship thanks to the efforts made by countless people in our two countries and exchanges among them.

Now, to further cement the foundation for our bilateral relations in the future, without taking for granted our current solid relations, I explained to the President my initiative to strengthen Japan-U.S. exchanges, including intellectual exchanges. And I received heartfelt support for this idea from President Bush.

Secondly, we discussed synergies between our respective Asia policies and Japan-U.S. alliance. I explained to the President that the solid Japan-U.S. alliance will provide the foundation for Asia's peace and prosperity. And realizing a stable and open Asia that advances in prosperity by further deepening our relations with Asian countries on the basis of Japan-U.S. alliance will be in our mutual interests. And I told the President I'm convinced that such active diplomacy vis-a-vis Asia in turn will further strengthen our alliance.

Following this meeting here, I shall be attending a series of ASEAN-related summit meetings in Singapore, and I desired to visit Washington, DC, and have discussions with President Bush because of my belief regarding our alliance. And I'm extremely encouraged by the President's support.

We also discussed issues that Japan and U.S. need to address jointly, and particularly—in particular, North Korea and the fight against terrorism. With regard to North Korean nuclear programs, we agreed that Japan and U.S. need to maintain close coordination with each other, in order to achieve complete abandonment of all nuclear weapons and programs by North Korea, through the six-party talks. President Bush stated that he will never forget the abduction issue, and on that basis, he once

again expressed his commitment for unchanged support to the Japanese Government.

We should never allow Afghanistan to once again become a hotbed for terrorism. And we agreed that Japan and the United States should continue to work together with the international community in the fight against terrorism. And I communicated to President Bush that I shall do my level best to achieve an early passage of a bill for the early resumption of the refuel activities in the Indian Ocean by the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force. President Bush expressed his appreciation for Japan's support for the international community's fight against terrorism and the hope that refueling operations will be resumed soon.

With regard to Myanmar, I stated that I have been working on the Government of Myanmar for democratization and improvement of the human rights situation. And with regard to Iranian nuclear development, we cannot—never tolerate—and we agreed that we shall together work to raise pressure with the international community so that the—then Iran will comply with the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions.

And in this age of rapid changes, we—on the basis of Japan-U.S. alliance, Japan intends to exercise more active leadership in addressing the problems of Asia and international community.

And further, we shall have discussion with President Bush over lunch on new, important issues. Japan shall be holding—hosting two important national conferences next year. One is the G-8 summit at Lake Toya in Hokkaido, in July. And the important theme for that meeting will be climate change. On this issue, Japan and the United States, through close coordination over the past half year or so, have led international discussions. And through a new forum for negotiations at the U.N., we very much hope that we will have discussions with President on closer cooperation on global

warming measures so that concrete results will be achieved for an effective framework for the future.

And through further coordination, we would like to achieve a successful G-8 summit on the global climate change issue and other matters as well, because I believe that we can have useful discussions that will allow science and technology to achieve continued economic growth and also achieve global warming measures and energy security.

The other important conference Japan will be hosting is the International Conference in African Development, because that is a matter that the international community together should address. And this is the—[inaudible]—fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development that will be held in Japan in May. And we would like to tie the findings and results of that meeting to the G-8 summit. And again, we'd like to engage in cooperation with the United States. And there also is a question of health care in Africa, and again, we would like to work in cooperation with the United States on that health care issue.

As the world economy faces numerous challenges, Japan and the United States, I believe, should work together on a global scale in the economic area, including intellectual property protection and for the sustainable development of developing countries.

There was a reference to beef. I hope that—well, we are addressing the beef issue on the basis of scientific findings. We are still in the process of our bilateral meetings.

I wanted to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the very warm welcome by President Bush and the people of the United States. And I look forward to addressing our common challenges together, hand in hand with President Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sakie Yokota, mother

of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by North Korean authorities; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for De-

mocracy in Burma. Prime Minister Fukuda spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on National Adoption Day November 16, 2007

Thank you all. Nice line of work when you get introduced by your wife. *[Laughter]* Laura and I are sure glad you're here. We want to welcome Members of the Congress, Senators and Members of the House. Thank you all for coming. You're kind to take time to join our honored guests. We're really glad you're here in the White House. And we're pleased to join you on National Adoption Day. We offer a special welcome to the youngsters who have joined us. We're glad you all are here. You've just got to know this is the people's house. And I know you took time off from school to be here today. *[Laughter]* And I thank you for making such a difficult sacrifice. *[Laughter]*

I thank the members of the National Adoption Day coalition who have joined us. Few missions in life are more rewarding than uniting loving children with moms and dads for the very first time. Each of you has known this blessing. That's got to make you feel good in your soul. You've shared it with others, and in so doing, you've strengthened what is the very foundation of our country, and that is the American family. I want to thank you for being part of something that is so remarkable and so special.

It is fitting that we celebrate this day in a room honoring George Washington, or as some like to say, the original George W. *[Laughter]* There he is. He raised four children who were not his by birth. He cared for them, provided for them, and he offered them advice, even when they didn't want it. *[Laughter]* When one of his boys went off to college, Washington did what

many parents do—he checked up on him. And in 1798, he sent the young man a letter. It said, “I have, with much surprise, been informed of your devoting much time to a certain young lady.” And he went on to advise that “your application to books is not [what] it ought to be.” Well, some parents here today may be able to relate to this. It's probably hard to believe, but there was even a time when my dad—*[laughter]*—felt compelled to write such a letter. *[Laughter]*

Since Washington's time, this house has known many leaders who understood that not every family is defined by biology. A true family is defined by love. Around the corner, for example, is a portrait of a proud adopted son named Gerald R. Ford. A few steps away is the portrait of a proud adoptive father named Ronald Reagan. Close by is a proud grandfather of two adopted grandchildren, George H.W. Bush. And here in this room are children who have strengthened families and enriched communities and warmed hearts. You are the living reminders that adoptions are stories of celebration, stories of hope, and stories of love.

National Adoption Day also reminds us that not every child finds this happy ending. Each year, more than 100,000 foster children await adoption, and too many children will not find a permanent home. And so on this National Adoption Day, we remind our fellow citizens there's still plenty of acts of love to be done. Many people have worked with courts and foster homes and social workers to change that, and our Government has tried to help. And that's

why I'm so proud Members of Congress are here.

We have joined with community- and faith-based organizations to raise public awareness of foster children awaiting adoption. And we've worked with the Congress to assist families to overcome financial barriers to adopting children. Nothing is more vital to this country's future than helping young people find the love, stability, and support from families.

There's a man here—I told him—I warned him I was going to talk about him—and that's a fellow named Tom Wollack. I want my fellow citizens who may be listening to hear this story. Tom has much to be proud of. He served our country in Vietnam; he's a New York City firefighter. By the way, nothing finer than being a New York City firefighter. He rushed to the scene of the World Trade Center on September the 11th, 2001. While others were leaving, he's a bunch of them that went in.

Yet at the top of his list of achievements are his seven children. Three were foster children that Tom later adopted. They're here—two college and one soon-to-be college attendee. They were born to parents struggling with drug addiction. Today, they are deeply loved members of the Wollack family. He calls his family his foundation, and that foundation is here today, right here in the White House. We want to thank you for coming. I thank you for being a loving soul and truing our—showing our Nation the true meaning of family. Thank you, Tom.

Each of the families here has shown the world the depth and wonder of the human heart. And because of people like you, this Thanksgiving holiday will be particularly special for thousands of families in thousands of homes. Many children will be giving thanks for being part of a family they never thought they would have. Many parents will look across the table at children who once were strangers and who are now priceless treasures in their lives.

To the parents here today, please know how grateful we are that you have taken children in need of a hopeful start in life and made them your own. And to the young people here today, always remember that you are special not only because of what your parents have given you but because of the love and joy you have given them. So thankful that the parents and children here today have found the gift of one another. And I encourage our citizens across the land to explore adoption, look into the joys of adoption, and provide love for somebody who needs it.

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless you and your families. May God bless our country. And now I'd ask the talented Rodney Atkins to come up here and perform some songs for us to celebrate this special day. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. The National Adoption Day proclamation of October 31 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address *November 17, 2007*

Good morning. In a few days, our Nation will celebrate Thanksgiving. Like millions of Americans, Members of Congress will

travel home for the holiday. Unfortunately, as they get to work carving their turkeys, they're leaving a lot of unfinished work

back in Washington, DC. And unless they complete this work soon, middle class Americans will pay higher taxes and American troops will not receive the critical funding they need to fight and defeat our enemies.

Many middle class taxpayers will face higher tax bills unless Congress acts on the Alternative Minimum Tax, or AMT. The AMT was designed to ensure that the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT decades ago, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is creeping up on more and more middle class families.

To deal with this problem, Congress has in recent years passed temporary legislation that prevented most middle class taxpayers from having to pay the AMT. But this year, Congress has yet to pass this legislation. A failure to do so would mean that 25 million Americans would be subject to the AMT, more than six times the number that faced the tax last year. If you are one of those 25 million, you would have to send an average of \$2,000 more to the IRS next year. This is a huge tax increase that Americans do not expect and do not deserve.

The longer Congress waits to fix this problem, the worse it will get. Last month, Treasury Secretary Paulson wrote a letter to Members of Congress warning that delaying action on legislation to fix the AMT could create confusion for millions of taxpayers and delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Congress has ignored Secretary Paulson's warnings, and we are now beginning to see the consequences. On Friday, the tax forms for 2007 had to be sent to the Government Printer. And because of Congress's refusal to act, the IRS will be forced to send out tens of millions of tax forms that will almost certainly end up being wrong, wasting your money, delaying refunds, and making it even more complicated to figure out your taxes.

It is clear that Congress's failure to adjust the AMT for inflation was a mistake. Unfortunately, Congress seems determined to compound this original mistake by making another one. Last week, the House passed a bill that provides relief from the AMT but raises other taxes. Congress should not use legislation that millions of Americans are counting on to protect them from higher taxes in one area as an excuse to raise taxes in other areas. I will veto any bill that raises taxes as a condition of fixing the AMT. Members of Congress must put political theater behind them, fix the AMT, and protect America's middle class from an unfair tax hike.

Congress is also failing to meet its responsibilities to our troops. For months, Congress has delayed action on supplemental war funding because some in Congress want to make a political statement about the war. On Wednesday, the House passed a bill that once again has Congress directing our military commanders on how to conduct the war in Iraq as a condition for funding our troops. We do not need Members of Congress telling our commanders what to do. We need Congress listening to our military commanders and giving them what they need to win the war against extremists and radicals. Congress knows I'll veto this bill. During this time of war, our troops deserve the full support of Congress, and that means giving our troops the funding they need to successfully carry out their mission. I urge Congress to work quickly and send me a clean bill, so we can fulfill our obligation to our brave men and women in uniform.

With both of these delays, congressional leaders are choosing political posturing over the priorities of the people. These choices have real-world consequences for our taxpayers and our troops. When Members of Congress return from their 2-week long Thanksgiving vacation, they will have only a few weeks left on the legislative calendar before they go home again for their Christmas break. I call on Congress to use the

time that is left to do what is right and pass AMT relief and fund our troops in combat.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on November 16 in the Cabinet Room at the

White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 16, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at Berkeley Plantation in Charles City, Virginia *November 19, 2007*

Thank you all. Thanks very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. I am proud to be back in the great State of Virginia. I particularly appreciate the chance to visit Berkeley Plantation. I thank the good people who care for this historic treasure. Over the years, Presidents have visited Berkeley. President William Henry Harrison called it home. As a matter of fact, it was here where he composed the longest inauguration speech in history. *[Laughter]* He went on for nearly 2 hours. You don't need to worry; I'm not going to try to one up him today. *[Laughter]*

Berkeley also claims to be the site of America's first official Thanksgiving. The good folks here say that the founders of Berkeley held their celebration before the pilgrims had even left port. As you can imagine, this version of events is not very popular up North. *[Laughter]* But even the administration of President Kennedy—a son of Massachusetts—recognized Berkeley's role in this important holiday. And so this afternoon I've come to honor Berkeley's history and to continue the great American tradition of giving thanks.

Laura sends her best. Now, most people say, "I wish she'd have come and not you." *[Laughter]* She's doing just fine, and I know she is going to be envious when I describe how beautiful this part of the country is. And I thank you for giving me a chance to come.

I want to thank my friend Tom Saunders, who is the founder of the Saunders Trust for American History at the New York Historical Society. That means he and his wife Jordan are raising money to make sure this site is as beautiful as it is and stays an important part of our history and legacy.

I thank Judy and Jamie Jamieson, who happen to be the owners of this beautiful site, and I appreciate your hospitality. I can't help but recognize my daughter's future father-in-law. *[Laughter]* I appreciate you coming. A lot of people think she's showed some pretty good common sense to marry somebody from Virginia. He's doing all right himself. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the fact that the Congressman from this district, Congressman Bobby Scott, is with us. Thanks for coming, Bobby. Congressman Eric Cantor from Richmond is with us. And Congressman Randy Forbes, appreciate you coming, Randy.

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, Bill Bolling, for joining us. Thank you for coming, Governor. Bob McDonnell, the Attorney General—General, I appreciate you being here. I had the honor of meeting the high sheriff. Sheriff, thank you and your law enforcement officials. I'm proud to be with you. I want to thank all the local officeholders and State officeholders. And most of all, thank you for letting me come by, and I appreciate you coming.

Every November, we celebrate the traditions of Thanksgiving; we're fixing to do so again. We remember that the pilgrims great—gave thanks after their first harvest in New England. We remember that George Washington led his men in Thanksgiving during the American Revolution. And we remember that Abraham Lincoln revived the Thanksgiving tradition in the midst of a bloody civil war.

Yet few Americans remember much about Berkeley. They don't know the story of the Berkeley Thanksgiving. This story has its beginnings in the founding of the colony of Virginia four centuries ago. As the colony grew, settlers ventured beyond the walls of Jamestown and into the surrounding countryside. The Berkeley Company of England acquired 8,000 acres of nearby land and commissioned an expedition to settle it.

In 1619, a band of 38 settlers departed Bristol, England, for Berkeley aboard a ship like the one behind me. At the end of their long voyage, the men reviewed their orders from home. And here's what the orders said: "The day of our ship's arrival . . . shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God." Upon hearing those orders, the men fell to their knees in prayer. And with this humble act of faith, the settlers celebrated their first Thanksgiving in the New World.

In the years that followed, the settlers at Berkeley faced many hardships. And in 1622, the settlement was destroyed. Berkeley became a successful plantation after it was rebuilt, when people returned to this site. And it is an important part of our history. And as we look back on the story of Berkeley, we remember that we live in a land of many blessings.

The story of Berkeley reminds us that we live in a land of opportunity. We remember that the settlers at Berkeley came to America with the hope of building a better life. And we remember that immigrants in every generation have followed

in their footsteps. Their dreams have helped transform 13 small Colonies into a large and growing nation of more than 300 million people.

Today, we're blessed with great prosperity. We're blessed with farmers and ranchers who provide us with abundant food. We're blessed with the world's finest workers, with entrepreneurs who create new jobs. We're blessed with devoted teachers who prepare our children for the opportunities of tomorrow. We're blessed with a system of free enterprise that makes it possible for people of all backgrounds to rise in society and realize their dreams. These blessings have helped us build a strong and growing economy, and these blessings have filled our lives full of hope.

The story of Berkeley reminds us that we live in a nation dedicated to liberty. In 1776, Berkeley's owner, Benjamin Harrison, became one of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. In the Declaration, we see the Founders' great hope for our country, their conviction that we're all created equal, with the God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

At times, America has fallen short of these ideals. We remember that the expansion of our country came at a terrible cost to Native American tribes. We remember that many people came to the New World in chains rather than by choice. For many years, slaves were held against their will here at Berkeley and other plantations, and their bondage is a shameful chapter in our Nation's history.

Today, we're grateful to live in a more perfect Union. Yet our society still faces divisions that hold us back. These divisions have roots in the bitter experiences of our past and have no place in America's future. The work of realizing the ideals of our founding continues, and we must not rest until the promise of America is real for all our citizens.

We're also grateful to live in a time when freedom is taking hold in places where liberty was once unimaginable. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the number of democracies in the world has more than doubled. From our own history, we know these young democracies will face challenges and setbacks in the journey ahead. Yet as they travel the road to freedom, they must know that they will have a constant and reliable friend in the United States of America.

The story of Berkeley reminds us to honor those who have sacrificed in the cause of freedom. During the Civil War, Union forces at Berkeley adopted a nightly bugle call that has echoed throughout the ages. The bugle call has become known as "Taps." And when we hear it play, we remember that the freedoms we enjoyed have come at a heavy price.

Today, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces are taking risks for our freedom. They're fighting on the frontlines of the war on terror, the war against extremists and radicals who would do us more harm. Many of them will spend Thanksgiving far from the comforts of home. And so we thank them for their service and sacrifice. We keep their families and loved ones in our prayers. We pray for the families who lost a loved one in this fight against the extremists and radicals, and we vow that their sacrifice will not be in vain.

This Thanksgiving, we pay tribute to all Americans who serve a cause larger than themselves. We are thankful for the police officers who patrol our streets. We're thankful for the firefighters who protect our homes and property. We're thankful for the leaders of our churches and synagogues and all faith-based organizations that call us to live lives of charity. We're thankful of the ordinary citizens who become good Samaritans in times of distress.

This Thanksgiving, we remember the many examples of the good heart of the American people that we have seen this past year. We remember the Virginia Tech

professor who died blocking a gunman from entering his classroom. As a survivor of the Holocaust, Professor Liviu Librescu had seen the worst of humanity, yet through his sacrifice, he showed us the best.

We remember the Minneapolis man who was escorting a busload of children when the bridge underneath them collapsed. Jeremy Hernandez responded to this emergency with courage. He broke open the back door of the bus, and he helped lead every child on board to safety.

We remember the people in New Orleans who are rebuilding a great American city. One of them is Principal Doris Hicks. After Katrina, many said that her school could never return to its building in the Lower Ninth Ward. But Principal Hicks had a different point of view; she had a different attitude. As a matter of fact, she had a uniquely American attitude. She had a vision for a resurgent community with a vibrant school at its heart. This summer, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology became the first public school to reopen in the Lower Ninth Ward.

These stories remind us that our Nation's greatest strength is the decency and compassion of our people. As we count our many blessings, I encourage all Americans to show their thanks by giving back. You know, I just visited the Central Virginia Foodbank. If you're living in Richmond and you want to give back, help the Central Virginia Foodbank. The volunteers there help prepare thousands of meals for the poor each day. And in so doing, they make the Richmond community and our Nation a more hopeful place. And there are many ways to spread hope this holiday: volunteer in a shelter, mentor a child, help an elderly neighbor, say thanks to one who wears our Nation's uniform.

In the four centuries since the founders of Berkeley first knelt on these grounds, our Nation has changed in many ways. Our people have prospered; our Nation has

grown; our Thanksgiving traditions have evolved—after all, they didn't have football back then. [Laughter] Yet the source of all our blessings remains the same. We give thanks to the Author of Life who granted our forefathers safe passage to this land, who gives every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth the gift of freedom, and who watches over our Nation every day.

I wish you all a safe and happy Thanksgiving. I offer Thanksgiving greetings to

every American citizen. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John H. Hager, chairman, Republican Party of Virginia; and Beverly A. Washington, sheriff, Charles City County, Virginia. The related Thanksgiving Day proclamation of November 15 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Resignation of Frances Fragos Townsend as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism *November 19, 2007*

Over the past 4½ years, Fran Townsend has served my administration with distinction as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. Fran has always provided wise counsel on how to best protect the American people from the threat of terrorism. She has been a steady leader in the effort to prevent and disrupt attacks and to better respond to natural disasters.

Fran's remarkable career as a public servant has spanned more than two decades. She has prosecuted violent crimes, narcotics offenses, mafia cases, and white collar fraud as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn and as an assistant U.S. attorney in Manhattan. During her career, Fran worked to protect the American people as the Counsel to the Attorney General for Intelligence Policy, the Assistant Com-

mandant for Intelligence at the U.S. Coast Guard, and as the Deputy National Security Adviser for Combating Terrorism at the National Security Council.

With her extensive experience, intellect, and candor, Fran has ably guided the Homeland Security Council. She has played an integral role in the formation of the key strategies and policies my administration has used to combat terror and protect Americans. She has traveled the world to meet with allies in the global war on terror and has partnered extensively with first-responders at the State and local level to enhance our preparedness. We are safer today because of her leadership.

Laura and I wish Fran, her husband John, and their two sons James and Patrick, all the best.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony *November 20, 2007*

The President. Good morning. Welcome to the Rose Garden. Thanks for coming.

We're glad you're here at the White House. Each of you is taking part in a tradition

that goes back to the days of Harry Truman. And to paraphrase Harry today, we have a message for our two feathered friends: You cannot take the heat, and you're definitely going to stay out of the kitchen. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the representatives of the National Turkey Federation who have joined us—the chairman, Ted Seger. Appreciate you coming, Ted, thanks. Ted brought his mom—glad you're here—7 brothers, and over 30 family members, I think it is. No wonder there are so many people in the Rose Garden. *[Laughter]* But we're glad you're here. Welcome.

I also want to welcome President Joel Brandenberger. The turkeys in today's ceremony come from the Seger family farm in Dubois, Indiana. So I guess you can say they come with the chairman's seal of approval.

I also thank everybody who voted online to choose the names for our guests of honor. And I'm pleased to announce the winning names. They are "May" and "Flower." They're certainly better than the names the Vice President suggested, which was "Lunch" and "Dinner." *[Laughter]*

The national observation of Thanksgiving goes back to the days of our Founders. They asked Americans to give thanks for a nation that Benjamin Franklin famously compared to a rising sun. Over the years, Americans have found much to be thankful for. We still see our country the way Franklin did, or as the poet Carl Sandburg put it: "In the crimson light of a rising sun fresh from the hand of God."

This Thanksgiving, we are grateful for a harvest big enough to feed us all and millions more. We're grateful for citizens who reach out to those who struggle and for neighbors in need—from neighbors in need to the strangers they've never met. We're grateful for working Americans who've given us the longest period of uninterrupted job creation on record and a prosperity that lifts our citizens. And we are grateful for one blessing in particular:

the men and women of the United States military. They've worn proudly the uniform of our country. They have offered their lives in our defense. And each year, thousands more volunteer to join their noble ranks and to keep us safe. And so on this Thanksgiving, we keep our—we keep their families and their loved ones in our prayers and in our thoughts.

[At this point, the turkeys gobbled.]

The President. Thank you. *[Laughter]*

America's children also have a special place in our thoughts during this season. Don't you agree? Today we're proud to be joined from—youngsters from the Camp Fire USA. We're glad you all are here. It's a nationwide organization that helps children become caring and confident future leaders. One of the things Laura and I have been most thankful for over the years is the chance to meet children from across the country and to hear from thousands of others. Some send photos; some offer prayers; some of them ask about Barney. A second grader from California once asked me, "Do you ever get a headache?" Not really, only when I have a press conference. *[Laughter]* Some children send letters with the same—with the simple phrase, "God bless America." Others write about relatives serving in the war, and they hope I remember them.

Earlier this year, a little girl in Oregon sent me a picture she had drawn. It's a large American flag, and it stood in the glow of bright orange sun. The spirit that inspired Franklin and Sandburg and other generations of America lives in the heart of this child. She sees America in the light of a rising sun. And so do I, and so do millions of our citizens. It's hard to be anything but grateful when you live in a country full of compassionate and decent citizens, a land our Fathers always knew was blessed by the Almighty God.

And so now I have a task, and that is to grant a full Presidential pardon to May

and Flower. They'll be shortly flown to Disney World, where they will serve as honorary grand marshals for the Thanksgiving Day Parade. I hope that honor doesn't go to their head. [*Laughter*] May they live the rest of their lives in blissful gobbling. And may all Americans enjoy a holiday full of love and peace. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Joel Brandenberger, president, National Turkey Federation. The related Thanksgiving Day proclamation of November 15 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address *November 24, 2007*

Good morning. This week, our Nation celebrated Thanksgiving. American families and friends gathered together to express gratitude for all that we have been given. We give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy. We give thanks for the loved ones who enrich our lives. And we give thanks for the many gifts that come from this prosperous land. Thanksgiving is a time when we acknowledge that all of these things, and life itself, come not from the hand of man, but from Almighty God.

Earlier this week, I visited Berkeley Plantation in Virginia. The story of this historic setting goes back nearly four centuries to another day of thanks. In 1619, a band of 38 settlers departed Bristol, England, for Berkeley. At the end of their long voyage, the men reviewed their orders from home. The orders said, quote, "The day of our ship's arrival . . . shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God." In response, the men fell to their knees in prayer. And with this humble act of faith, the settlers celebrated their first Thanksgiving in the New World.

Berkeley's settlers remind us that giving thanks has been an American tradition from the beginning. At this time of year, we also remember the Pilgrims at Plymouth who gave thanks after their first harvest in New England. We remember George Washington, who led his men in Thanksgiving during the American Revolution. We re-

member Abraham Lincoln, who revived the Thanksgiving tradition in the midst of a terrible civil war.

Throughout our history, Americans have always taken time to give thanks for all those whose sacrifices protect and strengthen our Nation. We continue that tradition today, and we give thanks for a new generation of patriots who are defending our liberty around the world. We are grateful to all our men and women in uniform who are spending this holiday weekend far from their families. We keep them in our thoughts and prayers. And we especially remember those who have given their lives in our Nation's defense.

One of these brave Americans was Lieutenant Michael Murphy. In June 2005, this officer gave his life in defense of his fellow Navy SEALs. Michael was conducting surveillance on a mountain ridge in Afghanistan, when his four-man SEAL team was surrounded by a much larger enemy force. Their only escape was down the side of the mountain. The SEALs launched a valiant counterattack while cascading from cliff to cliff. But as the enemy closed in, Michael recognized that the survival of his men depended on calling back to base for reinforcements.

With complete disregard for his own life, Michael Murphy moved into a clearing where he could get a signal. As he made the call, Michael fell under heavy fire.

Though severely wounded, he said thank you before signing off and returned to the fight. His heroism cost him his life and earned him our Nation's highest decoration for valor, the Medal of Honor. This week-end, we give thanks for the blessings of young Americans like Lieutenant Michael Murphy, who risk their own lives to keep us safe.

We're also blessed by the many other Americans who serve a cause larger than themselves. Each day, our Nation's police and firefighters and emergency responders and faith-based and community volunteers dedicate their time to serving others. While we were enjoying our Thanksgiving turkeys, tens of thousands of these men and women were on the job, keeping their fellow citizens safe and bringing hope and compassion to our brothers and sisters in need. And their sacrifice reminds us that the true strength of our Nation is the goodness and decency of our people.

Since America's first Thanksgiving, we have changed in many ways. Our population has grown. Our people have prospered. And we have become a great beacon of hope and freedom for millions around the world. Despite these changes, the source of all our blessings remains the same. We are grateful to the Author of Life who blessed our Nation's first days, who strengthened America in times of trial and war, and who watches over us today.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2 p.m. on November 20 at Camp David, MD, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 23, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Annapolis Conference *November 25, 2007*

I am pleased to welcome Prime Minister Olmert, President Abbas, and representatives of more than 40 countries to the United States for the November 27 Annapolis Conference. The broad attendance at this conference by regional states and other key international participants demonstrates the international resolve to seize this important opportunity to advance freedom and peace in the Middle East.

This conference will signal international support for the Israelis' and Palestinians' intention to commence negotiations on the establishment of a Palestinian state and the realization of peace between these two peoples.

It will also provide an opportunity for the Israelis, the Palestinians, and their neighbors to recommit to implementing the

roadmap, with the U.S. monitoring their progress by the parties' agreement.

Finally, the conference will review Palestinian plans to build the institutions of a democratic state and their preparations for next month's donors' conference in Paris.

I remain personally committed to implementing my vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The Israelis and Palestinians have waited a long time for this vision to be realized, and I call upon all those gathering in Annapolis this week to redouble their efforts to turn dreams of peace into reality. I look forward to my discussions with Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas this week, as well as to addressing the conference along with them on Tuesday.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel November 26, 2007

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. It's an honor to have you back in the Oval Office. Thanks for coming to the Annapolis Conference. I'm looking forward to continuing our serious dialog with you and the President of the Palestinian Authority to see whether or not peace is possible. I'm optimistic. I know you're optimistic, and I want to thank you for your courage and your friendship. I'm proud of you—I'm proud of you.

Prime Minister Olmert. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm delighted to come with my colleagues to—another time to the Oval Office. This time it's different because we are going to have lots of participants in what I hope will launch a serious process of negotiations between us and the

Palestinians. This will be a bilateral process, but the international support is very important for us.

And I thank you for the efforts that you, President, made in order to make it possible, and the Secretary of State, together with us, in order to come to this point where from we and the Palestinians will sit together in Jerusalem and work out something that will be very good to create a great hope for our peoples.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority November 26, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome.

President Abbas. Thank you.

President Bush. Yes. It's good to have you back here in the Oval Office. Thank you for coming, and thank you for working hard to implement a vision for a Palestinian state.

We want to help you. We want there to be peace. We want the people in the Palestinian Territories to have hope. And we thank you for your willingness to sit down with Israel to negotiate the settlement.

The United States cannot impose our vision, but we can help facilitate. And the process will begin tonight at the State Department and then on to Annapolis tomorrow. And I want to thank you for coming. Wish you all the very best.

President Abbas. I am delighted to have the opportunity to meet with President Bush after his invitation and this historic initiative that he launched to convene the Annapolis Conference. We have a great deal of hope that this conference will produce a permanent status negotiations, expanded negotiations over all permanent

status issues that would lead to a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian people, an agreement to secure security and stability.

President Bush's initiative is a great initiative. We will continue to rely on his support and the support of the United States

and his administration in order to achieve the intended objective. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Situation in Russia *November 26, 2007*

I am deeply concerned about the detention of numerous human rights activists and political leaders who participated in peaceful rallies in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, and Nazran this weekend. I am particularly troubled by the use of force by law enforcement authorities to stop these peaceful activities and to prevent

some journalists and human rights activists from covering them.

The freedoms of expression, assembly, and press, as well as due process, are fundamental to any democratic society. I am hopeful that the Government of Russia will honor its international obligations in these areas, investigate allegations of abuses, and free those who remain in detention.

Statement on Senator C. Trent Lott's Decision Not To Seek Reelection *November 26, 2007*

For more than three decades, Trent Lott has been an outstanding advocate in the United States Congress for the people of Mississippi. With service in the Republican leadership in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, he has skillfully advanced legislation and effectively championed key principles of our party, including low taxes and a strong national defense.

Trent has worked to enhance the economic vitality of our Nation and his home State throughout his career. By focusing on the important defense, transportation, infrastructure, agricultural, and educational needs of Mississippi, he has helped bring

new development and opportunity to his constituents.

Throughout his service, Trent has always been a leader, someone his colleagues have known they could count on to stay true to his principles, while working cooperatively to achieve results for the American people. Trent enjoyed bipartisan respect because of his reverence for the institutions of Congress and because Republicans and Democrats knew they could count on him to keep his commitments and his word. His immense talent will be missed in our Nation's Capital. Laura and I wish him and his wife Tricia all the best.

Joint Declaration by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq: Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America

November 26, 2007

As Iraqi leaders confirmed in their Communiqué signed on August 26, 2007, and endorsed by President Bush, the Governments of Iraq and the United States are committed to developing a long-term relationship of cooperation and friendship as two fully sovereign and independent states with common interests. This relationship will serve the interest of coming generations based on the heroic sacrifices made by the Iraqi people and the American people for the sake of a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal, and unified Iraq.

The relationship of cooperation envisioned by the Republic of Iraq and the United States includes a range of issues, foremost of which is cooperation in the political, economic, cultural, and security fields, taking account of the following principles:

First: The Political, Diplomatic, and Cultural Spheres

1. Supporting the Republic of Iraq in defending its democratic system against internal and external threats.

2. Respecting and upholding the Constitution as the expression of the will of the Iraqi people and standing against any attempt to impede, suspend, or violate it.

3. Supporting the efforts of the Republic of Iraq to achieve national reconciliation including as envisioned in the Communiqué of August 26.

4. Supporting the Republic of Iraq's efforts to enhance its position in regional and international organizations and institutions so that it may play a positive and constructive role in the region and the world.

5. Cooperating jointly with the states of the region on the basis of mutual respect, non-intervention in internal affairs, rejection

of the use of violence in resolving disputes, and adoption of constructive dialogue in resolving outstanding problems among the various states of the region.

6. Promoting political efforts to establish positive relationships between the states of the region and the world, which serve the common goals of all relevant parties in a manner that enhances the security and stability of the region, and the prosperity of its peoples.

7. Encouraging cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges between the two countries.

Second: The Economic Sphere

1. Supporting Iraq's development in various economic fields, including its productive capabilities, and aiding its transition to a market economy.

2. Encouraging all parties to abide by their commitments as stipulated in the International Compact with Iraq.

3. Supporting the building of Iraq's economic institutions and infrastructure with the provision of financial and technical assistance to train and develop competencies and capacities of vital Iraqi institutions.

4. Supporting Iraq's further integration into regional and international financial and economic organizations.

5. Facilitating and encouraging the flow of foreign investments to Iraq, especially American investments, to contribute to the reconstruction and rebuilding of Iraq.

6. Assisting Iraq in recovering illegally exported funds and properties, especially those smuggled by the family of Saddam Hussein and his regime's associates, as well as antiquities and items of cultural heritage, smuggled before and after April 9, 2003.

7. Helping the Republic of Iraq to obtain forgiveness of its debts and compensation for the wars waged by the former regime.

8. Supporting the Republic of Iraq to obtain positive and preferential trading conditions for Iraq within the global marketplace including accession to the World Trade Organization and most favored nation status with the United States.

Third: The Security Sphere

1. Providing security assurances and commitments to the Republic of Iraq to deter foreign aggression against Iraq that violates its sovereignty and integrity of its territories, waters, or airspace.

2. Supporting the Republic of Iraq in its efforts to combat all terrorist groups, at the forefront of which is Al-Qaeda, Saddamists, and all other outlaw groups regardless of affiliation, and destroy their logistical networks and their sources of finance, and defeat and uproot them from Iraq. This support will be provided consistent with mechanisms and arrangements to be established in the bilateral cooperation agreements mentioned herein.

3. Supporting the Republic of Iraq in training, equipping, and arming the Iraqi Security Forces to enable them to protect Iraq and all its peoples, and completing the building of its administrative systems, in accordance with the request of the Iraqi government.

The Iraqi Government in confirmation of its resolute rights under existing Security Council resolutions will request to extend the mandate of the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter for a final time. As a condition for this request, following the expiration of the above mentioned extension, Iraq's status under Chapter VII and its designation as a threat to international peace and security will end, and Iraq will return to the legal and international standing it enjoyed prior to the issuance of U.N. Security Council Resolution No. 661 (August, 1990), thus enhancing the recognition and confirming the full sovereignty of Iraq over its territories, waters, and airspace, and its control over its forces and the administration of its affairs.

Taking into account the principles discussed above, bilateral negotiations between the Republic of Iraq and the United States shall begin as soon as possible, with the aim to achieve, before July 31, 2008, agreements between the two governments with respect to the political, cultural, economic, and security spheres.

President of the
United States of America
George W. Bush

Prime Minister of the
Republic of Iraq
Nouri Kamel Al-Maliki

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

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for
Annapolis Conference Participants
November 26, 2007

Madam Secretary, thank you for your hospitality. I was wondering where my place is. [*Laughter*] I appreciate very much your hosting this important dinner.

Prime Minister Olmert, welcome. President Abbas, Secretary-General Ban, former Prime Minister Tony Blair, and all those

who have gathered here in the cause of peace, welcome to the United States. We're glad you're here.

We've come together this week because we share a common goal: two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Achieving this goal requires difficult compromises, and the Israelis and Palestinians have elected leaders committed to making them. Achieving this goal requires neighbors committed to peace between Israel and a new Palestinian state, and I'm encouraged by the presence of so many here. Achieving this goal requires the commitment of the international community, including the United States. Tonight I restate my personal commitment on behalf of the United States to all those in the Middle East who wish to live in freedom and peace. We stand with you at the Annapolis Conference and beyond.

The extremists and terrorists want our efforts to fail. They're working actively to undermine every effort as we try to achieve

peace and reconciliation. We offer a more hopeful vision of a Middle East growing in freedom and dignity and prosperity. We are here to renew our efforts to achieve this vision. And tonight I offer a toast to all of our honored guests and to the future of peace that we can build together.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:10 p.m. at the Department of State. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Quartet Representative in the Middle East.

Remarks at the Annapolis Conference in Annapolis, Maryland November 27, 2007

Thank you for coming, Prime Minister Olmert, President Abbas, Secretary-General Ban, former Prime Minister Blair, distinguished guests: Welcome to one of the finest institutes we have in America, the United States Naval Academy. We appreciate you joining us in what I believe is an historic opportunity to encourage the expansion of freedom and peace in the Holy Land.

We meet to lay the foundation for the establishment of a new nation, a democratic Palestinian state that will live side by side with Israel in peace and security. We meet to help bring an end to the violence that has been the true enemy of the aspirations of both the Israelis and Palestinians.

We're off to a strong start. I'm about to read a statement that was agreed upon by our distinguished guests.

"The representatives of the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, represented re-

spective by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas in his capacity as Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee and President of the Palestinian Authority, have convened in Annapolis, Maryland, under the auspices of President George W. Bush of the United States of America, and with the support of the participants of this international conference, having concluded the following joint understanding.

"We express our determination to bring an end to bloodshed, suffering, and decades of conflict between our peoples; to usher in a new era of peace, based on freedom, security, justice, dignity, respect, and mutual recognition; to propagate a culture of peace and nonviolence; to confront terrorism and incitement, whether committed by Palestinians or Israelis. In furtherance of the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, we agree to immediately launch good-

faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty, resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, as specified in previous agreements.

"We agree to engage in vigorous, ongoing, and continuous negotiations and shall make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008. For this purpose, a steering committee, led jointly by the head of the delegation of each party, will meet continuously, as agreed. The steering committee will develop a joint work plan and establish and oversee the work of negotiations teams to address all issues, to be headed by one lead representative from each party. The first session of the steering committee will be held on 12 December 2007.

"President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert will continue to meet on a biweekly basis to follow up the negotiations in order to offer all necessary assistance for their advancement.

"The parties also commit to immediately implement their respective obligations under the performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, issued by the Quartet on 30 April 2003—this is called the roadmap—and agree to form an American, Palestinian, and Israeli mechanism, led by the United States, to follow up on the implementation of the roadmap.

"The parties further commit to continue the implementation of the ongoing obligations of the roadmap until they reach a peace treaty. The United States will monitor and judge the fulfillment of the commitment of both sides of the roadmap. Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, implementation of the future peace treaty will be subject to the implementation of the roadmap as judged by the United States."

Congratulations for your strong leadership.

The Palestinian people are blessed with many gifts and talents. They want the opportunity to use those gifts to better their

own lives and build a future for their children. They want the dignity that comes with sovereignty and independence. They want justice and equality under the rule of law. They want freedom from violence and fear.

The people of Israel have just aspirations as well. They want their children to be able to ride a bus or to go to school without fear of suicide bombers. They want an end to rocket attacks and constant threats of assault. They want their nation to be recognized and welcomed in the region where they live.

Today, Palestinians and Israelis each understand that helping the other to realize their aspirations is key to realizing their own aspirations, both require an independent, democratic, viable Palestinian state. Such a state will provide Palestinians with the chance to lead lives of freedom and purpose and dignity. Such a state will help provide the Israelis with something they have been seeking for generations: to live in peace with their neighbors.

Achieving this goal is not going to be easy. If it were easy, it would have happened a long time ago. To achieve freedom and peace, both Israelis and Palestinians will have to make tough choices. Both sides are sober about the work ahead, but having spent time with their leaders, they are ready to take on the tough issues. As Prime Minister Olmert recently put it: "We will avoid none of the historic questions; we will not run from discussing any of them." As President Abbas has said: "I believe that there is an opportunity not only for us but for the Israelis too. We have a historic and important opportunity that we must benefit from." It is with that spirit that we concluded—that they concluded this statement I just read.

Our purpose here in Annapolis is not to conclude an agreement. Rather, it is to launch negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. For the rest of us, our job is to encourage the parties in this

effort and to give them the support they need to succeed.

In light of recent developments, some have suggested that now is not the right time to pursue peace. I disagree. I believe now is precisely the right time to begin these negotiations for a number of reasons.

First, the time is right because Palestinians and Israelis have leaders who are determined to achieve peace. President Abbas seeks to fulfill his people's aspirations for statehood, dignity, and security. President Abbas understands that a Palestinian state will not be born of terror and that terrorism is the enemy standing in the way of a state. He and Prime Minister Fayyad have both declared, without hesitation, that they are opposed to terrorism and committed to peace. They're committed to turning these declarations into actions on the ground to combat terror.

The emergence of responsible Palestinian leaders has given Israeli leaders the confidence they need to reach out to the Palestinians in true partnership. Prime Minister Olmert has expressed his understanding of the suffering and indignities felt by the Palestinian people. He's made clear that the security of Israel will be enhanced by the establishment of a responsible, democratic Palestinian state. With leaders of courage and conviction on both sides, now is the time to come together and seek the peace that both sides desire.

Second, the time is right because a battle is underway for the future of the Middle East, and we must not cede victory to the extremists. With their violent actions and contempt for human life, the extremists are seeking to impose a dark vision on the Palestinian people, a vision that feeds on hopelessness and despair to sow chaos in the Holy Land. If this vision prevails, the future of the region will be endless terror, endless war, and endless suffering.

Standing against this dark vision are President Abbas and his Government. They are offering the Palestinian people an alternative vision for the future: a vision of

peace, a homeland of their own, and a better life. If responsible Palestinian leaders can deliver on this vision, they will deal the forces of extremism a devastating blow. And when liberty takes root in the rocky soil of the West Bank and Gaza, it will inspire millions across the Middle East who want their societies built on freedom and peace and hope.

By contrast, if Palestinian reformers cannot deliver on this hopeful vision, then the forces of extremism and terror will be strengthened, a generation of Palestinians could be lost to the extremists, and the Middle East will grow in despair. We cannot allow this to happen. Now is the time to show Palestinians that their dream of a free and independent state can be achieved at the table of peace and that the terror and violence preached by Palestinian extremists is the greatest obstacle to a Palestinian state.

Third, the time is right because the world understands the urgency of supporting these negotiations. We appreciate that representatives from so many governments and international institutions have come to join us here in Annapolis, especially the Arab world. We're here because we recognize what is at stake. We are here because we each have a vital role to play in helping Palestinians forge the institutions of a free society. We're here because we understand that the success of these efforts to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians will have an impact far beyond the Holy Land.

These are the reasons we've gathered here in Annapolis, and now we begin the difficult work of freedom and peace. The United States is proud to host this meeting, and we reaffirm the path to peace set out in the roadmap. Yet in the end, the outcome of the negotiations they launch here depends on the Israelis and Palestinians themselves. America will do everything in our power to support their quest for peace, but we cannot achieve it for them. The success of these efforts will require that

all parties show patience and flexibility and meet their responsibilities.

For these negotiations to succeed, the Palestinians must do their part. They must show the world they understand that while the borders of a Palestinian state are important, the nature of a Palestinian state is just as important. They must demonstrate that a Palestinian state will create opportunity for all its citizens and govern justly and dismantle the infrastructure of terror. They must show that a Palestinian state will accept its responsibility and have the capability to be a source of stability and peace for its own citizens, for the people of Israel, and for the whole region.

The Israelis must do their part. They must show the world that they are ready to begin—to bring an end to the occupation that began in 1967 through a negotiated settlement. This settlement will establish Palestine as a Palestinian homeland, just as Israel is a homeland for the Jewish people. Israel must demonstrate its support for the creation of a prosperous and successful Palestinian state by removing unauthorized outposts, ending settlement expansion, and finding other ways for the Palestinian Authority to exercise its responsibilities without compromising Israel's security.

Arab States also have a vital role to play. Relaunching the Arab League initiative and the Arab League's support for today's conference are positive steps. All Arab States should show their strong support for the Government of President Abbas and provide needed assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Arab States should also reach out to Israel, work toward the normalization of relations, and demonstrate in both word and deed that they believe that Israel and its people have a permanent home in the Middle East. These are vital steps toward the comprehensive peace that we all seek.

Finally, the international community has important responsibilities. Prime Minister Fayyad is finalizing a plan to increase openness and transparency and accountability throughout Palestinian society, and he

needs the resources and support from the international community. With strong backing from those gathered here, the Palestinian Government can build the free institutions that will support a free Palestinian state.

The United States will help Palestinian leaders build these free institutions. And the United States will keep its commitment to the security of Israel as a Jewish state and homeland for the Jewish people.

The United States strongly feels that these efforts will yield the peace that we want, and that is why we will continue to support the Lebanese people. We believe democracy brings peace. And democracy in Lebanon is vital as well for the peace in the Middle East. Lebanese people are in the process of electing a President. That decision is for the Lebanese people to make, and they must be able to do so free from outside interference and intimidation. As they embark on this process, the people of Lebanon can know that the American people stand with them, and we look forward to the day when the people of Lebanon can enjoy the blessings of liberty without fear of violence or coercion.

The task begun here at Annapolis will be difficult. This is the beginning of the process, not the end of it, and no doubt a lot of work remains to be done. Yet the parties can approach this work with confidence. The time is right. The cause is just. And with hard effort, I know they can succeed.

President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert, I pledge to devote my effort during my time as President to do all I can to help you achieve this ambitious goal. I give you my personal commitment to support your work with the resources and resolve of the American Government. I believe a day is coming when freedom will yield the peace we desire. And the land that is holy to so many will see the light of peace.

The day is coming when Palestinians will enjoy the blessings that freedom brings and

all Israelis will enjoy the security they deserve. That day is coming. The day is coming when the terrorists and extremists who threaten the Israeli and Palestinian people will be marginalized and eventually defeated. And when that day comes, future generations will look to the work we began here at Annapolis. They will give thanks to the leaders who gathered on the banks of the Chesapeake for their vision, their wisdom, and courage to choose a future of freedom and peace.

Thanks for coming. May God bless their work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. in Memorial Hall at the U.S. Naval Academy. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Quartet Representative in the Middle East.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Locality Pay Increases Payable to Civilian Federal Employees November 27, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases payable to civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems in January 2008.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS and certain other pay systems would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2008: (1) a 2.5 percent across-the-board adjustment in scheduled rates of basic pay derived from Employment Cost Index data on changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) locality pay adjustments averaging 12.5 percent based on Bureau of Labor Statistics salary surveys of non-Federal employers in each locality pay area. According to the statutory formula, for Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 15.0 percent.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative locality pay plan if I view the adjustments that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to “national emergency or serious economic

conditions affecting the general welfare.” For the reasons described below, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority to set alternative January 2008 locality pay increases.

A national emergency, within the meaning of chapter 53 of title 5, has existed since September 11, 2001. Full statutory civilian pay increases would cost \$16.4 billion in 2008 alone. That amount exceeds by \$12.7 billion the cost of a 3.0 percent overall Federal civilian pay increase that I proposed in my 2008 Budget. Furthermore, the costs would grow at compounded rates in subsequent years. Such cost increases would force deep cuts in discretionary spending or Federal employment to stay within budget. Either outcome would unacceptably interfere with our Nation’s ability to secure the homeland and pursue the war on terrorism.

Accordingly, I have determined that under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments for the locality pay areas established by the President’s Pay

Agent, in the amounts set forth in the attached table, shall become effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2008. When compared with the payments currently in effect, these comparability payments will increase the General Schedule payroll by about 0.5 percent. When combined with the 2.5 percent across-the-board increase, the 3.0 percent total increase equals the 12-month increase in overall nationwide labor costs as of September 2006 (the reference period for decisions about the January 2008 pay adjustment under current law). Our national situation precludes granting larger locality pay increases at this time.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal work-

force. To the contrary, since any pay raise above the amount proposed in this alternative plan would likely be unfunded, agencies would have to absorb the additional cost and could have to freeze hiring to pay the higher rates. Moreover, the GS "quit" rate continues to be very low (2.1 percent on an annual basis), well below the overall average "quit" rate in private enterprise. Should the need arise, the Government has many compensation flexibilities, such as special salary rates and recruitment and retention incentives, to maintain the high quality workforce that serves our Nation.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 28.

Remarks Following Meetings With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority *November 28, 2007*

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you; Mr. President—a series of successful meetings today with these leaders. Yesterday was an important day, and it was a hopeful beginning. No matter how important yesterday was, it's not nearly as important as tomorrow and the days beyond.

I appreciate the commitment of these leaders to working hard to achieve peace. I wouldn't be standing here if I didn't believe that peace was possible, and they wouldn't be here either if they didn't think peace was possible.

It's very important for the international community to support these two leaders during the bilateral negotiations that will take place. And one thing I've assured both

gentlemen is that the United States will be actively engaged in the process; that we will use our power to help you as you come up with the necessary decisions to lay out a Palestinian state that will live side by side in peace with Israel.

And so I wish you all the best. I appreciate your courage and leadership. It's an honor to call you friends. And it's an honor to have watched you yesterday as you laid out your respective visions for something we all want, which is peace in the Holy Land.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on the Resignation of Allan B. Hubbard and the Appointment of Keith Hennessey as Director of the National Economic Council *November 28, 2007*

As the Director of the National Economic Council, Al Hubbard has led the economic policymaking process in my administration for some of the most challenging economic issues confronting our Nation. His work has resulted in creative, sensible policies that have helped Americans continue to compete and prosper and live better lives. In leading the policy process on issues such as taxes, entitlements, health care, energy security, the environment, and trade and investment, Al contributed his own ideas and also worked to ensure that all views were brought to the table and given fair analysis and debate. While many of the policies Al worked to develop are in place today, other policy initiatives, including Social Security reform and health care reform, have laid the foundation for policies I believe will be adopted in the future.

Al came to the White House after spending nearly 30 years as a successful entrepreneur and business leader. He brought to the White House his capacity for hard

work and creative thinking and fostered an open, cooperative working environment.

Al has been a valuable leader among my economic advisers for nearly 3 years, and for many more years, he and his family have been friends to Laura and me. Al's presence in the White House will be deeply missed. Laura and I wish Al, his wife Kathy, and his children Will, Sara, and Katie, all the best as they move on to the next chapter in their lives.

I am pleased to announce that Keith Hennessey will succeed Al as Assistant to the President for Economic Policy and Director of the National Economic Council. Keith has been an important member of my White House team for more than 5 years. He has served as the deputy to three Directors of the National Economic Council and has worked on a broad range of economic policy issues. Prior to coming to the White House, Keith worked for Senator Trent Lott and at the Senate Budget Committee. Keith will make an outstanding Director of the NEC, and I look forward to continuing to work with him.

Statement on the Energy Information Administration's Report *November 28, 2007*

I was pleased to receive the Energy Information Administration's final report today, which includes U.S. greenhouse gas emissions for 2006. The final report shows that emissions declined 1.5 percent from the 2005 level, while our economy grew 2.9 percent. That means greenhouse gas intensity—how much we emit per unit of economic activity—decreased by 4.2 percent, the largest annual improvement since

1985. This puts us well ahead of the goal I set in 2002 to reduce greenhouse gas intensity by 18 percent by 2012.

My administration's climate change policy is science based, encourages research breakthroughs that lead to technology development, encourages global participation, and pursues actions that will help ensure continued economic growth and prosperity for our citizens and for people throughout

the world. Since 2001, we have spent almost \$37 billion on climate science, technology development, and incentives and international assistance.

Recently, we convened representatives of the world's major economies—the largest users of energy and largest producers of greenhouse gas emissions from both developed and developing nations—to discuss a new international approach on energy security and climate change. Our aim is to agree on a detailed contribution for a new global framework in 2008 that would contribute to a global agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by 2009. The United States looks forward to working with part-

ners to reach consensus on a Bali roadmap at the upcoming U.N. meeting on climate change in Indonesia in December.

Energy security and climate change are two of the important challenges of our time. The United States takes these challenges seriously, and we are effectively confronting climate change through regulations, public-private partnerships, incentives, and strong investment in new technologies. Our guiding principle is clear: We must lead the world to produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and we must do it in a way that does not undermine economic growth or prevent nations from delivering greater prosperity for their people.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez of El Salvador

November 29, 2007

President Bush. Bienvenidos a mi amigo, el amigo de los Estados Unidos, Presidente Saca. Thanks for coming, Mr. President. We just had an extensive discussion.

I first want to congratulate the President on winning a distinguished honor with the IRI award. It's a recognition of strong leadership. The President deserves the award because he's been a strong leader, not only at home, but in the region. The Salvadoran economy is strong, in part because the President fought hard to have a free trade agreement called CAFTA. And a strong leader always worries about his people.

And so today the President wanted to know how his people in the United States are doing, how the people from his great country are doing here in the country. And I thank you for your compassion and your heart for your fellow citizens.

We share a concern about the drug issue and the crime issue. We're in the process of finalizing a strategy to help the Central American countries deal with these issues.

And I've asked the President to take the lead, and he has been a strong regional leader as well as a leader in his home country.

Y por fin, I want to thank the people of El Salvador for being such strong supporters in the war against extremists and radicals. I appreciate the sacrifice of your troops, Mr. President, and their families as we work jointly to help others realize the blessings of liberty and freedom, particularly in Iraq.

Bienvenidos.

President Saca. Thank you very much, Mr. President. We've had a very broad conversation with President Bush, our friend, our ally, historically, in our struggle to build a democratic El Salvador. Twenty years ago, we were in the midst of a war. Today, we live in peace and democracy and economic growth.

We have discussed with President Bush about free trade and openness. I'm a true believer that free trade generates openness

and opportunities for the low income people. President Bush was always a strong leader to push CAFTA through.

We have also spoken about the support that the United States has given us, especially on the security issue. The President has seen with good eyes the security—the regional security plan that we have prepared. And he has asked financial support to the Congress for this plan. The President is showing a great identification with Mexico and Central America, which is also important for the stability in the United States.

We have also spoken about the Millennium Account. El Salvador is on the right track. We're improving our indicators. We're investing in our people. We're improving public security. And El Salvador is one of the countries with the greatest level of freedom in all Latin America. Our country, although small, has an investment great. And this is very important because we have built this along 18 years of hard work because no good results can come overnight. El Salvador is a society that is in its building a democratic society, open—in midst of a Latin America that is filled up with populism today. To continue on this path is the most adequate thing we can do.

I want to express my appreciation to President Bush for his support to my fellow men with the TPS. We have 240,000 Salvadorans that have been benefited with the TPS, thanks to the direct support of President Bush. And today we have spoken of how important it is for my people to be legally living here in this country.

I have also invited him to visit El Salvador, and he has promised me to be there very soon. So we're going to set up a date for that important visit.

The United States has in Central America a region that is very stable after the democratic construction. We have spoken about all the important issues, such as the fight against drug activity, the FOL that we have in El Salvador to fight drug trafficking that has allowed all the countries of Central America to capture large amounts of the drugs. And the Minister Figueroa, the Minister of Security, has talked to President Bush about the regional transnational center against gangs. El Salvador is working very well with the FBI and with all Central America. There is no doubt that the regional plan is going to be a complete success.

I have reiterated to President Bush that we share our criteria on freedom, on democracy. And he is a very strong ally of El Salvador. It is important for El Salvador to remain democratic, making its people grow, without populism and, of course, with great government responsibility. The United States has been our partner and our friend.

So thank you very much, Mr. President.
President Bush. Si. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:56 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Sacá referred to Minister of Public Security and Justice Rene Figueroa. President Sacá spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Briefing by Senior Department of Defense Officials
in Arlington, Virginia
November 29, 2007

Good afternoon. Thanks for coming. I just finished briefings with Secretary Gates, Deputy Secretary England, Admiral Mullen, and the Joint Chiefs. We discussed the long-term needs of our military services and the importance of progressing with modernization.

The men and women of this Department, the Department of Defense, are helping to carry out the Government's most important duty: protecting the American people. Every day, they confront America's enemies. Every day, they work to stop the spread of dangerous weapons. And every day, they guard against those seeking to bring another day of destruction to our shores. The missions of this Department are essential to saving Americans' lives, and they are too important to be disrupted or delayed or put at risk.

Beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to the United States Congress to fund operations in the war on terror. Our military has waited on these funds for months. The funds include money to carry out combat operations against the enemy in Afghanistan and Iraq; they include money to train the Afghan and Iraqi security forces to take on more responsibility for the defense of their countries; they include money for intelligence operations to protect our troops on the battlefield.

Pentagon officials have warned Congress that the continued delay in funding our troops will soon begin to have a damaging impact on the operations of this Department. The warning has been laid out for the United States Congress to hear.

Recently, Secretary Gates sought to clear up any misperception that the Department can fund our troops for an indefinite period simply by shifting money around. In fact, Congress limits how much money can be

moved from one account to the other. Secretary Gates has already notified Congress that he will transfer money from accounts used to fund other activities of the military services to pay for current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and no more money can be moved. So he has directed the Army and Marine Corps to develop a plan to lay off civilian employees, to terminate contracts, and to prepare our military bases across the country for reduced operations. These are contingency steps that a prudent manager must take.

Secretary Gates and America's senior military officials have made a reasoned case to Congress for the funds they need to keep the military running. They have carefully explained the need to plan prudently should those funds not be forthcoming. Secretary Gates puts it this way: "The Defense Department is like the world's biggest supertanker. It cannot turn on a dime, and I cannot steer it like a skiff."

The American people expect us to work together to support our troops. That's what they want. They do not want the Government to create needless uncertainty for those defending our country and uncertainty for their families. They do not want disputes in Washington to undermine our troops in Iraq just as they're seeing clear signs of success.

Here in Washington, leaders have a responsibility to send the right message to the rest of the world. Let us tell our enemies that America will do what it takes to defeat them. Let us tell Afghans and Iraqis that we will stand with them as they take the fight to our common enemies. Let us tell our men and women in uniform that we will give them what they need to succeed in their missions, without strings and without delay.

I ask Congress to provide this essential funding to our troops before the Members leave on their Christmas vacation. And I thank the members of this Department for their hard work, their sacrifice, their courage, and their dedication to peace.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:59 p.m. at the Pentagon.

Statement on the Death of Former Representative Henry J. Hyde *November 29, 2007*

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the death of former Congressman Henry Hyde. From his service in the Navy during World War II until his retirement from the U.S. House of Representatives last year, Henry Hyde led a life devoted to public service. During more than 30 years as a Congressman, he represented the people of Illinois with character and dignity and always stood for a strong and purposeful America. This fine man believed in the power of freedom,

and he was a tireless champion of the weak and forgotten. He used his talents to build a more hopeful America and promote a culture of life. Earlier this month, in recognition of his good and purposeful life, I was proud to award Henry Hyde the Medal of Freedom.

Congressman Hyde's passing represents a great loss to the people of Illinois and our Nation, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family in this sad hour.

Remarks on World AIDS Day in Mount Airy, Maryland *November 30, 2007*

Tomorrow is World's AIDS Day, and Laura and I are honored to commemorate the occasion here at the Calvary United Methodist Church. And we're honored to commemorate the day with people who have dedicated their lives to save lives.

I want to start by thanking Ambassador Mark Dybul, who is the Global AIDS Coordinator. His job is to make sure that America's great compassion is effective and widespread, that the goals we have set are met. And I—Mr. Ambassador, you're doing a fine job, and I want to thank you very much for serving.

I also want to thank Pastor Dennis Yocum, the pastor of this church. Dennis, I want to thank you for your hospitality; it's not easy to host the President and all those who follow the President. I want to

thank the members of your church who have so graciously made our stay here so comfortable.

I really want to thank the people standing behind me for not only joining Laura and me in discussions but for serving as such powerful examples of the human spirit. Behind me are folks who understand that the scourge of HIV/AIDS can be mitigated and that people's lives can be improved, who have seen hopelessness and have seen hope, people who are willing to act on the universal call to love a neighbor. People here come from, obviously, different backgrounds and different denominations, yet they share this timeless calling to heal the sick and comfort the lonely. And their stories are incredibly inspirational and touching.

I appreciate the fact that they live out their faith, just like hundreds of thousands of other people do who are involved with the HIV/AIDS crisis. And in so living out their faith, they better our world.

World AIDS Day is both a day of sadness and a day of hope. We remember with sadness all those lost to AIDS. We mourn their lives cut short, their dreams of future denied, and we ask for God's blessing on the loved ones they have left behind. We also mark this day with hope for the improving prospects of those living with the virus, for the unprecedented number of infections being prevented, and for new progress toward eradicating this disease. Above all, we rededicate ourselves to a great purpose: We will turn the tide against HIV/AIDS once and for all.

According to the most recent estimates by the United Nations, more than 33 million people around the world live with HIV. They are mothers; they are fathers, brothers and sisters, friends and teachers. And each day, some 5,700 lose their life.

When Americans witness this suffering, they feel a duty to respond. Some are motivated by conscience and a conviction that America should use its great influence to be a force for good. Many others are driven by faith, by the call to love your neighbor as yourself, even when that neighbor may live on the other side of the world. This spirit of brotherhood and generosity has long defined our country. And over the past 6 years, we have rallied that spirit in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Here at home, we've taken new measures to increase HIV/AIDS testing and expand treatment and improve care. We've worked with health care providers to make voluntary HIV screening a routine part of medical care, so all Americans can know their status. We've worked with Congress to renew the Ryan White Care Act, which helps HIV/AIDS patients receive lifesaving drugs.

Overseas, the scope of this challenge is much longer—much larger, and this Nation

is responding. In 2003, I proposed the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a 5-year, \$15 billion initiative to expand prevention, treatment, and care in the most heavily affected countries. Congress approved the plan with bipartisan support. And I want our fellow citizens to think about what this means. Every year, American taxpayers send billions of their hard-earned dollars overseas to save the lives of people they have never met.

In return for this extraordinary generosity, Americans expect results, so the emergency plan includes specific, measurable targets for progress. It demands honesty and accountability for all those involved. It puts local partners in the lead because they know the needs of their people best. With this strategy, we have pioneered a new model for public health. And so far, the results have been striking.

Five years ago, only 50,000 people with AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa were receiving antiretroviral drugs. Today, thanks to the emergency plan and to the generosity of the American taxpayer, that number is nearly 1.4 million. Think about that. Over a 5-year period of time, the number of people in sub-Saharan Africa has increased from 50,000 people to 1.4 million thanks to the American taxpayer. Around the world, another 6.7 million people with HIV/AIDS have received compassionate care, including 2.7 million orphans and vulnerable children. Tens of millions have received prevention messages based on the proven principles of ABC, which is "Abstinence, Be faithful, and use Condoms."

The money that you have spent is being spent wisely and saving lives. Some call this a remarkable success. I call it a good start. So we have worked with the private sector and G-8 nations to increase their commitments. This May, I proposed to double our Nation's initial pledge to \$30 billion over the next 5 years. These American funds will help us support treatment for nearly 2.5 million people, prevent more than 12 million new infections, and support care for

12 million people, including more than 5 million orphans and vulnerable children. Now the time has come for the United States Congress to act again. I'm confident they will, and I call on the Congress to show America's leadership by reauthorizing the emergency plan and doubling our commitment to this urgent cause.

One reason for the effectiveness of our efforts is the leading role of faith-based organizations. Last summer, volunteers from this church traveled to Namibia to serve at a home for AIDS orphans. Think about that. People from this part of Maryland took it upon themselves to travel to a far-away land to help orphans, to say we love you, to inspire through their compassion. With me today is a fellow named Chris Dominick from the McLean Bible Church. He briefed Laura and me and the others on the training that he had received in order to go to Zambia tomorrow. Faith-based groups like these are the foot soldiers in the armies of compassion. They are changing behavior by changing hearts, and they are helping to defeat this epidemic one soul at a time.

This morning I also met a woman a—named Martha Chilufya—was afraid you left. [*Laughter*] Eight years ago, she established Mututa Memorial Center in Zambia to honor her husband, who had died of AIDS. Today, the center partners with the emergency plan and faith-based caregivers to serve more than 150 patients. Martha hosted Laura and Jenna on their recent trip to Africa. And they listened to a choir of orphans who had received loving care at the center. The children sang these inspiring words: “God, you are really there . . . when I pray, when I cry, when I am ill, you are there.”

Stories like these bring pride to our country, and they should bring something

more. When we support nations seeking to replace chaos and despair with progress and hope, we reduce the appeal of extremism. When we replace despair with progress, when we replace hopelessness with hope, we add to the security of our Nation. As well, we make friends who will always remember that America stood with them in their hour of need.

The new relationships that America has forged in Africa are a high priority for our Nation. I'm pleased to announce that Laura and I will travel to sub-Sahara Africa early next year. I look forward to seeing the results of America's generosity and to assure our friends that they have a steady partner in the United States of America.

The Scriptures tell us: “I have set before you life and death . . . therefore, choose life.” All who wage the battle against AIDS have made the choice for life. Because of their compassion and courage, millions who once saw the disease as a death sentence now look to the future with hope. This World AIDS Day is a day of importance because it's a day we resolve to continue the work of healing and redemption. It's a day to strive for the day when the scourge of AIDS is a part of history.

Laura and I are honored to be here with you all. May God bless your work; may God bless those who suffer from HIV/AIDS; may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church. In his remarks, he referred to Martha Chilufya, director, Mututa Memorial Center, Lusaka, Zambia. The World AIDS Day proclamation of November 29 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address *December 1, 2007*

Good morning. Next week, Congress returns from its Thanksgiving recess. Members are coming back to a lot of unfinished business. And the clock will be ticking because they have only a few weeks to get their work done before leaving again for Christmas.

Congress must address four critical priorities. First, Congress needs to pass a bill to fund our troops in combat. Second, Congress needs to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to monitor terrorist communications so we can prevent attacks against our people. Third, Congress needs to pass a bill to protect middle class families from higher taxes. And fourth, Congress needs to pass all the remaining appropriations bills to keep the Federal Government running.

Congress's first priority should be to provide the funds and flexibility to keep our troops safe and help them protect our Nation. Beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund operations in the war on terror. Our military has waited on these funds for months. The funds include money to carry out combat operations against the enemy in Afghanistan and Iraq. They include money to train the Afghan and Iraqi security forces to take on more responsibility for the defense of their countries. And they include money for intelligence operations to protect our troops on the battlefield.

Pentagon officials recently warned Congress that continued delay in funding our troops will soon begin to have a damaging impact on the operations of our military. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has already notified Congress that he will transfer money from accounts used to fund other activities of the military services to pay for current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and no more money can be moved. So he has directed the Army and Marine

Corps to develop a plan to lay off civilian employees, terminate contracts, and prepare our military bases across the country for reduced operations. Military leaders have told us what they need to do their job. It is time for the Congress to do its job and give our troops what they need to protect America.

Another priority Congress must address is the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA. FISA provides a critical legal framework that allows our intelligence community to monitor terrorist communications while protecting the freedoms of the American people. Unfortunately, the law is dangerously out of date. In August, Congress passed legislation to help modernize FISA. That bill closed critical intelligence gaps, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence. The problem is, this new law expires on February 1st, while the threat from our terrorist enemies does not.

Congress must take action now to keep the intelligence gaps closed and make certain our national security professionals do not lose a critical tool for keeping America safe. As part of these efforts, Congress also needs to provide meaningful liability protection to those companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in the efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

Congress's third priority should be to fix the Alternative Minimum Tax. The AMT was designed to ensure that the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT decades ago, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is creeping up on more and more middle class families. If Congress fails to pass legislation to fix the AMT, as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to the AMT. On average, these taxpayers would have to send an extra

\$2,000 to the IRS next year. This is a huge tax increase that taxpayers do not deserve and Congress must stop.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the budget. One of Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet we are in the final month of the year, and Congress still has work to do on 11 of the 12 annual spending bills. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling all these bills into one monstrous piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and porkbarrel spending.

This is not what congressional leaders promised when they took control of the Congress at the start of the year. In January, one congressional leader declared, "No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol, while families in America struggle to get ahead." He was right. Congressional leaders need to keep their word and pass

the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way.

The end of the year is approaching fast, and Americans are working hard to finish up their business. Yet when it comes to getting its business done, Congress is only getting started. Members of Congress now have only a few weeks left before they head home for the holidays. Before they do so, I urge them to do their job: fund our troops, protect our citizens, provide taxpayers relief, and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on November 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 30, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Congressional Action on the Legislative Agenda *December 3, 2007*

Good morning. Congress returns from its 2-week Thanksgiving break today. They have just 2 weeks to go before they leave town again. That's much—that's not really a lot of time to squeeze in nearly a year's worth of unfinished business.

In fairness, Congress was not entirely out over the past 2 weeks. In a political maneuver designed to block my ability to make recess appointments, congressional leaders arranged for a Senator to come in every 3 days or so, bang a gavel, wait for about 30 seconds, bang a gavel again, and then leave. Now, under the Senate rules, this counts as a full day. If 30 seconds is a full day, no wonder Congress has got a lot of work to do.

Congress needs to start by passing a bill to fund our troops in combat. Beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund these operations in the war on terror. Yet some in Congress are withholding this funding because they want to substitute their judgment for that of our military commanders. Instead of listening to the judgment of General Petraeus, they are threatening to withhold money he needs unless they can mandate an arbitrary date of withdrawal.

This month, more of our troops will return home as a result of the success we're seeing in Iraq. People are coming home. For Congress to insist on setting an arbitrary date for withdrawal would put the gains General Petraeus and our troops have

made in danger, and that would threaten the security of our country. It's unconscionable to deny funds to our troops in harm's way because some in Congress want to force a self-defeating policy, especially when we're seeing the benefits of success.

Secretary Gates and other senior Pentagon officials say the delay in our funding will mean this for our military: Unless Congress acts, the Defense Department will soon be required to begin giving layoff notices to about 100,000 civilian employees. Unless Congress acts, the military task force developing ways to better detect and protect our troops from roadside bombs will run out of money by early next year. Unless Congress acts, the Army will run out of operations and maintenance money in February. Unless Congress acts, the Marine Corps will run out of similar funds in March.

Earlier this year, congressional leaders were trying to impose conditions on funds because they said our strategy in Iraq was not working. We changed our strategy, and now even many of those who initially opposed the surge acknowledge that it is achieving results. It is time for Members of Congress to meet their responsibility to our men and women in uniform, and they should stay in session until they pass these emergency funds for our troops.

Second, Congress needs to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to monitor terrorist communications. In August, Congress passed legislation to help modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. That bill closed critical intelligence gaps, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence information about terrorist plots. The problem is, the new law expires on February 1st, while the threat from the terrorists does not expire.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has warned that unless the FISA reforms in the act are made permanent, our national security professionals will lose critical tools they need to protect our country. Instead of listening to the

judgment of Director McConnell, some in Congress now want to restrict the intelligence tools that help keep the American people safe. They are blocking efforts to provide meaningful liability protection to those companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in our efforts to defend our Nation following the September 11th attacks. Congress must stop this obstruction and make certain our national security professionals do not lose a critical tool for keeping our country safe.

Third, Congress needs to act immediately to prevent the Alternative Minimum Tax from hitting more Americans this year. The AMT was enacted in 1969 to ensure that a few hundred wealthy individuals paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is being imposed on more and more middle class families.

Last month, Treasury Secretary Paulson wrote a letter to Members of Congress warning them about this: that if they put off an AMT fix, it could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Yet instead of listening to Secretary Paulson's warning, Congress continues to delay action. The longer Congress delays action, the longer Americans will wait—likely wait to get their tax refund checks next year.

If Congress fails to act, as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to AMT. On average, these taxpayers—many of them middle class families—would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next April. At a time when many Americans are struggling with home mortgages and health care costs, the last thing they need is for Congress to stick them with an additional tax increase.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the Federal budget. One of the Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet only 1 of the 12 spending

bills has made it into law. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling the remaining bills into one monster piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and wasteful spending. Now is not the time to burden our economy with wasteful Washington spending that will lead to higher taxes. Congressional leaders need to do their job and pass the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way. And if they send me an irresponsible spending bill, I will veto it.

The end of 2007 is approaching fast, and the new Congress has little to show for it. I call on Members to use the time left to support our troops and to protect our citizens, prevent harmful tax increases, and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at the Children's Holiday Reception

December 3, 2007

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. I've got two jobs. One is to introduce you to my wife Laura, and two is to tell you how much we admire your moms and dads, how much we appreciate their service to our country.

I know it's hard when you have a loved one, somebody you love a lot, not going to be around for the Christmas season. And one way we hope to help you through the moment is to invite you here to the White House for what's going to be a pretty special moment.

So I want to say thank you. When you talk to your mom or dad or e-mail your mom or dad, you make sure you tell them that President and Mrs. Bush are sure proud of their contributions to our country.

And so with that, I'm going to do my second job, which is to bring to the podium here my wife, First Lady Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the U.S.-Palestinian Public-Private Partnership

December 3, 2007

It's been my honor and the honor of key members of my administration to welcome Minister Abu Daqqa here. She's the Minister of Youth for the Palestinians. I also want to welcome friends, business leaders, community activists who are committed to a public-private partnership to

help the Palestinian Government provide hope, particularly for the young—she's the Minister of Youth.

And we—so Walter Isaacson and the other leaders here have outlined a strategy to us as to how we can make sure our USAID money and our OPIC money can

be leveraged with private participation to help the Palestinians develop a civil society that is a key part of making sure that the vision of two states living side by side in peace becomes a reality.

And so Madam Minister, you're seeing the best of America. You're seeing private citizens who care deeply about peace come together with a Government that is dedicated to a two-state solution to develop a strategy to help you succeed.

And one of the things that interests me a lot is the fact that we are going to help the Palestinians develop youth centers, places where young Palestinians can come and learn new technical skills or language skills or have mentoring programs, all aimed at saying, there is a hopeful future; a future where you don't have to adhere to violence; a future where radicalism is

not in your sights; a future where peace is possible.

And so we're proud you're here in America. We want to thank you for your commitment to living side by side with Israel in peace. We have—you have a friend here in the United States to help you achieve this objective.

And I want to thank my fellow citizens for being so spirited that you're willing to take time out of your busy lives to help this young democracy get up on its feet and eventually lead the peace that we all are so hopeful for.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Walter Isaacson, president and chief executive officer, Aspen Institute.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2007 *December 3, 2007*

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

Hanukkah commemorates a victory for freedom and the courage and faith that made it possible. More than 2,000 years ago, the land of ancient Israel was conquered, its sacred Temple was desecrated, and the Jewish people were forbidden to practice their faith. A patriot named Judah Maccabee and his followers rose up against their oppressors to take back Jerusalem. When the Maccabees returned to reclaim and purify their Holy Temple, the oil used for dedication should have lasted only one day but burned for eight. Every year since then, Jews have celebrated this victory of light over darkness and given thanks for the presence of a just and loving God.

As Jewish Americans prepare to light the Hanukkah candles, we are reminded of the many blessings in our lives. The candles' glow has the power to lift our souls, put hope in our hearts, and make our Nation a more compassionate and peaceful place. We pray that those who still live in the darkness of tyranny will someday see the light of freedom, and we ask for God's continued guidance and boundless love and His protection of all those in need during this holiday season.

Laura and I wish all people of the Jewish faith a Happy Hanukkah.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Message to the Senate Transmitting a Treaty Between the United States and Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation

December 3, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation, done at Sydney, September 5, 2007. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State that includes an overview of this Treaty.

My Administration is prepared to provide to the Senate for its information other relevant documents, including proposed implementing arrangements to be concluded pursuant to the Treaty, relevant correspondence with the Government of Aus-

tralia, and proposed amendments to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations.

This Treaty will allow for greater cooperation between the United States and Australia, enhancing the operational capabilities and interoperability of the armed forces of both countries. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Treaty.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 3, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4.

The President's News Conference *December 4, 2007*

The President. Good morning. I appreciate the fact that the United States Senate is going to take up the free trade agreement with Peru today. This agreement will level the playing field for American goods and services. It will create new opportunities for investment. It will strengthen our friendship with a fellow democracy. The House of Representatives has passed this bill. I congratulate the House leadership. And I certainly hope the Senate will pass it as well. This will be a very positive step.

But Congress still has a lot to do and doesn't have very much time to do it. Three weeks from today, Americans will celebrate Christmas, and three groups of Americans are waiting on Congress to act. The first group are the troops. Our troops are waiting on Congress to fund them in their operations overseas. Nearly 10 months

ago, I submitted a detailed funding request. Congress has not acted. Our men and women shouldn't have to wait any longer.

Second, our intelligence professionals are waiting for Congress to act. The legislation Congress approved early this year to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to effectively monitor terrorist communications is set to expire in February. Allowing this law to lapse would open gaps in our intelligence and increase the danger to our country. Our intelligence professionals need these tools to keep our people safe, and they need Congress to ensure that these tools are not taken away.

Third, American taxpayers are waiting on Congress to act. Congress has failed to pass legislation that will protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative

Minimum Tax. If Congress doesn't act, millions of Americans will be hit with an unexpected tax bill. And even if Congress does act by the end of the year, this action could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Congress expects Americans to pay their taxes on time, and the least the Congress can do is make sure Americans get their refunds on time.

Americans also expect their tax dollars to be spent wisely. Yet today, 11 of the 12 annual spending bills that fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government remain unfinished. And now congressional leaders are talking about piling these bills into one monstrous piece of legislation which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and wasteful spending. Taxpayers deserve better. And if the Congress passes an irresponsible spending bill, I'm going to veto it.

The holidays are approaching, and the clock is ticking for the United States Congress. Based on the record so far, Americans could be forgiven for thinking that Santa will have slipped down their chimney on Christmas Eve before Congress finishes its work. Let's hope they're wrong.

And now I'll be glad to answer some questions, starting with Terry Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Mr. President, a new intelligence report says that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program 4 years ago and that it remains frozen. Are you still convinced that Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb? And do the new findings take the military option that you've talked about off the table?

The President. Here's what we know. We know that they're still trying to learn how to enrich uranium. We know that enriching uranium is an important step in a country whose desire it was to develop a weapon. We know they had a program. We know the program was halted.

I think it is very important for the international community to recognize the fact

that if Iran were to develop the knowledge that they could transfer to a clandestine program, it would create a danger for the world. And so I view this report as a warning signal that they had the program; they halted the program. And the reason why it's a warning signal is that they could restart it. And the thing that would make a restarted program effective and dangerous is the ability to enrich uranium, the knowledge of which could be passed on to a hidden program.

And so it's a—to me, the NIE provides an opportunity for us to rally the international community—continue to rally the community to pressure the Iranian regime to suspend its program.

You know, the NIE also said that such pressure was effective, and that's what our Government has been explaining to our other partners in keeping the international pressure on Iran. The best diplomacy, effective diplomacy, is one in which all options are on the table.

Intelligence Reform/Iran

Q. Mr. President, Iraq's WMD turned out not to be there, and now Iran halted its nuclear program in 2003. Are you concerned that the United States is losing credibility in the world and now may be seen as the boy who tried—who called wolf?

The President. Actually, I am—I want to compliment the intelligence community for their good work. Right after the failure of intelligence in Iraq, we reformed the intel community so that there was a lot of serious considerations of NIEs in a way that would give us confidence. And here's a, I think, a very important product that is a result of the reforms we've put in place. As a matter of fact, the American people should have confidence that the reforms are working and that this work on the intel community is important work.

People said, "Well, why is it that you can't get exact knowledge quicker?" Well, the answer is, is because we're dealing with

a regime that is not very transparent, and frankly, we haven't had a very good presence in Iran since 1979. And that's why I instructed the intel community to beef up its intelligence on Iran. So we could have a better sense for what they're thinking and what they're doing. And this product is a result of intelligence reform and, more importantly, the good, hard work of our intelligence community.

One of the reasons why this is out in the public arena is because I wanted—and our administration believed that, one, it was important for people to know the facts as we see them; secondly, that members of my administration had been very clear about the weapons program earlier this year. And therefore, it's important for the American people to see that there has been a reevaluation of the Iranian issue.

David [David Gregory, NBC News].

Intelligence Analysis/Iran

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I'd like to follow on that. When you talked about Iraq, you and others in the administration talked about a mushroom cloud; then there were no WMD in Iraq. When it came to Iran, you said in October—on October 17th, you warned about the prospect of world war III, when months before you made that statement, this intelligence about them suspending their weapons program back in '03 had already come to light to this administration. So can't you be accused of hyping this threat? And don't you worry that that undermines U.S. credibility?

The President. David, I don't want to contradict an august reporter such as yourself, but I was made aware of the NIE last week. In August, I think it was, John McConnell—Mike McConnell came in and said, "We have some new information." He didn't tell me what the information was; he did tell me it was going to take a while to analyze. Why would you take time to analyze new information? One, you want to make sure it's not disinformation. You want to make sure the piece of intelligence

you have is real. And secondly, they want to make sure they understand the intelligence they gathered. If they think it's real, then what does it mean? And it wasn't until last week that I was briefed on the NIE that is now public.

And the second part of your question has to do with this: Look, Iran was dangerous; Iran is dangerous; and Iran will be dangerous if they have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. The NIE says that Iran had a hidden—a covert nuclear weapons program. That's what it said. What's to say they couldn't start another covert nuclear weapons program? And the best way to ensure that there—that the world is peaceful in the future is for the international community to continue to work together to say to the Iranians, we're going to isolate you. However, there is a better way forward for the Iranians.

Now, in 2003, the Iranian Government began to come to the table in discussions with the EU-3, facilitated by the United States. In other words, we said to the EU-3, we'll support your efforts to say to the Iranians, you have a choice to make: You can continue to do policy that will isolate you, or there's a better way forward. And so that was the sticks-and-carrots approach.

You might remember, the United States said at that point in time, we'll put the WTO on the table for consideration, or we'll help you with spare parts for your airplanes. It was all an attempt to take advantage of what we thought was a more openminded Iranian regime at the time—a willingness of this regime to talk about a way forward. And then the Iranians had elections, and Ahmadi-nejad announced that—to the IAEA that he was going to—this is after, by the way, the Iranians had suspended their enrichment program—he said, "We're going to stop the suspension; we'll start up the program again." And that's where we are today.

My point is, is that there is a better way forward for the Iranians. There has been a moment during my Presidency in

which diplomacy provided a way forward for the Iranians. And our hope is we can get back on that path again. But what is certain is that if Iran ever had the knowledge to develop a nuclear weapon and they passed that knowledge on to a covert program, which at one time in their history has existed, the world would be more dangerous. And now is the time for the international community to work together.

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Just to follow, I understand what you're saying about when you were informed about the NIE. Are you saying at no point while the rhetoric was escalating, as "world war III" was making it into conversation, at no point nobody from your intelligence team or your administration was saying, maybe you want to back it down a little bit?

The President. No, I've never—nobody ever told me that. Having said—having laid that out, I still feel strongly that Iran is a danger. Nothing has changed in this NIE that says, okay, why don't we just stop worrying about it. Quite the contrary, I think the NIE makes it clear that Iran needs to be taken seriously as a threat to peace. Their—my opinion hasn't changed.

And I just explained, Jim [Jim Axelrod, CBS News], that if you want to avoid a really problematic situation in the Middle East, now is the time to continue to work together. That's our message to our allies, and it's an important message for them to hear. And here's the reason why: In order for a nation to develop a nuclear weapons program, they must have the materials from which to make a bomb, the know-how on how to take that material and make it explode, and a delivery system.

Now, the Iranians—the most difficult aspect of developing a weapons program, or as some would say, the long pole in the tent, is enriching uranium. This is a nation—Iran is a nation that is testing ballistic missiles. And it is a nation that is trying to enrich uranium. The NIE says this is

a country that had a covert nuclear weapons program, which, by the way, they have failed to disclose, even today. They have never admitted the program existed in the first place.

The danger is, is that they can enrich, play like they got a civilian program—or have a civilian program, or claim it's a civilian program—and pass the knowledge to a covert military program. And then the danger is, is at some point in the future, they show up with a weapon. And my comments are, now is the time to work together to prevent that scenario from taking place. It's in our interests.

Yes, ma'am.

Iran

Q. Mr. Bush, how can you say nothing has changed when you may see it this way, but the rest of the world is going to see the lead as the fact that the nuclear weapons program was halted in 2003?

The President. Right.

Q. When you first saw this, weren't you angry? You didn't know about Syria. In 2005, you had the same assessment, "with high confidence that Iran currently is determined to develop nuclear weapons." And now, quite the opposite. How can you possibly think the rest of the world is going to continue—to the degree it did—to rally around you and your intelligence?

The President. Because many in the world understand that if Iran developed a nuclear weapon, the world would be a very dangerous place. Secondly, many of the world are going to take heart in noting that it's diplomatic pressure that caused them to change their mind. And plenty of people understand that if they learn how to enrich, that knowledge can be transferred to a weapons program, if Iran so chooses.

And I think this is a—it's a—to me, it's a way for us to continue to rally our partners. That's why I'm working the phones, and Condi Rice is working the phones. All

of us are calling our partners. And I appreciate many of the comments that have come out of the capitals.

One thing is for certain: The NIE talks about how a carrot-and-stick approach can work. And this is heartening news to people who believe that, on the one hand, we should exert pressure, and on the other hand, we should provide the Iranians a way forward. And it was working until Ahmadi-njad came in. And our hope is that the Iranians will get diplomacy back on track.

Yes, ma'am.

Intelligence Analysis

Q. Why should you trust this intelligence since it's different than 2005? Why should we trust this any more?

The President. Well, you know, I'm—without getting into sources and methods, I believe that the intelligence community has made a great discovery. And they've analyzed the discovery, and it's now part of our Government policy.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters], I apologize for getting immediately to the TV people. That's just bad protocol; I should have called on you.

Q. She went already, didn't she?

The President. Oh, she already has—[in-audible].

Q. Yes, you're getting on to TV. [Laughter]

Q. Yes, I've got another question, though.

The President. I'm having such a good time, I forgot the past.

Q. I have more questions. You're just afraid I'll ask another followup, which I'd love to.

The President. No, but you're just kind of belting them out. [Laughter] Yes.

Q. Okay, 2005, why—the poll says—

Q. Thank you—

The President. Ed [Ed Henry, Cable News Network].

Q. —Mr. President.

The President. Excuse me, Toby.

Saudi Arabian Sexual Assault Case

Q. Thank you. Another issue—on another issue of credibility in the Mideast, at the Annapolis summit, you used your influence to get Saudi Arabia to the table. But I wonder whether now you will use your influence to do something about the Saudi rape case that's gotten so much international attention. What goes through your mind when you hear about a 19-year-old Saudi woman getting gang-raped by 7 men and basically a Saudi court blames the victim and sentence her to 200 lashes? You spoke to King Abdallah by telephone in the last couple of weeks. Did you press him on this case? If so, what did you say? And if not, are you giving him a pass?

The President. My first thoughts were these: What happens if this happened to my daughter? How would I react? And I would have been—I'd have been very emotional, of course. I'd have been angry at those who committed the crime, and I'd be angry at a state that didn't support the victim. And our opinions were expressed by Dana Perino from the podium and—

Q. But did you press King Abdallah about it personally?

The President. I talked to King Abdallah about the Middle Eastern peace. I don't remember if that subject came up.

Q. But if it's that important to you, why wouldn't you bring it—at that level, bring it directly up to King Abdallah?

The President. We'll have plenty of time. He knows our position loud and clear.

McKinnon [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

National Economy

Q. Maybe we could switch to the economy just for one second, Mr. President.

The President. Wait a minute. That's not a dis on the front row, is it?

Q. Not at all, sir.

The President. Okay. Well, they're not taking it that way, it doesn't look like—

Q. You're misreading it. [Laughter]

There's a lot of indications that people are increasingly concerned about the state of the economy and the outlook for the next couple of years. Your administration is considering a plan to help people out with their mortgage payments, but I wonder if there's anything else beyond that that you've got in mind. If you could just give us your thoughts about all this.

The President. First of all, let me talk about the Paulson-Jackson initiative. They're working with lenders, service industry people, and investors to come up with a plan that would make it easier for qualified home buyers to stay in their homes. And I appreciate their efforts. And that's an important part of what I'm about to say, and that is this: First of all, the economy—basics in the economy are good. Inflation is low; job creation is good; interest rates are low; productivity is up; exports are up. In other words, the basic underpinnings of the economy are strong.

Secondly, we are addressing the current issues, and homeownership is a current issue. And no question, it's a headwind; it's a part of why many people are saying that the economy is slowing down.

Thirdly, Secretary Paulson has worked with the private sector on a credit reassurance fund.

Fourthly, we have called consistently on Congress to pass measures that will help keep the economy strong. And one—such as the free trade agreement, which I heralded today. That's a signal, John, that as you keep opening up markets, it will help the psychology of the country. There's not going to be an immediate impact on Peru; I mean, it's not going to happen next month. But nevertheless, when the country is confident we'll continue to open up markets for goods and services, it should say that this administration is aggressively pursuing progrowth policies.

And the main thing we're going to do is make it clear that Congress is not going to raise taxes during a time when this

slow—when this economy could be slowing down.

So I'm optimistic. I recognize there's some serious issues—the credit crunch, as well as the home building industry. I am concerned about people who may not be able to stay in their homes. That's of concern to me and our administration. That's why we're taking the action we're taking.

Ed [Edwin Chen, Bloomberg News].

Home Mortgage Industry

Q. Mr. President, good morning.

The President. Yes. Good morning, Ed. Thank you; appreciate that. A little ray of sunshine here. [Laughter]

Q. We do all we can. [Laughter]

Sir, was the Government too slow in this case to recognize the subprime mortgage problem? And what specific expects—do you expect to see with the economy on the proposals that will be coming later this week?

The President. We've been working on this since August, Ed. And ours is a belief that, one, we shouldn't bail out lenders. And so, in other words, we shouldn't be using taxpayers' money to say, okay, you made a lousy loan; therefore, we're going to subsidize you.

Secondly, that we recognize there's—this is a—the home mortgage industry is a little more complex than in the past. The old days, you'd go to your local savings and loans, say, or your bank, get your home mortgage, and if you had a problem, you go back to the banker that loaned you the money and renegotiate if possible. Now what has happened, as you know, people have taken those mortgages and bundled them up as securities. And somebody else owns the mortgage; it's not the originating bank; it's somebody else owns the mortgage.

And so Secretary Paulson is working with a more complex industry than we've had in the past. And that's why it's taken a while, Ed, because not only do you have the lender, you now have a whole service

industry that has arisen that will, hopefully, help people stay in their homes—that's their job—but you've also got people all around the world who now own U.S. mortgages, invest—and assets that are U.S. mortgage—bundles of U.S. mortgages.

And so it's a complex assignment. I'm pleased with the work that the Secretary is doing—both Secretaries are doing. I think they're making pretty good progress.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, to go back to Iran for a minute, the Non-Proliferation Treaty doesn't prohibit a country like Iran from having the knowledge to enrich uranium. Are you setting a different standard in this case and a different international obligation on Iran? And is that going to complicate the efforts to keep the pressure on when it comes to sanctions at the United Nations?

The President. The problem that most of the world has seen in Iran stems from the fact that they hid their program. That's what the NIE says. The '68 agreement that Iran signed contemplated full transparency and openness. They didn't contemplate a regime that would have a covert nuclear weapons program, all the more reason for the international community to continue to work together. If somebody hid their program once, they could hide it again. If somebody defied the agreement that they signed, the codicils of the agreement they've signed, they could do it again. And most of the world understands that Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a serious danger to peace, and therefore, now is the time to work together to convince them to suspend their program.

People say, "Would you ever talk to Iran?" For you veterans here, for those who have been following this administration for a while, you might remember that I have consistently said that we will be at the table with the EU-3 if Iran would verifiably suspend their program, and the offer still stands.

What changed was the change of leadership in Iran. In other words, we had a diplomatic track going, and Ahmadi-nejad came along and took a different tone. And the Iranian people must understand that the tone and actions of their Government are that which is isolating them. There's a better way forward for Iran. There's a better way forward for the Iranian people than one in which they find themselves isolated in the world. Their economy can be stronger. But their leadership is going to have to understand that defiance and hiding programs and defying IAEA is not the way forward.

And my hope is, is that the Iranian regime takes a look at their policies and changes their policies back to where we were prior to the election of Ahmadi-nejad, which was a hopeful period. They had suspended their program; they were at the table. The United States had made some very positive gestures to convince them that there was a better way forward. And hopefully, we can get back to that day.

Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I'd like to ask for one clarification and one question, if I may.

The President. Sure. Depends on what the clarification is.

Q. The clarification is, are you saying that this NIE will not lead to a change in U.S. policy toward Iran or shift in focus?

The President. I'm saying that I believed before the NIE that Iran was dangerous, and I believe after the NIE that Iran is dangerous. And I believe now is the time for the world to do the hard work necessary to convince the Iranians there is a better way forward. And I say, "hard work," here's why it's hard. One, many companies are fearful of losing market share in Iran to another company. It's one thing to get governments to speak out; it's another thing to convince private sector concerns that it's

in our collective interests to pressure the Iranian regime economically.

So I spend a fair amount of time trying to convince my counterparts that they need to convince the private sector folks that it is in their interests and in the—for the sake of peace that there be a common effort to convince the Iranians to change their ways and that there's a better way forward.

So our policy remains the same. I see a danger. And many in the world see the same danger. This report is not a "okay, everybody needs to relax and quit" report. This is a report that says what has happened in the past could be repeated, and that the policies used to cause the regime to halt are effective policies, and let's keep them up; let's continue to work together.

Question, please.

Venezuelan Referendum/Venezuela-U.S. Relations/Colombia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. What does the vote in Venezuela mean for the U.S.? Obviously, this is a major loss for Hugo Chavez, a leader who has repeatedly referred to you as the devil. Before his effort for this never-ending terms in office, he told a crowd confidently, quote, "Anyone who votes 'no' is voting for George W. Bush. Our true enemy is the U.S. empire, and on Sunday, December 2d, we're going to give another knockout to Bush." What's your reaction to Chavez's opponents winning?

The President. The Venezuelan people rejected one-man rule. They voted for democracy. And the United States can make a difference in South America, in terms of Venezuelan influence. And here's how: The Congress can pass a free trade agreement with Colombia. People say, "Well, how does that affect U.S.-Venezuelan relations or the relations of Venezuela in South America with other countries?" And here's how—and I like to quote Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who said, "The biggest fear in South America is not the leader

in Venezuela, but the biggest fear for stability is if the United States Congress rejects the free trade agreement with Colombia."

It would be an insult to a friend. It would send a contradictory message to a country led by a very strong leader who is working hard to deal with some very difficult problems, one of which is armed gangs of people that are ruthless and brutal, people who just kidnap innocent people for the sake of achieving political objectives.

And so a vote for democracy took place, a very strong vote for democracy. And the United States policy can help promote democracies and stability. And again, I'm going to repeat to you: If the Congress does not pass the free trade agreement with Colombia, it will be a destabilizing moment.

Olivier Knox [Agence France Press], yes.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Iran

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you very much. This morning you spoke for, apparently, about 40 minutes with President Putin. I was wondering if you could shed a little light on what you talked about? Specifically, did you ask him to not go ahead with the sale of uranium or the shipment of uranium to—

The President. I'm not going to get into the specifics of conversations I have with any world leader. Otherwise, the next time I have a phone call it might be a short one.

Q. Do you have a message—

The President. But I'd be glad to talk about the themes.

Q. Please do.

The President. I don't particularly like when people read out my phone calls with them. Sometimes the words get mischaracterized. Sometimes what I say might not be exact—what they say I said might not be exactly what I said.

But we did spend a lot of time on the Iranian issue. And one of the interesting tactical decisions that Russia has made that

the United States supports is the notion that Iran has a sovereign right to have a civilian nuclear power program. What they don't have is our confidence that they should be able to enrich uranium so that those plants would work. Why? Because they had a covert weapons program that they did not declare and have yet to declare. Secondly, we understand that if they were to develop that weapons program, it would be a real danger.

And so the Russians said, "Well, would you support us on this notion, that because they're untrustworthy when it comes to the fuel cycle, we will provide the fuel, and we will collect the spent fuel?" And I have, publicly. I'll say it again. And we discussed this part of our strategy.

Secondly, I explained to him the content of the NIE and what it meant and how our working together has been effective. And thirdly, we talked about ongoing efforts to come up with another U.N. Security Council resolution if the Iranian regime doesn't suspend.

Russian Elections

Q. Sir, did the elections come up, sir—the Russian elections?

The President. They did. They did. And I said we were sincere in our expressions of concern about the elections.

Wolf [Richard Wolf, USA Today].

2008 Presidential Election

Q. A question on the upcoming elections that doesn't require you to—

The President. Which ones would those be?

Q. The ones that begin in January—

The President. Of course.

Q. —that does not require you to take any—to take sides. What is your feeling right now about the tone of the campaign and, in particular, on the Republican side, some of the talk on immigration?

The President. Wolf, for the next 3 months, you and your august colleagues will—trying to get me to be pundit in chief.

And I unfortunately practiced some punditry in the past; I'm not going to any further. I know, I know, it's just—

Q. A little analysis, maybe? [Laughter]

The President. You can ask another question. I really am going to—look, we got—it's hard to believe—like, a month away from the Iowa caucuses, and it's going to get intense. And elections are intense. They are intense experiences, and they're intense on both sides. This is the first time in a long time that both parties haven't had, kind of, a clear nominee, and it's going to be interesting to watch.

Q. Do you miss it?

The President. Yes, I'm going to miss the campaigning. I like campaigning. And if somebody ever says they don't like campaigning, they're not telling you—either that, or they're a lousy candidate. I mean, it's fun. [Laughter] I enjoy it. I enjoy the crowds; I enjoy the noise; I enjoy giving that message; I enjoy the competition. And yes, I'm going to miss it.

On the other hand, what I'm not going to miss is what we all—some of us went through in 2000, which was getting out on an airplane and having my friend Candy Crowley pass a virus around and—[laughter]. I got a respiratory infection; so did half the press corps. They got off the plane; I didn't get to get off the plane. [Laughter] And it was tough; it was a tough experience. And—well, look, I'm not dissing Candy; I said, "my friend." Look, it can happen to the best of them, you know.

Yes, I know, Wolf.

Cooperation With Congress/Legislative Agenda

Q. I get another one. [Laughter] This is a good deal. Can you tell us whether you think your personal relationship with the Democratic leaders in Congress has had a negative impact on your ability to get your legislation through? And how important is that personal relationship?

The President. I have got cordial relations with the leaders when I talk to them. I

saw Speaker Pelosi last night at the Congressional Ball at the White House, and we have very cordial relations. Here's—Congress—the Democrats in Congress, in the House and the Senate, need to work out their differences before they come to the White House. You can imagine what it's like to try to deal on an important piece of legislation, and the Democrats in the House have one opinion, and the Democrats in the Senate have another opinion. FISA is a good example.

And in order for us to be able to reach accord, they've got to come with one voice, one position. And it's—nobody—like, the most disappointing thing about Washington has been the name-calling and this kind of—people go out in front of the mikes, and they just kind of unleash. And I've tried hard not to do that. I've tried to be respectful to all parties. And that's disappointing.

On the other hand, I think we can get some things done. The Peruvian trade vote is one; there's an example. And the Congress needs to get their differences sorted. One of the worst ways to negotiate is to negotiate with one group. They pocket your negotiations, and then another group shows up and says, "Well, you've said this to them, now give us this."

And hopefully, as we come down the stretch here, that they're capable of coming forward with, "Here's what we believe; here's our plan; here's what we would like you to consider," as opposed to some examples, which is passing legislation for the sake of the headline, as opposed to passing legislation to get it passed. And SCHIP is a classic example. They knew I was going to veto the bill. They knew that was going to happen. They knew the veto would be sustained. But they ate up valuable time and passed the bill anyway.

And so we sit here in the White House trying to figure out why. Why would you waste time? Why wouldn't you sit down and try to seriously negotiate an agreement

on a bill that they knew was going to get vetoed and sustained?

Now, hopefully, in the next—however long they intend to stay here, that we're capable of working together. But if not, I'm going to stand strong for certain principles, and one of which is to make sure our troops get funded. We've got men and women in combat. We've got people risking their lives for the United States of America. And this Congress has yet to fund them, and it needs to. And it needs to fund them without telling our military how to conduct this war. Arbitrary dates for withdrawal are unacceptable, particularly given the fact that the strategy is working—it's working.

And it seems like to me that this Congress ought to be congratulating our military commanders and our troops. And one way to send a congratulatory message is to give them the funds they need, and now is the time to do it.

Let's see here, Mark Silva [Chicago Tribune].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. That would be you back there.

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. I may want to apologize in advance because I—

The President. Please do.

Q. —I can't help but read your body language this morning, Mr. President. You seem somehow dispirited—somewhat dispirited.

The President. I think you need to apologize for advance—[laughter]. This is like—all of a sudden, it's like psychology 101, you know? [Laughter]

Q. A question related to that, sir, is, twice now—on Iran and Iraq—the facts have failed you on things that you've been outspoken on telling the American people. Senator Harry Reid is saying on the war spending issue that, quote, "The President is not leveling with the American people."

The President. On the war spending issue?

Q. Yes. Are you, in fact, troubled by—
The President. Why don't you clarify that for me?

Q. Well, are you—

The President. What aspect of it? That I don't think we ought to fund the troops?

Q. No, sir.

The President. I think we need to fund the troops. I submitted a supplemental last February. Anyway—

Q. My question, sir, is, are you feeling troubled about your standing here today, about perhaps facing a credibility gap with the American people?

The President. No, I'm feeling pretty spirited, pretty good about life, and have made the decision to come before you so I can explain the NIE. And I have said Iran is dangerous, and the NIE doesn't do anything to change my opinion about the danger Iran poses to the world. Quite the contrary. I'm using this NIE as an opportunity to continue to rally our colleagues and allies.

Q. Do you think it—

The President. It makes it—the NIE makes it clear that the strategy we have used in the past is effective. And the reason why we need to make sure that strategy goes forward for the future is because if Iran shows up with a nuclear weapon at some point in time, the world is going to say, what happened to them in 2007? How come they couldn't see the impending danger? What caused them not to understand

that a country that once had a weapons program could reconstitute the weapons program? How come they couldn't see that the important first step in developing a weapon is the capacity to be able to enrich uranium? How come they didn't know that with that capacity, that knowledge could be passed on to a covert program? What blinded them to the realities of the world? And it's not going to happen on my watch, Mark.

And so, kind of, psychology 101 ain't working. It's just not working. I understand the issues; I clearly see the problems. And I'm going to use the NIE to continue to rally the international community for the sake of peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:01 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; and Cable News Network reporter Candy Crowley. Reporters referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela; and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Statement on Senate Approval of a Free Trade Agreement With Peru December 4, 2007

I commend the Senate for approving the free trade agreement with Peru with strong bipartisan support. This agreement will level the playing field for American exporters and investors and will expand an important market in this hemisphere for U.S. goods and services, which will help

strengthen economic growth and job creation in the United States. Approval of this agreement also signals our firm support for those who share our values of freedom and democracy and expanding opportunity for all.

Today's action by the Senate also marks the approval of the first free trade agreement that fulfills the May 10 bipartisan trade agreement with Congress by incorporating enforceable labor and environmental standards. I look forward to signing this legislation into law and urge Congress to promptly consider and approve our other

pending free trade agreements, starting with Colombia, which would be important to the stability of the region, and including Panama and South Korea.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this statement.

Remarks on Arrival in Omaha, Nebraska *December 5, 2007*

The President. Good morning. I'm pleased to be back in Nebraska.

Senatorial candidate Michael O. Johanns. Welcome back.

The President. I do want to say a couple of words about Iran before I talk about my friend Mike Johanns.

On the way out here, I spoke with my team, who gave me a report on conversations that the Secretary of State and our National Security Adviser have had over the last couple of days with their counterparts in the United Kingdom, in Germany and France and Russia. These countries understand that the Iranian nuclear issue is a problem and continues to be a problem that must be addressed by the international community. A number of them have said so publicly, and I appreciate their comments.

I appreciate the work of our intelligence community in helping us better understand Iran's past and present nuclear activities. Their information is critical in increasing our understanding and helping us develop a sound policy.

It is clear from the latest NIE that the Iranian Government has more to explain about its nuclear intentions and past actions, especially the covert nuclear weapons program pursued until the fall of 2003, which the Iranian regime has yet to acknowledge. The Iranians have a strategic choice to make. They can come clean with

the international community about the scope of their nuclear activities and fully accept the longstanding offer to suspend their enrichment program and come to the table and negotiate, or they can continue on a path of isolation that is not in the best interest of the Iranian people. The choice is up to the Iranian regime.

I'm here also to talk about my friend Mike Johanns. I have gotten to know him well, and there's no doubt in my mind he'll make a great United States Senator from the State of Nebraska. He's an honorable, decent man, and he's a humble man. When given a task, he can get the job done.

People of Nebraska have gotten to know Mike as a result of his leadership when he was the Governor. I got to know Mike as the result of his being a fine leader at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mike understands farming, and he understands ranching. He understands the issues that the people who work the soil will face. If I were someone living in Nebraska who cared about the agricultural industry, I'd want somebody who knew what he was talking about being my Senator. And Mike Johanns knows what he's talking about when it comes to agricultural matters.

He also understands what he's talking about when it comes to national security matters. He sat in the Cabinet Room with me and other members of my Cabinet, discussing how best to secure the United

States of America from the threats of the world in which we live. It is important for the people of Nebraska to have a Senator who understands the realities of the world and is willing to support the Government in its efforts to protect the American people.

Mike Johanns is a man of values. He understands Nebraskan values. He can articulate Nebraskan values, but more importantly, he lives Nebraskan values.

And so I've come to say to the people of this good State: I know you're going to make up your own mind for what's right,

but if I was a voter in this State, I'd sure pull that lever for Mike Johanns for the United States Senator. [*Laughter*] And if my wife was a voter for this State—[*laughter*—she'd try to pull it twice. [*Laughter*]

So I'm proud to be here with Mike and Stephanie. Thank you, sir. Good luck, and God bless you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. at Eppley Airfield. In his remarks, he referred to Stephanie Johanns, wife of Nebraska senatorial candidate Michael O. Johanns.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care and an Exchange With Reporters in Omaha December 5, 2007

The President. It is a joy to be here at the OneWorld Community Health Center in Omaha. I want to thank Andrea and Dr. McVea for the tour.

I say it's a joy because the spirit here, the spirit of community, the desire to help people who are less fortunate is prevalent. People here feel a great sense of community and accomplishment. And as well they should because community health centers, not only here in Omaha but around the country, provide a very vital service. I happen to think they're an integral part of a health care system because they provide care for the low-income, for the newly arrived, and they take the pressure off of our hospital emergency rooms.

And so I've come to thank the staff and the providers of compassionate health care here for their work. I remind the people of Omaha that this is a public-private partnership. The Federal Government is a—and my administration strongly supports the expansion and the extension and the reach of these community health centers. But the private sector, the public, needs to support these centers as well.

We spent a little time talking about whether or not the community understands the importance of a community health center. This community does. I think there is some awareness of how important OneWorld is, and I would hope that other citizens that aren't aware would find out the importance of a community health center.

When I—in 2000, when I was running, I said, look, I believe these are important centers because they provide an integral service, and they take pressure off of our health care systems around the country. And so I laid out a goal of expanding and—the health care centers by 1,200, and we're meeting that goal. And I want to thank Members of Congress from both parties for understanding the importance and the vitality of community health centers. And I look forward to working with Congress to continue to expand the reach of these important facilities.

And so, again, I want to thank you all for your hospitality. I really appreciate you giving me a chance to come to—a part of our national strategy is to make sure

the uninsured can find good, quality primary care. This center serves—85 percent of its people don't speak English as a first language. By far, the vast majority are low-income, and yet they're receiving first-class quality care. So I thank the docs and the nurses and the social workers and all the people who are making this facility such a good one.

Thanks for having me.

Iran

Q. Iran's President said the NIE is a victory for Iran. They want an apology from the United States and compensation, sir.

Will you do that? Is the NIE a victory for Iran?

The President. [Laughter] You can mark down I chuckled.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. in the Adah and Leon Millard Foundation Conference Room at OneWorld Community Health Centers. In his remarks, he referred to Andrea Skolkin, executive director, and Kristine McVea, medical director, OneWorld Community Health Centers. A reporter referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr., and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson

December 6, 2007

Good afternoon. Before turning to the situation in the housing market, I send my sympathy to the families of those murdered in Omaha, Nebraska, yesterday. I was in Omaha just before the shooting took place, and I know what a difficult day it is for that fine community. The victims and their loved ones are in the prayers of Americans. The Federal Government stands ready to help in any way we can. And our whole Nation grieves with the people of Omaha.

I just had an important discussion on the housing market with Secretary Paulson, Secretary Jackson, and members of the mortgage industry.

The housing market is moving through a period of change. In recent years, innovative mortgage products have helped millions of Americans afford their own homes, and that's good. Unfortunately, some of these products were used irresponsibly. Some lenders made loans that borrowers did not understand, especially in the subprime sector. Some borrowers took out loans they knew they could not afford. And

to compound the problem, many mortgages are packaged into securities and sold to investors around the world. So when concerns about subprime loans begin to mount—began to mount, uncertainty spread to the broader financial markets.

Secretary Paulson and Secretary Jackson and Chairman Bernanke are monitoring developments in the housing market and working to limit the disruption to our overall economy. Data released this morning confirmed the difficulties facing the housing market. Yet one reason for confidence is that the downturn in housing comes against a backdrop of solid fundamentals in other areas, including low inflation, a healthy job market, record-high exports. America's economy has proved itself highly resilient. And it is strong, and it is flexible, and it is dynamic enough to weather this storm.

For individual homeowners, the problem is more difficult. Many of those feeling financial stress have an adjustable rate mortgage, which typically starts with a lower

interest rate and then resets to a higher rate after a few years. Many of those borrowers cannot afford the higher payments. And now some are fearing foreclosure, which is a terrible burden for hard-working families and a source of concern for communities and neighborhoods across our country.

The rise in foreclosures would have negative consequences for our economy. Lenders and investors would face enormous losses, so they have an interest in supporting mortgage counseling and working with homeowners to prevent foreclosure.

The Government has a role to play as well. We should not bail out lenders, real estate speculators, or those who made the reckless decision to buy a home they knew they could never afford. Yet there are some responsible homeowners who could avoid foreclosure with some assistance. And in August, I announced a series of targeted actions to help them. My administration has moved forward in three key areas.

First, we've launched a new initiative at the Federal Housing Administration called FHASecure. This program gives the FHA greater flexibility to offset refinancing to homeowners—to offer refinancing to homeowners who have good credit histories, but cannot afford their current payments. In just 3 months, the FHA has helped more than 35,000 people refinance. And in the coming year, the FHA expects this program to help more than 300,000 families.

Second, in August, I asked Secretaries Paulson and Jackson to work with lenders and loan servicers and mortgage counselors and investors on an initiative to help struggling homeowners find a way to refinance. They assembled a private sector group called HOPE NOW Alliance. Their leaders are with us today. HOPE NOW is an example of Government bringing together members of the private sector to voluntarily address a national challenge, without taxpayer subsidies or without Government mandates. I'm pleased to announce that our efforts

have yielded a promising new source of relief for American homeowners.

Representatives of HOPE NOW just briefed me on their plan to help homeowners who will not be able to make the higher payments on their subprime loan once the interest rates go up, but who can at least afford the current starter rate. HOPE NOW members have agreed on a set of industry-wide standards to provide relief to these borrowers in one of three ways: by refinancing an existing loan into a new private mortgage, by moving them into an FHASecure loan, or by freezing their current interest rate for 5 years.

Lenders are already refinancing and modifying mortgages on a case-by-case basis. With this systematic approach, HOPE NOW will be able to help large groups of homeowners all at once. This will bring more relief to more homeowners more quickly. HOPE NOW estimates there are up to 1.2 million American homeowners who could be eligible for this assistance.

Public awareness is critical to this effort because the group can only help homeowners who ask for it. So HOPE NOW recently mailed hundreds of thousands of letters to borrowers falling behind on their payments, and they have set up a counseling hotline that Americans can call 24 hours a day. I've directed Secretaries Paulson and Jackson to expand the public awareness campaign. And I have a message for every homeowner worried about rising mortgage payments: The best you can do for your family is to call 1-800-995-HOPE [1-888-995-HOPE].* That is 1-800-995-H-O-P-E [1-888-995-H-O-P-E].*

Third, the Federal Government is taking several regulatory actions to make the mortgage industry more transparent, reliable, and fair. Later this month, the Federal Reserve intends to announce stronger lending standards that will help protect borrowers. At the same time, HUD and the Federal

* White House correction.

banking regulators are taking steps to improve disclosure requirements so that homeowners can be confident that they are receiving complete, accurate, and understandable information about their mortgages.

As we take these steps, the Department of Justice will continue to pursue wrongdoing in the banking and housing industries so we can help ensure that those who defraud American consumers face justice.

These measures will help many struggling homeowners, and the United States Congress has the potential to help even more. Yet in 3 months since I made my proposals, the Congress has not sent me a single bill to help homeowners. If Members are serious about responding to the challenges in the housing market, they can start with the following steps.

First, Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the FHA. In April 2006, I sent Congress an FHA modernization bill. This bill would increase access to FHA-insured loans by lowering down payment requirements, allowing the FHA to insure bigger mortgages in high-cost States, and expanding FHA's authority to price insurance fairly with risk-based premiums. This bill could allow the FHA to reach an additional 250,000 families who could not otherwise qualify for prime-rate financing. Last year, the House passed the bill with more than 400 votes, and this year, the House passed it again. Yet the Senate has not acted. The liquidity and stability that FHA provides the market are needed more than ever, and I urge the United States Senate to move as quickly as possible on this important piece of legislation.

Second, Congress needs to temporarily reform the Tax Code to help homeowners refinance during this time of housing market stress. Under current law, if the value of your house declines and your bank forgives a portion of your mortgage, the Tax Code treats the amount forgiven as taxable income. When you're worried about making your payments, higher taxes are the last

thing you need. The House agrees and recently passed this relief with bipartisan support. Yet the Senate has not responded. This simple reform could help many American homeowners in an hour of need, and the Senate should pass it as soon as possible.

Changing the Tax Code can also help State and local governments do their part to help homeowners. Under current law, cities and States can issue tax-exempt bonds to finance new mortgages for first-time home buyers. My administration has proposed allowing cities and States to issue these tax-exempt mortgage bonds for an additional purpose: to refinance existing loans. This temporary measure would make it easier for State housing authorities to help troubled borrowers, and Congress should approve it quickly.

Third, Congress needs to pass funding to support mortgage counseling. Nonprofit groups like NeighborWorks provides essential services to—by helping homeowners find affordable mortgage solutions and prevent foreclosures. My budget requests nearly \$120 million for NeighborWorks and another 50 million for HUD's mortgage counseling programs. Congress has had these requests since February, yet it has not sent me a bill, and they need to get the funding to my desk.

Fourth, Congress needs to pass legislation to reform Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. These institutions provide liquidity in the mortgage market that benefits millions of homeowners, and it is vital they operate safely and operate soundly. So I've called on Congress to pass legislation that strengthens independent regulation of the GSEs and ensures they focus on their important housing mission. The GSE reform bill passed by the House earlier this year is a good start, but the Senate has not acted, and the United States Senate needs to pass this legislation soon.

The holidays are fast approaching, and unfortunately, this will be a time of anxiety

for Americans worried about their mortgages and their homes. There's no perfect solution, but the homeowners deserve our help. And the steps I've outlined today are a sensible response to a serious challenge. I call on Congress to move forward quickly and join with me in delivering relief to

homeowners in need so we can keep our economy healthy and the American Dream alive.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree December 6, 2007

Mr. Secretary, thank you for that kind introduction, and thank you all for joining us. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you on this joyous occasion. As the Secretary said, in a few moments, we will light the National Christmas Tree. And as he also said, this is a tradition that dates back to President Calvin Coolidge.

There's one person with us today who remembers that first annual Christmas tree lighting, and, Santa, we are glad you're here. *[Laughter]* We know this is a busy time of year for you, and we're thrilled you're here. And we really appreciate you bringing Mrs. Claus. Both you and I married well. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet for joining us, Members of the Congress. I want to thank Vin Cipolla, Mary Bomar. I particularly want to thank the men and women who work for the National Park Service.

Pastor, thank you for your blessing. I believe these entertainers didn't disappoint anyone. We're proud you're here, and thank you for your beautiful music.

Christmas is a time of rejoicing and reflection. Each year at this time, we rejoice in the proclamation of good news, that in Bethlehem of Judea, a Savior was born. And we rejoice in the Christmas promise of peace to men of good will. We also reflect on the mystery of Christmas, the story of the Almighty, who entered history in the most vulnerable form possible, hid-

den in the weakness of a newborn child. And we reflect on the call of our Creator, who by taking this form, reminds us of our duty to protect and care for the weak and the vulnerable among us.

During this Christmas season, millions of Americans will answer this call by reaching out a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. We are thankful for these good souls who show the good heart of our Nation. We're also thankful for the thousands of Americans who answer the call by serving our Nation in uniform. Many will spend this Christmas stationed in distant and dangerous lands, far from homes and from the families they love. They are never far from our thoughts, and they're always in our prayers. America honors their sacrifice and that of their families, who also serve our Nation. We're grateful for all they do to ensure that we live in the freedom our Creator intended for every man, woman, and child on the face of this Earth.

And now, as an expression of our hope for peace in this Christmas season, we're going to light the National Christmas Tree. And we have asked two young Americans to join us. Brianna Kinder helps others through her participation in the Montgomery County Police Activities League's Kids Care Club. And Damarcus Hawkins gives his time as part of the Discovery Creek Children's Museum service learning program.

And now if Brianna and Damarcus will join Laura, and if you will join me in a countdown: five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his re-

marks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who introduced the President; Vin Cipolla, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Rev. Roger P. Freeman, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Clarksville, TN.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland *December 7, 2007*

President Bush. One of the great experiences for me during my Presidency is to witness historic occasions, and I'm witnessing such an occasion with the arrival of Reverend Paisley and Mr. Martin McGuinness here to the White House. These two men are—have dedicated themselves to embettering their—Northern Ireland through their courage and conviction and desire to put aside the past and focus on a hopeful future.

And so I want to welcome you all here. I congratulate you for seizing the moment and writing a hopeful chapter. I'm looking forward to hearing about how the United States can help Northern Ireland move forward. I know one way we can help, and that is to encourage our business leaders to take a good look at the economic opportunities that Northern Ireland presents.

And so I welcome you here. I'm proud of your accomplishments. And I welcome you all to say a few comments to the TV, if you care to do so.

First Minister Paisley. Well, Mr. President, our first words on that—[*inaudible*]. We want to say from the people of Northern Ireland, "Thank you." Thank you to the American people for all they have done for us in the past. We did a lot for you in the past too.

But what I can say is we deeply appreciate that. And we also deeply appreciate the fact that we're here today, and that you have met us and have tried to encour-

age us on this. We have had our political squabbles and fights. I think we have come to the end of that. I think that peace has come; there will be a fight for peace. You don't win peace; you have to fight to keep it.

President Bush. Yes, sir.

First Minister Paisley. And we intend to that, and we're dedicated to that.

But we do need help in the economic field. And that—we're glad that the door has opened. We have had a very good reception in your country so far, and of course—[*inaudible*]. And when we look back and see this mighty army that's following hard in your tracks, we know that this is your final. And we say, thank you, and we look forward to good dealings between our little country and yours in the coming days.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.
Martin.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness. Yes. Can I too reiterate the comments of the First Minister in expressing our deepest thanks and appreciation to you and your administration for the tremendous help that we have received throughout the course of the process; follows on from the tradition of President Clinton and his administration.

So we're hugely appreciative of both of you for all of the tremendous support that we have received. Up until the 26th of March this year, Ian Paisley and I never

had a conversation about anything—[laughter]—not even about the weather. And now we have worked very closely together over the course of the last 7 months, and there hasn't been an angry word between us.

President Bush. Thank you.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness. So I think that that clearly shows that we are set for a new course. There is peace and stability. We have transformed the political situation. What we now need to do, as you have correctly identified, is transform the economic situation so that we can give our young people, in particular, a better future.

I am confident that we can do that, and with the tremendous assistance we've received here in the United States, and particularly working towards the economic investment conference in May, the future looks greater than it ever has in the course of Irish history.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

The President's Radio Address December 7, 2007

Good morning. Today I'm going to talk to you about some important policies affecting taxpayers and homeowners this holiday season. On Thursday, the United States Senate passed a bill to fix the Alternative Minimum Tax, or AMT. The AMT was designed to ensure that the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT decades ago, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is creeping up on more and more middle class families, and as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to the AMT. On average, these taxpayers would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next year. This is a huge tax increase that taxpayers do not deserve and that Congress must stop.

I congratulate the United States Senate for acting to do so. Now it's up to the House of Representatives to move the bill. They've already delayed the bill so long that 75 billion in tax refund checks could be delayed next year.

I urge the House of Representatives to get the Senate-passed AMT relief bill to my desk before they adjourn so I can sign it and protect millions of families from

higher taxes and avert any further delay in the tax refund checks next year.

I also know many Americans are concerned about meeting their mortgage obligations. The private sector and the Government both have a role to play. More than 3 months ago, I announced a series of targeted actions to help responsible homeowners avoid foreclosure. And on Thursday, I met with Treasury Secretary Paulson and Housing Secretary Jackson, who updated me on the progress.

The first step we took was to launch a new initiative at the Federal Housing Administration called FHASecure. This program gives the FHA greater flexibility to offer refinancing to homeowners who have good credit histories but cannot afford their current payments. In just 3 months, the FHA has helped more than 35,000 people refinance their homes. And in the coming year, the FHA expects this program to help more than 300,000 families.

Second, we helped assemble the HOPE NOW Alliance, which includes lenders, loan servicers, investors, and mortgage counselors. HOPE NOW is an example of

the Government bringing together members of the private sector to voluntarily address a national challenge, without taxpayer subsidies or Government mandates. This group has agreed on a set of industry-wide standards to help struggling homeowners by refinancing an existing loan into a new private mortgage or by moving them into an FHA Secure loan or by freezing their current interest rates for 5 years.

Lenders are already refinancing and modifying mortgages on a case-by-case basis. By taking a systemic approach, HOPE NOW will be able to help large groups of homeowners all at once. HOPE NOW estimates that up to 1.2 million homeowners could be eligible for assistance. And HOPE NOW has set up a counseling hotline that Americans can call 24 hours a day. I urge homeowners who are worried about rising mortgage payments to call 1-888-995-H-O-P-E to get help.

Third, the Federal Government is working to reduce the likelihood of similar problems in the future. Regulators are taking action to make the mortgage industry more transparent, reliable, and fair. Our goal is to ensure that homeowners receive complete, accurate, and understandable information about their mortgages.

These measures will help many struggling homeowners, and Congress has the potential to help even more. Yet in the 3 months since I made my proposals, Congress has not sent me a single bill to help homeowners. If Members are serious about responding to the challenges in the housing

market, they can start by taking several important steps.

Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the FHA. This bill could allow the FHA to help 250,000 families by the end of 2008. Congress needs to temporarily reform the Tax Code to help homeowners refinance during this time of housing market stress. And Congress needs to pass funding to support mortgage counseling. With this funding, we could help more homeowners choose the mortgage that is right for them.

As well, Congress needs to pass legislation to reform Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. By strengthening the independent regulation of these institutions, we can ensure they focus on their mission to expand homeownership in a fiscally responsible way.

These commonsense measures have been before Congress for months. Congress needs to pass these measures quickly and send them to my desk so we can help homeowners in need and protect the American Dream for all our citizens.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on December 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 7. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Jewish Community Leaders *December 10, 2007*

I've just had an extraordinary meeting with Jewish men and women, many of whom are from different parts of the world, who are fortunate to call America home. And they do so because of our great tradi-

tion of religious freedom and religious tolerance.

We discussed how America must remain engaged in helping people realize the great blessings of religious freedom and where

we find societies in which religious freedom is not allowed to practice, that we must do something about it.

I recognize today is International Human Rights Day. And a good way to celebrate this day is to invited people from our country and from around the world to share with me their stories, stories of courage, stories of people who simply want to be in a society where people are allowed to worship freely.

We discussed the world in which we live today. We all recognize that we're in an ideological struggle against people who murder the innocent in order to achieve political objectives, and that on the one

hand, America must do everything to protect ourselves and are doing so. In the long term, the best way to defeat an ideology of hate is with an ideology of hope. And an ideology of hope is one that says, we value your religion, we honor the way you worship. And in our society, you can worship any way you so choose, and that's the vision and dream for societies around the world.

So I want to thank you for sharing your stories with me. I thank you for your courage. May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Lighting the Hanukkah Menorah *December 10, 2007*

Thank you. Good evening. Laura and I welcome you to the White House. Mr. Attorney General, thank you for being here; Secretary Chertoff and family. Hanukkah is a time of joy and festivity in the Jewish religion. We're honored to gather with members of the Jewish community to celebrate this holiday.

During Hanukkah, we remember an ancient struggle for freedom. More than 2,000 years ago, a cruel tyrant ruled Judea and forbade the Israelites from practicing their religion. A band of brothers came together to fight this oppression, and against incredible odds, they liberated the capital city of Jerusalem. As they set about rededicating the Holy Temple, they witnessed a great miracle: That purified oil that was supposed to last for 1 day burned for 8.

Jewish families commemorate this miracle by lighting the menorah for the 8 nights of Hanukkah. The Talmud instructs families to place the menorah in public view so the entire world can see its light. The flames remind us that light triumphs over darkness, faith conquers despair, and

the desire for freedom burns inside every man, woman, and child.

As we light the Hanukkah candles this year, we pray for those who still live under the shadow of tyranny. This afternoon I met with a group of Jewish immigrants to mark International Human Rights Day. Many of these men and women fled from religious oppression in countries like Iran and Syria and the Soviet Union. They came to America because our Nation is a beacon of freedom. And they see a day of hope on the horizon when people all across the world will worship in freedom. The forces of intolerance can suppress the menorah, but they can never extinguish its light.

The menorah we light tonight has special meaning. It once belonged to Chayim Pearl, who was the great-grandfather of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. While reporting in Pakistan in 2002, Daniel was kidnaped and murdered by terrorists. His only crime was being a Jewish American, something Daniel Pearl would never deny. In his final moments, Daniel told his captors about a street in Israel named

for his great-grandfather. He looked into their camera, and he said, "My father is Jewish, my mother is Jewish, and I'm Jewish." These words have become a source of inspiration for Americans of all faiths. They show the courage of a man who refused to bow before terror and the strength of a spirit that could not be broken.

Daniel's memory remains close to our hearts. Those who knew him best remember a gifted writer who loved the violin and made friends wherever he went. We're honored that Daniel's parents, Ruth and Judea, have joined us today. We thank them for their work on behalf of the Daniel Pearl Foundation. The foundation helps bring people from different cultures together through journalism and music. It's

a fitting tribute to Daniel's lifelong pursuit of truth and tolerance. By honoring Daniel, we are given the opportunity to bring forth hope from the darkness of tragedy, and that is a miracle worth celebrating during the Festival of Lights.

Laura and I wish people of Jewish faith around the world a happy Hanukkah. May God bless you all.

Tonight we will hear a wonderful performance by the Zamir Chorale. But first, I ask Ruth and Judea to light the Pearl family menorah and lead the blessings.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:27 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey.

Remarks Following a Discussion on Teen Drug Use Statistics December 11, 2007

Thank you. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. Director Walters and Dr. Volkow, thank you for joining me. We've got the Ambassador *de Mexico y tambien Colombia*; thanks for coming. I appreciate you all being here. Where are the—*Embajador, bienvenidos—los dos*. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate the students from Brown Academy for joining us. I want to thank officials in my administration for being here. I welcome our honored guests.

I am pleased to be here with the men and women who have enlisted, have signed up, in our country's fight against illegal drugs. You battle an unrelenting evil that ruins families, endangers neighborhoods, and stalks our children. You're part of a mission that will shape our Nation's future. You're fulfilling the highest calling of citizenship; you're giving your fellow Americans the chance for a better life. And I thank you for your good and noble work.

I've just come from a roundtable—or was it a square table—but either way, it was a table—[laughter]—where I met with community activists and youth leaders, people who've heard a call to answer our Nation's need to be engaged in a fierce battle against drug abuse, those who encourage it and those who profit from it. The drug trade has enriched our society's enemies. It has funded acts of terror. It feeds an addiction that causes some Americans to turn to crime.

When I took office, our country was facing a troubling rate of drug use among young people. A new generation was in danger of being swept up in a cycle of addiction, crime, and hopelessness. This was a looming crisis, and I felt it required an aggressive response.

And so in 2002, I committed our Nation to an ambitious goal to cut drug use amongst young people by 25 percent over a 5-year period. John Walters agreed with that goal. He's been in charge of leading

an effort to achieve that goal. We took a tough and balanced approach. We would cut the supply of drugs coming to our country through aggressive action by law enforcement personnel and international partners. We would fight the demand for drugs here at home through prevention and treatment. In other words, our strategy was balance. On the one hand, we'll interdict and prevent and disrupt the drug supply networks, and on the other hand, we'll work to convince people they shouldn't use drugs in the first place. And those that have, there's prevention—or there's recovery programs for you.

This strategy has had promising results. This morning I was briefed on the latest "Monitoring the Future" study, which tracks drug use amongst America's youth. It reports that since 2001, the overall use of illicit drugs by young people has dropped by 24 percent. Marijuana use fell by 25 percent, steroid use by a third, and the use of ecstasy by 54 percent. The most encouraging statistic relates to the use of methamphetamine, which has plummeted by an impressive 64 percent since 2001.

One exception to this trend is a rise in the abuse of certain prescription painkillers. This is troubling, and we're going to continue to confront the challenge. Yet the overall direction is hopeful. Because Americans took action, today, there are an estimated 860,000 fewer children using drugs than 6 years ago. Because of—Americans took action, because grassroots activists stood up and said, "We've had enough," because law enforcement worked hard, communities are safer, families are stronger, and more children have the hope of a healthy and happy life.

This is a remarkable achievement, and it is a tribute to the work of a lot of really good people. I'd like to remind people, government can rally, government can fund, but the true work is done at the grassroots level. We've got representatives from our law enforcement organizations who are with us today. They've risked their

lives to cut the supply of drugs to our streets. Over the past 6 years, they have seized record amounts of cocaine coming into the United States. I see that Admiral Allen is here from the United States Coast Guard. They've got people out there on those cutters in the high seas doing incredibly important work. Admiral, you thank those troops for all they're doing.

We've worked with our allies to stop their drugs coming in from Colombia. And Madam Ambassador, you need to thank your strong President for leading the fight against drugs in Colombia.

We're working with the President of Mexico, Mr. Ambassador, and we're helping that man take the lead. He's made some tough decisions and courageous decisions. He's led an unprecedented assault against drug organizations in Mexico, and we want to continue to work together. We got to have a strategy on both sides of the border to deal with a common problem. So I want to thank you both for being here. Pass word on to your bosses that I admire their courage and appreciate their hard work.

I appreciate the fact that our drug enforcement focused on meth, and therefore, we have a dramatic drop. You might remember, a while ago, that methamphetamine seemed to be a—just running so rampant that people were worried that we could never get our—get a handle on it. And yet there's been a dramatic drop. A lot of it has to do with the fact that our law enforcement officers, in both urban and rural settings, are on the frontline of disrupting the suppliers.

They appreciate the fact that we're dismantling drug trafficking operations. We're seizing supplies, and we're putting the peddlers of poisons where they belong, and that is behind bars. Appreciate your outstanding service. For all those who wear the uniform of law enforcement, our Nation owes you a great debt of gratitude.

At home, countless Americans have worked to reduce the demand of illegal drugs. It's one thing to affect supply, but

when you reduce demand, it affects the capacity of people to supply. In other words, if we have people—fewer people using, there's not going to be a need to supply as much. On the frontlines of this efforts are parents, are teachers, are counselors who are sending our kids a clear message: Drug use is not fun; it is not glamorous; it is harmful. And I want to thank those who are making that a clear message. Drugs destroys lives.

This addiction is hard to break. It's a hard thing to break a drug addiction. Yet many Americans are breaking it. With us today are some young people who have fought to win this difficult struggle. And we met with them, and I want to talk about two of them. I asked their permission, and they said: "That's fine, Mr. President. You can—you go ahead and lay our stories out." And the reason I want to do so is because I want others to hear the stories of two youngsters who made an incredibly tough decision to save their life.

First is Sara Johnson. She started using drugs when she was 12 years old. As her addiction grew, she would steal drugs from medicine cabinets without even knowing what the drugs were. She pawned things to get money so she could go out on the streets to buy drugs. And she hit bottom, and she was scared. Yet she summoned up the courage to get treatment. And she didn't like the treatment at first. She told me that after about 6 months, she decided she wanted to leave without permission. [Laughter] Then she reassessed her life. She made a personal choice and went back into treatment. And she is in recovery, and she's working for a better life. I said: "What do you want to be, now that you've made this incredibly important step in your life at a young age? Do you have a goal?" She said, "Plastic surgeon." Then she looked at me, and I thought for a minute she said, "Well, you could use a little work, Mr. President." [Laughter] But Sara, thank you for your courage. I'm proud you're here.

You might just stand up and let the people take a look at you. Thank you.

Hear the story of Justin Calderon. He was raised by a mom who had a serious drug addiction. Drugs crowd out love and responsibility. If you love drugs more than you love your child, serious problems can arise, and this is a man who knows it first-hand. He spent his childhood on the streets, seeking drugs and committing crimes to support his habit. One night, he was alone in a jail cell, and after years of addiction and struggle, he told himself, he said, "You are better than this." And so he's in a recovery program. He's been off drugs for a year. He plans to go back to school. And what he wants to do is to give back to society by helping other young people fight drug addiction. *Bienvenidos*;—welcome.

Two joyous souls who are inspiring others, I told them, I said, you just don't know whose lives you've touched, but you have touched the President's life. But there's somebody paying attention to you. And so thanks for leading.

So today we celebrate progress against substance abuse. We also know that this work is not finished. There's still a lot more work to be done. Thousands of children still live in homes torn apart by drugs. Thousands more are still considering whether to try drugs for the first time. It's up to all Americans to be involved in this important struggle against drug addiction. It's up to all of us to urge our fellow citizens to make the right choice and to help those who make the wrong choice understand the consequences and that there is a more hopeful future.

In this effort, we need more help from role models that our kids look up to. It's really important for professional sports associations to continue to crack down on drug abuse by athletes. And it's important that more people in Hollywood stand up and send a right message to our children.

All Americans have a responsibility to encourage people to turn away from the losing spiral of addiction and to make good choices in life. But the great thing about our country and the reason I'm so optimistic is there are thousands and thousands of people willing to take the lead in their own communities, people who have seen a problem and said, "We're going to do something about it." Like this good woman right here from eastern Kentucky. She said, "We live in rural America, and we got a significant prescription drug problem that's affecting every family in that area." And so instead of wringing her hands, she said, "I think I'm going to do something about it," and has led the charge. We can help, but it's her initiative, along with thousands of others who have stepped up and said, "We're going to save lives one soul at a time." Why? Because they love America, and they love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

This mission of dealing with drug abuse is worthy of a great people and a great nation. It's a worthy mission. It is a struggle

that requires us to confront torment with patience, weakness with understanding, and evil with resolve, hope, and love.

I want to thank you all for being a part of this great effort. I thank John and all those in the grassroots for accomplishing an important goal. I urge you to continue staying in this battle. I say to our young folks: Make the right choice in life, and you can realize your dreams here in the United States of America.

Thank you for being here. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Nora D. Volkow, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse; Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; Ambassador to the U.S. Carolina Barco Isakson and President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; and Karen Engle, executive director, Operation UNITE.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy *December 11, 2007*

President Bush. Mr. President, it's my honor to welcome you to the Oval Office. Our—we just had a very substantive meeting. And it will be my honor to feed you a lunch. I doubt it is going to be—the food will be as good as the food I had when I visited your beautiful country.

Bilateral relations with the United States and Italy are very good. We have a lot of interchange between our countries, with business as well as travel. And there are millions of Italian Americans who will be pleased, Mr. President, to know we've got good relations.

Secondly, we just had a really around-the-world trip as we discussed problem

areas and our mutual desire to work together to help solve those problems.

We discussed Afghanistan, Lebanon, Kosovo. I briefed the President on the recent Annapolis Conference that we hosted to help get the peace process started between the Palestinians and Israelis. We had a very compatible relation—discussion because by and large, we're in agreement on how to advance the solutions to these issues.

And finally, I'm—have expressed and will continue to dialog with the President about my deep concern about Iran. Iran is dangerous. Iran—we believe Iran had a secret military weapons program. And Iran must

explain to the world why they had a program. Iran has an obligation to explain to the IAEA why they hid this program from them. Iran is dangerous, and they'll be even more dangerous if they learn how to enrich uranium.

And so I look forward to working with the President to explain our strategy and figure out ways we can work together to prevent this from happening for the sake of world peace.

So I'm sure proud to have you here, Mr. President, and welcome.

President Napolitano. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It has been a great pleasure for me to accept your invitation. You kindly addressed me 6 months ago when you were in Rome, and we had already then very positive talks.

And in the past few months, there have been important and rather positive developments in the international situation. First of all, I wanted to express to President Bush my deep appreciation for the responsibility he wanted to take to foster negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian authorities in view of a peace treaty.

Italy is present in several areas of crisis. In this moment, it is an Italian general who is taking the command of the Kabul region in Afghanistan. In Iraq, we give our contribution to the stabilization of the country, participating in NATO training activities. And as a matter of fact, there has been an undeniable improvement in the security conditions in Iraq in the past few months.

In fact, generally speaking, we share the same concerns, and we express a common commitment. And speaking particularly of Kosovo, we could verify how close are our positions on the way to deal with the independence of Kosovo, taking into account the difficult overall situation in the region.

We want to discuss constructively our positions on all questions and all threats. We just want to give our contribution and our idea how to face successfully all threats, including the relative threat of nuclear weaponization of Iran.

I just want to add a word about Europe, because in the past few months, there has been something important. Europe was able—European Union was able to overcome a stalemate, a very dangerous institutional stalemate. The constitutional treaty has been put aside, but a new treaty has been outlined unanimously, and the day after tomorrow it will be signed in Lisbon. And on the basis of this new treaty, which has to be ratified by the signed—I am sure it will be ratified by all 27 member states—we'll have new figures; we'll have new institutions more capable to affirm the role of a united Europe on the international scene.

Italy and Europe both must take their responsibilities for international security and peace for the cause of liberty and democracy. And the more Europe will be united and will be effective, I think the better we can reach these goals. We cannot ask the United States to take care of our security. International security is a common duty, and Europe must be up to this challenge.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Glad you're here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:48 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Napolitano referred to Brig. Gen. Federico Bonato, Italian Army, commander, Regional Command Capital, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *December 11, 2007*

I am deeply disturbed by the report that U.N. Special Rapporteur Paulo Pinheiro released today in Geneva documenting his findings from his trip to Burma last month. It provides further alarming details about the Burmese authorities' crackdown on demonstrations by monks and democracy activists and the severe reprisals that continue today.

He describes how the regime harassed, detained, and killed many peaceful demonstrators. The Special Rapporteur received reports, for example, that a large number of bodies were burned September 27–30 at the Ye Way Crematorium.

I strongly condemn these actions and the junta's refusal to accept the need for real change in Burma. Even while Mr. Pinheiro was in Burma, the regime continued to arrest and harass monks and democracy activists. The regime has also closed down monasteries, including the Maggin Monastery in Rangoon that served as a hospice and treatment center for HIV/AIDS patients.

Mr. Pinheiro's report demonstrates why the world cannot go back to business as usual with General Than Shwe and his junta. I call on all members of the international community to condemn the atrocities detailed in Mr. Pinheiro's report in the strongest possible terms. Last month, I announced new sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their cronies. Should the regime continue to ignore calls for a true democratic transition and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, the United States is prepared to lead international efforts to place more sanctions on the regime. Laura and I will continue to stand with the Burmese people as they seek the freedom they deserve.

NOTE: The President referred to Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Burma; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

Remarks on Presenting the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor *December 12, 2007*

You know, one of the wonderful experiences of being a President is to welcome citizens who have served their communities with valor and compassion. And I—General and I are surrounded by four such gentlemen who have been heroic in their duties. They will tell you they were just doing their job; I'm telling you they did their job with extraordinary courage. And

so it's been an honor to award them this precious medal. And I want to thank you all very much for joining us. Proud to call you fellow citizens.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey.

Statement on Signing the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007

December 12, 2007

Today I signed into law the “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007,” a bill to reauthorize Head Start. Over the past 40 years, Head Start has provided comprehensive child development services to more than 20 million low-income children and their families to promote school readiness. Because of the National Reporting System, we know that more Head Start programs are helping children gain early reading and math skills. But we must take steps to improve Head Start to ensure that low-income children arrive at school ready to learn.

I am pleased that this bill addresses several longstanding administration priorities, such as increased competition among Head Start providers, improved coordination of early childhood delivery systems, and stronger educational performance standards. Increasing competition for providers will help ensure that we offer the highest quality programs to our Nation’s most vulnerable young children. Greater collaboration among Head Start agencies, schools, and other programs serving young children will help ensure our investments are better aligned and more effective. Stronger educational performance standards and an emphasis on research-based curricula and

classroom practices will increase children’s preparedness for school. I also support the bill’s provisions to strengthen fiscal accountability and program oversight, so that dollars intended to serve children are spent wisely.

I am, however, deeply disappointed that the bill ends the National Reporting System, our only tool to examine consistently how Head Start children are performing in programs across the Nation. We should be working to provide more and better data to parents, teachers, and policymakers, not less. I am concerned that the bill authorizes spending levels higher than those proposed in my budget. Approval of this legislation is not an endorsement of these funding levels or a commitment to request them. I am also disappointed that the bill fails to include my proposal to protect faith-based organizations’ religious hiring autonomy.

I thank Members of both parties in Congress who worked on this legislation. I will continue to work with Congress to ensure that our neediest children are prepared for success in school and a lifetime of achievement.

NOTE: H.R. 1429, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 110–134.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007”

December 12, 2007

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 3963, the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007.” Like its predecessor, H.R. 976, this bill does not put poor children first and

it moves our country’s health care system in the wrong direction. Ultimately, our Nation’s goal should be to move children who have no health insurance to private coverage—not to move children who already

have private health insurance to government coverage. As a result, I cannot sign this legislation.

The purpose of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was to help low-income children whose families were struggling, but did not qualify for Medicaid, to get the health care coverage that they needed. My Administration strongly supports reauthorization of SCHIP. That is why in February of this year I proposed a 5-year reauthorization of SCHIP and a 20 percent increase in funding for the program.

Some in the Congress have sought to spend more on SCHIP than my budget proposal. In response, I told the Congress that I was willing to work with its leadership to find any additional funds necessary to put poor children first, without raising taxes.

The leadership in the Congress has refused to meet with my Administration's representatives. Although they claim to have made "substantial changes" to the legislation, H.R. 3963 is essentially identical to the legislation that I vetoed in October. The legislation would still shift SCHIP away from its original purpose by covering adults. It would still include coverage of

many individuals with incomes higher than the median income in the United States. It would still result in government health care for approximately 2 million children who already have private health care coverage. The new bill, like the old bill, does not responsibly offset its new and unnecessary spending, and it still raises taxes on working Americans.

Because the Congress has chosen to send me an essentially identical bill that has the same problems as the flawed bill I previously vetoed, I must veto this legislation, too. I continue to stand ready to work with the leaders of the Congress, on a bipartisan basis, to reauthorize the SCHIP program in a way that puts poor children first; moves adults out of a program meant for children; and does not abandon the bipartisan tradition that marked the original enactment of the SCHIP program. In the interim, I call on the Congress to extend funding under the current program to ensure no disruption of services to needy children.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 12, 2007.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria December 13, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, it's been my honor to welcome you here to the White House. Now, we've just had a very extensive and fruitful discussion on a variety of issues, and that's what you'd expect when friends meet together.

I—the President is committed to democracy and rule of law. He was very articulate in his desire to make sure that the people of Nigeria understand that their Government will be fair and transparent and will be a government of the people. Mr. Presi-

dent, I am impressed by your commitment to reform, your adherence to the concept that rule of law, and your belief in transparency. And I congratulate you for being a strong leader.

We also talked about social justice issues, the issue of education. The President is committed to seeing to it that compulsory education is followed through on in this country, throughout the country, and I admire that. And we want to help you. The United States has got a program that is

dedicated to making sure every child gets a good education. It's in our national interests that that be the case.

It's also in our national interests, Mr. President, to help you, if you so desire, on issues like HIV/AIDS and malaria. The President is strongly committed to helping the Nigerian families affected by these diseases get treatment and help. He understands that there needs to be a comprehensive program of prevention, distribution of antiretrovirals, and then a capacity to help the orphans who have been left behind as a result of this terrible disease. And we're committed through what we call PEPFAR, Mr. President. I'm going to the United States Congress and ask them to double our commitment because we believe it's in our interests to help you if you so desire. It's in our interests from a security perspective; it's in our interests from a moral perspective.

And so we've got a good visit. I'm proud you're here, and I welcome you and thank you for your time and for your heart.

President Yar'Adua. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I feel highly honored and privileged to be here and have the opportunity to share these few moments with you. These are moments that I'll never forget in my life.

I have briefed Mr. President on the situation in Nigeria, our efforts to anchor democracy on the rule of law, to help a credible electoral process, and to ensure that the principles of justice, equity will guide the conduct of affairs in Nigeria: transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption. And Mr. President has expressed the support of himself and the Government of the United States and the people of the United States to assist Nigeria to ensure that we continue to uphold—*[inaudible]*—democracy, the rule of law, zero tolerance for corruption, and the development of a free market economy through economic reforms that we have been effecting for the last 8 years.

Now, this will set the principles upon which we'll build and develop a free society capable of growing an economy that will cater for the development and needs of the people of Nigeria. And in this great effort we are making, we find great friendship and assistance from the Government and people of the United States. And we are very grateful for this expression of support, confidence, and trust.

We have discussed a wide range of issues beside democracy and the rule of law; we have—and the economic reforms. We have discussed about the problems of HIV/AIDS, the problem of malaria, challenges in education. And the United States Government will help us to meet these challenges as we go along. And I think this is an excellent humanitarian gesture for which I, personally, and the people and Government of Nigeria are extremely grateful.

We have discussed one—security issues and the security within Nigeria itself, within the Niger Delta region, and within the Gulf of Guinea. And we have also discussed security issues—peace and security on the African Continent. And we shall partner with—*[inaudible]*—to assist not only Nigeria but also the African Continent, to actualize its peace and security at its initiative, which is an initiative to help standby forces of brigade size in each of the regional economic groupings within the African Continent.

I think what we have discussed has given me hope. And myself, the Government, and people of Nigeria are inspired by the United States of America's achievement and the principles which guide it. And this is a posit we are trading, and the friendship and understanding of the United States will propel Nigeria with this inspiration to make the transformations that we need to do into a modern nation from an underdeveloped nation, capable of meeting the development and needs of its people.

I thank you very much, Mr. President. This is a rare opportunity.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Brigadier General Francois El Hajj of Lebanon December 13, 2007

I strongly condemn yesterday's assassination of Lebanese Brigadier General Francois El Hajj and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the innocents who were murdered alongside him.

This assassination marks the 12th political assassination or attempted assassination Lebanon has suffered since October 2004. Like the many victims before him, General El Hajj was a supporter of Lebanon's independence and an opponent of Syria's interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. I call on the international community to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these vicious attacks and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to safeguard their freedom, sovereignty, and democracy.

This act of terrorism again reminds us of the importance of the international tribunal established by the U.N. Security Council earlier this year and of the urgency

of ensuring that the tribunal is fully funded and capable of commencing its operations as soon as possible, to begin holding accountable those responsible for this systematic campaign of murder against Lebanon's most ardent patriots. We must work together to support and strengthen an independent and democratic Lebanon.

This attack comes as Lebanon is seeking to choose a new President. The United States supports the efforts of the democratically elected Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to maintain the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon before the Presidential elections. As Lebanon seeks to select a President democratically and in accordance with its Constitution, interference by the Syrian regime and its allies, aimed at intimidating the Lebanese people, must end. The people of Lebanon deserve the opportunity to choose their leaders in freedom and without fear.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters December 14, 2007

The President. Good morning. I just finished meeting with members of my Cabinet. I am proud of this team. I appreciate their service to the country. We discussed the priorities that we're working on to meet the needs of the American people. We're talking about the business that remains on Capitol Hill.

I want to thank the Senate and congratulate the Senate for passing a good energy bill, and now the House must act. Congress

also must move quickly to pass legislation to protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax, without raising taxes. And Congress must pass legislation to ensure our intelligence professionals can continue to effectively monitor terrorist communications.

And Congress must move forward with spending legislation to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government so

that the Cabinet Departments can provide essential services for the American people.

Because Congress did not pass any spending bills by the end of the fiscal year—with the exception of one—many essential services are now being funded under what's called a continuing resolution. This is a bill that keeps the Federal Government running on a temporary basis while lawmakers work out their differences.

In recent days, lawmakers have made some important progress in working out such differences. I'm pleased to hear that they are close to reaching agreement on a budget. There are a lot of details left to be worked out, and I hope they will pass a bill that is fiscally responsible and does not raise taxes. I also understand that Congress may provide a downpayment on the war funding I requested, without artificial timetables for withdrawal.

These are encouraging signs. Unfortunately, Members of Congress have not been able to complete their work by today, when the current continuing resolution expires. So last night Congress passed another continuing resolution that will fund the Government for one more week, and I just signed the resolution.

I hope Congress will use the additional time productively. I urge them to pass a clean spending package that meets the reasonable spending levels I have put forward, without gimmicks, without policy riders that could not be enacted in the ordinary legislative process, and with much-needed funding for our troops in combat.

It would be disappointing if Members of Congress did not finish their work by the holidays. But if they don't, they should not carry the unfinished business of 2007 into the new year. Instead, they should pass a 1-year continuing resolution that does not include wasteful spending or higher taxes. And they must ensure that our troops on the frontlines have the funds and resources they need to prevail.

I'll take a couple of questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

Major League Baseball

Q. Mr. President, on the Mitchell report, sir, do you think that the baseball players actually mentioned in the report should be punished?

The President. A couple of reactions to the Mitchell report, as you know, I'm a baseball fan. I love the sport; I love the game. Like many fans, I've been troubled by the steroid allegations. I think it's best that all of us not jump to any conclusions on individual player's name, but we can jump to this conclusion: that steroids have sullied the game, and players and the owners must take the Mitchell report seriously. I'm confident they will.

And my hope is that this report is a part of putting the steroid era of baseball behind us. You know, I—in the State of the Union a couple of years ago, I addressed the issue of steroids, and the reason I did so is because I understand the impact that professional athletes can have on our Nation's youth. And I just urge our—those in the public spotlight, particularly athletes, to understand that when they violate their bodies, they're sending a terrible signal to America's young.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, what was Kim Jong Il's message to you in response to your letter to him? And what was—what is your response to him?

The President. Well, first, I'm—you know, I got his attention with a letter, and he can get my attention by fully disclosing his programs, including any plutonium he may have processed and converted that into whatever he's used it for. We just need to know.

As well, he can get our attention by fully disclosing his proliferation activities. We have laid out a way forward. And I say "we": There's four other countries that have joined us; we've got what's called the six-party talks. And the five of us agree that there's a way forward for the—Kim

Jong Il, and an important step is a full declaration of programs, materials that may have been developed to create weapons, as well as the proliferation activities of the regime.

Thank you very much.

Q. Oh, don't stop now.

The President. I had a—well, I've got freezing Cabinet members out here. [Laughter] They're whispering; you can't hear their whispers. [Laughter] I can just feel their vibe saying: "I'm envious. They're all wearing these expensive coats, and here we are." [Laughter]

I hope you enjoyed the holiday bash as much as I did. I noticed some of the silverware is missing. [Laughter] We'll be taking a full inventory. [Laughter] Happy holidays.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. He also referred to H.J. Res. 69, which was assigned Public Law No. 110–137. A reporter referred to former Sen. George J. Mitchell, author of a report to the commissioner of baseball on the use of illegal performance-enhancing substances in Major League Baseball.

Remarks With President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru on Signing the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act December 14, 2007

President Bush. Thank you. Thank you. Please be seated. Good afternoon. *Buenas tardes.* President Garcia, thank you for being here.

Peru and the United States are strong partners, and today we're making that partnership even stronger. In a few moments, I'll have the honor of signing a bill that approves the vital free trade agreement between Peru and the United States. The bill will help increase opportunities for workers, ranchers, farmers, and businessmen in both our countries.

I want to thank the many Members of Congress, both in the House and the Senate, who came together to get this bill passed. I particularly want to thank the Members of Congress who are here today: the ranking member of the Ways and Means, Jim McCrery from Louisiana; Wally Herger from California; and Kevin Brady from the great State of Texas. [Laughter]

I appreciate members of my Cabinet who have joined us today: the Secretary of State, Condi Rice; Hank Paulson, Secretary of the Treasury; Secretary of Com-

merce Carlos Gutierrez; Ambassador Sue Schwab, USTR; former Ambassador—I guess you still call him Ambassador, but he used to work for us—Rob Portman is here as well. [Laughter] And the reason the members of the Cabinet are here is because this administration is firmly committed to free and fair trade. We believe it's in the interest of the United States.

I want to thank John Walters as well, who is with us today. He's a member of the Cabinet; there he is. I want to thank Chuck Conner, Acting Secretary of the Agriculture; Steve Preston, U.S. Business Administration.

I welcome our Peruvian guests. I thank the Ambassadors from countries in our neighborhood; I'm glad you're here—Ambassadors from El Salvador, Honduras, Chile, Mexico, Canada, Guatemala, Dominican Republic. I thank the Ambassadors and other representatives from countries who have pending free trade agreements before the United States Congress: the Ambassador from Colombia, Panama, and as well the Republic of Korea.

I thank those from the—who care about trade, who've joined us today. I appreciate your hard work on getting these agreements signed and ratified. And you know what I know: That when we extend trade, when we expand trade, America advances our deepest values as well as our economic interests. Opening markets has helped expand democracy. Opening markets helps expand and strengthen the rule of law. And opening markets helps lift millions out of poverty.

Open markets contribute to America's prosperity. Exports now account for a larger percentage of our GDP than at any other time in our history, which means that trade is a key driver for economic growth. Exports support higher paying jobs for our workers. This week, we learned that over the 12 months ending in October, U.S. exports increased by 13 percent.

The bill I signed today advances free and fair trade with one of the fastest growing economies in the Western Hemisphere. Last year, Peru's economy expanded by more than 7½ percent, and I congratulate the President—wish he'd lend us a couple of percent. *[Laughter]* It's impossible to do. But trade will help growth. It will help the U.S. grow, and it will help Peru grow. Over the past 3 years, trade between our two nations has more than doubled to nearly \$9 billion. With this free trade agreement, we will expand our trade even more and create new opportunities for citizens in both countries.

The agreement creates new opportunities here in the United States. Once implemented, it will immediately eliminate duties on about 80 percent of U.S. consumer and industrial goods sold in Peru. It will eliminate all remaining duties within 10 years. Once implemented, the agreement will also immediately eliminate the duties on more than two-thirds of U.S. agricultural exports to Peru and eliminate most of the remaining duties over the following 5 to 15 years.

This agreement will also create new opportunities for the people of Peru. This is

good for the people of Peru. After all, the agreement locks in access for Peruvian businesses, small-business owners, and agricultural folks to the largest market in the world. With more U.S. products available in their country, Peruvians will benefit from more choices and more lower prices—or better prices. The more a consumer has to choose from, the better off that consumer will be. Opening up markets to U.S. goods and services will help the Peruvian consumer by removing barriers to U.S. services and investment.

The agreement will help create a secure, predictable legal framework that will help attract U.S. investors. The Peruvian people understand that expanding trade with the United States will improve their lives; that's what they understand. And so their representatives in the legislature approved this agreement by an overwhelming margin. And by his presence today, President Garcia is showing our common commitment to a hemisphere that grows in liberty and opportunity for all.

I want to thank the Congress for passing this bill. They passed it with broad, bipartisan support. Earlier this year, my administration and Congress came together on a bipartisan approach to free trade agreements. Under this approach, we included enforceable labor and environmental provisions in our pending free trade agreements. This is the approach we applied to our agreement with Peru, and this agreement shows the American people that Congress and the administration can work together—and are working together—in following a bipartisan way forward on trade.

I urge Members of Congress to continue on this path as they consider agreements with two other important partners in the region, Colombia and Panama. Across our hemisphere, people are watching what the Congress will do. They're watching to see what this Congress will do when it comes to how we treat our friends. They're watching carefully the actions of the Congress in regards to the free trade agreements

with Colombia and Panama. The champions of false populism will use any failure to approve these trade agreements as evidence that America will never treat other democracies in the region as full partners.

Those who espouse the language of false populism will use failure of these trade agreements as a way of showing America doesn't—isn't committed to our friends in the hemisphere. It is vital that Congress send a strong message that the United States of America is committed to advancing freedom and prosperity in our neighborhood and approve these agreements with strong, bipartisan majorities.

Congress also needs to move forward with a bill to implement a free trade agreement with one of our most important partners in the Far East, South Korea. This agreement will create jobs and opportunity on both sides of the Pacific. It will strengthen a democratic ally. I urge Congress to act quickly and send this good bill to my desk.

As we work with Congress to approve trade legislation, we're also working to break down barriers to trade and investment at the global level. The best way to do so is through the Doha round of trade talks. A successful Doha round would open up markets for America's goods and crops and services. Doha also represents an historic opportunity to help lift millions of people out of poverty and despair. It's in our national interest to do so. It's in our moral interest to do so. My administration will continue to work to bring the Doha round of trade negotiations to a successful conclusion.

By advancing free and fair trade, we strengthen ties with our friends, we help democracies build a better life for their citizens, and we show that so long as the rules are fair, American workers can compete with anyone, anytime, anywhere.

Mr. President, I welcome you here to this important gathering. I ask you to give some words to the people of your country and our country. And after you finish

speaking, it will be my honor to sign the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act.

Welcome, Mr. President.

President Garcia. Thank you. It's a great day for Peru, for the friendship between Peru and the United States. It's a great day for democracy and social justice and freedom. On the contrary, it's a bad day for the authoritarianism and those who—against the democracy and free trade.

Your Excellency and dear friends, now that the implementation bill for the trade promotion agreement between the U.S. and Peru has been signed, I would like to thank the American people and the U.S. Congress. And especially, I wish to express my sincere recognition to Your Excellency, the great supporter of the treaty and a true—a real, true ally and friend of the Peruvian people.

Today, the challenges to our societies are the consolidation of freedom, democracy, social justice, and peace, as well as the promotion of scientific and cultural development. The information and communication revolution allows countries to reach these goals and strengthen the links between our peoples by tearing down boulders and consolidating the foundations of human culture based in tolerance and respect to each other. Free trade agreements and world fora are important tools for these endeavors. More investment and more trade, as well as social policies, will contribute to eradicate poverty, protect the environment, and reduce and control migrations throughout the world.

Your Excellency, this is a crucial opportunity to consolidate hemispheric relations. The ties between the U.S. and Latin America has been blocked by misunderstandings, but they are also full of great prospects for reaching democracy and consensus.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Good Neighbor Policy and John F. Kennedy Alliance for Progress come to my mind in this moment. Those initiatives were designed to contribute to a firm relationship between

our peoples based on justice and development. Unfortunately, those were lost opportunities.

Today, I think, begins a new era. The free trade area of the Americas and the free trade agreements in the hemisphere open a third opportunity we must not squander. The treaty with Peru has been studied and discussed at length. First with your administration, then it has been enhanced in the dialog with the U.S. Congress, which lead to an extension for the environment and on labor chapters, which will favor the poor, the population in the Andes, and their small enterprises.

Other Latin America countries should also benefit from the great American market and the investment opportunities. In that regard, Colombia is a country with great challenges ahead. The hurdles that are claimed to delay the agreement with Colombia will be swiftly solved if the treaty is approved, creating more jobs and investment and development. I take upon myself the Latin American responsibility to request Your Excellency and the U.S. Congress to pass this agreement as soon as possible.

This treaty will contribute to our fight against narcotraffic and global terrorism. This would be critical to reaffirm democracy, freedom, investment, and prosperity for the Colombian people that I love very much. The same could be said about Panama.

Let me finish, Your Excellency, reaffirming that we both are committed to peace and against nuclear proliferation that may threaten the future of our children. We both fight for freedom and democracy.

Your Excellency, you should be sure, as well as the Members of the Congress and the American people, that in Peru this treaty would not exclude the poorest of the Peruvian workers. On the contrary, using the words of the great Abraham Lincoln, it will be a free trade agreement of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Thank you very much.

[At this point, President Bush signed the bill.]

President Bush. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to former Office of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman; El Salvador's Ambassador to the U.S. Rene Antonio Leon Rodriguez; Honduras's Ambassador to the U.S. Roberto Flores Bermudez; Chile's Ambassador to the U.S. Mariano Fernandez; Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana; Canada's Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Wilson; Guatemala's Ambassador to the U.S. Guillermo Castillo; the Dominican Republic's Ambassador to the U.S. Flavio Dario Espinal Jacobo; Colombia's Ambassador to the U.S. Carolina Barco Isakson; Panama's Ambassador to the U.S. Federico Antonio Humbert Arias; and South Korea's Ambassador to the U.S. Lee Tae-sik. H.R. 3688, approved December 14, was assigned Public Law 110-138. The Office of the Press Secretary released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Candida Wolff and the Appointment of Daniel Meyer as Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs *December 14, 2007*

One of the most challenging jobs in any White House is managing the President's

relationship with Congress. There are 535 Members of Congress, 2 parties, and 46

committee chairmen, but only one Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. Candi Wolff has done a remarkable job of working with Congress and advancing my legislative agenda.

As my chief adviser on congressional affairs, Candi has helped bring about many significant accomplishments, including energy legislation, trade agreements, tax relief, vital national security measures, and the confirmation of two Supreme Court Justices. Her dedication and enthusiasm have resulted in policies that protect the American people, hold the line on spending, strengthen our economy, and support our troops. Candi has earned the respect of Members of Congress and her colleagues.

I have relied upon Candi's sound judgment, extensive experience, and thorough understanding of Capitol Hill as I have made decisions that affect the lives of all

Americans. As Candi's service at the White House comes to an end, I appreciate her years of hard work and friendship. Laura and I wish Candi, her husband Mark, and their two daughters Veronica and Claire, all the best.

I am pleased to announce that Dan Meyer will succeed Candi as Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. After serving as a House and Senate staffer for more than 15 years, including as chief of staff to the Speaker of the House, Dan knows how to help get things done in Congress. As a member of the legislative affairs office at the White House, he has been a capable leader who is well-respected by Members on both sides of the aisle and committed to reaching solutions on important issues. I am confident he will perform well in this new position. I look forward to continuing to work with him.

Statement on the Resignation of William McGurn and the Appointment of Marc Thiessen as Assistant to the President for Speechwriting *December 14, 2007*

As Assistant to the President for Speechwriting, Bill McGurn has worked tirelessly to help communicate my agenda to the American people and the world. Bill is a serious thinker and a gifted writer whose command of language and knowledge of history have helped shape a wide variety of my speeches. I have counted on Bill to help me prepare State of the Union Addresses, policy announcements, and speeches to the Nation. In all our work together, I have valued Bill's creativity, insight, and sound judgment. And I have appreciated his friendship, generous spirit, and sense of humor.

As he moves on to the next stage of his career, Bill can be proud of his service

at the White House. The son of a marine, Bill loves his country and has served it well. Laura and I have come to know Bill's wife Julie and their daughters Grace, Maisie, and Lucy, and we wish Bill and his family all the best.

I am pleased to announce that Bill's deputy, Marc Thiessen, will succeed him as Assistant to the President for Speechwriting. Marc has done superb work in the speechwriting office for more than 3 years. Before coming to the White House, he served as chief speechwriter to Secretary Rumsfeld. Marc is a talented writer and experienced communicator who will do an outstanding job in his new position. I look forward to continuing to work with him.

Statement on the Formation of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration

December 14, 2007

I applaud the recent formation of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration in Damascus, Syria. The brave men and women who formed this council reflect the desires of the majority of Syrian people to live in freedom, democracy, and peace, both at home and alongside their neighbors in the region.

The Syrian regime continues to hold hundreds of prisoners of conscience and has arrested more than 30 national council members in the past few days. All those detained should be released immediately.

The Syrian regime continues to deny its citizens fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and the right to elect a representative government responsive to their needs. The formation of the national council is an encouraging sign to all people who support freedom and democracy. We support the national council's principles of nonviolent struggle and open membership to all the people of Syria who believe the time has come for change.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of James B. Peake as Secretary of Veterans Affairs

December 14, 2007

I am pleased that the Senate unanimously confirmed Dr. James Peake to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Peake is a decorated veteran, highly skilled physician, and proven leader who has devoted his career to serving America's men and women in uniform. His decades of expertise in combat medicine and health care management have provided him with a thorough understanding of the Department's responsibility to care for America's veterans.

One of his first tasks as Secretary will be to ensure that my administration con-

tinues to swiftly implement the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission on Wounded Warriors. I am confident that he will build upon our record of improving care, reducing bureaucracy, and ensuring that our veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

NOTE: The statement referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces Around the World
December 14, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. combat-equipped Armed Forces around the world. This supplemental report covers operations in support of the war on terror and Kosovo.

THE WAR ON TERROR

Since September 24, 2001, I have reported, consistent with Public Law 107-40 and the War Powers Resolution, on the combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qaida terrorists and their Taliban supporters, which began on October 7, 2001, and the deployment of various combat-equipped and combat-support forces to a number of locations in the Central, Pacific, European, and Southern Command areas of operation in support of those operations and of other operations in our war on terror.

I will direct additional measures as necessary in the exercise of the U.S. right to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short-notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States.

United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous coalition partners, continue to conduct the U.S. campaign to pursue al-Qaida terrorists and to eliminate support to al-Qaida. These operations have been successful in seriously degrading al-

Qaida's training capabilities. United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous coalition partners, ended the Taliban regime and are actively pursuing and engaging remnant al-Qaida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 25,900, of which approximately 15,180 are assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The U.N. Security Council authorized the ISAF in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1386 of December 20, 2001, and has reaffirmed its authorization since that time, most recently, for a 12-month period from October 13, 2007, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1776 of September 19, 2007. The mission of the ISAF under NATO command is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in creating a safe and secure environment that allows for continued reconstruction and the exercise and extension of Afghan authority. Currently, 37 nations contribute military and other support personnel to the ISAF, including all 26 NATO nations.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qaida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped and combat-support forces deployed to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in the U.S. Southern Command area of operations since January 2002, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay.

The U.N. Security Council authorized a Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq under unified command in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1511 of October 16, 2003, and reaffirmed its authorization in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546 of June 8, 2004, U.N. Security Council Resolution

1637 of November 8, 2005, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1723 of November 28, 2006, set to expire on December 31, 2007. Under Resolutions 1546, 1637, and 1723, the mission of the MNF is to contribute to security and stability in Iraq. These contributions have included assisting in building the capability of the Iraqi security forces and institutions as the Iraqi people drafted and approved a constitution and established a constitutionally elected government. The U.S. contribution to the MNF fluctuates over time depending on the conditions in theater as determined by the commanders on the ground; the U.S. contribution to the MNF is approximately 159,529 U.S. military personnel.

In furtherance of our efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, its friends and allies, and our forces abroad, the United States continues to work with friends and allies in areas around the globe. These efforts include the deployment of U.S. combat-equipped and combat-support forces to assist in enhancing the counter-terrorism capabilities of our friends and allies. United States combat-equipped and combat-support forces also continue to be located in the Horn of Africa region.

In addition, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of all of the geographic combatant commanders. These maritime operations have the responsibility to stop the movement, arming, or financing of international terrorists.

NATO-LED KOSOVO FORCE (KFOR)

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peace-keeping efforts in Kosovo, the U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish KFOR in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999.

The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Tech-

nical Agreement (MTA) between NATO and Serbia (formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities and, with local authorities and international police, contributes to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment that facilitates the work of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Currently, there are 24 NATO nations contributing to KFOR. Ten non-NATO contributing countries also participate by providing military personnel and other support personnel to KFOR. The U.S. contribution to KFOR in Kosovo is about 1,498 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 10 percent of KFOR's total strength of approximately 15,251 personnel.

The U.S. forces have been assigned to the eastern region of Kosovo. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, maintaining a safe and secure environment remains the primary military task. The KFOR operates under NATO command and control and rules of engagement. The KFOR coordinates with and supports UNMIK at most levels; provides a security presence in towns, villages, and the countryside; and organizes checkpoints and patrols in key areas to provide security, to protect minorities, to resolve disputes, and to help instill in the community a feeling of confidence.

In accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244, UNMIK continues to transfer additional competencies to the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, which includes the President, Prime Minister, multiple ministries, and the Kosovo Assembly. The UNMIK retains ultimate authority in some sensitive areas such as police, justice, and ethnic minority affairs.

NATO formally continues to review KFOR's mission at 6-month intervals. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, force structure, force reductions, and the

eventual withdrawal of KFOR. NATO has adopted the Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans. The UNMIK international police and the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) have full responsibility for public safety and policing throughout Kosovo. The UNMIK international police and KPS also have begun to assume responsibility for guarding patrimonial sites and established border-crossing checkpoints. The KFOR augments security in particularly sensitive areas or in response to particular threats as needed.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations

pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

The President's Radio Address *December 15, 2007*

Good morning. In a time of war, America's top priority should be to ensure that our troops on the frontlines get the funding they need. So beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund operations in the war on terror. Congress has had months to pass this funding. Unfortunately, with just days to go before Members leave for their Christmas vacation, they still have not come through with these funds.

This week, Congress considered a defense authorization bill. An authorization bill is a pledge to spend money. Under such a bill, Congress will make a promise to fund our troops in combat. But a congressional promise, even if enacted, does not pay the bills. It is time for Congress to provide our troops with actual funding.

The stakes are high for our men and women on the frontlines. Our troops are striking blows against the terrorists and extremists in Iraq and Afghanistan, and these funds are critical to their continued success. The funds I have requested include money

to carry out combat operations against the enemy. They include money to train the Iraqi and Afghan security forces to take on more responsibility for the defense of their countries. They include money for civilian agencies deployed in the field with our military to help build local governments and create jobs. And they include money for intelligence operations to protect our troops on the battlefield.

Congress has had plenty of time to consider the emergency funds our troops need. Time is running out. And Pentagon officials say that continued delay in funding our troops will soon begin to have a damaging impact on the operations of our military. Congress's responsibility is clear: They must deliver vital funds for our troops, and they must do it before they leave for Christmas. Our men and women on the frontlines will be spending this holiday season far from their families and loved ones. And this Christmas, they deserve more than words from Congress; they deserve action.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:15 a.m. on December 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press

Secretary on December 14, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Representative Julia M. Carson *December 15, 2007*

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Representative Julia Carson. Throughout her decade of service in the U.S. House of Representatives and her nearly 20 years in the Indiana General Assembly, Representative Carson served her constituents in Indianapolis with passion and commitment. She was revered as a champion for building strong and safe communities, working to end homelessness, improving fi-

nancial literacy for all Americans, and helping her constituents achieve and maintain the dream of homeownership.

Julia was a dedicated and admired public servant who will be missed by her many friends and colleagues both at home in Indiana and in our Nation's Capital. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.

Remarks on the National Economy and a Question-and-Answer Session in Fredericksburg, Virginia *December 17, 2007*

The President. Thank you, all. Please be seated. Ralph, thanks for the invitation. Thanks for the gift; it was planted by the first George W. [*Laughter*] I'm glad to be here at the Rotary Club. I have spent some quality times at rotary clubs, whether it was asking for votes or selling baseball tickets. [*Laughter*] I could never get admitted to any of the clubs in Texas cause my voice wasn't good enough. [*Laughter*] But I'm proud to be with you. Thanks for letting me come by and share some thoughts with you about our economy, what's happening in Washington. And if time permits, I'll be glad to answer some questions, if you have any.

I also want to thank the chamber for having me as well. Appreciate what you're

doing. People say—they're probably wondering why would—old George W. has got something important to say; why would he bother to come to a place out in the country? And the answer is, because this is where jobs are created; this is where dreams are lived; this is where values are upheld. And so I'm proud to be with you. It kind of reminds me of being in Texas, to come to a place where there's just down-to-earth people that are trying to do what's best for their families and their communities. And so I'm honored to be with you. I appreciate you letting me come by.

Ralph, thanks for the invitation. I also want to thank Bob Hagin. And I'm proud to be here with Congressman Eric Cantor from Richmond, Virginia, as well as newly

elected Congressman Rob Wittman. Appreciate you being here. Good luck. I'm looking forward to working with you. I want to thank the speaker of the House of Delegates—you call them delegates, right? Yes. Bill Howell, a good man; good to see you, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate you being here. Senator-elect Richard Stuart, is that right? Yes, appreciate you, Richard. Thanks for coming as well. John [James]* Lacy, past president of Rotary International has bothered to come over. Mr. Lacy, thank you for serving.

You know, I tell the people of our country every time I can that the great strength of America is not our military—although I intend to keep it strong—or the size of our wallets. But the great strength of America are the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens who take time out of their everyday lives to love a neighbor like they would like to be loved themselves. That's what rotaries mean to me.

People are saying, "Well, how can we best foster the well-being of the community in which we live? What can we do, as loving human beings, to work with our youth like you do at this—here at this rotary club?" And so I want to thank you for what you're doing. I thank you for adding to the great compassion of our country. Societies change one heart and one soul at a time. And I hope you have found what others have found, that if you're part of that helping somebody's life improve, it improves your own.

Laura sends her very best. She's doing just fine. She's a fabulous wife, great mother, and a wonderful First Lady. And she is—she and I are having the great joy of welcoming people to the White House during the holiday season. It's a pretty spectacular place when you see the trees and all the great garlands. And they do a fine job of decorating the White House. I just put on the lights on the trees. *[Laughter]* But we're having a joyous time.

* White House correction.

I want to talk a little bit about our economy and some of the challenges we face and then answer some questions. First of all, I put forth what some would consider a controversial proposal—that's in Washington, DC; at least those in Washington consider it controversial—and that is, cutting taxes on people helps the economy. There's quite an appetite for your money in Washington. People can figure out all kinds of ways to spend the taxpayers' money. My attitude was, particularly in the face of recession and after a terrorist attack, that the best way to help this economy recover was to let people keep more of their own money.

And so I worked with the Congress to cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes. Now, sometimes in the Nation's Capital, they'll say, "Well, some people get tax cuts and others don't." That's not my attitude. My attitude was, if you're paying taxes, you ought to get tax relief, and so we cut taxes. And I mean we cut them on everybody. And when you cut them on individuals, it turns out you also are cutting taxes on small-business owners. Most small businesses in America are subchapter S corporations, or limited liability partnerships, which means that the owners of the companies pay individual taxes. In other words, the company is subject to the individual tax rates. And so cutting individual taxes not only helps consumers and families, but it also helps small businesses.

And the plan worked. If you think about where we were coming out of 2001 and where we are today, you can't help but say the plan worked. Cutting taxes helped stimulate economic growth. Why? Because most new jobs are created by small-business owners. And if you let a small-business owner have more money to save or invest or spend, it means he or she is more likely to hire somebody. And so we've had a pretty good economic run here in the country, 6 years of growth. We've had 51 straight months of increased job employment. It's

the largest—longest period of uninterrupted job growth in the Nation's history. People are working; productivity is high. In other words, our economy is becoming more productive as a result of the advent of new technologies. And that means people are more likely to get paid more.

And yet there are some challenges. There's a credit issue and a housing issue. In other words, what I'm about to tell you is, is that the Congress cannot take economic vitality for granted. There are some positive things Congress can do to make sure that the economy continues to grow and people are working and realizing dreams, and there's some negative things they can do. And the most negative thing the Congress can do in the face of some economic uncertainty is to raise taxes on the American people. If you want to figure out a way to slow this economy down, just start taking money out of people's pockets or making it harder for small businesses to grow and invest.

So one thing I want to share with you today is, I'll veto any tax increase. I don't think Congress needs more money. I think they need to learn how to set better priorities.

And that's what you're watching play out here in Washington. The President submits a budget, and then the Congress can either accept it, run over it, ignore it. And then the Congress—or the Constitution wisely gives a President veto power in order to make sure the President stays involved in the process. And I'm pleased to report that we're making some pretty good progress toward coming up with a fiscally sound budget, one that meets priorities, helps on some emergencies, and enables us to say that we've been fiscally sound with the people's money.

The next couple of days will be interesting to watch. As I say, I'm hopeful, and I appreciate those on Capitol Hill are working hard to come up with a good appropriations package. And that appropriations

package, by the way, must also include funding for our troops in harm's way.

Now, I understand people in Washington and people around the country may not have agreed with my decisions on how to protect America. I know that, and that's fair. That's what democracy should be all about. When people have a difference of opinion with the President, they ought to feel comfortable expressing that difference. And it turns out, quite a few citizens are willing to do that. *[Laughter]*

But there should be no difference of opinion when it comes to making sure our troops have the funding they need, and there should be no difference of opinion about whether our commanders on the ground ought to be those who decide or those who recommend to the President and the Congress the best way to proceed.

And so we'll be watching very carefully as the Congress works through how to spend your money coming down the stretch here before Christmas. They can't have any gimmicks—accounting gimmicks in there, or, you know, sometimes they'll use the appropriations process to pass law that otherwise didn't make it to the floor of the House or the Senate. I'm sure that doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker, in—*[laughter]*. Sometimes it happens in Washington, though. *[Laughter]*

And so I'm looking forward to working with them to come up with a good bill. But they need to fund these troops. And they don't need to be putting artificial timetable for withdrawal on the money that we're asking to make sure the men and women who courageously serve the United States of America have what it takes to do the job they've been asked to do.

If the Congress can't get the job done—in other words, those jet fumes will start to be moving out pretty here—pretty soon here, later on this week—if they can't get the job done, then I've got a suggestion for them: And just pass a 1-year continuing resolution. That's all they got to do. If they can't get the job done—like I'm hopeful

they will—then all they got to do is just take what's called a continuing resolution, get the people's business done that way, and go on home. They got to make sure they fund the troops, though, on the way out of town.

There's another issue that's coming down I want to bring your attention to—and by the way, the House looks like they're coming up with a reasonable plan, Eric and Rob. So we're watching very carefully. I don't know if you ever heard of the Alternative Minimum Tax—[laughter]—well, this was aimed at super-rich years ago, but the plan wasn't indexed for inflation. And all of a sudden, middle class citizens are fixing to be stuck with this bill. And Congress needs to fix the AMT, and they need to do it quickly.

And the Senate, by the way, passed a good version of an AMT fix, so you're not going to get stuck with a higher tax bill. And by the way, it's just not individuals. Again, if you're incorporated through a limited partnership or subchapter S, you'll end up paying higher taxes as well. But they need to move quickly on this piece of legislation because the longer they delay, the more likely it is that there's \$75 billion of refund checks that will be late. People are going to be wondering why they didn't get their refund check on time. And the answer is, it's because there's been a delay in the AMT fix. Now, the positive news is the Senate passed a good bill, and the House of Representatives needs to get it done quickly.

People are concerned around this country about housing. Here's my attitude on housing: One, the Government should never bail out lenders; two, some people bought a house that they shouldn't have been in the market; three, there are speculators who thought they could get—buy nice—one of these reset mortgages, and flip it, make some money. I'm sure none of them are in the Chamber, but nevertheless—[laughter]—that's what happened. But there are some people that are credit-

worthy that should be encouraged to stay in their homes.

And the issue—the housing issue has changed. I can remember the first home I bought in Midland, Texas. I remember going down to the savings and loan and sitting down with the savings and loan officer and negotiating with the savings and loan officer. Well, this day and age, you know, these mortgages have been bundled. So the savings and loan doesn't own the mortgage anymore, or the bank doesn't loan the mortgage anymore. The local lending institute doesn't loan the mortgage anymore; it's owned by some international group, perhaps, or it's been bundled into an asset. And so there's hardly anybody to negotiate with. And so some lenders aren't sure where to turn. They have creditworthiness; they may get pinched as their interest rates reset.

But it seems like to me it's in our interests to help people stay in their homes. And there's—we've got a couple of ways to do so. One is through the FHASecure. It's a way for the—Alphonso Jackson and his Department, which is HUD, to help creditworthy people renegotiate and stay in their homes. Congress needs to get a bill to my desk that will make it easier for FHA to continue to help people stay in their homes. We're not bailing people out; we're helping them refinance their money. We're helping them, you know, own—we're helping them stay in a part of the American Dream is what we're doing, and it's worthwhile to do that.

And the other is what's called HOPE NOW, and this is the Treasury Department bringing the private sector together—lenders, investors, mortgage counselors—to help people renegotiate, to help people understand what is possible when it comes to finance and recourse and stay in your house.

And so I am concerned; I know you're concerned about the housing industry. We all should be. We've been building a lot of homes, and all of a sudden, fewer buyers

are showing up. And it's going to take a while to work through the housing bubble. But we can mitigate some of the issues, and I'm concerned about people who are creditworthy enough to live in their homes not being able to deal with the resets. And so I just want to let you know we got a strategy.

And Congress can help. They can pass the FHA modernization bill, which will help us. And the other issue that they can pass that would really help the homeowner is that when you renegotiate, if you happen to have a mortgage and—that you're going to have trouble meeting, you can find somebody to renegotiate with, and you do. And part of that loan may be forgiven for tax purpose, you actually have to pay tax. It doesn't make any sense if somebody is struggling to stay in their house and the Tax Code says you get to pay more tax after you've renegotiated your loan. So we need to fix the Tax Code, and the Senate bipartisan way is passing a good piece of legislation. I hope the House takes it up.

Two other issues, and then I'll answer some questions. One, I know if you're a small-business owner, you're concerned about health care, and you should be. And the fundamental question facing the country is, what can the Government do to make health care more affordable and more available? And there's a classic philosophical divide in Washington. On the one hand, there are those who believe that government is the fix, that government can best decide the allocation of resources in health care. And then there are those of us who believe that we ought to push for more consumer—a consumer-driven health care system.

Part of the problem in health care is that there is no consumerism. I shouldn't say "no consumerism." Obviously, that's a—there is some consumerism. But when a third party pays your bill, you tend not to worry about price. If somebody else pays your bill, you're not really an active consumer. And therefore, the question is—part

of the issue with price is, how do you encourage consumerism? And here's one way: change the Tax Code. The Tax Code now says if you work for corporate America—big company—you get a tax benefit, but if you're a small-business owner or you're out on your own, you have to buy health care with after-tax dollars.

And therefore, there's a disincentive for people to be purchasing health care on the individual market, and therefore, the individual market hasn't grown. So I propose to Congress that we allow families, everybody, regardless of your employment status, to be able to deduct \$15,000 off your income taxes, or \$7,500 as an individual, all aimed at level the playing field so that an individual market begins to grow. So step one to consumerism is for individuals to have more options in the marketplace so they can become involved directly in buying better insurance for their families.

Step two is for there to be transparency in pricing and quality, and the Federal Government can help. We're a huge health care consumer. And one of the things that Secretary Leavitt is doing is saying that if you're interfacing with the Federal Government, then you got to post your price. I don't know how many of you ever go to your doctor and say, "What are you charging, you know, compared to your neighbor?" I suspect you do that when it comes an automobile, but you don't when it comes to buying—to purchasing health care. I never have, frankly. I don't remember asking my buddies in Midland, who are my doctors, "How much are you charging relative to the person down the street?"

So—but the Government can help with pricing transparency. So we're now getting people to—providers to not only post a price, but also, we're developing a qualitative index so that people are able to compare price and quality. Now, that—this is a novel concept, I readily concede. But if you're interested in more consumerism, then there has to be transparency in the health care industry.

Third, there needs to be products like health savings accounts expanded. If you're a small-business owner, I strongly urge you to look at a health savings account for a way to help your employees or yourself save for everyday expenses—medical expenses on a tax-free basis and coupled with a catastrophic health plan. The whole purpose is—there is to give you more decision-making in your health care—with your health care and portability.

Because one of the issues facing America, particularly if you're a youngster, is, can you take your health care plans with you? It turns out, most young Americans have changed jobs, like, seven or eight times by the time they're 35 years old. And the inability to carry a good health care plan with you, a plan that you own, a plan of which the dollars inside your plan are earning tax free, creates frustrations for people. This economy is changing. And therefore, the health care industry needs to change with it and provide flexibility for our workers.

Fourth, small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries. Well, that means if you're a restaurant owner here, you ought to be able to pool your employees with a restaurant owner in Texas so that you can go into the market and buy insurance at the same discounts that larger companies get.

Fifth, health care needs to be better at incorporating information technologies. I don't know, I mean, I suspect you'll find some of your docs still writing files by hand. That's a little antiquated these days. The trouble is, most doctors aren't very good writers to begin with. *[Laughter]* And so we're using Government leverage to help information technology take hold so that there is higher productivity increases in health care, less inefficiency and waste. My dream is for all of us to have a medical electronics record within a decade. My only caveat is, I want to make sure that your material is private and that nobody can access it; it's your material alone. But never-

theless, it makes sense for all your medical records to be on a single chip, which will help take the inefficiencies out of health care and help keep the pressure off cost.

Finally, if you're truly interested in making sure health care is available and affordable, then you need to join the outcry on these frivolous and junk lawsuits. There are too many lawsuits running too many doctors out of practice. We have an ob-gyn crisis in America, in some States, because junk lawsuits are making it impossible for people to practice their skills. And they just—they get sick of it and say, "I'm out of here. I don't want to practice anymore." And plus, every time there's a lawsuit, it drives up the cost of medicine. That means you have to pay more. Because why? Because many doctors practice defensive medicine. They say, "Well, if I'm fixing to get sued, I want to make sure I administer as many tests as possible, so that my practice and my techniques can stand up in a court of law," which runs up the cost of medicine.

Now, obviously, there ought to be—needs to be recourse for malpractice. Nobody wants to deny anybody their right to have a claim in the court of law. That's one of the great things about America, is if you've got a claim, you ought to be able to take it to the court of law. But we can—and we can pass law that protects somebody's right to go to the court of law and do something about these junk lawsuits. And you know, it's tough. Boy, the trial lawyers are tough in Washington. In all due respect to the trial lawyers here, you're very powerful politically. We kept—we got the bill out of the House of Representatives. Time and time again, it got blocked in the United States Senate.

So here's a commonsense way to move forward to help small businesses and individuals deal with health care costs. And that stands in contrast to those who really believe the Federal Government can run it better than the individual consumer. And I'm not saying those are bad people who

articulate that position, I'm just telling you I think it's wrong for America.

Finally, energy, we're too dependent on oil from overseas. That sounds strange for a Texas guy to say, I know. But dependency on oil creates economic security issues and national security issues and environmental issues. And so I proposed a bill that would encourage—let me just—most oil is consumed through automobile usage. So I want to talk to you about automobile usage and electricity, and then I'll answer some questions.

I have proposed a bill—and I'm hopeful it will get a pass by the Congress—that increases CAFE standards, which is the fuel economy standards, in a reasonable way without sacrificing automobile safety. And I've also proposed that we reduce gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years by using alternative fuels. Now, I wouldn't have done that if I didn't think it was practical and possible.

If you're a hog grower—which I suspect there's not too many around here—but you're a little concerned about the use of ethanol with corn at its base because the price of corn is high. Ethanol is beginning to spread in the Midwest, and it's causing the price of corn to go up.

But that's going to be relieved as a result of research and development. One of these days, the scientists tell me—and I believe—that we'll be able to manufacture fuel for your automobiles from switchgrass or biomass or wood chips. And then all of a sudden, if you really think about it and are optimistic about America's capacity to use technology to change our way of life, then all of a sudden, you begin to see the rationale for saying that we can reduce gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years. I believe it's coming, I really do.

I also believe that a part of that mix is going to be new battery technologies that will enable you to drive the first 40 miles on electricity. And for those of you who are worried about the size of the vehicle,

it won't look like a golf cart. [Laughter] It will be a normal size vehicle.

On electricity, there's a lot of talk about electricity. I understand that, and there should be. If America wants to solve its dependency on foreign sources or wants to solve its environmental—deal with environmental concerns, we need to aggressively spread nuclear power. If you're generally an environmentalist, if you're worried about greenhouse gases, then you need to be in the forefront of supporting nuclear powerplants. If you're worried about whether or not we can continue to have the electricity necessary to foster economic growth and vitality, you ought to be for nuclear power. I know that's not necessarily politically correct in some circles, but I believe the engineering is safe, and I know we can come up with ways to dispose of the waste in a safe way.

And so those are some of my thoughts, other than I hope you all have a great holiday season. I'd be glad to—I hope you can tell I'm an optimistic fellow. We've been through a lot over the last 7 years; we really have. But I'm absolutely convinced this country is strong and vibrant. We're in the lead when it comes to the freedom agenda. I believe the decisions that have been made over the last 7 years are going to lead peace. Sometimes I know it's hard for you to tell it. But I'm convinced that when people look back at this era, they're going to say, "Thank goodness the United States of America never abandoned its belief that freedom is universal."

I happen to believe there is an Almighty, and a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child is freedom. And I believe it's in our Nation's interest to act upon that belief. And so I come to you today as a man honored to serve a great country, with some ideas on how we can stay strong economically, and a great faith in the capacity of freedom to bring the peace we want.

And with that, I'll be glad to answer any questions, from anybody other than the

press corps. [*Laughter*] If I wanted to have a press conference, I'd call a press conference. Right, Herman [Ken Herman, Cox News]?

Mr. Herman. [*Inaudible*].—Mr. President.

The President. I can't hear you. He's from Texas, forgive him. [*Laughter*]

Yes, ma'am.

Oil Industry

Q. I'm from that county outside Texas called Oklahoma.

The President. There you go. We love Oklahoma in Texas, except when you come down and beat our football teams. [*Laughter*]

Q. That is a bad thing.

They seem to be closing a lot of the refineries and capping off different oil wells, et cetera. Are they saving our oil, or what are they doing?

The President. What happens, you know, an oilfield plays out. And many of the fields you're referring to in Oklahoma or parts of Texas are just old, and there's little to recover.

One of the interesting things that is taking place around the country, though, is that the higher price of oil has caused people to invest in new technologies, and the new technologies are enabled—enabling some to be able to get more of the reserves out of the reservoirs. But when a person caps off an oil well, plugs an oil well, at this price it pretty well means it's played out; there's not left.

Now, refineries is a different issue. We haven't built any new refineries. Now, we've expanded some refineries. We're not building new refineries, and it makes no sense not to increase the supply of gasoline. And I mean, if you're concerned about the price of gasoline, one way to deal with it is to encourage the expansion of refineries.

And so one of the proposals I put forth to the Congress was, as we shut down bases through the BRAC process, why don't we provide land on those old bases for refineries and to encourage the expansion of

refineries here in the United States. And it's just—anyway, it's—there are some who—I don't know why they wouldn't be for something as commonsensical as that.

I'll tell you another thing we ought to be doing, is we ought to be exploring for oil and gas in the Arctic—up in Alaska. You can't believe the technologies that are now available. You can drill a—on a small pad, without creating much of an impact on the environment, and explore laterally, in order to develop a field. And they tend to drill in the winter, on ice, and they move the rig off in the summer during the melt. And so we've got the technologies capable of finding oil and gas reserves and hardly leaving a scratch on the environment up there. But it's become a cause celebre with a lot of the special interests in Washington, DC.

So I can't tell you why people aren't for refinery expansion. I'm just telling you they ought to be. And there are some examples where refineries are expanding, like down there in Mississippi, for example, in the—Pascagoula. A big refinery has gotten permits on its current footprint to expand its capacity, and that's going to be good for the country. It's going to take a while. I mean, we will be using oil and gas for a while. And it's going to take a while to diversify. And therefore, for the sake of our consumers and our economy, we need to make sure we got reliable supplies as we develop new technologies. And new technologies are coming. It's going to be an exciting era, in my judgment.

Thank you. Yes, sir.

President's Domestic Agenda

Q. [*Inaudible*].—a commercial lender here in Fredericksburg.

The President. Yes. How do you like the mortgage plan? [*Laughter*] Because I don't know—

Q. Well, the mortgage plan is a little bit tough. And I'm a commercial lender as well, so it's great to hear from the President. Just two issues that we're looking at

against valuating—evaluating financial statements, daily on the income statements, health care expenses, fuel expenses—what about my big customers that are driving diesel-powered equipment? What if fuel goes to 3.25 a gallon to \$5.00—

The President. Yes.

Q. —while at the same time that you're having an escalated health care expenses. So it's great to see you here today and preaching that message, because, again, revenues aren't necessarily expanding in this soft economy we're in.

The President. Right.

Q. So what happens in '08 and '09 when the—

The President. No, I appreciate that. That's why I'm against raising the gasoline tax. In other words, "We need to raise the gasoline tax." It comes up about every year in Congress. I'm against it for precisely that reason, and—is somebody for it over there? [*Laughter*] I said, the Federal gasoline tax. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, I wasn't talking about the State gasoline tax. [*Laughter*] But it's—yes, look, that's the concern, and I fully understand the pinch some of your folks are going to feel.

And having said that, this economy is pretty good. There are some—there's definitely some storm clouds and concerns, but the underpinning is good, and we'll work our way through this period. But I couldn't agree with you more that there's—your people have got some concerns. There's just some fundamental questions that we're going to have to make on issues like health care. The quick fix, at least what sounds like a quick fix, is going to be, don't worry, we'll handle it for you at the Federal Government.

And to me that would mean that the greatest health care system in the world would head toward mediocrity quite rapidly. We don't want rationing, people standing in lines. We want the great innovation and the private medicine to flourish. And so my only caution is, is that people see the health care rising; I hope they don't

leap to what sounds like a simple solution that would lead to a long-term problem for the country.

Yes, sir.

Transportation Infrastructure/Fuel Efficiency Standards

Q. You may have noticed that transportation is an issue for us in this area, and—

The President. Actually, the helicopter didn't get stuck in any traffic. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. And I was wondering—

The President. Yes. What traffic jam? [*Laughter*] Anyway, yes, it is, it's a huge issue.

Q. Yes, sir. And Homeland Security is moving more people in our area here, especially up on 610, and moving a lot of their offices. I was wondering if the Federal Government would be able to help us with our transportation problem, so that we could better facilitate Homeland facility—Homeland Security's problem.

The President. Yes. You're not looking for that special earmark, are you? [*Laughter*]

Q. No, no, no, sir.

The President. Yes, you are—at least you're honest. [*Laughter*] Look, here's the thing about highway funds, a couple of points. First of all, I don't know if you know this or not, but the Public Works Committee, I guess, is the largest in the House. Is that right, Eric? Yes. And the way they get the bills out of the House onto the floor is everybody gets a special project. And so it's the largest committee, and then everybody gets them a special project, and then the bill moves, and then the funding formulas kick in. The way it ought to be done is they ought to adjust the funding formulas based upon rational measures and then pass these bills without earmarks, without special projects. That's just the way it works. A lot of the money is spent before it even—the highway bill makes it to the floor, and it's just not a good system.

Secondly—and so therefore, they need to change the system. This isn't going to answer your question specifically. And it's not an intentional dodge, by the way; it's a slight dodge—[*laughter*—because I—you know, you don't want your President walking around promising this project to this person or this project to that person. That's just not a—that's not what the President's job is to do. The President's job is to think strategically for the country and help get fiscal sanity into the process.

Secondly, no question that we're going to have to rethink for the long term how to fund highways. Right now the highways are funded as a result of gasoline taxes, as you know. Not all of the money from the gasoline tax, by the way, goes to highway projects. There's a lot of mass transit money spent; there's other things that the money is spent on. I'm not making a qualitative judgment; I'm just telling you that not every dime collected from the highway tax—for the highway tax goes to highways.

Automobile—I just told you that we're going to become more efficient with our automobile; we're raising our fuel efficiency standards. In other words, cars and new technology and electricity are going to change how often people go to the pump. And so the source of revenues that had been kind of the staple of the interstate highway system since the fifties is going to change a lot. And so how—what's a rational way forward? I talked to Secretary Peters about this, and I have instructed her to think about alternative methods of financing highway growth, such as user fees in lieu of, or in combination with, current tax structure.

Now why would you do that? Well, if your automobiles are going to get less miles per gallon, then you're going to have to figure out—and you need additional highways, you're going to have to figure out a way to raise the money. And the user fee is a good way to do it. And if you happen to go to a user fee system, one of the interesting things that are being used

is differential pricing. In other words, you pay a different price depending upon the day you drive; in other words, a market-oriented system. If one of the things you're concerned about is massive traffic jams on your highways, in and out of your community, then it may make sense to say to somebody, if you're going to ride between 9 and 4, you pay a higher fee than somebody riding before 9 or after 4. It's congestion pricing. It's worked in some parts of the world. I definitely think we ought to look at it.

In other words, what I'm telling you is, the funding system is antiquated relative to the challenges we're going to be facing. And so Secretary Peters is a good, smart soul who is looking through different alternatives. It's going to be a tough issue, as you found out locally, and it's going to be a tough issue. It's hard to get Washington to change sometimes, but we will do our part.

She's, by the way, very much engaged in making sure that the air transportation system is more modern. One thing we did over Thanksgiving, and we'll again do for Christmas, is take away some of the military flight lanes and provide them for commercial airlines. But the truth of the matter is, we need a more rational way of allocating gates amongst airlines, so that there is rational—a market-driven system in place. Anyway, I'm not going to answer your question on the special deal. [*Laughter*] Yes, sir. I'll leave that to your Congressman. [*Laughter*]

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Corporations

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Fredericksburg and Stafford area is a high cost of living area, and all the proposals for FHA, VA, and conventional loans are tied to the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac limit of 417,000.

The President. Yes.

Q. And in this area, that works for some folks, but the interest rate on jumbo loans is now 1 percent higher than conforming

loans. Has there been some effort to try to increase Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac?

The President. There has, in lieu—in conjunction with reforming of the two institutions to make sure that they stay focused. The reform would make sure they stay focused on their core missions. But there has been—and Secretary Paulson has been working with Congressman Frank in the House on this very issue, which is to raise the limit on jumbos in conjunction with reforms. I don't know if it's going to pass this time or not. I should have checked before I came. But it definitely is a part of the reform agenda that we're working with the House on.

Yes, sir.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, my name is Mike West. I'm a Stafford resident here. It's a pleasure to have——

The President. How long have you been living here, Mike?

Q. Seven years.

The President. There you go.

Q. We moved from Charleston, West Virginia.

My question is, I have three children in the school system here, and I'm very concerned about their well-being, living in this country. And you've done a wonderful job of protecting our Nation, but I'm concerned about the nations like Iraq, who now have nuclear weapons——

The President. Iran.

Q. Iran and Iraq both.

The President. Not Iraq. *[Laughter]*

Q. But my question would be about Iran. How is the diplomatic channels coming through there, as far as——

The President. No, I appreciate that, thanks. You all read a report the other day that said that Iran had, but halted, a covert military nuclear weapons program. I said in my press conference that that report came out—that that report says to me, when you read it carefully, Iran was a threat, Iran is a threat to peace, and Iran

will be a threat to peace if we don't stop their enrichment facilities because—I said that because there are three components to a nuclear weapons program. The first component is having the materials necessary to make a bomb. And you can either purchase materials that have already been processed, or you can learn how to process yourself. That's the enrichment component.

That program is still active, in spite of the fact that most of the world has said to the Iranians, stop your enrichment. And that's where you're watching the diplomacy play out. The ability to weaponize that material, in other words, to make it into something that explodes is that part of the program is what the intelligence people thought was ongoing at one time and suspended.

And finally, in order to be in a position to say you're a nuclear weapon power, you've got to be able to deliver the weapon by missiles. And they've spent a lot of time testing their missiles. So two of the three components in order to become a power—a nuclear power with a weapons system is—they're active. Now, what I told the people, first of all, I think Iran is a danger to peace. And I believe that for a variety of reasons. I believe with a weapon they would be very destabilizing. I believe with a weapon we need to take their threats seriously about what they have said about one of our allies, Israel. And therefore, my attitude hasn't changed toward Iran. If somebody had them a weapons program, what's to say they couldn't start it up tomorrow? Since they tried to hide their program before, how would we know?

And so my point on the Iranian issue is this: They owe an explanation to the world. They need to tell the world why they had a program that they didn't report. They need to make it clear to the international organization, the IAEA, what that program was all about, and why they hid it from the world. And so Iran is a danger, and we will continue to work with friends and allies to convince them that it is in

their interests to suspend their enrichment programs. And if they do, there's a way forward for them that is different from the way that—the path they're headed down now. They're heading down a path of isolation right now and economic sanctions. We passed two resolutions out of the U.N., and Condi Rice is working on a third.

And my message to the Iranian people is, one, we respect your history and traditions. It's your Government that is isolating you from the world. It's the decisions that your Government has made that is making it more difficult for you to put food on the table, making it more difficult for your family to realize their dreams. And there's a better way forward for the Iranian people than to have a Government that is non-transparent, that's hidden a program, and that refuses to listen to the demands of the—of most of the civilized world, which is, give up your—suspend your program.

Interestingly enough, today Russia sent some enriched—or is in the process of sending enriched uranium to Iran to help on their civilian nuclear reactor. If that's the case, if the Russians are willing to do that, which I support, then the Iranians do not need to learn how to enrich. If the Iranians accept that uranium for a civilian nuclear powerplant, then there's no need for them to learn how to enrich. And so I appreciate your question.

Yes, sir.

Care for Wounded Military Personnel

Q. I'm Jeff Davis. I'm a retired marine Vietnam veteran, and I want to be assured that our wounded warriors are getting the health care that they deserve.

The President. Yes. I appreciate you saying that. I want to be assured of that too, Mr. Davis. First of all, thank you for serving. I feel a particular sense of obligation to make sure that the man or woman I send into combat gets the very best care possible. I will tell you, sir, that the doctors and nurses providing our military health care are fabulous. And the health care

these troops are getting is excellent, no ands, ifs, or buts about it.

The bureaucracy, however, needed to be reviewed and fixed. You're taking these kids, unlike Vietnam, that are getting wounded in Iraq, they're coming straight off the battlefield, getting fine care there. If need be, they're in Germany getting intensive care. And they're here in the United States of America. Laura and I are going to Bethesda and Walter Reed on Wednesday and Thursday. Two reasons: One, to tell those troops we love them; and two, to tell those docs and nurses who are working overtime to give them fabulous care this country appreciates what they're doing.

Now, as you read, the Walter Reed deal, that was a bureaucratic foulup. Secretary Gates moved on it very quickly. It should show you our intensity in making sure that our troops get the very best care. The veterans system, in our judgment, can be fixed and improved. And that's why I asked Bob Dole and Donna Shalala to come together to make sure that veterans' benefits match the needs of these troops coming out of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We've got to make sure that—here's what happens. You get transferred from the Department of Defense into the Veterans Administration, and sometimes that transfer isn't too smooth. So we believe there ought to be a seamless system. There needs to be health information technology for our troops. Our families need to have a case study—a case worker with them all the time.

So we're making good improvements, and we've addressed the bureaucratic shortfalls. We'll probably find others. But you need to know, sir, that I am absolutely convinced I can look the parents of our—and loved ones of the troops in our eyes and say, your kid is going to get fabulous health care, and they deserve it.

Yes, sir.

Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. With regards to research and development into mileage in cars—and I'm a hybrid owner myself—

The President. There you go.

Q. —is there anything that is being done to—I understand the issue with the ethanol plants is there's no outlet for ethanol, other than 10 percent over at Exxon. Is there anything being done with that respect?

The President. Yes. Listen, a couple points there. First of all, the first hurdle to the use of ethanol is to have automobiles that are capable of using ethanol. And most automobiles are flex-fuel vehicles. You've probably—you've got one, and you just don't know it. Meaning, you use gasoline or ethanol and the engine works either way.

Secondly, the fuel blends probably in this area are 10 percent, but out in the Midwest, they're up to 90 percent. And the reason why is this market is going to develop regionally. And by that I mean, if—obviously—what's interesting is that the most significant penetration of high-concentrated ethanol is in the Midwest, where there's corn. And if this area doesn't have the fuel stocks necessary to make ethanol, it's the—there's not a pipeline system that will enable a lot of ethanol to get here. And so what you're going to have is local production or regional production to fuel the capacity of you to be able to have more ethanol available at the pump.

The issue is the manufacturing of the product in the region as opposed to once the product is here in the region, that you're capable of finding an outlet that will deliver it to you. And that's why this research into different raw materials for ethanol is going to be very important. So you can envision, if you can start using wood chips—you got you some wood around here—and all of a sudden, it becomes a viable source of input into an ethanol plant.

But out in Midwest, I repeat to you—I think they call it E-90, or something like that, which is 90 percent ethanol—is now available in a lot of pumps. And one of the concerns about the folks who live out there is, how do you get more of it available? And the marketplace tends to work. People start showing up demanding ethanol, and all of a sudden, somebody figures out how to supply it.

But it's making pretty good market penetration in the Midwest. It's an interesting map to look at, and I believe the reason why is because since corn is now the main source of ethanol, that's where you get to get your corn. But hopefully, this research and development in a relatively quick period will come up with different alternative sources for ethanol. And I think it will, I really do, otherwise I wouldn't have put the 20-10 initiative.

Alrighty. Yes, sir.

Health Care Reform

Q. I'm a physician, and I happen to agree with your attitude about health care. And I think that the consumerism aspect of it needs to be emphasized. I think we're going to have too many options out there to offer to the American public, and we won't be able to afford all of them. We can't hardly afford it now. But do you have new legislation out that you may propose for next year that would try to implement some of the ideas that you have, other than the health savings account?

The President. AHPs, we'll run it again, associated health plans. That's the plan that enables small businesses to pool across jurisdictional boundaries. And again, that's economies of scale, economies of spreading risk, which to me is a rational plan. It's opposed by different groups, by the way. It sounds logical and sounds rational, but evidently such a plan gets crossways with some of the interests in Washington, otherwise it would have passed.

Secondly, we'll run the tax deductibility again, which would be a significant change

in enabling your patients to be treated just like the patient that works for a large corporation. And that's going to be a vital part, doc, of making sure that people stay—making sure that we have a consumer-driven system.

We may run tort reform again; I'll see what it looks like. As I say, we passed it out of the House twice, if I'm not mistaken; went nowhere in the Senate. So there's three alternatives for you right there.

How's your practice?

Q. Doing well, thank you.

The President. That's good. I'm going to tell you something: We have fabulous health care in America, just so you know. I think it's very important—before people start griping about the health care system here—and of course, there's always grounds for complaint—just to compare it with other systems around the world. And one of the reasons our system is expensive is because some of the new technologies that are coming on line, they happen to be saving lives. And can we become more efficient deliverers of health care? You bet. Are there things we can do? Absolutely. But whatever we do, we don't want to undermine the fact that we got great health care. I'm very proud of our docs, nurses, researchers. There's some just fabulous research going on in our country. And to me, that's in our national interest that we spend money on medical research, so that we can stay on the leading edge of change.

One more, and then I've got to get home. Yes, ma'am.

Stock Market

Q. Hi, Mr. President, I'm Kate Hopper, and I wanted to extend my holiday wishes to you and your family from all of our family.

The President. Thank you, thank you. I'm fired up about the holidays.

Q. I wanted to ask you—I'm a financial adviser here in Fredericksburg, and I wanted to ask you what your thoughts are on the market going forward for '08, and if

any of your policies would make any difference?

The President. No, I appreciate that. Was it Kate?

Q. Yes.

The President. No. [Laughter] I'm not going to answer your question. If I were an investor, I would be looking at the basic fundamentals of the economy. And early on in my Presidency, somebody asked me about the stock market, and I thought I was a financial genius, and it was a mistake. [Laughter] The fundamentals of our—of this Nation are strong.

One of the interesting developments has been the role of exports in overall GDP growth. When you open up markets for goods and services, and we're treated fairly, we can compete just about with anybody, anywhere. And exports have been an integral part, at least of the 3d quarter growth. But far be it for me—I apologize—for not being in the position to answer your question. But I don't think you want your President opining on whether the Dow Jones is going to be—[laughter]—going up or down.

I appreciate you giving me a chance to come by. In the old days, the entourage wasn't quite as big, but we're glad that you were—you welcomed us all. I really do hope your families have a blessed Christmas and a holiday season. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in Yak-a-Doo's restaurant at the Holiday Inn—North. In his remarks, he referred to Ralph Sutton, president, Stafford Rotary Club; Robert Hagin, former executive director, Morgan Stanley Investment Mgmt.; and 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.

Remarks Following a Visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor's Jeanne Jugan Residence

December 18, 2007

Listen, thank you all for welcoming us. Laura and I are honored to be with you. Sister, thanks for your hospitality, and more importantly, thank you for showing the Nation what is possible when people with loving hearts reach out to a neighbor in need. It is easy to feel the great compassion of the sisters here in this hall as you help make somebody else's Christmas a joyous time of celebration.

First, there are volunteers here in the community who have taken time out of their busy schedules to volunteer to help somebody. And that's one of the messages of the Christmas season: That I hope our fellow citizens reach out and find a neighbor in need, find out somebody who needs a loving pat on the back, or somebody who could use a little help in learning how to read, or an elderly citizen who wants to know that somebody cares for them. It doesn't take much effort; it takes a little prioritization. And during a season in which we count our blessings, I would hope those of us who are blessed help somebody else.

And there's no better place to come to see that happening than right here. The Little Sisters of the Poor are renown for their great hearts and wonderful compassion. Isn't that right, Archbishop? [*Laughter*]

And so Laura and I are thrilled to be here with you all. I do want to thank the

volunteers—high school students, some going to the schools nearby, some homeschooled—who have heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

I want to thank you all for making cards for our troops in harm's way. As I worked the tables, I was most thankful that people here said that they pray for our troops, the safety of our troops. And so do I, and so does Laura. And one way to let our troops know that people care deeply about their safety and their well-being is to send them a Christmas card, which you all are fixing to do here. So I thank you for that as well.

I finally want to thank our musician. [*Laughter*] The man hadn't lost a step. [*Laughter*] Thank you, sir, for your beautiful—I particularly liked "The Eyes of Texas."

And so we say to you all, Merry Christmas. May God continue to bless you. May God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you for your hospitality.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mother Benedict de la Passion (Armstrong), Superior and president of the Jeanne Jugan Residence, Little Sisters of the Poor; Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, DC; and Joe Dignazio, resident, Little Sisters of the Poor.

Remarks on Signing the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007

December 19, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Mr. Secretary, thank you for that introduction. We're all pleased to be here at the Department of Energy. I particularly want to

thank the employees here for their daily efforts to help our country meet its energy needs. Thanks for your hard work. Sam, thank you for your leadership.

As Sam mentioned, I firmly believe this country needs to have a comprehensive energy strategy, and I appreciate the Members of Congress for understanding that as well. Two years ago, I was pleased to stand with Members—many of whom are here—to sign a bill that was the first major energy security legislation in more than a decade. At the time, I recognized that we needed to go even further. And so in my State of the Union, I proposed an aggressive plan to reduce oil consumption of gasoline by 20 percent over 10 years.

Today we make a major step with the Energy Independence and Security Act. We make a major step toward reducing our dependence on oil, confronting global climate change, expanding the production of renewable fuels, and giving future generations of our country a nation that is stronger, cleaner, and more secure.

I do welcome members of the Cabinet who've joined us. I particularly want to thank the Speaker and the leader. I appreciate your leadership on this important issue. Speaker Pelosi is here with Congressman Steny Hoyer, House majority leader. Welcome, Mr. Leader. Leader Reid has brought Members of the Senate with him: Senator Inouye, Senator Bingaman, Senator Stevens—I think that's Senator Domenici there in disguise with a—[laughter]. Looking pretty handsome, isn't he? I appreciate Congressman Dingell and Congressman Markey, Congressman Gordon. These are all leaders on their respective committees that helped bring this bill to my desk. I also want to welcome all the other Members of Congress who've joined us.

One of the most serious long-term challenges facing our country is dependence on oil, especially oil from foreign lands. It's a serious challenge. And Members of Congress up here understand the challenge, and so do I. Because this dependence harms us economically through high and volatile prices at the gas pump, dependence creates pollution and contributes to greenhouse gas admissions. It threatens our na-

tional security by making us vulnerable to hostile regimes in unstable regions of the world. It makes us vulnerable to terrorists who might attack oil infrastructure.

The legislation I am signing today will address our vulnerabilities and our dependence in two important ways. First, it will increase the supply of alternative fuel sources. I proposed an alternative fuel standard earlier this year. This standard would require fuel producers to include a certain amount of alternative fuels in their products. This standard would create new markets for foreign products used to produce these fuels. This standard would increase our energy security by making us less vulnerable to instability, to the instability of oil prices on the world market.

The bill I sign today takes a significant step because it will require fuel producers to use at least 36 billion gallons of biofuel in 2022. This is nearly a fivefold increase over current levels. It will help us diversify our energy supplies and reduce our dependence on oil. It's an important part of this legislation, and I thank the Members of Congress for your wisdom.

Second, the legislation also—will also reduce our demand for oil by increasing fuel economy standards. Last January, I called for the first statutory increase in fuel economy standards for automobiles since they were enacted in 1975. The bill I'm about to sign delivers on that request. It specifies a national standard of 35 miles per gallon by 2020, which will increase fuel economy standards by 40 percent and save billions of gallons of fuel. This bill also includes an important reform that I believe is essential to making sure that we realize this strategy. It allows the Department of Transportation to issue what are known as attribute-based standards, which will assure that increased fuel efficiency does not come at the expense of automobile safety. This is an important part of this bill, and again, I thank the Members for taking the lead.

The bill also includes revisions to improve energy efficiency in lighting and appliances. It adopts elements of the Executive order I signed requiring Federal Agencies to lead by example in efficiency and renewable energy use.

Taken together, all these measures will help us improve our environment. It is estimated that these initiatives could reduce projected CO₂ emissions by billions of metric tons. The U.N. climate change meeting in Bali last week, our Nation promised to pursue new, quantifiable actions to reduce carbon emissions. Today we're doing just that. The legislation I'm signing today will lead to some of the largest CO₂ emission cuts in our Nation's history.

The legislation I'm about to sign should say to the American people that we can find common ground on critical issues. And there's more we can accomplish together. New technologies will bring about a new era of energy. So I appreciate the fact that Congress—in the omnibus spending bill that I'm going to sign later on—recognizes that new technologies will help usher in a better quality of life for our citizens. And so we're going to spend money on new research for alternative feedstocks for ethanol. I mean, we understand the hog growers are getting nervous because the price of corn is up. But we also believe strongly that research will enable us to use wood chips and switchgrass and biomass to be able to develop the ethanol necessary to help us realize the vision outlined in this bill.

I appreciate very much the fact that we're going to fund additional research on

new battery technologies to power plug-in hybrids. We're spending money on innovative ways to capture solar power. We're making—providing incentives for nuclear energy. If we're serious about making sure we grow our economy and deal with greenhouse gases, we have got to expand nuclear power.

It is going to take time to transition to this new era. And we're still going to need hydrocarbons. And I hope the Congress will continue to open access to domestic energy sources: certain parts of the Outer Continental Shelf, in ANWR. And to protect us against disruptions in our oil supply, I ask Congress to double the current capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

With these steps—particularly in the bill I'm about to sign—we're going to help American consumers a lot. We'll help them by diversifying our supplies, which will help lower energy prices. We'll strengthen our security by helping to break our dependence on foreign oil. We'll do our duty to future generations by addressing climate change.

And so I thank the Members of Congress. I appreciate the fact that we've worked together, that we can show what's possible in addressing the big issues facing our Nation. This is a good bill, and I'm pleased to sign it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. at the Department of Energy. H.R. 6, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 110-140.

Remarks on Signing a Bill To Prevent Taxation of Payments From the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund to Virginia Tech Victims and Families *December 19, 2007*

It's my honor to welcome the president of Virginia Tech, the mayor of Blacksburg,

the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and of course, distinguished members

of the congressional delegation here as I sign a bill that's going to help the folks who suffered mightily on that day when a gunman killed their loved ones. It's a good piece of legislation. I appreciate members from both parties working on it.

And I asked the president how—what the spirits are like there at Virginia Tech, and he said they're strong. And I'm not surprised. Having been there for that memorial ceremony, I left with the distinct impression that of all the communities in America that could deal with a tragedy, it's the Virginia Tech community.

And so I want to say to the families who still suffer, we think about you. And

to the students and faculty and alumni and leadership of Virginia Tech, thank you for helping those who suffer reconcile and recover from the grief they feel. So it's my honor to sign this important piece of legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Steger, president, Virginia Tech University; Mayor Ron Rordam of Blacksburg, VA; and Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia. H.R. 4118, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 110–141.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops and Their Families at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland December 19, 2007

The President. Admiral, thank you very much for your hospitality. You know, it's a great honor to come here. It's an honor to see the troops who've been wounded, and it's an honor to hug their families, and it's an honor to see the fabulous care that these folks receive. You know, our citizens wonder whether or not troops in harm's way will get superb medical care. And the answer is, absolutely, they get fantastic medical care.

Sometimes there's bureaucratic snafus that we're straightening out. But our citizens should never question whether or not the nurses and docs and caregivers are giving it their all in a professional way. They're saving lives, and they're healing hearts at the same time. And so it's a wonder what

takes place here, admiral. And I want to thank you and the colonel for taking the lead. And you know, I'm—I know Americans join me in praising our troops and honoring their families.

Merry Christmas to you.

Rear Adm. Richard R. Jeffries. Thank you, sir. It's an honor to serve them and you.

The President. Yes, sir. Thank you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. Participating in the visit were Rear Adm. Richard R. Jeffries, USN, commander, and Col. Leon E. Moores, USA, deputy commander for integration, National Naval Medical Center.

Message on the Observance of Eid al-Adha December 19, 2007

I send holiday greetings to all Muslims celebrating Eid al-Adha.

During Eid al-Adha, Muslims around the world reflect on Abraham's unwavering faith and his trust in God when asked to sacrifice his son. These four days are a time for Muslims to honor Abraham's obedience by celebrating with family and friends and showing gratitude for the many blessings bestowed by God. This holiday also helps ensure the important values of compassion and devotion are passed on to future generations.

America is a land of many beliefs, and our society is enriched by our Muslim citi-

zens. The kindness, generosity, and goodwill displayed by American Muslims during this special occasion and throughout the year have contributed to the strength and vitality of our Nation. May all those observing Eid al-Adha find love and warmth during this joyous holiday.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a memorable celebration.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

The President's News Conference December 20, 2007

The President. Good morning. I hope you all enjoyed the holiday reception at the White House as much as Laura and I enjoyed it. We took an inventory of the silverware, and this year, only a few pieces were missing. So, like, if you see Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News], tell him to bring them back. [*Laughter*] I've decided to come in and visit with you because you're heading off on the holidays, and so are we, and we wish you happy holidays.

I think recent days have been a moment that the country can be proud of. In the past few days, we have stopped a tax increase on the middle class families, we improved our energy security, we delivered relief to struggling homeowners, and we funded our troops. I want to thank the members of both parties for their hard work in these areas. I'm pleased that we have been able to end this year on a high note by moving beyond our differences and

achieving important results for the American people.

This week, Congress passed legislation to protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax, without raising taxes. Unfortunately, Congress passed this legislation after a lengthy delay. It's going to—the delay is going to add time it takes to process tens of billions of dollars in refunds. And so we will work hard—now that the bill is passed, we will work hard to minimize the impact of the congressional delay so that Americans can get their refund checks as soon as possible.

Congress passed a good energy bill. The legislation I signed yesterday will reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil by increasing the supply of alternative fuel sources and increasing fuel economy standards. It demonstrates America's leadership in confronting climate change.

Congress also passed legislation to help homeowners struggling to make their mortgage payments. The bill I'm going to sign this afternoon increases the incentives for borrowers and lenders to work together to refinance loans. It will allow American families to secure lower mortgage payments without facing higher taxes. This is a tax reform bill. It takes away the penalty that a homeowner—a tax penalty a homeowner will receive if he or she renegotiates the loan to a lower rate, to a lower value for the house.

Finally, Congress reached agreement on a spending bill to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. They passed this bill without raising taxes. They eliminated many of the worst policy riders that would have never been approved through the ordinary legislative process. I appreciate that they included a down payment on the funding request for our troops on the frontlines in Afghanistan and Iraq without an artificial timetable of withdrawal. These brave men and women are risking their lives to protect us, and they deserve the full support of the U.S. Government.

I'm disappointed that Congress resorted to passing all this spending in one massive, more than 1,400-page omnibus bill, rather than considering and passing individual spending bills in the normal process. The omnibus bill was approved at the last minute, nearly 3 months after the end of the fiscal year. When Congress wastes so much time and leaves its work to the final days before Christmas, it is not a responsible way to run this Government.

Another thing that's not responsible is the number of earmarks that Congress included in a massive spending bill. Earmarks are special interest items that are slipped into big spending bills like this one, often at the last hour, without discussion or debate. Congressional leaders ran in the last election on a promise that they would curb earmarks. And they made some progress, and there's more transparency in the proc-

ess, but they have not made enough progress. The bill they just passed includes about 9,800 earmarks. Together with the previously passed defense spending bill, that means Congress has approved about 11,900 earmarks this year. And so I'm instructing Budget Director Jim Nussle to review options for dealing with the wasteful spending in the omnibus bill.

I'm also disappointed that Congress failed to pass legislation to ensure that our intelligence professionals can continue to effectively monitor terrorist communications. Those of us in public office have no greater responsibility than stopping new attacks on our country. And this summer, Congress passed a bill that—called the Protect America Act, which strengthened our ability to collect foreign intelligence on terrorists overseas. The bill closed dangerous gaps in our intelligence; it was a good piece of legislation. It wasn't perfect, but it was good. Unfortunately, Congress made this law effective until February 1st of 2008, as if the terrorist threat is going to go away on February the 1st, 2008.

The first priority of Congress when it returns in the new year must be to pass a good bill and get it to my desk promptly. They have a duty to give our professionals the tools necessary to protect the American people. The bill should include liability protection for companies that are facing multi-billion-dollar lawsuits, only because they are believed to have assisted in the efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks. And it must ensure that our intelligence professionals have all the tools they need to keep us safe.

I hope the Members of Congress enjoy their holiday break; I intend to enjoy mine. We have a great deal of work in the months ahead. Next year is an election year, but that does not relieve us of our responsibility to carry out the people's business. The American people did not elect us to govern in odd years and campaign in even years. They expect us to get things done. That's what we've accomplished over

the past few weeks, and we need to carry this momentum into next year. I'm going to do my part, and I call upon the leaders of both parties on Capitol Hill to do their part.

And now I'll be glad to answer some of your questions, starting with AP man [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Central Intelligence Agency Interrogation Tapes

Q. Mr. President, there's ambiguity in the statement that you have no recollection about the existence and destruction of the CIA interrogation tapes. Why can't you say yes or no about the tapes and their destruction? And regardless, do you think the destruction of the tapes was a responsible thing to do?

The President. It sounds pretty clear to me when I say I have—the first recollection is when Mike Hayden briefed me. That's pretty clear. Secondly, I am confident that the preliminary inquiry conducted by the AG and the IG of the CIA, coupled with the oversight provided by the Congress, will end up enabling us all to find out what exactly happened. And therefore, over the course of these inquiries and oversight hearings, I'm going to reserve judgment until I find out the full facts.

I know I'm going to be asked about this question a lot as time goes on. I'm just going to prepare you—until these inquiries are complete, until the oversights are finished, then I will be rendering no opinion from the podium.

*President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia/
Russian Elections*

Q. Vladimir Putin has just been named Time magazine's "person of the year."

The President. Yes.

Q. And he has signaled that he intends to become Prime Minister. You said once that he had been wily about his intentions, but now that he's made those clear, what does it say about the state of democracy in Russia?

The President. You know, I'm looking forward to seeing him at the alumni meeting of the "men of the year," or the "persons of the year." I don't know when it's going to be, but—look, I presume—I haven't read the article, but I presume they put him on there because he was a consequential leader. And the fundamental question is, consequential to what end? What will the country look like 10 years from now?

My hope, of course, is that Russia is a country which understands there needs to be checks and balances and free and fair elections and a vibrant press; that they understand Western values based upon human rights and human dignity are values that will lead to a better country. That's my hopes.

Now, your speculation as to whether or not he'll be the Prime Minister, I don't know if he is; I haven't talked to him about it. And until that happens, I think we better just watch and see. What will be interesting next year is how the Russian President carries on his business—the new Russian President. In other words, we'll be together probably a couple of times next year, and it will be interesting to see how foreign policy is conducted and what the role of President Putin may be or not be. I just don't know yet, so we'll just wait and see how it—what happens.

John [John Yang, NBC News].

Cooperation With Congress/Legislative Agenda

Q. Mr. President, a year ago when you were—had your year-end press conference, the Democrats had just taken control of Congress. They said that one of their main goals was to end the war in Iraq. They were talking a lot about very contentious times ahead. As you just said, the Congress has now passed again, without strings, money for the war, and you've achieved a lot of your goals and have gotten a lot of things you wanted from Congress without a lot of give-and-take with them by

talking tough with firm veto threats. What does this say—say about the Democratic leadership, the way they're running Congress, and your relations with the leaders?

The President. You know, I don't view—I just don't view life as zero-sum. I think there—all of us deserve credit for getting some things done. The President constantly has to make sure that the executive branch is involved in the process, and one way is to use the veto. And the veto wouldn't have been effective without close coordination and consultation with Republican leaders in the House and the Senate. And in that, we made the veto effective. It then meant that negotiations could proceed with the President involved.

And so I really don't sit here and say, "Well, you know, he won, they lost," or "They won, he lost"—it's just not my nature—because I think what ended up happening was good for the country. I think it's good that we ended up with a spending bill that met 933, but also dealt with some emergencies. I think it's good that we funded our troops without an artificial timetable for withdrawal. I think it's good for the country that that happened.

I know it's good that we passed an important piece of energy legislation. I proposed that in my State of the Union, but it required a Congress willing to work with the executive branch and to work among themselves to get the bill passed. So there's plenty of credit to go around.

I know we live in an environment here in Washington where—I'm not saying you try to stir this up, but sometimes it's beneficial to constantly harp on, well, they don't get along here, or maybe they can't agree here. It's so-and-so versus so-and-so; it's an antagonistic world from some people's point of view. I try to make it less that way and to focus on high priorities.

And we got a lot of priorities for next year. And one of my priorities—this is—I understand this is a bone of contention, but one of the priorities is to make sure they don't run up the taxes on people. And

my attitude is, if you run them up on one area, it'll become a habit that will be hard to break, and then they'll try to run them up on other areas. And the reason I feel strongly about that is I don't want to undermine the economy by raising taxes.

There's some areas where we can work together, like reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, although I will warn Congress that—in that the current bill doesn't expire, if they try to weaken the current bill, I'll veto any attempt to weaken it. But I believe we can strengthen it. I spoke to Senator Kennedy on this issue and Congressman Miller and Senator Enzi and Congressman Boehner about how to strengthen No Child.

I mean, there's a lot of things we can do together, I guess what I'm saying, John. And so I leave the year feeling good about our capacity to get some important things done. And of course, I'm grateful that the troops got funded. One of the—one of my concerns from the last year was that Congress initially spent a lot of time on passing resolutions and sentiment and trying to put—trying to tell our commanders how to conduct the war. And it just didn't work. But they spent a lot of time on the subject, which meant when we came down to the end of the year, there was a lot of unfinished business. But we got it done.

Yes, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News].

Progress in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, despite the military success of the surge, there's no evidence that one of its intended benefits, making it easier for the Iraqis to form a unity government, has had any effect. Refugees won't come home from Syria. There was an opinion poll this week which said that most of the Iraqis surveyed blamed us, said things would be better when the U.S. leaves. What benchmarks can the Iraqi Government meet that would change this? What do you want them to do?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't agree with your premise that there's no politics taking place in Iraq. There is a functioning Government. They did pass a budget last year, and they're in the process of passing their budget this year. I am pleased to report that there's been two readings of a de-Ba'athification law to the Council of Assemblies.

Well, Bill, I mean, if your standard is—if you're trying to judge the Iraqi parliament based upon our own Congress's ability to get bills done—is that what you're saying—I'd be a little careful. It took our Congress till the last minute to get things done. I mean, the legislative process is not all that smooth at times. And they've got a lot of work to do; don't get me wrong. I mean, I am not suggesting that we shouldn't, as a Government, continue to press them. What I am suggesting, though, there is a functioning Government. Your statement was, security didn't provide room for a government to stand up and function. Well, it's happening. And so therefore—and therefore, we will continue to press them on de-Ba'ath law, Provincial election laws, power sharing with the central Government and the Provinces, and oil law.

But as I've reminded you from this podium, they are distributing oil revenues to the Provinces. There is revenue sharing, and there's local reconciliation taking place. And a lot of times, it's local politics that will drive national politics. Are we satisfied with the progress in Baghdad? No. But to say nothing is happening is just simply not the case.

2008 Presidential Election

Q. I understand you do not want to discuss the Presidential campaign—

The President. That's true—

Q. —let me ask you a question about—

The President. —so therefore, why don't you ask me about the Presidential campaign. I'll confirm it.

Q. All right, let me ask you about all Presidential campaigns—

The President. Sure. [Laughter]

Q. You've been in office for 7 years now. You must have some pretty strong opinions about what it takes to sit in the Oval Office. What is important to you? Is experience in government important? Are a candidate's religious views important to you?

The President. It's a good attempt to get me in the race. [Laughter] What's important to me will be this: the principles by which people will make decisions. People develop principles all different kinds of ways. But you can't be the President unless you have a firm set of principles to guide you as you sort through all the problems the world faces. And I would be very hesitant to support somebody who relied upon opinion polls and focus groups to define a way forward for a President.

And so my question to—if I were asking questions to people running for office, I'd say, what are the principles that you will stand on, in good times and bad times? What will be the underpinning of your decisions? What will it be? Because a President needs to be consistent, and a President needs to understand that what may look like a nonissue today could be a big issue tomorrow.

And secondly I would say, how do you intend to get advice from people you surround yourself—who are you going to surround yourself? And what process will you have in place to ensure that you get the unvarnished opinion of advisers? Because whoever sits in that Oval Office is going to find this is a complex world, with a lot of issues coming into the Oval Office—a lot—and a great expectation in the world that the United States take the lead. And so my question would be, how do you intend to set up your Oval Office so that people will come in and give you their advice?

And so those would be the two questions I'd ask. And—

Q. It sounds like you think the principles are more important than experience or specific religious views.

The President. No, sometimes you develop your principles as a result of experience. Sometimes you develop your principles based upon your—how you were raised or your religious experiences. I just want to know whether or not somebody has got a sound set of principles from which they will not deviate as they make decisions that will affect the peace and security of our country.

Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Progress in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning. You've announced a review of the situation in Afghanistan. The last time the American people heard about a review of the war, it ended up in a surge of U.S. troops in Iraq. Can the U.S. expect a surge of U.S. troops in Afghanistan? And do you agree with many analysts who say that the real problem in Afghanistan—or a major problem is that the NATO allies are not getting it done or avoiding the fight there?

The President. Part of the review is to assess how best to make sure our coalition partners realize there is a coherent strategy of which they are an integral part, all aiming to make sure that there is a presence that will assure the Afghan Government and the Afghan people that people will be trying to help them with their security.

It is—it makes sense for us to constantly review our strategies in a variety of theaters. That's what good governance is: You analyze the situation a year after the previous strategy to determine whether or not—what worked and what didn't work. What did work was the—you might remember last year; I guess there was a lot of talk about the Taliban surge or the Taliban offensive. And General McNeill informed us that the only team that's going to be on the offense is American and NATO allies and other allies.

And we were on the offense. And the Taliban got hit hard last year. The question, of course, is—just like in Iraq—is there a followup to the security gains? In other words, is life changing better for the average citizen? That's the question that we all got to be looking at. Unity governments are important, but does the average citizen realize that a free society is in his or her interest.

And I visited with President Karzai on the SVTS the other day, and it's a question I basically asked him. I said, we were successful militarily; what's happened in your country that you can point to that indicates that you're taking advantage of better security in certain places?

And he pointed out some interesting things. He talked about the—I think it's 5 million children now going to school. It was an interesting measurement for him. He says, "I believe we're taking advantage of the security because more of our children are getting educated." He told us a story—I can't remember the exact Province—about when he was part of the struggle against the Taliban. Somebody got wounded; he took them to the hospital—there was nothing there. You know, it was like they called it a hospital. It was just kind of a rundown place where a person couldn't get much good health care. And now, all of a sudden, he talks about an expanding health care system and the infant mortality rate dropping. He talks about the roads that are being built so that the average citizen there can get their crops to market. And we checked into his assertions, and they're true. So this is a society where—that is evolving.

Now, it takes a while for societies that have been brutalized by tyranny and wracked by war to meet expectations. So the questions I ask on Iraq and Afghanistan are: Is there progress? Are people feeling better about life? And of course, we press their governments to work to come together and get budgets passed, or in Iraq's case, de-Ba'athification law or oil laws. And

those are all important. But also what's important is the human condition. And I believe we're making progress on both fronts.

Yes, sir.

NATO Alliance Role in Afghanistan

Q. One more, I'm sorry. On the NATO allies, do you believe that they're avoiding the fight, or at least some of them are?

The President. Well, I would like to praise the Brits, the Canadians, the Dutch, the Danes, and other countries for their contribution—the Aussies—for their contribution of shooters, fighters, people that are willing to be on the frontline of this battle. These are brave souls. They're working side by side with the Afghan forces and U.S. forces to deal the Taliban a blow. And I've only got praise for them.

I understand that some countries are in a position where they can't commit combat troops. And so the question is, are we able to leverage their position in Iraq in such a way that enables us to stay on the offense against the Taliban, help the Afghans to do so?

And my biggest concern is that people say, "Well, we're kind of tired of Afghanistan; therefore, we think we're going to leave." That would be my biggest concern. And so our objective is to help people meet a mission that they're comfortable with achieving, and convince them that this is going to take a while. It's going to take time for this democratic experiment there in Afghanistan to work. And I believe it will.

As you all know, I've said this many times from the podium: I do believe in the universality of freedom. I believe if people are given a chance to be free, they will do so. Now, I understand some don't believe that. It's kind of like we're the only ones that can be free. It's kind of the ultimate isolationism, isn't it? And the question then is, is it in our Nation's interest to help others realize the blessings of liberty? And I—clearly, the Bush foreign policy says it is, because I believe it's going to yield

peace, and particularly important given the fact that we're in an ideological struggle against people who use murder to achieve political objectives.

And we've faced these kind of people before in our past. And the question is, does it make sense to confront them? And if we forget the lessons of September the 11th as a nation, we will be naive or blind to the realities of the world. And the best way to confront these folks in the long term is to defeat their ideology with one based upon hope, and that's one based upon liberty. And that's what you're watching unfold. It's necessary work, and it's hard work, and it requires determination and effort and commitment. And so part of our efforts is to convince others, one, the nature of the world in which we live; two, that we're in an ideological struggle; and three, we will prevail because we've got the ultimate weapon against those who can't see anything but terror and murder as a way forward. And that is freedom.

Yes, Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

National Economy/Home Loan Industry

Q. Mr. President, prominent Republican economists, including Alan Greenspan and Marty Feldstein, are saying the Government should do more to head off a recession. Greenspan is suggesting you need Government money to prevent home foreclosures, and Feldstein is suggesting more tax cuts. Should the Government do more, and if so, what?

The President. Well, we're constantly analyzing options available to us. My view of the economy is that the fundamentals are strong, that we've had strong growth for a reason: that we're competitive; we got flexible workplace; that we kept taxes low; exports are up.

Like many Americans, I'm concerned, and I'm concerned about the fact that Americans see their costs going up. I know Americans are concerned about whether or

not their neighbor may stay in their house. And so we're dealing with these issues.

On the housing front, I made it clear we're not going to bail out lenders, and we're not going to help speculators. But we will help creditworthy people stay in their homes. And that's what Secretary Paulson has done, along with Secretary Jackson, in putting together what's called the HOPE NOW coalition, which has got lenders and financiers and consumer advocates all working together to develop standards to make it more likely a creditworthy person can refinance their home.

See, the difficulty we face in the housing market is that the lender, the person who actually made the note, oftentimes doesn't end up owning the note. That note could be—in the recent past has been bundled and sold as an asset. And so there's no telling who owns the mortgage of the person who wants to renegotiate. And so we're helping deal with the new realities in a way that we believe is going to be effective.

Secondly, the Congress can really help by passing a FHA modernization bill. The House passed a bill. The Senate passed a bill. They need to get together when they get back, quickly, and get it to my desk so that it makes it easier for the Federal Government, in this case, to help people refinance their homes.

In terms of further stimulation, we'll consider all options. And so we're watching carefully.

Let's see here. Baker [Peter Baker, Washington Post].

*Environment/Fuel Efficiency Standards/
Alternative Fuel Sources*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Yesterday you joined together with House Speaker Pelosi and Senator Reid to sign the energy legislation and talk about the importance of the bill in curbing greenhouse gases, among other goals. However, your administration then told California that it couldn't implement its own plan to restrict tailpipe emissions. How important is fighting green-

house gases to you? Why can't the States try to do more? And can you tell me anything about your conversation with Vice President Gore about climate change a few weeks ago?

The President. Remind me about that here. Let me finish the first part of the question, and remind me you asked that.

The question is how to have an effective strategy. Is it more effective to let each State make a decision as to how to proceed in curbing greenhouse gases, or is it more effective to have a national strategy? Director Johnson made a decision based upon the fact that we passed a piece of legislation that enables us to have a national strategy, which is the increasing CAFE standards to 35 miles an hour by 2020 and a substantial increase of alternative fuels, 36 billion gallons by 2022.

And so the Director, in assessing this law, and assessing what would be more effective for the country, says, we now have a national plan. It's one of the benefits of Congress passing this piece of legislation.

I told Vice President Gore that I take the issue seriously. And we're developing a strategy that will deal with it—and an effective strategy. Yesterday's bill is a part of that strategy. When you replace as much gasoline on a mandatory basis as we're suggesting, it's going to do a lot to improve the greenhouse gases. And by the way, the bill I signed was a little weaker than the one I suggested, but nevertheless was happy to sign it.

And one of the key components, by the way, to be successful on reformulated fuel standards is to spend research and development money on cellulosic ethanol, new ways to manufacture ethanol. We can't rely only on corn in order to meet these standards. And I understand a lot of people in the farm belt are getting concerned, unless, of course, you're a corn grower. But if you're feeding cattle or feeding hogs, the cost of business has gone up. And that's one of the tradeoffs you have to make. So what I want to assure people out there

is that we're spending a lot of taxpayers' money in a way to figure out how to use wood chips or switchgrass in order to make ethanol. But this is a real national plan.

Secondly, in order to be effective on a global basis, countries that emit greenhouse gases need to be at the table. One of the main reasons I was against Kyoto was that China wasn't at the table. I mean, we could do all we wanted to do, but it wouldn't affect greenhouse gases over the long run unless a country like China had agreed to participate in a strategy.

And so we went to the Bali Conference with that in mind and worked out a compromise that said, we're committed to a process that's going to unfold over the next 2 years. But we've also got a parallel process working to make sure major emitters sit at the table and come together, hopefully, on a goal that we all agree to. And it's a strategy that I laid out at the G-8 in Germany, it's a strategy that was explained to everybody there in Bali, and it's a strategy we think will be effective.

And so, absolutely, I take the issue seriously. But I want to make sure that we're effective in what we do, and secondly, do not wreck our economy in whatever we do. See, it is hard to develop the technologies necessary to be able to make sure our standard of living remains strong and deal with greenhouse gases if you're broke. If you don't have any money, it is really hard to develop new technologies. And so we need to be prosperous for a lot of reasons, primarily so our citizens can have a good life, but also so that we're wealthy enough to make the investments necessary to deal with greenhouse gases.

Finally, if you're truly serious about dealing with greenhouse gases, then it seems like to me you ought to be a strong supporter of nuclear power. Nuclear power enables us to generate electricity without emitting one unit of greenhouse gases. I am—to me, I am amazed that our country isn't more robust in supporting the advent of nuclear power. I certainly am, and ap-

plaud those efforts by Members of the Congress to provide incentives for the construction of new plants.

But if you're somebody that says, "Greenhouse gases are of vital national interest," then you ought to be saying, "I'm for the development of nuclear power-plants." It is by far the best solution to making sure we have economic growth and, at the same time, be good stewards of the environment.

And so when you couple increasing CAFE standards with using alternative fuels—which deals with the automobile area—as well as a good strategy on electricity, then all of a sudden, you begin to see a strategy unfold. And by the way, the final thing is, is that we do have 250 years of coal. And I believe we can develop technologies that will enable us to use that coal in an environmentally friendly way.

So what I'm suggesting to you is, is that we do have a strategy. Our strategy is to bring others to the table. Our strategy is to develop our own plan to meet the national goals—the international goals that I hope we'll be able to set later on this summer. And you've just heard some of the components of it.

Yes, sir.

U.S. Image Abroad

Q. Mr. President, thank you. If I could return a minute to the CIA tapes. I realize you don't want to discuss it at this point, but given your remarks about the struggle against ideology, how concerned are you that your administration once again faces criticism, questions from people around the world about the handling of a terrorist suspect?

The President. You know, you're trying to get me to prejudge the outcome of this inquiry. And let's wait and see what happens. Let's wait and see what the facts are. And look, we get criticized a lot for a variety of reasons. We're asking people to do hard things, for starters, which is intercept and find terrorists and to spread freedom.

And there's isolationist tendencies in this world. People would rather stay at home. People would rather not aggressively pursue people overseas and aggressively pursue freedom. I understand that. We got people like that in our own country. That's why, in my State of the Union Address a couple of years ago, I talked about the perils of isolationism and protectionism. And the fundamental question facing whoever sits in the Oval Office is, will you use the influence of the United States to advance a freedom agenda to help others realize the blessings of liberty and yield peace?

So I don't want people to get the wrong impression of our country, but I'm not surprised we get criticized on a variety of fronts. And on the other hand, most people like to come to our country, and most people love what America stands for. And so it's like I say about the Presidency: People in America like the Presidency, and sometime they like the President. Get it? [Laughter]

Yes, ma'am.

*Syria/Lebanese Presidential Election/
President's Visit to the Middle East*

Q. Mr. President, on the Middle East, will your trip to the Middle East—I know you're not going to Lebanon—will it help to stabilize Lebanon? As you know, President Sarkozy said that he spoke to President Asad, and he said his patience is running out.

The President. Yes.

Q. Was this coordinated with you? And are you willing to speak to President Asad to end the crisis in Lebanon?

The President. No, it wasn't coordinated with me, and my patience ran out on President Asad a long time ago. And the reason why is, is because he houses Hamas; he facilitates Hizballah; suiciders go from his country into Iraq; and he destabilizes Lebanon. And so if he's listening, he doesn't need a phone call. He knows exactly what my position is.

We are—our view on Lebanon—first of all, it's very important that Lebanon—Lebanon's democracy succeed. Secondly, as you know, we did work with the French on 1559 to get Syria out of Lebanon, and Syria needs to stay out of Lebanon. Syria needs to let the process in Lebanon work. And if they can't come to an agreement—I appreciate the sides trying to work on a common ground for a President, but if they can't come for agreement, then the world ought to say this: that the March 14th coalition can run their candidate and their Parliament; majority plus one ought to determine who the President is. And when that happens, the world ought to embrace the President.

I'm looking forward to going to the Middle East. I've got a couple of objectives. One is to advance the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Secondly is to continue to work with our Arab friends on reconciliation with Israel. And finally is to assure people in the Middle East that we understand—or we'll show a strong commitment to the security of the region and a commitment to the security of our friends.

And it's going to be a great trip. I hope you're going with me.

Q. I am, actually.

The President. Good. [Laughter] So therefore, you use that as an opportunity to ask a followup. [Laughter]

Q. Absolutely.

The President. Didn't work. [Laughter]
Mike [Mike Allen, Politico].

U.S. Foreign Policy/Freedom Agenda

Q. Mr. President, you maybe saw that President Clinton said recently that one of the first actions of a new Clinton administration would be to send Presidents 41 and 42 on a worldwide good will mission to restore the country's good name abroad.

The President. Yes——

Q. I wonder if you think such a thing is necessary——

The President. Well, 41 didn't think it's necessary. It sounds like it's going to be a one-man trip. [Laughter]

Yes, Michael, do you want to try—

Q. Mr. President, I wonder if you would consider doing such a thing during your Presidency, and do you think that you might have—

The President. That's what I do during my Presidency. I go around spreading good will and talking about the importance of spreading freedom and peace. Go ahead. I don't know what I'm going to do after I'm President. Michael, I've got an exciting 13 months ahead, and I know you're just waiting for me to say "sprint to the finish line," so I won't. [Laughter] But it's—go ahead, Michael, try one more time.

Q. Mr. President, you maybe saw that your former colleague from the National Governors Association, Mike Huckabee—

The President. Okay. You're trying to get me in the race, Mike.

Q. No, sir.

The President. You're trying to drag me in the race, I know. What's your advice? Should I do it?

Q. Do it.

The President. Do it?

Q. Go for it. [Laughter]

The President. I plan on having some press conferences next year, and I suspect next year the questions will be even more plentiful about getting me to be the opiner in chief.

Yes, go ahead, Mike.

2008 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, this is a question about your foreign policy. You maybe saw that your foreign policy was described as arrogant, go-it-alone. I wonder why you disagree with that, and if there's any danger in having—

The President. That's a clever way of getting me in the race. Look, during the primaries and during the general election, I suspect my name may come up a lot, and

what the American people need to do is to sort through the rhetoric and reality.

And so this is a subtle attempt to get me to start commenting about the primaries, and I'm not going to do so. I will wait, reserve judgment, be patient, and after the primaries are over, will help my party unify, because I believe we will keep the White House. I believe ours is the party that understands the nature of the world in which we live and that the Government's primary responsibility is to protect the American citizens from harm. And I will continue to remind the American people that our professionals need to have the tools necessary to make sure that we find out who's thinking about attacking us, and if they are, do something about it. That's what we're going to do.

We're also the party that understands that you can spend your money, Michael; all that money they pay you, you can spend it better than the Government can spend it. And therefore, we're going to keep taxes low. And we've got an economic—a plan that will keep this economy strong.

And I'm looking forward to doing my bit. In the meantime, I'm out raising money for the Republican Party, trying to make sure that once the primaries are over—that you're trying to drag me into—that we're united and ready to go. And I'm confident we'll hold the White House, and I'm confident we can pick up seats in the—both the Senate and the Congress.

Yes, sir.

National Economy

Q. So far, Republicans haven't mentioned your name.

Q. Yes, just a quick—

The President. No, not you. This guy right here. USA Today. Wolf [Richard Wolf].

Q. On keeping taxes—

The President. —yelled his name out—Wolf.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On keeping taxes low, part of the way you seem

to be doing it is by not paying for some of the things that passed in the last couple days: emergency spending on Iraq, the AMT fix. Can you tell us why it's not irresponsible to pass these costs along to our kids? And I'm also tempted to ask, at the top of this, you talked about the wasteful spending and an initiative that you were going to—with Director Nussle. Can you give us a little bit of a hint on how you're going to go after—

The President. No, I think we better—that will be an interesting nugget for next year. And secondly, we have been reducing the deficit. Progrowth economic policies work. By cutting taxes, the economy grows, which yields more revenues for the Treasury. And then the fundamental question is, can we bring fiscal discipline on the spending side? The argument that you've got to raise taxes to make sure your children don't pay debt only works if the Government doesn't follow suit and spend that money you raised on new programs.

My view is, is that given more money, the Government will find new ways to spend it. And secondly, by raising taxes, we'll slow down the economic growth of this country, which will increase deficits over time.

And so we're on a plan to reduce the deficit, and at the same time, fund our troops, and at the same time, keep taxes low. Progrowth economic policies has worked. And maybe somebody else thinks you can raise taxes and keep the economy growing; I don't. I think a sure way to hurt the economy is to run up taxes on people.

This other thing that's interesting—and you hear these people in the campaigns—even though I'm not going to opine about the primary—but they do talk about taxing the rich. I just want people to remember that many small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax level because they're organized not as C corps, but as limited liability partnerships and S corps, which means that they pay individual tax rates.

And when you say you're going to tax the rich, you're taxing a lot of people that are hard-working people, and you're taxing small businesses. Small businesses create most of the growth in our economy, most of the job growth. And a sure way to stop that from happening is to take money out of their Treasury.

And so I'm a strong believer that tax cuts work, and we need to keep taxes low.

Yes, sir. Dow Jones man [Henry "Jay" Pulizzi, Dow Jones Newsletter]. How's the market?

Q. I don't know. I'll check.

The President. Okay. Good. Thanks.

U.S. Financial Markets/Foreign Investors

Q. The mortgage crisis is leading some of the Nation's biggest financial institutions to seek investments from funds that are controlled by foreign governments. Is that something that concerns you?

The President. No, I like to get our money back. I think the world that is open for investment and trade is a world that will lead to overall prosperity. It's interesting that they're going to have to do that. My attitude is, is that Wall Street needs to put all their—put it all out there for everybody to see. They need to have the—off-balance sheet this and put out there for investors to take a look at. And if there's some write-downs to be done, they need to do it now.

And so I'm fine with capital coming in from overseas to help bolster financial institutions. I don't think it's a problem. I think what will be a problem is to say, we're not going to accept foreign capital, or we're not going to open markets, or we become protectionists. Protectionism would be a huge mistake for this country. And what's going to be an interesting test next year on whether or not we're going to be a country that trades with others and opens up markets is these free trade votes. I applaud the Congress for passing the Peruvian free trade deal. But we got some votes coming up with Colombia. That's going to

be an interesting test to determine whether or not we remain—that we remain an open economy and that we expect others to treat us the way we treat them.

And I spoke this morning to the President-elect of South Korea. And the people there are going to be watching very carefully as to whether or not our Congress understands the importance of the relationship and that they pass that free trade agreement with Korea. It's in our interests we do so.

But no, I understand that people are—when they write down their assets, they may need to get a little extra capital on their balance sheets. And it doesn't trouble me at all; it doesn't. What troubles me is the fact that they—is that some of this paper isn't worth what people thought it

was, and it's going to have to work through the system.

Listen, thank you all. Have a wonderful holiday season. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:01 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Dan K. McNeill, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and President-elect Lee Myung-bak of South Korea. A reporter referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for James B. Peake as Secretary of Veterans Affairs December 20, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Good morning. Thanks for the warm welcome to the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am proud to introduce your new Secretary, Lieutenant General James Peake. And I am pleased to be joined by his wife Janice and daughter Kimberly and her husband Mack. I know they're proud of what Jim has accomplished during his career, and I thank them for supporting him in his work ahead.

I thank the Vice President for joining me today. We had a long ride over here, Jim. [Laughter] Plenty of time to visit. [Laughter] I want to thank the Secretary for joining us—Secretary of Defense Bob Gates; honored you're here, sir. Appreciate Elaine Chao, Secretary of Labor; Deputy Secretary Gordon Mansfield—I'm going to say something about you here in a minute. I appreciate Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, for join-

ing us. Thanks for coming, Admiral; General Dick Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the United States Army. I appreciate all those who wear the uniform who have joined us today as well.

I want to thank Arlen Specter, United States Senator, for joining us. Senator, thanks for coming. And my Congressman, the Congressman from central Texas, Congressman Chet Edwards, chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee; proud you're here.

I want to thank the members of veterans service organizations who are with us today.

Audience member. Hoorah! [Laughter]

The President. Looking forward to working with you. [Laughter] And behave yourself. [Laughter]

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has one of the most important jobs in our Government. The Secretary leads a Department

of more than 240,000 employees, and I want to thank every one of them for serving our country; appreciate your hard work. The Secretary is charged with a solemn responsibility: to ensure our Nation's veterans receive the care and the benefits they deserve.

Dr. Jim Peake has the skills and experience to carry out this mission. He is both the first physician and the first general to lead this Department. His 36-year medical career has taken him to military bases across the world. And during the opening years of the war on terror, he directed the Army Medical Department as Army Surgeon General. In that position, he led more than 55,000 medical personnel and managed an operating budget of nearly \$5 billion. Throughout his long career, Dr. Peake has worked to improve the way we deliver medical care to our troops. And thanks to his efforts, many who once might have died on the battlefield have returned home to live lives of hope and promise.

We see this hope and promise in the story of Dr. Peake's own life. Dr. Peake's first stay at a military hospital came years before he entered his—earned his medical degree at Cornell. It came as a wounded patient during the Vietnam war. This West Point graduate received several medals for his valor, including the Silver Star; he earned a reputation for honor and selflessness.

Dr. Peake learned those values from his loving parents who taught him the meaning of service. His mother was an Army nurse. His father was an Army officer, who spent most of his 30-year career in the Medical Service Corps. And I know they both would be proud to see their oldest son, Jim, become the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Dr. Peake follows in the footsteps of another fine public servant and Vietnam combat veteran, Secretary Jim Nicholson. Throughout his career, Jim Nicholson has served our Nation with honor and integrity—as an Army Ranger, an ambassador, and as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Sec-

retary Nicholson built on the fine record of his predecessor, Tony Principi—Mr. Secretary, glad you're here today—and he leaves an impressive legacy of his own. Under his leadership, this Department has worked to meet the needs of new veterans returning home from Afghanistan and Iraq. Secretary Nicholson also launched an effort to modernize the Department's information technology systems, so we can better protect patients' personal information. I want to thank Jim for his work on behalf of our Nation's veterans, and I wish him and his wife Suzanne all the very best.

I also want to thank Deputy Secretary Gordon Mansfield. He served as the Acting Secretary for Veterans Affairs since October. Gordon is a retired Army officer who has dedicated much of his career to serving his fellow veterans. I've benefited from Gordon's wisdom and counsel, and he did a terrific job as Acting Secretary during this time of transition.

Dr. Peake takes office at a critical moment in the history of this Department. Our Nation is at war, and many new veterans are leaving the battlefield and entering the VA system. This system provides our veterans with the finest care, but sometimes the bureaucracy can be difficult. To address these problems, our administration, along with the Secretary's leadership, is implementing recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission on Wounded Warriors. In other words, we're not going to tolerate bureaucratic delays. We want the very best for our veterans. Some of the Commission's recommendations require the approval of Congress, and Congressman and Senator, we're looking forward to working with you on those. I've sent legislation to Congress to carry out these additional recommendations, and Dr. Peake is going to work with Members from both sides of the aisle to get me a good bill that I can sign into law.

Our Nation has no higher calling than to provide for those who have borne the

cost of battle, and we will honor our responsibilities. I am confident in the future of this Department because I have seen firsthand the dedication and character of the men and women who work here. And I am confident that you will have a worthy and strong leader in our new Secretary.

Congratulations, Jim. I appreciate your willingness to serve. And now I ask the Vice President to administer the oath.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. at the Department of Veterans Affairs. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Robert J. Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Peake.

Remarks on Signing the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007 *December 20, 2007*

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. I'm pleased to sign a bill that will help homeowners who are struggling with rising mortgage payments. The Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007 will protect families from higher taxes when they refinance their homes. It will help hard-working Americans take steps to avoid foreclosure during a period of uncertainty in the housing market. I want to thank Members of Congress for getting this bill passed. I appreciate it very much. It's been a joy working with you.

I thank my Secretary of the Treasury, Hank Paulson, and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Alphonso Jackson, for taking the lead in helping people stay in their homes. I particularly want to thank the chairman of the Finance Committee, Max Baucus, Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, and Senator George Voinovich of Ohio for sponsoring this legislation.

I remember calling you on the phone, telling you that I'm going to propose the same thing you are—talked to George as well—and it's been a joy to work with you.

I want to thank Jim McCrery of the House, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and Rob Andrews. Appreciate you all being here.

I want to thank the staff who works hard at the Treasury and HUD to make this deal work. Appreciate your hard work.

In recent months, our Nation's housing market has faced serious strains. Home values have fallen in many parts of our country. At the same time, many homeowners with adjustable rate mortgages have seen their monthly payments increase faster than their ability to pay. And now some homeowners face the prospect of foreclosure.

My administration has taken strong steps to help homeowners avoid foreclosure by making it easier to refinance loans. We gave the Federal Housing Administration greater flexibility to refinance loans for struggling homeowners. We helped assemble a private sector group of lenders, loan servicers, investors, and mortgage counselors called the HOPE NOW Alliance. This group has agreed on a set of industry-wide standards to help those with subprime loans refinance or modify their mortgages, so more families can stay in their homes.

The bill I sign today will help this effort by ensuring that refinancing a mortgage does not result in a higher tax bill. Under current law, if the value of your house declines and your bank or lender forgives a portion of your mortgage, the Tax Code treats the amount forgiven as money that can be taxed. And of course, this makes

a difficult situation even worse. When you're worried about making your payments, higher taxes are the last thing you need to worry about. So this bill will create a 3-year window for homeowners to refinance their mortgage and pay no taxes on any debt forgiveness that they receive. And it's a really good piece of legislation. The provision will increase the incentive for borrowers and lenders to work together to refinance loans, and it will allow American families to secure lower mortgage payments without facing higher taxes.

With this bill, Congress has taken a strong step to address the turbulence in the housing market. Yet there's more work to be done. The Congress needs to pass legislation permitting State and local governments to issue tax-exempt bonds for refinancing existing home loans. And Congress needs to pass legislation strengthening the independent regulator of Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, so we can keep them focused

on the mission to expand homeownership. Congress needs, as well, to complete work on responsible legislation modernizing the Federal Housing Administration, so that we can give the FHA the necessary flexibility to help hundreds of thousands of additional families qualify for prime-rate financing.

By taking these steps, we can help our homeowners, and we'll help more Americans become homeowners. We want people to have a place they can call their own. After all, it's an essential part of the American Dream. And we want that dream to extend throughout our Nation.

I want to thank the Members for joining us. I wish you all happy holidays. And this is going to make a happy holiday for many homeowners. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. H.R. 3648, approved December 20, was assigned Public Law No. 110-142.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 20, 2007

Thank you all for joining me. I've just come down from a tour of the—a couple of the wards up there here at Walter Reed. First, I'm inspired by the quality of health care. Americans may wonder whether or not our troops are getting the best possible health care, and they are. They're not only getting great care from good docs and nurses, they're getting a lot of compassion and a lot of love up in the wards. And so I want to thank you all. General, thank you very much for taking the lead.

This past month is the lowest number of patients being admitted here since '02, and that's good news. It's good news for families who worry about their loved ones in harm's way, and it's good news for the

staff here who would like nothing more to be—to have nobody come in here. Every time I come to a facility like this, I count my blessings. And one of the great blessings is to be the President of a country that produces such brave men and women.

And so as we head into the holiday seasons, I ask for the good Lord's blessings on those in harm's way and their families. And I want to thank you again, general, for your hospitality. I appreciate you having me. Thank you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:14 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Carla G. Hawley-Bowland, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical

Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2007 December 21, 2007

“But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High . . . his kingdom will never end.’ ”

LUKE 1:30–33

During the Christmas season, our thoughts turn to the source of joy and hope born in a humble manger on a holy night more than 2,000 years ago. Each year, Christians everywhere celebrate this single life that changed the world and continues to change hearts today. The simple and inspiring story of the birth of Jesus fills our souls with gratitude for the many blessings in our lives and promises that God’s purpose is justice and His plan is peace.

At this special time of year, we give thanks for Christ’s message of love and

mercy, and we are reminded of our responsibility to serve. America is blessed to have fine citizens who reach out with a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. We also remember our brave men and women in uniform who have volunteered to defend us in distant lands. Many of those who have answered the call of duty will spend Christmas far from home and separated from family. We honor their sacrifice, ask God to watch over them and their families, and pray for their safe return.

Christmas is a time to rejoice and remember the birth of Jesus Christ. Laura and I pray your Christmas will be blessed with family and fellowship, and we wish you a day of glad tidings. Merry Christmas.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Message Sending Holiday Greetings to Members of the Armed Forces December 21, 2007

To the Men and Women of the United States Armed Forces

On behalf of a grateful Nation, Laura and I send our best wishes for the holidays.

In this season of giving, we remember our duty to others, and we see that sense of duty fulfilled in the men and women who wear our Nation’s uniform. Our country owes you a debt of gratitude for your courage and resolve to serve the cause of peace. Americans are proud of your dedi-

cated service, and I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of the greatest force for freedom in the history of the world.

Our Nation is thankful for the many sacrifices you and your families make every day. During the holidays and throughout the coming year, we ask the Almighty to bestow His protection and care on you and your loved ones. We pray for your safety and for liberty, justice, and peace on Earth.

Laura and I wish you a joyful holiday season. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2007 *December 21, 2007*

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

Established in 1966, Kwanzaa is celebrated each year as an opportunity for African Americans to honor African traditions of family, community, and culture. During the seven days leading up to the New Year, millions of individuals reflect on the past and renew their commitment to the principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

As family and friends gather to celebrate Kwanzaa, our citizens are reminded of the many African Americans who have contributed their talent and strength to this great Nation. I commend those observing this holiday for taking pride in your rich heritage. May the coming year be filled with the blessings of health and happiness.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa celebration.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

The President's Radio Address *December 22, 2007*

Good morning. Christmas is just a few days away. As Americans gather around the tree with family and friends, we remember the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and Coast Guard men and women who will be spending this holiday far away from their homes and loved ones.

America is blessed to have men and women willing to step forward to defend our freedoms and keep us safe from our enemies. We are thankful for their courage and their dedication to duty. We pray for their safety, and we wish them a Merry Christmas, wherever they serve.

America is also blessed to have military families willing to sacrifice for our country. The husbands and wives, mothers and fa-

thers, sons and daughters of those in the military serve our country as well. For many of them, service means packing up their belongings and moving on short notice, or living in a different country for a time, or missing a family member as he or she serves overseas. And this Christmas, many will sit down for dinner thinking of their loved ones half a world away. These families deserve the thanks and the prayers of our whole Nation.

Some military families are helping loved ones recover from injuries sustained in combat. These families are a special source of hope and strength for our wounded warriors. Through their encouragement and devotion, they help heal the body and the

spirit, and they remind our wounded warriors that our Nation stands behind them.

Other military families have felt the pain of losing a loved one in battle. This Christmas, we hold them in our hearts. We lift them up in our prayers. And we are inspired by the example that many of these families have set by turning their grief into extraordinary acts of compassion and love.

One such inspiring example is the family of Army Specialist Michael Rodriguez of Knoxville, Tennessee. During his deployment in Iraq, Michael often wrote home to his family about the children he met on patrol. In April, Michael was killed by a suicide bomber. Now his family is honoring his memory by helping to collect school supplies for students in an Iraqi school for girls.

We are also grateful for Kirsten Yuhl-Torres of San Diego, California. In 2006, Kirsten lost her son, Sergeant Joseph Perry, in Iraq. To honor Joseph's memory, she started sending care packages and writing letters of support to other soldiers serving there. Kirsten says, "Joe was our only son, but now we have hundreds."

Our Nation is also inspired by Bob Lehmiller, whose son, Sergeant Mike Lehmiller, was killed in 2005 while serving in Afghanistan. To honor his son, Bob created Mike's Guardian Eagle Foundation. The foundation gives financial assistance to

military families who need extra help when their loved ones deploy or if they're wounded or killed on the field of battle.

All these families have already given so much to America, and yet they have found a way to give even more. We thank each of them. And we thank every one of our citizens who supports our troops with letters and donations or prayers.

At this time of year, we acknowledge that love and sacrifice can transform our world. The miracle of Christmas reminds us that God's grace is revealed in the humblest places. Two thousand years ago, the fullness of that grace was found in a tiny manger, and the life born that day changed our world forever. As Christmas approaches, Laura and I extend to all Americans our best wishes, and we hope every family is brought closer together during this season of reflection and rejoicing.

Thank you for listening, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on December 21 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 21, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Signing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 *December 26, 2007*

Today, I signed into law H.R. 2764, legislation that will fund the Federal Government within the reasonable and responsible spending levels I proposed—without raising taxes and without the most objectionable policy changes considered by the Congress. This law provides a down payment for the resources our troops need, without arbitrary timelines for withdrawal. The Congress

should quickly take action next year to provide the remainder of the funding needed by our troops.

I am disappointed in the way the Congress compiled this legislation, including abandoning the goal I set early this year to reduce the number and cost of earmarks by half. Instead, the Congress dropped into the bill nearly 9,800 earmarks that total

more than \$10 billion. These projects are not funded through a merit-based process and provide a vehicle for wasteful Government spending.

There is still more to be done to rein in Government spending. In February I will submit my budget proposal for fiscal year 2009, which will once again restrain spending, keep taxes low, and continue us on a path towards a balanced budget. I look forward to working with the Congress in the coming year to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Finally, this legislation contains certain provisions similar to those found in prior appropriations bills passed by the Congress that might be construed to be inconsistent with my Constitutional responsibilities. To avoid such potential infirmities, the executive branch will interpret and construe such provisions in the same manner as I have previously stated in regard to similar provisions.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 26, 2007.

Remarks on the Death of Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in Crawford, Texas *December 27, 2007*

Laura and I extend our deepest condolences to the family of Benazir Bhutto, to her friends, and to her supporters. We send our condolences to the families of the others who were killed in today's violence. And we send our condolences to all the people of Pakistan on this tragic occasion.

The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy. Those who committed this crime must be brought to justice. Mrs. Bhutto served her nation twice as Prime Minister,

and she knew that her return to Pakistan earlier this year put her life at risk. Yet she refused to allow assassins to dictate the course of her country.

We stand with the people of Pakistan in their struggle against the forces of terror and extremism. We urge them to honor Benazir Bhutto's memory by continuing with the democratic process for which she so bravely gave her life.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. at the Bush Ranch.

Memorandum to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008" *December 28, 2007*

I am withholding my approval of H.R. 1585, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008," because it would imperil billions of dollars of Iraqi assets at a crucial juncture in that nation's reconstruction efforts and because it would un-

dermine the foreign policy and commercial interests of the United States.

The economic security and successful reconstruction of Iraq have been top priorities of the United States. Section 1083 of H.R. 1585 threatens those key objectives.

Immediately upon enactment, section 1083 would risk the freezing of substantial Iraqi assets in the United States—including those of the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI), and commercial entities in the United States in which Iraq has an interest. Section 1083 also would expose Iraq to new liability of at least several billion dollars by undoing judgments favorable to Iraq, by foreclosing available defenses on which Iraq is relying in pending litigation, and by creating a new Federal cause of action backed by the prospect of punitive damages to support claims that may previously have been foreclosed. This new liability, in turn, will only increase the potential for immediate entanglement of Iraqi assets in the United States. The aggregate financial impact of these provisions on Iraq would be devastating.

While my Administration objected to an earlier version of this provision in previous communications about the bill, its full impact on Iraq and on our relationship with Iraq has become apparent only in recent days. Members of my Administration are working with Members of Congress to fix this flawed provision as soon as possible after the Congress returns.

Section 1083 would establish unprecedented legal burdens on the allocation of Iraq's funds to where they are most needed. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, I have issued Executive Orders to shield from entanglement in lawsuits the assets of the DFI and the CBI. I have taken these steps both to uphold international legal obligations of the United States and to remove obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq. Section 1083 potentially would place these crucial protections of Iraq's core assets in immediate peril, by including a provision that might be misconstrued to supersede the protections I have put in place and to permit the judicial attachment of these funds. Iraq must not have its crucial reconstruction funds on judicial hold while lawyers argue and courts decide such legal assertions.

Moreover, section 1083 would permit plaintiffs to obtain liens on certain Iraqi property simply by filing a notice of pending action. Liens under section 1083 would be automatic upon filing a notice of a pending claim in a judicial district where Iraq's property is located, and they would reach property up to the amount of the judgment plaintiffs choose to demand in their complaints. Such pre-judgment liens, entered before claims are tested and cases are heard, are extraordinary and have never previously been available in suits in U.S. courts against foreign sovereigns. If permitted to become law, even for a short time, section 1083's attachment and lien provisions would impose grave—indeed, intolerable—consequences on Iraq.

Section 1083 also includes provisions that would expose Iraq to increased liability in lawsuits. Contrary to international legal norms and for the first time in U.S. history, a foreign sovereign would be liable for punitive damages under section 1083. Section 1083 removes defenses common for defendants in the United States—including *res judicata*, collateral estoppel, and statutes of limitation—upon which the Iraqi government has relied. And section 1083 would attempt to revive a \$959 million judgment against the new democratic Government of Iraq based on the misdeeds of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Exposing Iraq to such significant financial burdens would weaken the close partnership between the United States and Iraq during this critical period in Iraq's history. If Iraq's assets are frozen, even temporarily, that could reduce confidence in the Iraqi dinar and undermine the success of Iraq's monetary policy. By potentially forcing a close U.S. ally to withdraw significant funds from the U.S. financial system, section 1083 would cast doubt on whether the United States remains a safe place to invest and to hold financial assets. Iraqi entities would be deterred from engaging in commercial partnerships with U.S. businesses for fear of entangling assets in lawsuits. Section

1083 would be viewed with alarm by the international community and would invite reciprocal action against United States assets abroad.

The adjournment of the Congress has prevented my return of H.R. 1585 within the meaning of Article I, section 7, clause 2 of the Constitution. Accordingly, my withholding of approval from the bill precludes its becoming law. *The Pocket Veto Case*, 279 U.S. 655 (1929). In addition to withholding my signature and thereby invoking my constitutional power to “pocket veto” bills during an adjournment of the Congress, I am also sending H.R. 1585 to the Clerk of the House of Representatives, along with this memorandum setting forth my objections, to avoid unnecessary litigation about the non-enactment of the bill that results from my withholding approval and to leave no doubt that the bill is being vetoed.

This legislation contains important authorities for the Department of Defense,

including authority to provide certain additional pay and bonuses to servicemembers. Although I continue to have serious objections to other provisions of this bill, including section 1079 relating to intelligence matters, I urge the Congress to address the flaw in section 1083 as quickly as possible so I may sign into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, as modified. I also urge the Congress to ensure that any provisions affecting servicemember pay and bonuses, as well as provisions extending expiring authorities, are retroactive to January 1, 2008.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

December 28, 2007.

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

The President's Radio Address

December 29, 2007

Good morning. New Year's Day will soon be upon us, and with it will come New Year's resolutions. This weekend is a good time to give thanks for our blessings and to resolve to do better in the coming year.

One of our greatest blessings as Americans is that we live in a country with a growing economy, where people can pursue their dreams, turn ideas into enterprises, and provide for their families. It is a measure of our economy's resilience that even with high oil prices and softness in the housing market, we're still growing. In November, our economy added jobs for the 51st straight month, making this the longest period of uninterrupted job growth on record. Unemployment is a low 4.7 percent.

Exports are up. And the fundamentals of our economy are strong.

Economic statistics are important indicators. Yet it is more important to remember that behind all these numbers are real people. These people include the entrepreneurs who live their dreams by starting up new businesses. These people include small-business owners who create most of the new jobs in our economy. And most of all, these people include the tens of millions of working moms and dads whose jobs provide for their families.

I know that even in this growing economy, some of you have real concerns. Some of you worry about your ability to afford health care coverage for your families. Some of you are concerned about meeting

your monthly mortgage payments. Some of you worry about the impact of rising energy costs on fueling your cars and heating your homes. You expect your elected leaders in Washington to address these pressures on our economy and give you more options to help you deal with them. And I have put forth several proposals to do so.

In the last month, Congress has responded to some of my initiatives. They passed a good energy bill, they passed a temporary patch to protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax, and they passed a law that will help protect families from higher taxes when their lenders reduce their mortgage debt. But this is only a start. Congress needs to do more to decrease America's dependence on oil. Congress needs to pass legislation that will help make health care coverage more affordable for small businesses and workers who buy their own policies. And Congress needs to act quickly on the rest of my proposals to help families struggling with rising mortgage payments keep their homes.

Most of all, we need to set a good example in Washington by being careful with your money. I'm disappointed that leaders in Congress sent me a massive spending bill that includes about 9,800 earmarks. Earmarks are special interest items that are slipped into big spending bills like this one, often at the last hour, without discussion or debate. Among the earmarks Congress

approved was one for a prison museum and another for a sailing school. In the last election, congressional leaders ran on a promise that they would reform earmarks. They made some progress, but not nearly enough. So my administration is reviewing options to address wasteful earmark spending.

As we address earmarks, we also must restrain spending, keep taxes low, and continue on a path towards a balanced budget. And that is what the budget I submit in February will do. You work hard for your money and to live within your means. As you provide for your families, the last thing you need is wasteful spending that will lead to a tax hike. My resolution for the New Year is this: to work with Congress to keep our economy growing, to keep your tax burden low, and to ensure that the money you send to Washington is spent wisely or not at all.

Thank you for listening, and happy New Year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on December 28 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 28, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Appointment of Representative Roger F. Wicker as United States Senator for Mississippi *December 31, 2007*

Today Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour announced the appointment of Representative Roger Wicker to serve as United States Senator for the State of Mississippi, succeeding Senator Trent Lott.

I welcome Representative Wicker's appointment and commend Governor Barbour for the selection. Representative Wicker's leadership has earned the respect of his constituents and his colleagues in

the House of Representatives. He is an advocate for our men and women in uniform and a champion of modernizing our health care system, and he shares Senator Lott's

commitment to promote the interests of the people of Mississippi.

I look forward to working with Roger in his new role representing Mississippi in the United States Senate.

Statement on Signing the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007

December 31, 2007

Today, I have signed into law S. 2271, the "Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007." I share the deep concern of the Congress over the continued violence in Darfur perpetrated by the Government of Sudan and rebel groups. My Administration will continue its efforts to bring about significant improvements in the conditions in Sudan through sanctions against the Government of Sudan and high-level diplomatic engagement and by supporting the deployment of peacekeepers in Darfur.

This Act purports to authorize State and local governments to divest from companies doing business in named sectors in Sudan and thus risks being interpreted as insu-

lating from Federal oversight State and local divestment actions that could interfere with implementation of national foreign policy. However, as the Constitution vests the exclusive authority to conduct foreign relations with the Federal Government, the executive branch shall construe and enforce this legislation in a manner that does not conflict with that authority.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 31, 2007.

NOTE: S. 2271, approved December 31, was assigned Public Law No. 110-174.

Message on the Observance of New Year's Day, 2008

December 31, 2007

As we enter this New Year, we reflect on the past and look forward to a promising year ahead.

A future of hope and opportunity begins with a robust economy. Thanks to America's workers and entrepreneurs, our economy grew at a vigorous rate last year. Keeping taxes low and exercising fiscal restraint helped ensure that the number of jobs increased and the deficit once again fell ahead of schedule. The underpinnings of our economy have proven strong, competi-

tive, and resilient enough to overcome the challenges we face. In the coming year, we will continue to encourage growth in the economy so Americans have more money to invest in their businesses, spend on their families, and put aside for the future.

In addition to our efforts here at home, the United States continued its work to spread freedom and peace around the world. America is determined to defeat terrorists and extremists, and we will remain

on the offensive against the enemies of freedom. In 2008, we will continue to stand beside our partners in the international community to lay a foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

America is grateful for the service and sacrifice of our Nation's troops and their families. During this hopeful time of year, we remain mindful of the courage and resolve of the fine men and women who protect our country and defend freedom's cause.

As we welcome this New Year, we move forward with trust in the power of the American spirit, confidence in our purpose, and faith in a loving God who created us to be free.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a happy New Year. May God bless you, may God bless our troops and their families, and may God bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

July 1

In the afternoon, at the Bush family home in Kennebunkport, ME, the President and Mrs. Bush welcomed President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social dinner for President Putin.

July 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social luncheon for President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area impacted by severe storms and flooding beginning on June 26 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on June 19.

July 3

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President went to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where he visited with wounded U.S. military personnel and presented Purple Heart medals to three soldiers.

July 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Martins-

burg, WV. He then returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President attended a dinner and party hosted by Mrs. Bush in celebration of his upcoming birthday. Later, they viewed the Independence Day fireworks display on The National Mall from the White House.

July 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President attended a Washington Nationals baseball game to celebrate his upcoming birthday.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stuart J. Ishimaru to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel D. Heath to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund.

July 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

July 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes beginning on June 10 and continuing.

July 8

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

July 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Arlington, VA. He then returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President participated in an interview with Georgina Carnegie for the Australian program, "Visions

of Leadership,” which will air during the APEC summit in September. Later, at Blair House, he and Mrs. Bush attended a reception for Counselor to the President Daniel J. Bartlett.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robin Renee Sanders to be Ambassador to Nigeria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Diane D. Rath to be Assistant Secretary for Family Support at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to designate Reuben Jeffery III and Howard Radzely as members of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

July 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Cleveland, OH, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Gerris Farris. He then traveled to Parma, OH.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Cleveland, OH, where, at Slyman’s Restaurant, he had lunch with community leaders.

In the afternoon, the President toured the Cleveland Clinic. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Upon arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, he met with soldiers and marines injured in the war on terror.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the opening ceremonies of the XV Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 13:

Michael O. Leavitt (head of delegation);
Clifford M. Sobel;
Donna Richardson Joyner;
George P. Bush; and
Luis Tiant.

July 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gene A. Cretz to be Ambassador to Libya.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald M. Kerr to be Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark Kimmitt to be Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate John S. Bresland to be a member and chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles R.H. Shearer to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas C. Gilliland, William H. Graves, and Susan Richardson Williams to be members of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kyle E. McSlarrow, Ivan Seidenberg, and Mike Zafirovski as members of the President’s National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

The President announced that he has designated David L. Bernhardt as Acting U.S. Commissioner of the Part of the United States on the International Boundary Commission (U.S. and Canada).

July 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will meet with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the White House on July 17.

July 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in an interview with Fred Barnes, Stephen F. Hayes, and William Kristol of the Weekly Standard; Michael Barone of U.S. News & World Report; Charles Krauthammer of the Washington Post; Larry Kudlow, Rich Lowry, and Kate O’Beirne of the National Review; and syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker.

July 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

July 15

In the afternoon, on the South Lawn, the President participated in an interview with Karl Ravech of ESPN.

July 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with President Lech Kaczynski of Poland. Later, he traveled to McLean, VA.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a National Republican Senatorial Committee reception. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will welcome President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to Camp David on August 5 and 6.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sean R. Mulvaney to be Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (Management).

The President announced his intention to designate John E. Mansfield as Vice Chairman of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to designate Charles W. Grim as Acting Director of the Indian Health Service, Public Health Service at the Department of Health and Human Services.

July 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a briefing by Director of National Intelligence J. Michael McConnell on the new National Intelligence Estimate.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding June 2–18.

July 18

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nahayyan of the United Arab Emirates. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Landover, MD. He then toured Man & Machine, Inc. Later, he participated in an interview with Christopher Lee of the Washington Post.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate David T. Johnson to be Assistant Secretary of State (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs).

The President announced his intention to designate Craig S. Morford as Acting Deputy Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

July 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Nashville, TN, where, upon arrival, he met with Sgt. J. Kevin Downs of the Army National Guard, who was wounded in Iraq in August 2005, and his parents Catherine and Joe Downs. He then met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Bill Yancey.

Later in the morning, the President toured the Nashville Bun Company.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced that he has named Judith Ansley as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser for Regional Affairs on the National Security Council.

The President announced that he has named Andrew D. Ciafardini as Special Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Harold H. Kim as Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Brett H. McGurk as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Iraq and Afghanistan, Strategic Planning and Policy Development on the National Security Council.

The President announced that he has named Stephen D. Potts as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Rachael Leigh Sunbarger as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Advance for Press.

The President announced that he has named Ronald C. Williams as Special Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Senior Director for Nuclear Defense Policy on the Homeland Security Council.

July 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

The White House announced that the President will welcome King Abdullah II of Jordan to the White House on July 24.

July 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

July 22

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

July 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has named Cynthia Bergman as Special Assistant to the President for Communications.

The President announced that he has named Ann Thomas G. Johnston as Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Jason Recher as Special Assistant to the President and Trip Director.

July 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Charleston Air Force Base in Charleston, SC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with President Georgi Parvanov of Bulgaria to discuss the return of the Bulgarian nurses who were released from prison in Libya on July 24 and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to congratulate him on his party's July 22 election victory.

Later in the morning, the President viewed the loading of cargo planes for shipment to Iraq. He then had lunch with military personnel.

In the afternoon, the President met with family members of the Charleston firefighters who died on June 18. Later, he presented the Congressional Gold Medal to Tuskegee Airman Earl M. Middleton. He then returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, in the Residence, the President had dinner with King Abdullah II of Jordan.

The President announced his intention to nominate James D. McGee to be Ambassador to Zimbabwe.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vincent Obsitnik to be Ambassador to Slovenia.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding May 28–June 2.

July 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the 2007 Boys and Girls Nation delegates.

July 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Philadelphia, PA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteers Carly and Molly Houlahan.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President participated in a photo opportunity with National and State Future Farmers of America (FFA) Organization members.

The White House announced that the President will host Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom at Camp David on July 29 and 30.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark M. Boulware to be Ambassador to Mauritania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Benjamin E. Sasse to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services (Planning and Evaluation).

The President announced his intention to nominate Barry L. Wells to be Ambassador to The Gambia.

July 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

July 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

July 29

In the afternoon, the President welcomed Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom to Camp David, MD.

In the evening, the President had dinner with Prime Minister Brown.

July 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a photo opportunity with Ezekiel Taylor, the 2007 March of Dimes national ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andrew R. Cochran to be Inspector General of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert L. Smolen to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

July 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

In the afternoon, in the Residence, the President met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.

The President declared an emergency in the Federated States of Micronesia and ordered Federal aid to supplement national and state response efforts in the area impacted by a drought beginning on March 5 and continuing.

August 1

In the morning, in the Private Dining Room, the President had breakfast with bipartisan congressional leaders. Later, he had an intelligence briefing. He then had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President participated in an interview with David Aaronovitch of Juniper Communications. Later, at Blair House, he attended a reception for Of-

fice of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman.

In the evening, the President was informed of the Minneapolis bridge collapse in Minneapolis, MN.

The President announced that he has named James F. Jeffrey as Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser.

August 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Governor Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota, Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN, and Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters to discuss the Interstate 35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, MN.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with Martha Raddatz of ABC News.

The President announced his intention to nominate A. Paul Anderson to be a Commissioner of the Federal Maritime Commission, and to designate him Chairman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis W. Carlton to be a member of the Council of Economic Advisers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia Dyer to be Director of the Office of Violence Against Women at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carl B. Kress to be a Commissioner of the Federal Maritime Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey W. Runge to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service:

Julie Fisher Cummings;
Mark D. Gearan;
Tom Osborne;
Alan D. Solomont; and
Donna N. Williams.

The President announced his intention to nominate Margaret Spellings to be a Representative of the U.S. to the 34th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for the duration of the conference.

The President announced his intention to designate John A. Gastright, Jr., as U.S. Coordinator for Afghanistan and nominate him for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure as U.S. Coordinator for Afghanistan at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to designate James H. Herring as Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation.

The President announced his intention to designate Raymond Simon as Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to appoint Brock D. Bierman as the Small State and Rural Advocate at the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the Department of Homeland Security.

August 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President went to the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building where he had lunch with his counterterrorism and homeland security teams. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President declared an emergency in Vermont and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on July 9–11.

August 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Minneapolis, MN, where he took an aerial tour of the damaged Interstate 35W bridge. He then took a walking tour of the affected area.

Later in the morning, the President met with family members of victims of the bridge collapse.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Camp David, MD.

August 5

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush welcomed President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush had dinner with President Karzai.

August 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

August 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and his defense policy and programs and foreign policy teams.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia.

August 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., of Utah to discuss the situation in the Crandall Canyon Mine.

Later in the morning, at the Treasury Department, the President had lunch with his economic advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Barry Bonds, left fielder, San Francisco Giants, to congratulate him on breaking the Major League Baseball career home run record. He then participated in separate interviews with Neil Cavuto of FOX News and economic reporters.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to the White House.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will welcome President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to Kennebunkport, ME, for a private lunch on August 11.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the funeral of former Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa of Japan on August 28: J. Dennis Hastert (head of delegation); and John T. Schieffer.

The President declared a major disaster in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on July 11–12.

August 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Bush family home in Kennebunkport, ME.

August 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

August 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social lunch for President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

August 12

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

August 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

August 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

The President announced his intention to appoint Anthony K. Dungy as a member of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Anthony C. Wisniewski as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation.

August 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has named Jess Sharp as Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy.

The President announced that he has named John D. Adams as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Todd F. Braunstein as Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy.

The President announced that he has named Terry A. Wolff as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Iraq and Afghanistan Policy Implementation.

The President announced that he has named Mary Burce Warlick as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia of the National Security Council.

August 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a briefing on the August 15 earthquake in Peru.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dan W. Mozena to be Ambassador to Angola.

The President announced his intention to nominate Louis J. Nigro, Jr., to be Ambassador to Chad.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul E. Simons to be Ambassador to Chile.

August 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a briefing on the situation at the Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah.

In the afternoon, at the Broken Spoke Ranch, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a Republican National Committee reception.

August 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared an emergency in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from Hurricane Dean beginning on August 17 and continuing.

August 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a briefing on the National Intelligence Estimate. Later, he had briefings on Hurricane Dean and Tropical Storm Erin.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Ottawa, Canada. Prior to his departure from Texas State Technical College Airport in Waco, TX, he awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Public Service to Harry McKillop.

In the afternoon, at the Ottawa International Airport, the President participated in a greeting with Governor General Michaëlle Jean of Canada and her husband Jean-Daniel Lafond. Later, he traveled to Montebello, Canada. Upon arrival at the Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello, he participated in a greeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

Later in the afternoon, in the Ontario Room of the Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello, the President met with Prime Minister Harper. He then met with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico.

In the evening, in the Manoir Papineau—Salon Amedee of the Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello, the President attended a North American leaders' dinner.

August 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, on the porch of the Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello, he had a working breakfast with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico. Later, in the Canada Room of the Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello, he met with the North American Competitiveness Council.

Later in the morning, in the Curling Rink—Heritage Room, the President participated in a photo opportunity with Prime Minister Harper and President Calderon. He then participated in a North American leaders' meeting.

In the afternoon, at the Ottawa International Airport, the President met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. He then traveled to Minneapolis, MN, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Jim Daly. Later, he traveled to Eden Prairie, MN.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a Norm Coleman for U.S. Senate and Minnesota Republican Party reception. Later, he traveled to Kansas City, MO, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Janet Parks.

The President declared an emergency in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area impacted by the bridge collapse in Minneapolis on August 1.

August 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Riverside, MO. Later, he returned to Kansas City, MO.

Later in the morning, the President met with family members of military personnel killed in the war on terror.

In the afternoon, the President returned to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

August 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on August 18 and continuing.

August 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Rev. Billy Graham.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to discuss his resignation.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the dedication ceremony of the Afghanistan-Tajikistan Bridge on August 26: Carlos M. Gutierrez (head of delegation); William B. Wood; and Tracey Ann Jacobson.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to the 50th anniversary celebration of Malaysia's independence in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on August 31:

Jeffrey C. Sell (head of delegation);
Christopher J. LaFleur;
Karan K. Bhatia; and
Talal Eid.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on August 18 and continuing.

August 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

August 26

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush had lunch with Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and his wife Rebecca Turner Gonzales.

The President declared a major disaster in Wisconsin and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on August 18 and continuing.

August 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Albuquerque, NM, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Pat Dee. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with President Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and Vice Presidents Tariq al-Hashimi and Adil Abd Al-Mahdi of Iraq, and Masoud Barzani, president, Kurdistan region in Iraq.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a People for Pete Domenici reception. Later, he traveled to Bellevue, WA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Bernie Krane. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Scott Kellogg, deputy director, Rio Rancho Police Department, NM, to express his condolences for the death of Rio Rancho Police Officer Germaine Casey, who was killed in a motorcycle accident while protecting the President's motorcade.

Later in the afternoon, while en route to the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, the President had a telephone conversation with Lisa Casey, wife of police officer Germaine Casey, to express his condolences for the death of her husband.

In the evening, the President traveled to Reno, NV, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Cathy Levine.

The President declared a major disaster in Ohio and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes beginning on August 20 and continuing.

August 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with family members of military personnel killed in the war on terror.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, where, upon arrival in the evening, he was joined by Mrs. Bush. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Abdullah Gul of Turkey to congratulate him on his election victory.

Later in the evening, the President met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Allison Stouse.

August 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology, he and Mrs. Bush participated in a meeting with Louisiana education officials. They then participated in a moment of silence to honor the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Bay St. Louis, MS, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, at Our Lady of the Gulf Parish Community Center, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in a briefing on Mississippi rebuilding efforts. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding June 11–16.

August 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Jose Socrates of Portugal to the White House on September 17 in his dual roles as Prime Minister and President of the European Council.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on August 7 and 8.

August 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the

areas struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes on August 8.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes May 24–June 1.

September 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

September 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Al Asad Air Base in Iraq.

During the day, the President met with General David H. Petraeus, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Admiral William J. “Fox” Fallon, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Later, he met with Sunni tribal and Provincial leaders.

Also during the day, the President participated in separate interviews with CBS News and NBC News.

In the evening, the President traveled to Sydney, Australia, arriving the following evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he participated in an interview with travel pool reporters.

September 4

In the morning, aboard Air Force One, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has nominated Gregory F. Jacob to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor.

The President announced that he has nominated Robert D. Jamison to be Under Secretary for National Protection and Programs at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced that he has nominated James F. Moriarty to be Ambassador to Bangladesh.

The President announced that he has nominated Christopher A. Padilla to be Under Secretary for International Trade at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced that he has nominated Paula J. Dobriansky for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure as Special Envoy for Northern Ireland.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marc S. Goldman as a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad:

William C. Daroff;
Jules Fleischer;
Peter Hawryluk;
Lee Seeman; and
Lawrence E. Steinberg.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations:

Jorge L. Arrizurieta;
Craig R. Barrett;
Michael E. Campbell;
Thomas J. Donohue;
Anthony H. Gioia;
William P. Hite;
Kenneth I. Juster;
Robert A. McDonald;
Edward J. Perkins; and
Robert Stallman.

The President announced his intention to appoint Arthur D. Collins, Jr., Leon Trammell, and Stephen R. Tritch as members of the President’s Export Council.

The President announced his intention to designate Kerry N. Weems as Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at the Department of Health and Human Services.

September 5

In the morning, at the InterContinental Sydney, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Garden Island, where, at the Royal Australia Navy Heritage Centre, he met with members of the Australian Defense Force. Later, he attended a musical performance by Felicity Urquhart. He then returned to the InterContinental Sydney.

During the day, the President toured Sydney Harbor with Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia.

In the evening, the President traveled to Admiralty House, where, in the Drawing Room, he met with Governor General Philip Michael

Jeffery of Australia. Later, in the Dining Room at Kirribilli House, he had dinner with Prime Minister Howard. He then returned to the InterContinental Sydney.

The President announced that he has named Barry Jackson as Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Joie A. Gregor as Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel.

September 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Premier's Room at the InterContinental Sydney, he met with Opposition Leader Kevin M. Rudd of Australia. He then visited the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Later in the morning, in the Fort Macquarie Room at the InterContinental Sydney, the President met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families.

The President announced that he has named Joel A. Scanlon as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Strategic Initiatives.

The President announced that he has named Dianna Campagna as Special Assistant to the President and Executive Secretary for the Office of the Counsel to the President.

September 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harvey E. Johnson, Jr., to be Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vincent Obsitnik to be Ambassador to Slovakia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Todd J. Zinser to be Inspector General at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Walter Lukken to be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation:

John A. Garcia;
Julia A. King;
Thomas R. Miller; and
Ann A. Pritzlaff.

September 8

In the morning, at the InterContinental Sydney, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Rooftop Executive Lounge of the InterContinental Sydney, he had a working breakfast with Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the Sydney Opera House, where, in the Concert Hall Southern Foyer, he participated in an official welcome with Prime Minister Howard. Then, in the Utzon Room, he participated in the APEC Leaders Dialogue with the APEC Business Advisory Council.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with APEC leaders. Then, at the Guillaume at Bennelong Restaurant, he had lunch with APEC leaders. Later, he participated in the APEC Leaders official photograph.

Later in the afternoon, in The Studio, the President participated in APEC Leaders Retreat I.

In the evening, in the Concert Hall, the President attended a cultural performance. Later, on the Granite level of the Concert Hall Northern Foyer, he viewed a fireworks display and the Parade of Tall Ships. He then participated in the APEC Official Leaders dinner.

Later in the evening, the President traveled to Hickam Air Force Base, HI, crossing the international dateline and arriving in the morning, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Caroline Tom. In the afternoon, he traveled to Naval Station Pearl Harbor, where, in the dining room of the Admiral's residence, he had lunch with military commanders. He then returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and a tornado on August 26 and 27.

September 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael

O. Leavitt to discuss the initial report by the Interagency Working Group on Import Safety.

September 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at St. John's Episcopal Church, he attended a service of prayer and remembrance to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Then, at 8:46 a.m., on the South Lawn, he and Mrs. Bush participated in a moment of silence to honor the anniversary of the attacks.

The President announced that he has named Henry C. Lozano as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of USA Freedom Corps.

September 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Family Theater, he participated in a speech preparation session for his September 13 address to the Nation.

In the afternoon, in the Family Theater, the President participated in a speech preparation session for his September 13 address to the Nation.

The President announced that he has nominated Daniel V. Speckhard to be Ambassador to Greece.

The President announced that he has nominated Thomas F. Stephenson to be Ambassador to Portugal.

The President announced that he has nominated William H. Frist and Kenneth F. Hackett to be members of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The President announced that he has nominated William Delahunt, George E. Pataki, and Ted Poe to be U.S. Representatives to the 62d Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The President announced that he has nominated Kelly G. Knight and Rodger D. Young to be Alternate U.S. Representatives to the 62d Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

Judith A. Eisenberg;
David Girard-diCarlo;
C. Michael Kojaian;
Donna Garff Marriott;

William C. Powers; and
Joseph E. Robert, Jr.

September 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with the 2007 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award recipients.

September 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Marine Corps Base Quantico in Quantico, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. He then traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding August 17–September 5.

September 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

September 16

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Family Theater, they hosted a screening of "The Kite Runner."

September 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a photo opportunity with 2007 Scripps National Spelling Bee champion Evan M. O'Dorney.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the funeral of Prime Minister John Compton of Saint Lucia on September 18 in Castries, Saint Lucia: Alphonso R. Jackson (head of delegation); and Mary Martin Ourisman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anita K. Blair to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael W. Hager to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Human Resources and Management).

The President announced his intention to nominate Keith Hall to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael B. Mukasey to be Attorney General.

The President announced his intention to designate David H. McCormick as a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced that he has designated Peter D. Keisler as Acting Attorney General.

September 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President participated in an interview with Bret Baier of FOX News.

September 19

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece to congratulate him on his September 17 reelection and to express his condolences for the loss of life during the August wildfires. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Fort Meade, MD, where, at the National Security Agency, he participated in a briefing on the implementation of Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) reforms. He then greeted National Security Agency employees.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he participated in an interview with Michael Barone of U.S. News & World Report, Tony Blankley of the Washington Times, David Brooks of the New York Times, Ron Kessler of NewsMax magazine, Charles Krauthammer of the Washington Post, William Kristol of the Weekly Standard, and Larry Kudlow, Kathryn Lopez, and Kate O'Beirne of the National Review. Then, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with the 2007 Boys and Girls Clubs of America Youth of the Year regional finalists.

September 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

September 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the historic Evermay house, the President attended a Republican National Committee luncheon.

The President announced that he has named Adam Belmar as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Communications for Production.

The President announced that he has named Spencer Geissinger as Deputy Assistant to the President for Advance and Operations.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding August 19–21.

September 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

September 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Old Family Dining Room, he participated in an interview with Juan Williams of FOX News. Then, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with Deputy Assistant Attorney General John C. Keeney to honor his 60 years of Government service.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, where he was joined by Mrs. Bush. Later, he met with Quartet Representative in the Middle East Tony Blair.

In the evening, the President traveled to United Nations Headquarters, where he participated in a leaders dinner on climate change. Later, he returned to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the opening ceremonies of the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai, China, on October 2:

Margaret Spellings (head of delegation);
Clark T. Randt, Jr.;
John H. Hager;
Ernie Banks;
Lynn Fuchs;
Michelle Kwan;
Eunice Kennedy Shriver;

Timothy P. Shriver;
Anne Sweeney; and
Jennifer Polk Wardlow.

September 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to United Nations Headquarters, where he participated in an official greeting with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President of the 62d Session of the United Nations General Assembly Srgjan Kerim. He then met separately with Secretary-General Ban and President Kerim.

Later in the morning, the President returned to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to United Nations Headquarters.

In the evening, the President returned to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Javaid Anwar to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Madonna Cynthia Douglass to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christina H. Pearson to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services (Public Affairs) and, upon nomination, to designate her as Acting.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas W. Webster to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to designate Christopher A. Padilla as Acting Under Secretary for International Trade at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to designate John C. Rood as Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security at the Department of State.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding August 20–31.

September 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush met with United States Mission to the United Na-

tions staff and their families. They then met with Joel I. Klein, chancellor, New York City Department of Education.

Later in the morning, at a private residence, the President attended a Republican National Committee reception.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

September 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with Big Brother of the Year, Charles Matthews, and Big Sister of the Year, Crystal Rivera.

In the afternoon, the President met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi of China.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will host Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on November 9 and 10.

September 28

In the morning, the President had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President participated in an interview with Michael Rutz and Stephan Lamby of ARD German Television.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi to discuss SCHIP reauthorization legislation.

In the evening, at the Library of Congress, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the 2007 National Book Festival Gala and dinner.

September 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fort Myer, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

October 2

In the morning, the President had breakfast with Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Assistant Secretary of

State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher R. Hill, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric S. Edelman, White House Chief of Staff Joshua B. Bolten, and National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley to discuss the six-party talks. Later, he had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with President Jalal Talabani of Iraq.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by Tropical Storm Erin August 14–20.

October 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Lancaster, PA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Kennedy Kulish.

In the afternoon, the President met with family members of a soldier killed in the war on terror. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

October 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the Vilnius Energy Security Conference on October 10 and 11 in Vilnius, Lithuania: Jeffrey C. Sell (head of delegation); John A. Cloud; and Karen Alderman Harbert.

October 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, at the Hay-Adams Hotel, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a reception to celebrate the publication of Jenna Bush's book, "Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope."

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia to the White House on October 18.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the White House on October 26.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gus P. Coldebella as General Counsel at the Department of Homeland Security.

October 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD.

October 7

In the morning, the President traveled to Emmitsburg, MD.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Camp David, MD.

October 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

October 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea.

October 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Yamile Llanes Labrada and Shirlen Garcia, the wife and daughter of Cuban political prisoner Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, who was arrested in Cuba on March 18, 2003.

October 11

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with the Wall Street Journal. Later, in the Library, he participated in an interview with Maria Bartiromo of CNBC's "Closing Bell."

Later in the afternoon, on the South Portico, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the Ballou Senior High School Marching Band of Washington, DC. Later, in the East Room, he dropped by a screening of "Ballou: A Documentary Film," which was hosted by Mrs. Bush.

The President announced his intention to nominate Simon C. Gros to be Assistant Secretary of Transportation (Governmental Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah K. Jones to be Ambassador to Kuwait.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick F. Kennedy to be Under Secretary of State (Management).

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph J. Murin to be President of the Government National Mortgage Association.

The President announced that he has named David M. Clark as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Presidential Personnel.

The President announced that he has named John P. Bailey as Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy.

The President announced that he has named Therese Burch as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Advance.

The President announced that he has named Christopher Papagianis as Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy.

The President announced that he has named Michael Y. Scudder, Jr., as Senior Associate Counsel to the President, National Security Council Legal Advisor, and General Counsel.

October 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Pinellas Park, FL, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Brenda Guinand. Then, at a private residence, he attended a Republican National Committee luncheon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Miami, FL, where he met with Cuban American community leaders. Later, he traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda to the White House on October 30.

October 13

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Bentonville, AR, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer, Caroline

Worley. He then traveled to Rogers, AR, where he toured Stribling Packaging, Inc.

Later in the morning, at the Whole Hog Cafe, the President had lunch with business and civic leaders.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Memphis, TN, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Chi Zhang. Then, at a private residence, he attended a Lamar Alexander for Senate and Tennessee Victory reception. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

October 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Residence, the President met with Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia to the White House on October 22.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy to the White House on December 11.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy to the White House on February 4, 2008.

October 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Allan I. Mendelowitz to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Federal Housing Finance Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors:

Joaquin F. Blaya;
Edward E. Kaufman;
Susan M. McCue;
Dennis M. Mulhaupt; and
Steven J. Simmons.

The President announced his intention to designate Paul A. Schneider as Acting Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

October 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had breakfast with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to Washington, DC, on November 6–7.

October 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Laurel, MD, where they toured the Patuxent Research Refuge. They then traveled to St. Michaels, MD.

Later in the morning, the President participated in an interview with Chris and Melissa Fischer of ESPN's "Offshore Adventures" program.

In the afternoon, at the Vice President's residence, the President and Mrs. Bush had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney and his wife Lynne. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

October 21

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Governor-elect Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana to congratulate him on his election victory.

October 22

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia. Then, in the Oval Office, the President met with veterans, leaders of military service organizations, and family members of a marine who was killed in the war on terror. Later, he had two telephone conversations with Governor Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California to discuss the wildfires in southern California.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Abdullah Gul of Turkey.

In the evening, at Decatur House, the President attended a Republican Governors Association reception.

October 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Governor Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California to discuss the wildfires in southern California.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff and Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator R. David Paulison, who briefed him on damage and recovery efforts in southern California.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Shinn to be Assistant Secretary of Defense (Asian and Pacific Security Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert A. Sturgell to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

The President declared an emergency in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by wildfires beginning on October 21 and continuing.

October 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator R. David Paulison, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, Acting Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Conner, and Gen. Victor E. Renuart, Jr., USAF, commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, to discuss the wildfires in southern California.

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by wildfires beginning on October 21 and continuing.

October 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to San Diego, CA, where, aboard Marine One, he took an aerial tour of the areas damaged by the wildfires. He then traveled to Escondido, CA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven R. Chealander to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate John H. Gibson to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Financial Management).

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark V. Rosenker to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kenneth C. Canterbury, Jr., as a member of the Medal of Valor Review Board (Law Enforcement).

The President announced that he has named Brian V. McCormack as Deputy Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs.

October 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

October 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Philadelphia, PA, where, upon arrival in the afternoon, he met with Lew Bennett III.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Bryn Mawr, PA, where, at a private residence, he attended a Pennsylvania Victory 2008 reception. Later, he traveled to Cincinnati, OH, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteers Sharon and L.C. Nolan. Then, at a private residence, he attended a Chabot-Ohio Victory Committee reception.

In the evening, at the Montgomery Inn Boat-house, the President dropped by a birthday party for Baseball Hall of Famer Johnny Bench. He then returned to Washington, DC.

October 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President-elect Cristina E. Fernandez de Kirchner of Argentina.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to the White House on November 5.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carl T. Johnson to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lt. Gen. James B. Peake, USA (Ret.), to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jody L. Williams as a member of the Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission.

October 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President participated in a meeting on the National Strategy for Information Sharing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a bill signing ceremony for H.R. 3678, the Internet Tax Freedom Act Amendments Act of 2007, which was assigned Public Law No. 110–108.

The President announced his intention to nominate Edward T. Schafer to be Secretary of Agriculture.

November 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the 2007 Little League World Series champion Warner Robins, Georgia, Little League team. Later, on the North Portico, he participated in a photo opportunity with recipients of the 2006 Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a Republican National Committee regents dinner.

November 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Columbia, SC, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Graham Van Schaik. He then met with Lt. Andrew Kinard, USMC, who was wounded in Iraq on October 29, 2006.

Later in the morning, at a private residence, the President attended a Graham Victory 2008 reception.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Fort Jackson, SC, where, upon arrival, he greeted U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School students. He then visited the Fit To Win course. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD, arriving in the evening.

November 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

November 4

During the day, the President returned to Washington, DC.

November 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the U.S. Walker Cup team.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles A. Gargano to be Ambassador to Austria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary Ann Glendon to be Ambassador to the Holy See.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric J. Tanenblatt to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth F. Bagley, Victoria Clarke, and William J. Hybl to be members of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

November 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Bush greeted President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. Later, in the East Room, they hosted entertainment for President Sarkozy.

November 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the November 6 suicide bombing in Baghlan Province. He then had a telephone conversation with President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan.

In the afternoon, the President and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France traveled to President George Washington's Estate in Mount Vernon, VA, where they met in the Large Dining Room and toured the grounds. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

November 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Houston, TX. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and Poland's Ambassador to Iraq Gen. Edward Pietrzyk, who was wounded in Iraq on October 3. Upon arrival in Houston, he met separately with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Patrick Kuykendall and the crew of the space shuttle *Discovery*.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a Texans for Senator John Cornyn and Texas Victory reception. Later, he traveled to San Antonio, TX, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Gloria Sanchez. He then toured the Center for the Intrepid at Brooke Army Medical Center.

Later in the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a fundraiser for Senator John Cornyn.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary Beth Long to be Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia M. Haslach to be accorded the rank of Ambassador during the performance of her duties as U.S. Senior Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

November 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social dinner for Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and her husband Joachim Sauer.

November 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush had lunch with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and her husband Joachim Sauer.

November 11

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Waco, TX. Later, he returned to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

November 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he participated in an interview with Bret Baier of FOX News.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan to the White House on November 16.

November 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Alvaro Colom Caballeros of Guatemala. He then traveled to Louisville, KY, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Paul Carmony.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to New Albany, IN.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with David Asman of FOX Business Network. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome First Vice President of the Government of National Unity of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit to the White House on November 15.

November 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with Glamour magazine. Later, in the Grand Foyer, he and Mrs. Bush participated in a photo opportunity with crew members of the space shuttles *Discovery*, *Atlantis*, and *Endeavour* and the crew members of International Space Station Expeditions 14 and 15. Then, in the State Dining Room, he participated in a photo opportunity with the National Troopers' Coalition.

The White House announced that the President will welcome First Minister Ian R.K. Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin

McGuinness of Northern Ireland to the White House on December 7.

November 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with First Vice President of the Government of National Unity of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit.

The President announced his intention to nominate Grace C. Becker to be Assistant Attorney General (Civil Rights) at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark R. Filip to be Deputy Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nathan J. Hochman to be Assistant Attorney General (Tax Division) at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gregory G. Katsas to be Assistant Attorney General (Civil Division) at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kevin J. O'Connor to be Associate Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Goli Ameri to be Assistant Secretary of State (Educational and Cultural Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Craig W. Duehring to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower and Reserve Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Ana M. Guevara to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tracy R. Justesen to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric M. Thorson to be Inspector General at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Neel T. Kashkari to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (International Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas C. Carper, Nancy A. Naples, and Denver Stutler, Jr., to be members of the Reform Board (AMTRAK).

November 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a working lunch with Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with the recipients of the 2006 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez of El Salvador to the White House on November 29.

The President announced that he has nominated Larry W. Walther to be Director of the Trade and Development Agency.

November 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

November 19

In the morning, the President was briefed by Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte on his trip to Pakistan and his meetings with President Pervez Musharraf. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Richmond, VA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Paul Anderson. He then visited the Central Virginia Foodbank. Later, he traveled to Charles City, VA.

In the afternoon, the President visited the Thanksgiving Shrine at Berkeley Plantation. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he participated in an interview with syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker.

November 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD. They then participated in an interview with Charles Gibson of "ABC World News Tonight with Charles Gibson."

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with People magazine.

November 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Neil Romano to be Assistant Secretary of Labor (Disability Employment Policy) and, upon confirmation, appoint him as a member of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas H. Shulman to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Council to the Board of Governors of the American Red Cross:

Michael Chertoff;
Robert M. Gates;
Carlos M. Gutierrez;
Michael O. Leavitt;
Michael G. Mullen;
Condoleezza Rice; and
Margaret Spellings.

November 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had several Thanksgiving holiday telephone conversations with members of the U.S. military.

November 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

November 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

November 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with former Vice President Albert A. Gore, Jr. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with 2007 Nobel Prize recipients Mario R. Capecchi, Oliver Smithies, Eric S. Maskin, Roger B. Myerson, former Vice President Gore, Susan Solomon, Sharon L. Hays, and Harlan L. Watson.

November 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, where, at Buchanan House, he greeted and met with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Chairman Abdul Aziz al-Hakim of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Then, also in the Oval Office, he participated in an interview with the Associated Press.

The President announced his intention to appoint Abigail Thernstrom as a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and, upon appointment, to redesignate her as Vice Chairperson.

The President announced his intention to appoint Peter N. Kirsanow as a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

November 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi of China.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with Wolf Blitzer of CNN. He then participated in an interview with conservative columnists.

The President announced that he has named Terri Teuber Moore as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Communications for Policy and Planning.

The President announced that he has named Luke R. Frans as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Political Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Robert P. Kadlec as Special Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Senior Director for Biological Defense Policy.

The President announced that he has named Marie O'Neill Sciarrone as Special Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Senior Director for Cybersecurity and Information Sharing Policy.

November 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with the U.S. Solheim Cup women's golf team.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Arlington, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President attended a holiday reception.

November 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Mount Airy, MD, where, at the Calvary United Methodist Church, they participated in a meeting on World AIDS Day.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President attended a holiday reception.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan S. Adelstein to be a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael E. Fryzel to be a member of the National Credit Union Administration Board and, upon confirmation, to designate him as Chairperson.

The President announced his intention to nominate David R. Hill to be Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (Air and Radiation).

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles W. Larson, Jr., to be Ambassador to Latvia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Francis Mulvey to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Peter W. Tredick as a member of the Presidential Emergency Board No. 242 and, upon appointment, to designate him as Chair.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Presidential Emergency Board No. 242:

Ira F. Jaffe;
Joshua M. Javits;
Annette M. Sandberg; and
Helen Mercer Witt.

The President announced his intention to appoint Edward F. Crawford and Linda Maynor as members of the Board of Governors of the United Service Organizations, Inc.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of

the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board:

Douglas Anderson;
John G. Box;
Ronald J. Gardner;
James R. Harding II;
Neil K. Melick; and
Gary L. Talbot.

The President announced his intention to designate Grace C. Becker as Acting Assistant Attorney General (Civil Rights).

The President announced his intention to designate Nelson M. Ford as Acting Under Secretary of the Army.

The President declared a major disaster in Indiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe storms and flooding August 15–27.

December 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 2

During the day, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a reception for Kennedy Center honorees.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the Kennedy Center Honors Gala at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

December 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted the Congressional Ball.

The President announced that he has named Daniel M. Price as Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs.

December 4

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the historic Evermay house, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a Republican National Committee luncheon.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the inauguration of Cristina E. Fernandez de Kirchner as President

of Argentina on December 10: Elaine L. Chao (head of delegation); and E. Anthony Wayne.

The President announced that he has nominated Gregory B. Jazcko to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Hector E. Morales to be Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States (with the rank of Ambassador).

The President announced that he has nominated John J. Sullivan to be Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

December 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Omaha, NE, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Martha Connot. He then toured OneWorld Community Health Centers.

Later in the morning, at a private residence, the President attended a Johanns for Senate reception.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

December 6

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with leaders of pro-democracy political parties and nongovernmental organizations from Belarus.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria to the White House on December 13.

December 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has named Charles P. Blahous III as Deputy Assistant to the President for Economic Policy and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council.

The President announced that he has named Gordon Johndroe as Deputy Assistant to the President, Deputy Press Secretary, and National Security Council Spokesman.

The President announced that he has named John M. Herrmann II as Special Assistant to

the President and Senior Director for International Trade, Energy, and the Environment on the National Security Council.

The President announced that he has named Sally McDonough Niemiec as Special Assistant to the President and Director of Communications and Press Secretary to the First Lady.

The President announced that he has named David Sherzer as Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs.

December 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Oregon and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides beginning on December 1 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in Washington and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides beginning on December 1 and continuing.

December 9

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush went to the National Building Museum, where they participated in the taping of the annual "Christmas in Washington" concert for later television broadcast.

December 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he was briefed by Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff on the winter storms in the Midwest. Then, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he participated in a meeting on the "Monitoring the Future" report on teen drug use.

Later in the morning, the President participated in an interview with Martha Raddatz of ABC News. Then, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy.

In the afternoon, the President met with leaders of the U.S. broadcasting services and Broadcasting Board of Governors Chairman James K. Glassman.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with Martha Raddatz of ABC News. They then attended a holiday reception.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru to the White House on December 14.

The President announced his intention to nominate Yousif B. Ghafari to be Ambassador to Slovenia.

The President announced his intention to nominate James K. Glassman to be Under Secretary of State (Public Diplomacy) with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stanley C. Suboleski to be Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy).

The President announced his intention to nominate Jon Wellinghoff to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations:

Sheldon G. Adelson;
William "Phil" Gramm;
Harold McGraw III;
George E. "Sonny" Perdue; and
Faryar Shirzad.

The President declared an emergency in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms beginning on December 8 and continuing.

December 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with U.S. Representatives-elect Robert J. Wittman of Virginia and Robert E. Latta of Ohio to congratulate them on their election victories.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert F. Cohen, Jr., to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marcia S.B. Bernicat to be Ambassador to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

The President declared an emergency in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms beginning on December 8 and continuing.

The President declared an emergency in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms beginning on December 6 and continuing.

December 13

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the December 11 bombings in Algiers. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President attended two holiday receptions.

December 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru. Later, at the State Department, he and Mrs. Bush attended a holiday reception for the diplomatic corps.

The President announced his intention to nominate David J. Kramer to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and to appoint him as a member of the Congressional Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China and as an Executive Branch Commissioner-Observer on the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The President announced his intention to appoint Donald J. Wright as Alternate Representative of the U.S. on the Executive Board of the World Health Organization.

December 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fredericksburg, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

December 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a bill signing ceremony for H.R. 3315, designating the Great Hall of the Capitol Visitor Center as Emancipation Hall.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Israel, the West Bank, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt January 8–16, 2008.

The President announced his intention to nominate Irene B. Brooks to be Chairman and Samuel W. Speck to be a Commissioner of the International Joint Commission of the United States and Canada.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert G. McSwain to be Director of the Indian Health Service within the Public Health Service at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deanna Tanner Okun to be Deputy U.S. Trade Representative with the rank of Ambassador.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms on December 8 and continuing.

December 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in front of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he and Vice President Dick Cheney thanked Washington, DC, firefighters who responded to a fire in the Vice President's ceremonial office.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, where he visited with wounded U.S. military personnel and presented Purple Heart medals to servicemembers. He then returned to Washington, DC.

December 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President visited Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where he met with wounded U.S. military personnel and presented Purple Heart medals to soldiers.

December 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

December 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had several Christmas holiday telephone conversations with members of the U.S. military.

December 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, arriving in the afternoon.

December 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan to express his condolences for the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms beginning on December 6 and continuing.

December 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Abdullah Gul of Turkey to the White House on January 8.

December 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted July 11

John S. Bresland,
of New Jersey, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years (reappointment).

John S. Bresland,
of New Jersey, to be chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Carolyn W. Merritt, term expiring.

Gene Allan Cretz,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Libya.

Thomas C. Gilliland,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for the remainder of the term expiring May 18, 2011, vice William Baxter, resigned.

William H. Graves,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2012 (reappointment).

Daniel D. Heath,
of New Hampshire, to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 2 years, vice Margrethe Lundsager, term expired.

Donald M. Kerr,
of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, vice General Michael V. Hayden, U.S. Air Force, resigned.

Mark Kimmitt,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs), vice John Hillen, resigned.

Diane D. Rath,
of Texas, to be Assistant Secretary for Family Support, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Wade F. Horn, resigned.

Robin Renee Sanders,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Charles Russell Horner Shearer,
of Delaware, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Carolyn W. Merritt, term expiring.

Susan Richardson Williams,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2012 (reappointment).

Submitted July 12

Thomas P. O'Brien,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California for the term of 4 years, vice Debra W. Yang, resigned.

Edward Meacham Yarbrough,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee for the term of 4 years vice James K. Vines, resigned.

Submitted July 17

Robert J. Conrad, Jr.,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice James Dickson Phillips, Jr., retired.

Appendix B / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Catharina Haynes,
of Texas, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth
Circuit, vice Harold R. DeMoss, Jr., retired.

Sean R. Mulvaney,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Administrator of
the U.S. Agency for International Development,
vice John Marshall, resigned.

Shalom D. Stone,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for
the Third Circuit, vice Samuel A. Alito, Jr., ele-
vated.

John Daniel Tinder,
of Indiana, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the
Seventh Circuit, vice Daniel A. Manion, retiring.

Submitted July 18

Robert M. Dow, Jr.,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the
Northern District of Illinois, vice Charles P.
Kocoras, retired.

Submitted July 19

David T. Johnson,
of Georgia, a career member of the Senior For-
eign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be
an Assistant Secretary of State (International
Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs), vice
Anne W. Patterson.

Submitted July 25

James D. McGee,
of Florida, a career member of the Senior For-
eign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the United States of America to the Republic
of Zimbabwe.

Vincent Obsitnik,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the United States of America
to the Republic of Slovenia.

Harry K. Thomas, Jr.,
of New York, a career member of the Senior
Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to
be Director General of the Foreign Service, vice
George McDade Staples.

Submitted July 26

Mark M. Boulware,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign
Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Am-
bassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
the United States of America to the Islamic
Republic of Mauritania.

Benjamin Eric Sasse,
of Nebraska, to be an Assistant Secretary of
Health and Human Services, vice Michael
O'Grady, resigned.

Barry Leon Wells,
of Ohio, a career member of the Senior Execu-
tive Service, to be Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of the United States of
America to the Republic of The Gambia.

Submitted July 31

Andrew R. Cochran,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Environ-
mental Protection Agency, vice Nikki Rush
Tinsley, resigned.

Robert L. Smolen,
of Pennsylvania, to be Deputy Administrator for
Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security
Administration, vice Thomas P. D'Agostino.

Submitted August 2

A. Paul Anderson,
of Florida, to be a Federal Maritime Commis-
sioner for the term expiring June 30, 2012 (re-
appointment).

Dennis W. Carlton,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Council of
Economic Advisers, vice Katherine Baicker, re-
signed.

Julie Fisher Cummings,
of Michigan, to be a member of the Board of
Directors of the Corporation for National and
Community Service for a term expiring Sep-
tember 14, 2011, vice William A. Schambra,
term expired.

Cynthia Dyer,
of Texas, to be Director of the Violence Against
Women Office, Department of Justice, vice
Diane M. Stuart, resigned.

John A. Gastright,
of South Carolina, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as U.S. Coordinator for Afghanistan, Department of State.

Mark D. Gearan,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring December 1, 2010 (reappointment).

Carl B. Kress,
of California, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for the term expiring June 30, 2011, vice Steven Robert Blust, resigned.

Tom Osborne,
of Nebraska, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2012, vice Cynthia Boich, term expiring.

Jeffrey William Runge,
of North Carolina, to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, Department of Homeland Security (new position).

Alan D. Solomont,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2009 (reappointment).

Margaret Spellings,
of Texas, to be designated a Representative of the United States of America to the Thirty-fourth Session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Donna N. Williams,
of Texas, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2009, vice Marc Racicot, term expired.

Submitted August 3

Stuart Ishimaru,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2012 (reappointment).

Withdrawn August 3

Richard E. Hoagland,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Armenia, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

Submitted September 4

Paula J. Dobriansky,
of Virginia, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as Special Envoy for Northern Ireland.

Gregory F. Jacob,
of New Jersey, to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor, vice Howard Radzely.

Robert D. Jamison,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for National Protection and Programs, Department of Homeland Security, vice George W. Foresman, resigned.

James Francis Moriarty,
of Massachusetts, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Dan Mozena,
of Iowa, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Angola.

Louis John Nigro, Jr.,
of Florida, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chad.

Christopher A. Padilla,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, vice Franklin L. Lavin, resigned.

Paul E. Simons,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Appendix B / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

of the United States of America to the Republic of Chile.

Withdrawn September 4

Charles W. Grim,
of Oklahoma, to be Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, for the term of 4 years (re-appointment), which was sent to the Senate on May 21, 2007.

Scott A. Keller,
of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Steven B. Nesmith, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

David Palmer,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2011, vice Cari M. Dominguez, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

Submitted September 6

Stanley Thomas Anderson,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee, vice James D. Todd, retiring.

E. Duncan Getchell, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice H. Emory Widener, Jr., retired.

Steve A. Matthews,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice William W. Wilkins, Jr., retired.

John A. Mendez,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of California, vice David F. Levi, resigned.

Withdrawn September 6

Mary O. Donohue,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of New York, vice Frederick J. Scullin, Jr., retired, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

Submitted September 7

Harvey E. Johnson, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security.

Walter Lukken,
of Indiana, to be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, vice Reuben Jeffery III.

Vincent Obsitnik,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Slovak Republic.

Todd J. Zinser,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of Commerce, vice Johnnie E. Frazier, resigned.

Withdrawn September 7

Vincent Obsitnik,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Slovenia, which was sent to the Senate on July 25.

Submitted September 12

William Delahunt,
of Massachusetts, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

William H. Frist,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation for a term of 3 years, vice Christine Todd Whitman, resigned.

Kenneth Francis Hackett,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation for a term of 2 years (reappointment).

Kelly G. Knight,
of Kentucky, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

George E. Pataki,
of New York, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Ted Poe,
of Texas, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Daniel V. Speckhard,
of Wisconsin, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Greece.

Thomas F. Stephenson,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Portuguese Republic.

Rodger D. Young,
of Michigan, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Submitted September 18

Anita K. Blair,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice William A. Navas, Jr., resigned.

Michael W. Hager,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Human Resources and Management), vice Robert Allen Pittman, resigned.

Keith Hall,
of Virginia, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of 4 years, vice Kathleen P. Utgoff, term expired.

Withdrawn September 18

Anita K. Blair,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice Michael L. Dominguez, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

Submitted September 21

Michael B. Mukasey,
of New York, to be Attorney General, vice Alberto R. Gonzales, resigned.

Submitted October 16

Gus P. Coldebella,
of Massachusetts, to be General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, vice Philip J. Perry, resigned.

Simon Charles Gros,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Roger Shane Karr, resigned.

Deborah K. Jones,
of New Mexico, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the State of Kuwait.

Patrick Francis Kennedy,
of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be an Under Secretary of State (Management), vice Henrietta Holsman Fore.

Joseph J. Murin,
of Pennsylvania, to be President, Government National Mortgage Association, vice Robert M. Couch, resigned.

Brian Stacy Miller,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas, vice George Howard, Jr., deceased.

Withdrawn October 16

Andrew R. Cochran,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Environmental Protection Agency, vice Nikki Rush Tinsley, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on July 31, 2007.

Submitted October 18

Joaquin F. Blaya,
of Florida, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2008 (reappointment).

Joaquin F. Blaya,
of Florida, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2011 (reappointment).

Appendix B / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Edward E. Kaufman,
of Delaware, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2009 (reappointment).

Susan M. McCue,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2010, vice Norman J. Pattiz, term expired.

Allan I. Mendelowitz,
of Connecticut, to be a Director of the Federal Housing Finance Board for a term expiring February 27, 2014 (reappointment).

Dennis M. Mulhaupt,
of California, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2008, vice Blanquita Walsh Cullum, term expired.

Dennis M. Mulhaupt,
of California, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2011 (reappointment).

Steven J. Simmons,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2009 (reappointment).

Submitted October 23

James Shinn,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense (new position).

Robert A. Sturgell,
of Maryland, to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration for the term of 5 years, vice Marion C. Blakey, term expired.

Submitted October 26

Steven R. Chealander,
of Texas, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2012 (reappointment).

John H. Gibson,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice Michael Montelongo, resigned.

Mark V. Rosenker,
of Maryland, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of 2 years (reappointment).

Submitted November 1

Carl T. Johnson,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, vice Thomas J. Barrett.

Submitted November 7

Elizabeth F. Bagley,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2008 (reappointment).

Victoria Clarke,
of Maryland, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2009, vice Penne Percy Korth, term expired.

Charles A. Gargano,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Austria.

Mary Ann Glendon,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Holy See.

William J. Hybl,
of Colorado, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2009, vice Barbara McConnell Barrett, term expired.

Eric J. Tanenblatt,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2012, vice Dorothy A. Johnson, term expired.

Submitted November 8

Patricia M. Haslach,
of Oregon, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as U.S. Senior Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific Economic Corporation (APEC) Forum.

Mary Beth Long,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Peter W. Rodman, resigned.

Submitted November 15

Goli Ameri,
of Oregon, to be an Assistant Secretary of State
(Educational and Cultural Affairs), vice Dina
Habib Powell.

Grace C. Becker,
of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney Gen-
eral, vice Wan J. Kim.

Thomas C. Carper,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Reform Board
(Amtrak) for a term of 5 years, vice Sylvia de
Leon, term expired.

Craig W. Duehring,
of Minnesota, to be an Assistant Secretary of
the Air Force, vice Michael L. Dominguez.

Ana M. Guevara,
of Florida, to be U.S. Alternate Executive Direc-
tor of the International Bank for Reconstruction
and Development for a term of 2 years, vice
Jennifer L. Dorn, term expired.

Nathan J. Hochman,
of California, to be an Assistant Attorney Gen-
eral, vice Eileen J. O'Connor.

Tracy Ralph Justesen,
of Utah, to be Assistant Secretary for Special
Education and Rehabilitative Services, Depart-
ment of Education, vice John H. Hager, re-
signed.

Neel T. Kashkari,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of
the Treasury (new position).

Nancy A. Naples,
of New York, to be a member of the Reform
Board (Amtrak) for a term of 5 years, vice
Enrique J. Sosa, resigned.

James B. Peake,
of the District of Columbia, to be Secretary
of Veterans Affairs, vice Jim Nicholson, resigned.

Denver Stutler, Jr.,
of Florida, to be a member of the Reform Board
(Amtrak) for a term of 5 years, vice David
McQueen Laney, term expiring.

Eric M. Thorson,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Depart-
ment of the Treasury, vice Harold Damelin, re-
signed.

Lincoln D. Almond,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. District Judge for
the District of Rhode Island, vice Ernest C.
Torres, retired.

Edmund A. Booth, Jr.,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern
District of Georgia for the term of 4 years,
vice Lisa Godbey Wood, resigned.

Gregory A. Brower,
of Nevada, to be U.S. Attorney for the District
of Nevada for the term of 4 years, vice Daniel
G. Bogden, resigned.

Mark S. Davis,
of Virginia, to be U.S. District Judge for the
Eastern District of Virginia, vice T.S. Ellis III,
retired.

Rebecca A. Gregory,
of Texas, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern
District of Texas for the term of 4 years, vice
Matthew D. Orwig, resigned.

William Joseph Hawe,
of Washington, to be U.S. Marshal for the West-
ern District of Washington for the term of 4
years, vice Eric Eugene Robertson, resigned.

Reed Verne Hillman,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. Marshal for the
District of Massachusetts for the term of 4
years, vice Anthony Dichio.

Diane J. Humetewa,
of Arizona, to be U.S. Attorney for the District
of Arizona for the term of 4 years, vice Paul
K. Charlton, resigned.

David Gregory Kays,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the
Western District of Missouri, vice Dean Whip-
ple, retired.

Michael G. McGinn,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. Marshal for the Dis-
trict of Minnesota for the term of 4 years, vice
Allen Garber, retired.

Richard T. Morrison,
of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Tax Court
for a term of 15 years, vice Carolyn Miller Parr,
term expired.

David J. Novak,
of Virginia, to be U.S. District Judge for the
Eastern District of Virginia, vice Robert E.
Payne, retired.

Gene E.K. Pratter,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for
the Third Circuit, vice Franklin S. Van
Antwerpen, retired.

Rod J. Rosenstein,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the
Fourth Circuit, vice Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr.,
deceased.

Joseph P. Russoniello,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the North-
ern District of California for the term of 4 years,
vice Kevin Vincent Ryan.

Carolyn P. Short,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for
the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Gene
E.K. Pratter, upon elevation.

Submitted November 16

Larry Woodrow Walther,
of Arkansas, to be Director of the Trade and
Development Agency, vice Thelma J. Askey, re-
signed.

Submitted December 3

Jonathan Steven Adelstein,
of South Dakota, to be a member of the Federal
Communications Commission for a term expir-
ing June 30, 2013 (reappointment).

Michael E. Fryzel,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National
Credit Union Administration Board for a term
expiring August 2, 2013, vice JoAnn Johnson,
term expired.

David R. Hill,
of Missouri, to be an Assistant Administrator
of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice
Jeffrey R. Holmstead, resigned.

Charles W. Larson, Jr.,
of Iowa, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the United States of America
to the Republic of Latvia.

Francis Mulvey,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Surface
Transportation Board for a term expiring De-
cember 31, 2012 (reappointment).

Neil Romano,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of
Labor, vice W. Roy Grizzard, resigned.

Withdrawn December 3

John A. Gastright,
of South Carolina, for the rank of Ambassador
during his tenure of service as U.S. Coordinator
for Afghanistan, Department of State, which was
sent to the Senate on August 2, 2007.

Submitted December 4

Gregory B. Jaczko,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member
of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the
term of 5 years expiring June 30, 2013 (re-
appointment).

Hector E. Morales,
of Texas, to be Permanent Representative of
the United States of America to the Organiza-
tion of American States, with the rank of Am-
bassador, vice John F. Maisto, resigned.

John J. Sullivan,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of Com-
merce, vice David A. Sampson, resigned.

Submitted December 5

Mark R. Filip,
of Illinois, to be Deputy Attorney General, vice
Paul J. McNulty, resigned.

Submitted December 6

Ricardo H. Hinojosa,
of Texas, to be a member of the U.S. Sen-
tencing Commission for a term expiring October
31, 2013 (reappointment).

Ricardo H. Hinojosa,
of Texas, to be Chair of the U.S. Sentencing
Commission (reappointment).

Michael E. Horowitz,
of Maryland, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2013 (reappointment).

Stephen N. Limbaugh, Jr.,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri, vice Donald J. Stohr, retired.

Ed Schafer,
of North Dakota, to be Secretary of Agriculture, vice Mike Johanns, resigned.

William E. Smith,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the First Circuit, vice Bruce M. Selya, retired.

George W. Venables,
of California, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of California for the term of 4 years, vice Raul David Bejarano.

Submitted December 11

Yousif Boutrous Ghafari,
of Michigan, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Slovenia.

James K. Glassman,
of Connecticut, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy with the rank of Ambassador, vice Karen P. Hughes.

Gregory G. Katsas,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Peter D. Keisler, resigned.

Kevin J. O'Connor,
of Connecticut, to be Associate Attorney General, vice Robert D. McCallum, Jr.

Douglas H. Shulman,
of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term prescribed by law, vice Mark W. Everson.

G. Murray Snow,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice Stephen M. McNamee, retired.

Stanley C. Suboleski,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy), vice Jeffrey D. Jarrett, resigned.

Glenn T. Suddaby,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of New York, vice Lawrence E. Kahn, retired.

Jon Wellingshoff,
of Nevada, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2013 (reappointment).

Withdrawn December 11

James K. Glassman,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2010 (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on April 26, 2007.

Submitted December 12

Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Senegal, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Robert F. Cohen, Jr.,
of West Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2012, vice Stanley C. Suboleski, term expired.

Harvey E. Johnson, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security (new position).

Withdrawn December 12

Harvey E. Johnson, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security (new position), which was sent to the Senate on September 7, 2007.

Submitted December 14

Thomas M. Beck,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years

Appendix B / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

expiring July 1, 2010, vice Wayne Cartwright Beyer, resigned.

Matt Michael Dummermuth,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Iowa for the term of 4 years, vice Charles W. Larson, Sr., resigned.

David J. Kramer,
of Massachusetts, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, vice Barry F. Lowenkron.

Withdrawn December 14

Thomas M. Beck,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 29, 2012, vice Dale Cabaniss, term expiring, which was sent to the Senate on June 28, 2007.

Wayne Cartwright Beyer,
of New Hampshire, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 1, 2010, vice Othoniel Armendariz, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

Submitted December 19

Richard A. Boucher,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, for the personal rank of Career Ambassador in recognition of especially distinguished service over a sustained period.

William J. Burns,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, for the personal rank of Career Ambassador in recognition of especially distinguished service over a sustained period.

Robert D. Jamison,
of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary of Homeland Security.

Robert G. McSwain,
of Maryland, to be Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, for the term of 4 years, vice Charles W. Grim, resigned.

Deanna Tanner Okun,
of Idaho, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Karan K. Bhatia.

Anne Woods Patterson,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, for the personal rank of Career Ambassador in recognition of especially distinguished service over a sustained period.

C. David Welch,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, for the personal rank of Career Ambassador in recognition of especially distinguished service over a sustained period.

Jamsheed K. Choksy,
of Indiana, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Lawrence Okamura, term expiring.

Dawn Ho Delbanco,
of New York, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Dario Fernandez-Morera, term expiring.

Gary D. Glenn,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Stephan Thernstrom, term expiring.

David Hertz,
of Indiana, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Jewel Spears Brooker, term expiring.

Marvin Bailey Scott,
of Indiana, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for the remainder of the term expiring January 26, 2010, vice Thomas K. Lindsay, resigned.

Carol M. Swain,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Sidney McPhee, resigned.

Withdrawn December 19

Robert D. Jamison,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for National

Protection and Programs, Department of Homeland Security, vice George W. Foresman, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on September 4, 2007.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary which are not included in this book.

Released July 2

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on June 29 the President signed H.R. 57 and H.R. 692

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on June 30 the President signed H.R. 1830

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Released July 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1352

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1704

Released July 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 229 and S. 801

Released July 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Fact sheet: Job Creation Continues—More Than 8.2 Million Jobs Created Since August 2003

Released July 7

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Released July 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Fact sheet: White House Conference on the Americas

Text: Letter from Counsel to the President Fred F. Fielding to Senator Patrick J. Leahy and Representative John Conyers, Jr.

Released July 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Fact sheet: A Day in Cleveland: President Bush Calls on Congress To Act To Fund Vital Priorities

Released July 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Transcript of a press briefing by Office of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman on the Federal budget

Fact sheet: Growing Economy and Fiscal Discipline Working To Reduce Budget Deficit

Fact sheet: The 2007 Renovation of the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

Released July 12

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Released July 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Mozambique Signs \$507 Million Millennium Challenge Compact

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 277

Fact sheet: Expanded Provincial Reconstruction Teams Speed the Transition to Self-Reliance

Appendix C / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Text: Interview with National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley by NPR

Released July 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Afghan President Karzai to Camp David

Released July 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Transcript of a press briefing by Homeland Security Adviser Frances Fragos Townsend

Transcript of a press briefing by Special Assistant to the President for Biodefense Rajeev Venkayya, State Department Special Representative on Avian and Pandemic Influenza John Lange, Agriculture Department Chief Veterinary Officer John Clifford, Health and Human Services Department Assistant Secretary of Health John Agwunobi, and Homeland Security Department Chief Medical Officer on Pandemic Preparedness Jeff Runge on the implementation of the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza

Statement by the Press Secretary: Zimbabwe: Deepening Crisis and Additional U.S. Assistance

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Fact sheet: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland

Fact sheet: Implementation of the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza

Released July 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1701

Released July 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Fact sheet: Balancing the Budget While Keeping Taxes Low

Released July 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by King Abdullah II of Jordan to Washington

Statement by the Press Secretary: Release of the U.S. Strategy To Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed an Executive order on the United States Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions

Released July 21

Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel on the President's routine surveillance colonoscopy and temporary transfer of power to the Vice President

Released July 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released July 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Fact sheet: Al Qaeda in Iraq

Released July 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released July 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to Camp David

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush Signs Foreign Investment and National Security Act of 2007

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 556

Released July 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Transcript of a press briefing by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear, Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson,

Jr., and Office of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman

Fact sheet: Six Years of Progress Under the President's New Freedom Initiative

Released July 30

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 966

Released July 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1868

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to the Federated States of Micronesia

Released August 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 44

Released August 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Senate vote on Judge Leslie Southwick

Released August 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Transcript of a press briefing by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear and Office of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman on the national economy and Federal budget

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on FISA modernization

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on the Senate passage of intelligence legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2429

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Vermont

Fact sheet: Job Creation Continues—More Than 8.3 Million Jobs Created Since August 2003

Released August 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel and Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters

Released August 6

Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto on FISA modernization

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3311

Fact sheet: Combating Terrorism Worldwide

Fact sheet: The Protect America Act of 2007

Released August 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: President and Mrs. Bush To Welcome the President of France and Mrs. Sarkozy

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3206

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maine

Released August 9

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1260, H.R. 1335, H.R. 1384, H.R. 1425, H.R. 1434, H.R. 1617, H.R. 1722, H.R. 2025, H.R. 2077, H.R. 2078, H.R. 2127, H.R. 2309, H.R. 2563, H.R. 2570, and H.R. 2688

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1099

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2272

Fact sheet: America COMPETES Act of 2007

Released August 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on the unanimous vote by the United Nations Security Council to renew the mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq

Fact sheet: Improving Border Security and Immigration Within Existing Law

Appendix C / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Released August 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a roundtable interview of Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser to the President Karl Rove

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2863, H.R. 2952, H.R. 3006, S. 375, S. 975, and S. 1716

Released August 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released August 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released August 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Released August 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Released August 18

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Texas

Released August 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Daniel W. Fisk on the President's bilateral meetings with Mexico and Canada

Released August 21

Statement by Counselor to the President Edward W. Gillespie on the upcoming assessments of military and political progress in Iraq by Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker

Excerpts: President's Remarks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Minnesota

Released August 22

Fact sheet: Promoting Democracy To Help Make America Safer

Released August 23

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Statement by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe on the National Intelligence Estimate

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Minnesota

Released August 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

These excerpts were included in the statement by the Counselor to the President.

Released August 26

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Wisconsin

Released August 27

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Ohio

Released August 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel and Gulf Coast Region Recovery and Rebuilding Coordinator Donald E. Powell

Fact sheet: Making America Safer by Defeating Extremists in the Middle East

Released August 29

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Fact sheet: The Two-Year Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina

Released August 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Council Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Dennis C. Wilder and Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Daniel M. Price on the President's trip to Australia and the APEC summit

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Illinois

Released August 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Fact sheet: New Steps To Help Homeowners Avoid Foreclosure

Released September 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino, Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton, and Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Daniel M. Price

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on the situation in Lebanon

Fact sheet: U.S.-Australia Alliance: Steadfast and Growing

Released September 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino, Deputy National Security Adviser Jim Jeffrey, and Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Daniel M. Price

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation business summit

Fact sheet: Strengthening the Forces of Freedom and Prosperity in the Asia-Pacific

Released September 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino, Deputy National Security Adviser Jim Jeffrey, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs

Daniel M. Price, and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher R. Hill

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: President and Mrs. Bush's Participation in the 62d U.N. General Assembly

Fact sheet: United States Cooperation With Southeast Asia

Released September 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino, Deputy National Security Adviser Jim Jeffrey, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Daniel M. Price, and Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton on APEC meetings

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Fact sheet: More Than 8.2 Million Jobs Created Since August 2003

Released September 9

Fact sheet: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2007

Released September 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Transcript of a press briefing by Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt and National Economic Council Director Allan B. Hubbard on import safety

Released September 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Fact sheet: The Sixth Anniversary of 9/11: Remembering Lives Lost and Heroic Sacrifices Made

Released September 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released September 13

Transcript of a press briefing by senior administration officials on the President's address to the Nation on the war on terror in Iraq

Appendix C / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Fact sheet: "Return on Success" Guiding Principle for Troop Levels in Iraq

Excerpts of the President's address to the Nation on the war on terror in Iraq

Advance text of the President's address to the Nation on the war on terror in Iraq

Released September 14

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Iowa

Released September 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the Attorney General nomination

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's annual report listing major illicit drug transit and drug producing countries

Fact sheet: Michael Mukasey: A Strong Attorney General

Released September 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites

Released September 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: FISA 101: Why FISA Modernization Amendments Must be Made Permanent

Released September 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt on SCHIP legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2358 and S. 377

Released September 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Daniel M.

Price, and National Security Council Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Organizations Michael Kozak on the United Nations General Assembly and the upcoming meeting by major economies on energy security and climate change

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's support for reauthorizing SCHIP

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Released September 22

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Montreal Protocol to reduce greenhouse gases and protect the ozone layer

Released September 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino and a senior administration official on the President's bilateral meetings

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Statement by the Press Secretary: Egypt: Setbacks on Press Freedom and Civil Society

Fact sheet: Today's Education Announcement

Released September 25

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on the President's bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Council Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Organizations Michael Kozak

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's support for reauthorizing SCHIP

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Illinois

Fact sheet: A Mission of Liberation Around the World

Fact sheet: Burma: Calling for Human Dignity and Democracy

Released September 26

Fact sheet: 2007 Nation's Report Card Shows Minority Students Posting All-Time Highs

Released September 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters, Federal Aviation Administration Acting Administrator Robert A. Sturgell, and Domestic Policy Council Deputy Director Jess Sharp on aviation congestion

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's decision to veto the SCHIP reauthorization bill passed by Congress

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2669 and H.R. 3580

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3528

Fact sheet: Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change

Fact sheet: College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007

Fact sheet: New Steps To Address Airport Passenger Delays

Released September 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 954, H.R. 3218, and H.R. 3375

Fact sheet: Toward a New Global Approach to Climate Change and Energy Security

Excerpt of the President's radio address

Released September 29

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 43, H.J. Res. 52, and H.R. 3668

Released September 30

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3625

Released October 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released October 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Texas

Released October 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press gaggle by Counselor to the President Edward W. Gillespie

Released October 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released October 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Meet with Congolese President Kabila

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of the Republic of Liberia

Fact sheet: September 2007 Marks Record 49th Consecutive Month of Job Growth

Released October 6

Statement by the Press Secretary on U.S. trade with Costa Rica

Released October 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser Frances Fragos Townsend

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1983

Fact sheet: National Strategy for Homeland Security

Released October 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released October 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Appendix C / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Fact sheet: FY07 Results: Deficit Declining Towards 2012 Surplus

Released October 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Meet With Ugandan President Museveni

Fact sheet: Latin American and Korean Free Trade Agreements Vital to U.S. Economy and Security

Released October 14

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on reauthorization of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation

Released October 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Fact sheet: House FISA Legislation the Wrong Direction for Our National Security

Released October 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy on Wounded Warriors Reform Karl Zinsmeister

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome President Enkhbayar of Mongolia to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visits of President Giorgio Napolitano and Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 474 and S. 1612

Fact sheet: Ensuring Our Wounded Warriors Get the Best Possible Care

Released October 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt and National Economic Council Director Allan B. Hubbard on SCHIP reauthorization

Statement by the Press Secretary: Presidential Determination Regarding Brazil Airbridge Denial (ABD) Program

Released October 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Spokesman for the Government of Iraq Ali al-Dabbagh

Statement by the Press Secretary on reauthorization of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation

Released October 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton on the President's conservation announcements

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome President of France Nicolas Sarkozy

Fact sheet: President Bush Announces Added Sanctions Against Leaders of Burma's Regime

Fact sheet: Improving Habitat for Our Nation's Migratory Birds

Fact sheet: Guarding Against Over-Fishing Through Cooperative Conservation

Released October 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: Request To Fund Security Cooperation With Mexico and Central America

Fact sheet: 2008 War Funding Request

Released October 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by a senior administration official on the President's speech on Cuba

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of an appropriations bill to fund the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services and other Agencies

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Fact sheet: Defending America and Its Allies Against Ballistic Missile Attack

Released October 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1124, H.R. 2467, H.R. 2587, H.R. 2654, H.R. 2765, H.R. 2778, H.R. 2825, H.R. 3052, and H.R. 3106

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Fact sheet: Encouraging Freedom, Justice, and Prosperity in Cuba

Released October 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives passage of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 995

Released October 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3233

Released October 29

Announcement of the Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients

Released October 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey to Washington

Fact sheet: Lt. Gen. James B. Peake (Ret.), M.D.: The Best Choice for Our Nation's Veterans

Released October 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez and Council of

Economic Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear on the GDP

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3678 and S. 2258

Fact sheet: Ed Schafer: A Record of Leadership in Agriculture and Business

Fact sheet: National Strategy for Information Sharing

Released November 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) reauthorization legislation

Released November 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: October 2007 Marks Record 50th Consecutive Month of Job Growth

Fact sheet: The Way Forward in Iraq: Successes and Challenges

Released November 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by a senior administration official on Pakistan and Turkey

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 327 and H.R. 1284

Released November 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt

Statement by the Press Secretary on the decision to forward the nomination of Michael B. Mukasey as Attorney General to the full Senate

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attack in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan

Fact sheet: Import Safety Action Plan: Increasing Protection of American Consumers

Released November 7

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's telephone conversation with President

Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan concerning the November 6 terrorist attack in Baghlan Province
Statement by the Press Secretary on the administration's efforts to reduce chronic homelessness

Released November 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1808 and S. 2106

Fact sheet: In Case Congress Doesn't Quickly Pass an AMT Patch: Failure To Act Could Result in \$75 Billion of Delayed Refunds

Fact sheet: Keeping America's Promise to Those Who Have Defended Our Freedom

Released November 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Fact sheet: Michael Mukasey: A Strong Attorney General

Released November 10

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on meetings between President Bush and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany

Statement by the Press Secretary on congressional action on supplemental appropriations

Released November 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan

Released November 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Meet with Salva Kiir, First Vice President of the Government of National Unity and President of the Government of Southern Sudan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2779 and H.R. 3222

Excerpts of the President's remarks on the Federal budget in New Albany, Indiana

Released November 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome First Minister of Northern Ireland Dr. Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary: Liberia Debt Relief

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on supplemental appropriations

Fact sheet: Chairman Leahy's FISA Modernization Substitute: A Step Back for Our Nation's Security

Announcement of the National Medal of Arts and National Humanities Medal recipients

Released November 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and FAA Acting Vice President of Systems Operations Nancy Kalinowski on aviation congestion

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on FISA modernization

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2546

Fact sheet: Taking Administrative Action To Address Air Traffic Delays

Excerpts of the President's remarks at the Federalist Society's 25th annual gala dinner

Released November 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by President Elias Antonio "Tony" Saca of El Salvador

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2602 and S.J. Res. 7

Fact sheet: U.S.-Japan Cooperation on Energy Security, Clean Development, and Climate Change

Released November 17

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Associate Director Sharon L. Hays, and State Department Senior Climate Negotiator Harlan Watson on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report

Statement by the Press Secretary on Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh

The transcript of the press briefing was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 16 but was embargoed for release until November 17.

Released November 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2206

Released November 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on advances in ethical stem cell research

Released November 25

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on the Annapolis Conference

Released November 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Deputy National Security Adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute, USA

Fact sheet: U.S.-Iraq Declaration of Principles for Friendship and Cooperation

Released November 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Excerpts of the President's remarks at the Annapolis Conference in Annapolis, Maryland

Released November 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

Released November 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear on the administration's economic forecast

Transcript of remarks by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

Released November 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino and U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Mark Dybul

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2089, H.R. 2276, H.R. 3297, H.R. 3307, H.R. 3308, H.R. 3325, H.R. 3382, H.R. 3446, H.R. 3518, H.R. 3530, and H.R. 2572

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Indiana

Fact sheet: World AIDS Day 2007

Released December 3

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Statement by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on the National Intelligence Estimate

Released December 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Transcript of a press briefing by Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton and Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula J. Dobriansky on the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change

Statement by the Press Secretary on the shootings in Omaha, Nebraska

Fact sheet: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Uninsured and Underserved Americans

Appendix C / Administration of George W. Bush, 2007

Released December 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on energy security legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of Alternative Minimum Tax legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 50 and H.R. 465

Fact sheet: Helping American Families Keep Their Homes

Released December 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: November 2007 Marks Record 51st Consecutive Month of Job Growth

Released December 8

Statement by the Office of Management and Budget Director James A. Nussle on congressional spending

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oregon

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Washington

Released December 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released December 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by National Drug Control Policy Director John P. Walters and National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Nora Volkow on the "Monitoring the Future" report

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by President Alan Garcia of Peru

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Fact sheet: Significant, Long-Term Reductions in Youth Drug Use

Released December 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: U.S. Financial Action Against Money Laundering for Mexico's Sinaloa Drug Organization

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1429

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Released December 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate action on energy security legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4343

Released December 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of FHA modernization legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate approval of agricultural legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4252 and H.J. Res. 69

Fact sheet: United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act

Released December 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to be hosted by the President of Indonesia in Bali

Released December 17

Fact sheet: FISA Legislation Necessary To Keep Our Nation Safe

Released December 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's travel to Israel, the West Bank, Kuwait,

Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt from January 8–16, 2008

Statement by the Press Secretary: Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Transformation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3315

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Fact sheet: Energy Bill Responds to President's "Twenty in Ten" Vision

Released December 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on a New York Times story on the White House's involvement in the CIA's decision to destroy interrogation tapes

Statement by the Press Secretary on congressional passage of Alternative Minimum Tax legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on the reauthorization of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation

Fact sheet: Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007

Released December 20

Fact sheet: Lt. Gen. James B. Peake (Ret.), M.D.: "A Worthy and Strong Leader" for Our Nation's Veterans

Fact sheet: Year in Review: 2007

Fact sheet: The Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007

Released December 21

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: December 23 Elections in Thailand

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 365, H.R. 710, H.R. 2408, H.R. 2671, H.R. 3703, H.R. 3739,

H.J. Res. 72, S. 597, S. 888, S. 2174, S. 2371, S. 2484, and S.J. Res. 8

Statement by the Press Secretary on the resignation of Andrew S. Natsios as Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan

Released December 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 366, H.R. 797, H.R. 1045, H.R. 2011, H.R. 2761, H.R. 3470, H.R. 3569, H.R. 3571, H.R. 3974, H.R. 3996, H.R. 4009, S. 1396, S. 1896, S. 1916, and S.J. Res. 13

Released December 27

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Released December 28

Transcript of a press briefing by senior administration officials on the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008"

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on the President's intention to veto H.R. 1585, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008"

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: Visit by President Gul of Turkey to Washington

Fact sheet: National Defense Authorization Act Section 1083: A Danger to Iraq's Progress

Released December 29

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4839 and S. 2499

Released December 31

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2488

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the Federal Register

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. The texts of the documents are printed in the Federal Register (F.R.) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations and in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents.

PROCLAMATIONS

<i>Proc. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
8159	July 2	Grant of Executive Clemency	37095
8160	July 10	Captive Nations Week, 2007	38461
8161	July 12	Parents' Day, 2007	38995
8162	July 12	Death of Lady Bird Johnson	38997
8163	July 24	Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, 2007	41421
8164	Aug. 6	Women's Equality Day, 2007	44723
8165	Aug. 20	National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, 2007	48219
8166	Aug. 21	National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, 2007	48545
8167	Aug. 21	National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, 2007 ..	48929
8168	Aug. 21	Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, Constitution Week, 2007	48931
8169	Aug. 28	Minority Enterprise Development Week, 2007	50641
8170	Aug. 30	National Preparedness Month, 2007	51155
8171	Aug. 30	National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, 2007	51157
8172	Sept. 4	National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 2007	51549
8173	Sept. 4	National Days of Prayer and Remembrance, 2007	51551
8174	Sept. 4	Patriot Day, 2007	51553
8175	Sept. 12	National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2007	53097
8176	Sept. 12	National Farm Safety and Health Week, 2007	53099
8177	Sept. 20	National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 2007	54807
8178	Sept. 20	Family Day, 2007	54809
8179	Sept. 21	Gold Star Mother's Day, 2007	54811
8180	Sept. 28	To Provide for Duty Elimination for Certain Goods of Mexico Under the North American Free Trade Agreement	56171
8181	Sept. 28	National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, 2007	56613
8182	Sept. 28	National Disability Employment Awareness Month, 2007	56615
8183	Oct. 1	National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2007	56879
8184	Oct. 1	Child Health Day, 2007	56881
8185	Oct. 4	German-American Day, 2007	57477
8186	Oct. 4	Columbus Day, 2007	57479
8187	Oct. 4	Leif Erikson Day, 2007	57481
8188	Oct. 4	Fire Prevention Week, 2007	57483
8189	Oct. 10	General Pulaski Memorial Day, 2007	58467
8190	Oct. 12	National School Lunch Week, 2007	58749
8191	Oct. 12	White Cane Safety Day, 2007	58751
8192	Oct. 19	National Character Counts Week, 2007	60527
8193	Oct. 19	National Forest Products Week, 2007	60529

PROCLAMATIONS—Continued

<i>Proc. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
8194	Oct. 23	United Nations Day, 2007	60757
8195	Oct. 31	National Adoption Month, 2007	62395
8196	Oct. 31	National American Indian Heritage Month, 2007	62397
8197	Oct. 31	National Family Caregivers Month, 2007	62399
8198	Oct. 31	National Hospice Month, 2007	62401
8199	Oct. 31	Veterans Day, 2007	62403
8200	Oct. 31	National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, 2007	62555
8201	Oct. 31	National Diabetes Month, 2007	62557
8202	Nov. 8	World Freedom Day, 2007	64117
8203	Nov. 15	America Recycles Day, 2007	65211
8204	Nov. 15	Thanksgiving Day, 2007	65213
8205	Nov. 16	National Farm-City Week, 2007	65439
8206	Nov. 16	National Family Week, 2007	65651
8207	Nov. 29	World AIDS Day, 2007	68041
8208	Nov. 30	National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, 2007	68469
8209	Dec. 4	National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2007	69135
8210	Dec. 6	Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 2007	70761
8211	Dec. 11	Wright Brothers Day, 2007	71197
8212	Dec. 19	National Mentoring Month, 2008	72897
8213	Dec. 20	To Implement an Amendment to the Dominican Republic- Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement	73555
			<i>73 F.R. Page</i>
8214	Dec. 27	To Adjust the Rules of Origin Under the United States-Chile Free Trade Agreement and the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement	1439

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

<i>E.O. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
13438	July 17	Blocking Property of Certain Persons Who Threaten Stabiliza- tion Efforts in Iraq	39719
13439	July 18	Establishing an Interagency Working Group on Import Safety	40053
13440	July 20	Interpretation of the Geneva Conventions Common Article 3 as Applied to a Program of Detention and Interrogation Op- erated by the Central Intelligence Agency	40707
13441	Aug. 1	Blocking Property of Persons Undermining the Sovereignty of Lebanon or Its Democratic Processes and Institutions	43499
13442	Aug. 13	Amending the Order of Succession in the Department of Homeland Security	45877

EXECUTIVE ORDERS—Continued

<i>E.O. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
13443	Aug. 16	Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation	46537
13444	Sept. 12	Extending Privileges and Immunities to the African Union Mission to the United States	52747
13445	Sept. 27	Strengthening Adult Education	56165
13446	Sept. 28	Continuance of Certain Federal Advisory Committees and Amendments to and Revocation of Other Executive Orders	56175
13447	Sept. 28	Further 2007 Amendments to the Manual for Courts-Martial, United States	56179
13448	Oct. 18	Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain Transactions Re- lated to Burma	60223
13449	Oct. 20	Protection of Striped Bass and Red Drum Fish Populations	60531
13450	Nov. 13	Improving Government Program Performance	64519
13451	Nov. 19	Designating the ITER International Fusion Energy Organiza- tion as a Public International Organization Entitled To Enjoy Certain Privileges, Exemptions, and Immunities	65653
13452	Nov. 28	Establishing an Emergency Board To Investigate Disputes Be- tween the National Railroad Passenger Corporation and Certain of Its Employees Represented by Certain Labor Or- ganizations	67827
13453	Dec. 6	Closing of Executive Departments and Agencies of the Fed- eral Government on Monday, December 24, 2007	70477

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

<i>Doc. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
	July 3	Memorandum: Assignment of Certain Functions Relating to Nuclear Energy Facilities	37627
07-25	July 5	Presidential Determination: Transfer of Funds from Prior Year Independent States Account to the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Account To Support the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative	38747
07-26	July 10	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on Transfer of Economic Support Funds to the Overseas Private Investment Corporation To Establish a Loan Guarantee Program	39723
07-27	July 12	Presidential Determination: Waiver of Limitation on Obliga- tion and Expenditure of \$642.5 Million in Fiscal Year 2007 Economic Support Funds for Iraq	39725
	July 19	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor	40059
	Aug. 15	Notice: Continuation of Emergency Regarding Export Control Regulations	46137
07-28	Aug. 16	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on Continuation of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Colombia	50035

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS—Continued

<i>Doc. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
07–29	Aug. 27	Presidential Determination: Assignment of Function Concerning Assistance to Afghanistan	51351
07–30	Aug. 31	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on Waiving Prohibition on United States Military Assistance With Respect to Montenegro	52749
	Sept. 8	Memorandum: Assignment of Reporting Functions Relating to the Information Sharing Environment	52279
07–31	Sept. 8	Presidential Determination: Emergency Fund Drawdown to Support Assistance to Conflict Victims in Iraq, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka	52751
	Sept. 12	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Certain Terrorist Attacks	52465
07–32	Sept. 13	Presidential Determination: Continuation of the Exercise of Certain Authorities Under the Trading With the Enemy Act	53409
	Sept. 20	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism	54205
07–34	Sept. 28	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on Energy Assistance for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	56873
07–35	Sept. 28	Presidential Determination: Waiver of Limitation on Obligation and Expenditure of \$1,051.6 Million in Fiscal Year 2007 Economic Support Funds for Iraq	56875
	Sept. 28	Memorandum: Assignment of Specified Reporting and Determination Functions Relating to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Certain Education Abroad	56871
08–1	Oct. 2	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on FY 2008 Refugee Admissions Numbers and Authorizations of In-Country Refugee Status Pursuant to Sections 207 and 101(a)(42), Respectively, of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and Determination Pursuant to Section 2(b)(2) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, as Amended	58991
08–2	Oct. 11	Presidential Determination: Waiver and Certification of Statutory Provisions Regarding the Palestine Liberation Organization Office	61033
08–3	Oct. 16	Presidential Determination: Provision of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Brazil	61035
08–4	Oct. 18	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination With Respect to Foreign Governments' Efforts Regarding Trafficking in Persons	61037
	Oct. 18	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in Colombia	59473
08–5	Oct. 19	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination Relating to Assistance for Saudi Arabia	61041
	Oct. 24	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo	61045

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS—Continued

<i>Doc. No.</i>	<i>Date 2007</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>72 F.R. Page</i>
	Nov. 1	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Sudan	62407
	Nov. 8	Notice: Continuation of Emergency Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction	63963
	Nov. 8	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran	63965
			<i>73 F.R. Page</i>
08-6	Dec. 12	Presidential Determination: Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act	3849
08-7	Dec. 14	Presidential Determination: Waiver of Reimbursement Under the U.N. Participation Act To Support UNAMID Efforts in Darfur	3851
	Dec. 27	Memorandum: Provision of Aviation Insurance Coverage for Commercial Air Carrier Service in Domestic and International Operations	1813

Subject Index

ABC

- ABC News—1603, 1622
- “ABC World News Tonight with Charles Gibson”—1619

Adoption Day, National—1482

Afghanistan

- Afghan military and security forces—1045
 - Baghlan Province, terrorist attack—1617
 - Civilians, casualties—1049
 - Counternarcotics programs—1046
 - Democracy efforts—1163, 1240
 - Former King—1004
 - Former regime—1045, 1048, 1066
 - International assistance—995, 1045, 1579
 - NATO, role—1579
 - President—1045, 1240, 1601, 1604, 1605, 1617
 - Reconstruction and infrastructure development—1045, 1578
 - Relations with Iran—1049
 - Relations with Pakistan—1046
 - U.S. military forces
 - Casualties—1055, 1368, 1490
 - Deployment—1552
 - Women, status—1240
 - Afghanistan-Tajikistan Bridge, dedication ceremony—1606
- Africa
- See also* Developing countries; *specific country*
 - African Union—1238
 - Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, President's—1543
 - HIV/AIDS epidemic, prevention and treatment—1233, 1507, 1508
 - African Growth and Opportunity Act of 2000—1394
- Agriculture
- Legislation—1264
 - Overproduction, prevention efforts—1264
- Agriculture, Department of
- Acting Secretary—1615
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)—1264, 1359
 - Secretary—1212, 1400, 1405, 1616
- AIDS. *See* HIV/AIDS; *specific country or region*

Air Force, Department of the

Assistant Secretaries

- Financial Management—1616
- Manpower and Reserve Affairs—1618

Hickman Air Force Base in Honolulu—1190, 1609

Tuskegee Airmen—1602

Al Arabiya television—1280

Algeria

- President—1623
- Terrorist attacks in Algiers—1623

Al Qaida. *See* Terrorism

American. *See other part of subject*

Americans With Disabilities Act, anniversary—1022

America's Heritage Abroad, Commission for the Preservation of—1608

America's Promise Alliance—1469

Americas, White House Conference on the—918

AMTRAK Reform Board—1618

Angola, U.S. Ambassador—1605

ANWR. *See* Artic National Wildlife Refuge

Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board—1621

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)—1466, 1562

Argentina, President-elect—1616, 1621

Arkansas

- Business and civic leaders, meeting with President—1614

Central High School in Little Rock, 50th anniversary of integration—1239

President's visit—1309, 1614

Stribling Packaging, Inc., in Rogers—1614

Armed Forces, U.S.

- See also* Defense, Department of; Defense and national security; *specific military branch*

Enlistment and reenlistment rates—1461

Expansion—1154

Funding—1062, 1366, 1557

Humanitarian aid and relief missions—919

Military families—912, 915, 999, 1005, 1209, 1318, 1325, 1590

National Guard—913, 1319, 1601

Armed Forces, U.S.—Continued

Private organizations, assistance—1001, 1002, 1208, 1615

Private sector aid—916

Servicemembers

Casualties—909, 915, 999, 1011, 1190, 1209, 1280, 1325, 1326, 1419, 1449, 1461, 1572, 1588, 1590, 1599, 1600, 1606, 1607, 1613, 1615, 1623

Deployment—912, 991, 1062, 1209, 1487, 1512, 1530, 1552, 1589, 1590, 1619, 1624

Hispanic and Mexican American servicemembers—1300

Meetings with President—1190, 1199, 1599, 1600, 1602

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—1326

Service and dedication—909, 1199, 1317, 1597

Student loan assistance—1246

Armenia, relations with Turkey—1298, 1328

Arms and munitions

See also specific country

Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program—1133

Nuclear Material, Convention on the Physical Protection of—1173

Nuclear Terrorism, International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of—966

Nuclear weapons and material

Nonproliferation efforts—1375

Security—966, 1372

Proliferation Security Initiative—1141

Weapons of mass destruction—1452

Army, Department of the

Acting Under Secretary—1621

Army Chaplain Center and School, U.S., at Fort Jackson, SC—1617

Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, Center for the Intrepid—1449, 1617

Walter Reed Army Medical Center—909, 1325, 1326, 1449, 1588, 1599, 1623

Arts

See also Smithsonian Institution

“Ana’s Story: A Journey of Hope,” publication reception—1613

“Ballou: A Documentary Film,” White House screening—1613

“The Kite Runner,” White House screening—1610

Arts, National Endowment for the—1472

Asia

See also specific country

Asia—Continued

Asian Nations, Association of Southeast (ASEAN)—1144, 1183

Counterterrorism efforts—1179, 1180

Democratization—1177, 1181

Relations with U.S.—1136, 1144, 1147, 1177

Trade, expansion—1177

Trade with U.S.—1147

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)—

1600, 1135, 1144, 1168, 1176–1178, 1181, 1609, 1617

Associated Press—1620

Attorney General. *See* Justice, Department of Australia

Afghanistan, Australian military forces, deployment—1142, 1171

Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney—1176, 1609

Australian servicemembers, meeting with President Bush—1608

Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty, U.S.-Australia—1162, 1514

Energy cooperation with U.S.—1169

Free trade agreement with U.S.—1164

Governor General—1608

Iraq, Australian military forces, deployment—1142, 1145, 1163, 1171, 1182

Opposition Leader—1145, 1165, 1609

Parliamentary elections—1147, 1165

President Bush’s visit—1147, 1160, 1165, 1171, 1173, 1176, 1183, 1185–1187, 1608, 1609

Prime Minister—1145, 1146, 1160, 1162, 1169, 1171, 1176, 1604, 1608, 1609

Relations with U.S.—1136, 1147, 1163, 1165, 1169, 1176

Sky News—1145

U.S. Embassy staff, meeting with President Bush—1609

War on terror, role—1145, 1176

Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) Security Treaty—1176

Austria, U.S. Ambassador—1617

Avian influenza. *See* Diseases

Aviation, flight delays and congestion—1247, 1473

Aviation Administration, Federal

Administrator—1246, 1473, 1615

Modernization efforts—1247, 1475

Awards. *See* Decorations, medals, and awards

Bangladesh, U.S. Ambassador—1608

Banks. *See* Development banks and funds

- Belarus, prodemocracy political parties and non-governmental organizations' leaders, meeting with President Bush—1621
- Blind or Severely Disabled, Committee for Purchase From People Who Are—1619
- Board. *See other part of subject*
- Brazil
 - Energy
 - Alternative and renewable sources and technologies—1230
 - Cooperation with U.S.—923
 - President—1230
 - Relations with U.S.—923
- Broadcasting Board of Governors—1614, 1622
- Budget, Federal
 - See also Congress; specific Federal agency or organization*
- Appropriations
 - Defense, Department of—1393, 1404, 1407, 1412, 1465
 - Homeland Security, Department of—1434
 - Justice, Department of—1434
 - Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Departments—1466
 - Supplemental—1036, 1366, 1367
 - Veterans Affairs, Department of—1393, 1404, 1412, 1450, 1454, 1466
 - War on terror—1467, 1468, 1505, 1509, 1510, 1514, 1554
- Congressional spending restraint—949, 986, 1107, 1301, 1311, 1313, 1337, 1404
- Deficit—927, 948, 984, 1014, 1051, 1114, 1301, 1311
- Fiscal year 2008 budget—982, 1014, 1038, 1051, 1107, 1218, 1227, 1228, 1253, 1259, 1311, 1327, 1463, 1510, 1511, 1515, 1545, 1574
- Government programs, spending reductions—934
- Bulgaria
 - Nurses in Libya, release—1602
 - President—1602
- Burma
 - Blocking property of the Government and prohibiting certain transactions—1353
 - Democracy efforts—1232, 1321, 1354
 - Human rights issues—1134, 1164, 1232, 1247, 1321, 1354, 1355, 1479, 1540
 - International penalties—1355
 - U.S. sanctions—1321, 1354, 1540
- Business and industry
 - See also Commerce, international; Employment and unemployment; specific State or company*
- Business and industry—Continued
 - Corporate charities—922, 923
 - Home loan industry—1057, 1151, 1152, 1156, 1335, 1519, 1527, 1528, 1533, 1558, 1574, 1580, 1587
 - Small and minority business—927, 947, 980, 986, 1015, 1051, 1061, 1299
- C-SPAN television—1426
- Cabinet
 - See also specific Federal department or executive branch agency*
 - Members, meetings with President—1038, 1378, 1544
- CAFTA, DR-. *See Central America; Commerce, international*
- California
 - Disaster assistance—1615
 - Governor—1615
 - President's visit—1385, 1387, 1389, 1615
 - Wildfires—1371, 1378, 1385, 1387, 1389-1391, 1615
- Canada
 - Afghanistan, Canadian military forces, deployment and casualties—1086
 - Boundary Commission, International (U.S. and Canada)—1600
 - Energy cooperation with U.S.—1091, 1093
 - Governor General—1606
 - Northwest Passage—1083
 - President Bush's visit—1076, 1605, 1606
 - Prime Minister—1076, 1090, 1603, 1605, 1606, 1611
 - Relations with U.S.—1085, 1090
 - U.S. Embassy staff, meeting with President Bush—1606
- Canada, International Joint Commission of the United States and—1632
- CBS News—1608
- Central America
 - See also Commerce, international; specific country*
 - Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement, Dominican Republic- (DR-CAFTA)—1299, 1303
 - Crime and narcotics trafficking—1503
- Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement, Dominican Republic- (DR-CAFTA). *See Central America; Commerce, international*
- Central Intelligence Agency—1372, 1575
- Chad, U.S. Ambassador—1605
- Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board—1600

- Children and youth
 - See also* Education
 - Adoption—1482
 - Boys and Girls Nation—1602
 - Teen drug use statistics—1535, 1622
- Chile
 - Free trade agreement with U.S.—1303
 - U.S. Ambassador—1605
- China
 - 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing—1174
 - Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China—1623
 - Democracy and human rights issues—1165, 1329, 1341
 - Economic reforms and growth—1147, 1165
 - Job creation and growth—1147
 - Minister of Foreign Affairs—1612, 1620
 - President—1138, 1173, 1621
 - Relations with U.S.—1137, 1138, 1165
 - Trade with U.S.—1137, 1165
- Christmas and winter holidays—1512, 1530, 1573, 1589, 1592, 1620, 1622–1624
- Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation—1604, 1605
- Civil rights
 - Civil liberties—996, 1282
 - Civil rights movement—1424
 - Freedom of religion—1279, 1281, 1533
- Civil Rights, U.S. Commission on—1620
- Climate change. *See* Environment
- CNBC's "Closing Bell" program—1613
- Colombia
 - Crime and narcotrafficking—1305
 - Free trade agreement with U.S.—1305, 1308, 1521
 - Narcotics traffickers, continuation of national emergency—1352
 - Plan Colombia—1305
 - President—1305, 1624
- Commerce, Department of
 - Deputy Secretary—1621
 - Inspector General—1609
 - International Trade
 - Acting Under Secretary—1612
 - Under Secretary—1191
- Commerce, international
 - See also specific country or region*
 - Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement, Dominican Republic- (DR-CAFTA)—1299, 1303
 - Doha Development Agenda. *See* Developing countries
 - Export controls, U.S. national emergency—1073
 - Commerce, international—Continued
 - Free and fair trade—919, 921, 1141, 1178, 1219, 1234, 1299, 1302, 1303, 1306, 1308, 1328, 1399, 1430–1432, 1547–1549, 1584
 - Intellectual property rights—1140, 1432
 - North American Free Trade Agreement—1078, 1091
 - U.S. exports, expansion—1024, 1219, 1303, 1303, 1337, 1431, 1547, 1548, 1568
 - U.S. import safety procedures—981, 1091, 1093, 1433
- Commission. *See other part of subject*
- Commodity Futures Trading Commission—1609
- Communications
 - See also specific news organization, State, or country*
 - Interception. *See* Terrorism
 - News media, Presidential interviews—1135, 1145, 1148, 1280, 1435, 1439, 1599–1601, 1603, 1604, 1608, 1611–1613, 1615, 1618–1620, 1622
 - U.S. broadcasting services' leaders, meeting with President—1622
- Communications Commission, Federal—1620
- Community Service, Corporation for National and—1603, 1617
- Competitiveness Initiative, American—1025, 1053, 1064
- Congo, Democratic Republic of the
 - Economic growth and development—1390
 - President—1389, 1613
 - Presidential election—1389
 - Relations with U.S.—1390
 - U.S. national emergency, continuation—1384
- Congress
 - China, Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of—1623
 - Congressional Ball—1621
 - Congressional investigations—1063
 - Earmark reform—949, 1016, 1574, 1595
 - House of Representatives
 - House Republican Conference—1393
 - Speaker—1603, 1612
 - Transportation and Infrastructure Committee—1054
 - Iraq policy and strategy, contribution—956
 - Members, meetings with President—1192, 1603
 - Republican Senatorial Committee, National—1601
- Corporation. *See other part of subject*
- Credit Union Administration Board, National—1620
- Crime. *See* Law enforcement and crime

Cuba

- Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996—975
- Democracy efforts—1232, 1307, 1381, 1382, 1422
- Freedom Fund for Cuba—1382
- Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base, detention of alleged terrorists—1059, 1552
- Political prisoners, conditions of incarceration—1298, 1321, 1380, 1422, 1613
- President—1379

Darfur. *See* Sudan

Deaths

- Bhutto, Benazir, former Prime Minister of Pakistan—1592, 1624
- Carson, Rep. Julia M.—1555
- Casey, Germaine—1116, 1607
- Compton, John, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia—1192, 1610
- Davis, Rep. Jo Ann—1292
- Dunn, Jennifer Blackburn—1175
- El Hajj, Brig. Gen. Francois, of Lebanon—1544
- Ghanem, Antoine, Parliament Member of Lebanon—1211
- Gillmor, Paul E.—1174, 1192
- Griffin, Mervyn E., Jr.—1073
- Hyde, Henry J.—1506
- Johnson, former First Lady Claudia A. “Lady Bird”—950, 951
- Kennedy, D. James—1185
- Miyazawa, Kiichi, former Prime Minister of Japan—1604
- Pavarotti, Luciano—1175
- Zahir Shah, Mohammed, former King of Afghanistan—1004

Decorations, medals, and awards

- Arts, National Medal of—1472
- Big Brother and Big Sister of the Year Award—1612
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America 2007 Youth of the Year finalists—1611
- Congressional Gold Medal—975, 1340, 1602
- Congressional Medal of Honor—1368
- Humanities Medal, National—1472
- Nobel Prize—1619
- Presidential Medal of Freedom—1422
- Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor—1540
- Purple Heart Medal—1632, 1599
- Science and Technology, National Medals of—1024
- Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring, Presidential Awards for Excellence in—1618

Decorations, medals, and awards—Continued

- Scientists and Engineers, 2006 Presidential Early Career Awards for—1616
- Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award—1610
- Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Public Service, Office of the—1605
- Spelling Bee champion, Scripps National—1610

Defense and national security

- See also* Armed Forces, U.S.; Defense, Department of; Terrorism
- Border security—989, 990, 995, 1066, 1092, 1094, 1266, 1315
- Cyber attacks—1165
- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)—1027, 1039, 1040, 1044, 1210, 1211, 1327, 1336, 1509, 1511, 1514, 1611
- Information Sharing, National Strategy for—1616
- Intelligence—995, 1210, 1429, 1515
- Intelligence Estimate, National—1002, 1003, 1515, 1516, 1520, 1524, 1601, 1605
- Intelligence reform legislation—1043, 1297
- Missile defense—905, 906, 970, 1373, 1374, 1376, 1443
- Protect America Act—1372, 1407, 1412
- War on terror—913, 914, 931, 936, 940, 954, 961, 991, 995, 1005, 1017, 1018, 1027, 1028, 1033, 1039, 1045, 1046, 1048, 1054, 1062, 1063, 1066, 1086, 1099, 1101, 1107, 1111, 1117, 1119, 1135, 1138, 1139, 1142, 1146, 1162, 1179, 1182, 1186, 1190, 1194, 1209, 1211, 1263, 1269, 1270, 1279–1281, 1289, 1297, 1317, 1319, 1334, 1370, 1371, 1376, 1406, 1408, 1410, 1412, 1416, 1436, 1442, 1448, 1461, 1534, 1553, 1596, 1600, 1606, 1607, 1613, 1615

Defense, Department of

- See also* Armed Forces, U.S.; Defense and national security; *specific military branch*
- America Supports You Program—916
- Assistant Secretaries
 - Asian and Pacific Security Affairs—1615
 - International Security Affairs—1617
- Brigade combat commanders, briefings with President—966, 1205
- Defense policy team, meeting with President—1604
- Defense University, National—1370
- Deputy Secretary—1615
- Funding—1015, 1036, 1052, 1505, 1509, 1511, 1523, 1554
- Joint Chiefs of Staff—1254, 1608

- Defense, Department of—Continued
 - Military leaders, meetings with President—1154, 1609
 - Northern Command, U.S.—1615
 - Policy, Under Secretary for—1613
 - Secretary—1604, 1608, 1615
 - Senior officials, briefing with President—1505
- Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board—1601
- Democratization. *See* Foreign policy, U.S.
- Developing countries
 - See also specific country or region*
 - Doha Development Agenda—1029, 1091, 1135, 1164, 1177, 1187, 1219, 1230, 1234, 1306, 1432, 1455, 1548
 - Educational development and reform—1234
 - Hunger and famine, eradication efforts—1233
 - Millennium Challenge Accounts—920, 1234, 1364
 - Trade and economic growth—1234
- Development banks and funds. *See* Developing countries; World Bank
- Development, U.S. Agency for International—1601
- Disaster assistance
 - See also* Natural disasters; *specific State, country, or executive branch agency*
 - California wildfires
 - Federal assistance—1386, 1388, 1392, 1615
 - Private sector aid—1392
 - Hurricane Katrina
 - Federal assistance—1127, 1128, 1132
 - Private sector aid—1127, 1132
 - Illinois—1607, 1612
 - Indiana—1621
 - Iowa—1610
 - Kansas—1599, 1623
 - Maine—1604
 - Micronesia—1603
 - Minnesota—1606
 - Missouri—1611, 1623, 1624
 - Nebraska—1602, 1607
 - New York—1599, 1607
 - North Dakota—1601, 1609
 - Ohio—1607
 - Oklahoma—1632, 1599, 1606, 1608, 1622
 - Oregon—1622
 - Texas—1605, 1613
 - Vermont—1604
 - Washington—1622
 - Wisconsin—1607
- Diseases
 - See also* HIV/AIDS
 - Avian influenza—941
 - Malaria—996, 1233, 1321, 1342, 1390
- Diseases—Continued
 - Pandemic flu—941
 - Tamiflu—941
- District of Columbia
 - Ballou Senior High School Marching Band—1613
 - DC Opportunity Scholarship Program—943
 - Federal appropriations—1065
 - Little Sisters of the Poor's Jeanne Jugan Residence—1569
 - Walter Reed Army Medical Center—909, 1325, 1326, 1449, 1588, 1599, 1623
 - Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center—1071
- Doha Development Agenda. *See* Developing countries
- DR–CAFTA. *See* Central America; Commerce, international
- Drug abuse and trafficking
 - See also specific country*
 - Illicit drug production and transit countries—1202
 - Interdiction efforts—1087, 1088, 1536
 - Methamphetamine, production and distribution, efforts to combat—1536
 - “Monitoring the Future” report—1622
 - Professional athletes, drug use—1545
 - Teen drug use statistics—1535, 1622
- Economic Advisers, Council of—1023, 1050, 1603, 1604
- Economy, international. *See* Commerce, international
- Economy, national
 - See also* Budget, Federal; Employment and unemployment; *specific State or country*
 - Capital investment—1584
 - Economic concerns—1463
 - Financial literacy—1057, 1152
 - Improvement—917, 947, 981, 1024, 1050, 1052, 1057, 1062, 1084, 1114, 1124, 1150, 1214, 1218, 1227, 1290, 1301, 1304, 1308, 1334, 1399, 1463, 1464, 1594, 1596
 - NASDAQ stock market—1219
 - Poverty level, decline—1125
 - Strengthening efforts—1052, 1595
- Education
 - See also specific State or country*
 - Advanced Placement programs—1243
 - DC Opportunity Scholarship Program—943
 - Gulf Coast Library Recovery Initiative—1129
 - Head Start programs—1541
 - Latin American Youth Scholarship Program, Partnership for—1382

Education—Continued

- Local control of schools—942
- Math and science programs—1026
- Minority students—1243
- No Child Left Behind Act—942, 1017, 1239, 1241, 1246, 1271, 1295, 1299, 1314, 1327, 1576, 1613
- Postsecondary education
 - Community colleges—943, 1306, 1432
 - Loans—1270
 - Pell grants—1244, 1245, 1270
- Standards and school accountability—942, 1242, 1271, 1296
- Teachers—1128, 1243
- Tutoring programs—1243

Eid al-Adha—1573

Eid al-Fitr—1301

El Salvador

- President—1503, 1618
- War on terror, role—1503

Elections

- See also specific State or country*
- 2008 Presidential election—1055, 1219, 1438, 1442, 1522, 1583

Employment and unemployment

- See also Economy, national; specific State*
- Job creation and growth—917, 927, 984, 1290, 1299, 1309, 1310, 1415, 1430, 1463
- Job training programs—1306, 1432
- Unemployment rate—1463

Energy

- See also Environment; specific State or country*

- Alternative and renewable sources and technologies—925, 930, 931, 988, 1016, 1115, 1144, 1150, 1164, 1178, 1179, 1250, 1251, 1264, 1265, 1313, 1315, 1322, 1400, 1561, 1567
- Coal and clean coal technologies—1250, 1322
- Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs—1264, 1447
- Greenhouse gas emissions, regulation—1150, 1249–1251, 1322, 1502
- National energy plan—1115, 1144, 1168, 1169, 1466, 1503, 1561, 1570, 1573, 1580, 1581

Energy—Continued

- Nuclear energy—1251, 1322, 1561, 1581
- Oil supply and refining—1562
- Solar and wind energy—1251
- Vilnius Energy Security Conference in Vilnius, Lithuania—1613
- Energy, Department of
 - Energy Information Administration—1502
 - Energy Regulatory Commission, Federal—1622
 - Fossil Energy, Assistant Secretary for—1595
 - Global Nuclear Energy Partnership—1251
 - Nuclear Security Administration, National—1603

England. *See* United Kingdom

Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN)

- ESPN—1600
- “Offshore Adventures” program—1615

Environment

See also Energy

- Climate change—1136, 1150, 1164, 1168, 1178, 1230, 1248, 1249, 1265, 1456, 1502, 1611

Conservation

- Deforestation, prevention efforts—1252
- Marine debris, cleanup efforts—1362
- Marine environments and fish populations, protection efforts—1356
- Migratory birds, habitat restoration efforts—1356–1359
- Striped bass and red drum fish populations, protection efforts—1360
- Wetlands conservation and expansion—1362
- Kyoto Protocol—1167, 1168, 1322
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act—1361
- Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, Convention on the Prevention of—1172

Montreal Protocol—1252

Ocean Action Plan, U.S.—1361

Saltwater fish registry—1363

Environmental Protection Agency—1603, 1620

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—1599

ESPN. *See* Entertainment and Sports Programming Network

Europe

See also specific country

European Union

- Commission President—1207, 1607
- Relations with U.S.—1207

- Europe, Commission on Security and Cooperation in—1623
- Export Council, President's—1608
- Faith-based and community organizations
 - Federal Government funding—944
 - HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs—1508
 - Programs and services—943
- Federal. *See other part of subject*
- Federalist Society—1475
- FEMA. *See* Homeland Security, Department of
- FFA. *See* Future Farmers of America Organization, National
- FISA. *See* Defense and national security
- Flag, U.S., desecration ban, constitutional amendment—1117
- Florida
 - Cuban American community leaders, meeting with President—1614
 - Miami
 - Trade and economic growth—1303
 - Unemployment rate—1303
 - President's visit—1302, 1614
- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. *See* Defense and national security
- Foreign policy, U.S.
 - See also* Defense and national security
 - Democratization—934, 939, 962, 964, 994, 998, 1018, 1020, 1034, 1086, 1105, 1112, 1113, 1119, 1180, 1181, 1219, 1237, 1261, 1263, 1282, 1284, 1320, 1405, 1407, 1413, 1417, 1437, 1459, 1579
- FOX
 - FOX Business Network—1618
 - FOX News television—1604, 1611, 1618
- France
 - Afghanistan, role—1444
 - First Lady—1068
 - Iraq, role—1446
 - Lebanon, role—1448
 - President—1068, 1434, 1435, 1444, 1604, 1605, 1615, 1617
 - Relations with U.S.—1070, 1434, 1435, 1439
 - TF1 Television—1435
- Freedom Corps, USA—1610
- Future Farmers of America Organization, National—1602
- Gambia, The, U.S. Ambassador—1602
- Germany
 - Afghanistan, German military forces, deployment—1440, 1455
 - ARD German Television—1612
- Germany—Continued
 - Chancellor—1439, 1453, 1455, 1612, 1617, 1618
 - Iraq, role—1455
 - N-TV of Germany—1439
 - Relations with U.S.—1440
 - RTL Television—1439
- Glamour magazine—1618
- Government organization and employees
 - See also* Budget, Federal; *specific agency or organization*
 - Combined Federal Campaign—1023
 - Faith-based and community organizations initiative. *See* Faith-based and community organizations
 - Locality pay increases—1500
- Great Britain. *See* United Kingdom
- Greece
 - Parliamentary elections—1611
 - Prime Minister—1610
 - U.S. Ambassador—1610
 - Wildfires, casualties—1611
- Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association—1398
- Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base. *See* Cuba Guard, National. *See* Armed Forces, U.S.; *specific State*
- Guatemala, President-elect—1618
- Guinea-Bissau, U.S. Ambassador—1622
- Hanukkah—1513, 1534
- Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation—1612
- Hawaii
 - Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu—1190, 1609
 - Naval Station Pearl Harbor—1609
 - Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument—1361
 - President's visit—1190, 1609
- Health and Human Services, Department of
 - Assistant Secretaries
 - Family Support—1600
 - Planning and Evaluation—1602
 - Public Affairs—1612
 - Human Genome Research Institute, National—1423
 - Import Safety Working Group—981, 1433, 1610
 - Indian Health Service—1601, 1623
 - Medicare and Medicaid Services, Centers for—1608
 - Secretary—1609

Health and Human Services, Department of—
 Continued
 State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)—928, 980, 986, 1213, 1220, 1226, 1253, 1260, 1261, 1276, 1291, 1311, 1312, 1323, 1327, 1337, 1339, 1391, 1393, 1401, 1523, 1541, 1612
 Health and medical care
See also Diseases; HIV/AIDS; Science and technology
 Association health care plans—1403, 1560
 Community health centers—1526
 Cost control reforms—925, 928, 929, 980, 981, 986–988, 1323, 1567
 Health insurance, tax deductions—927, 1125, 1261, 1323, 1404, 1559
 Health savings accounts, tax-free—1403, 1560
 Information technology—1403, 1560
 Medical liability reform—1403, 1560
 Medicare and Medicaid—928, 949, 1016, 1291, 1312, 1323, 1339, 1401
 Pricing transparency—1404, 1559
 Public Health and Medical Preparedness, National Strategy for—1343
 Heritage Foundation—1409
 Hispanic Heritage Month, National—1298
 Historic Preservation, Advisory Council on—1609
 HIV/AIDS
See also specific country or region
 Domestic prevention and treatment strategy—1507
 Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, President's—924, 944, 996, 1233, 1507, 1543
 Holocaust Memorial Council, U.S.—1608
 Holy See (Vatican City), U.S. Ambassador—1617
 Homeland Security Council—1601
 Homeland Security, Department of
See also Defense and national security; Terrorism
 Acting Deputy Secretary—1614
 Chief Medical Officer—1603
 Customs and Border Protection, U.S.—998
 Emergency Management Agency, Federal—1604, 1609, 1615
 General Counsel—1613
 Health Affairs, Assistant Secretary for—1603
 Homeland security team, meeting with President—1604
 National Protection and Programs, Under Secretary for—1608
 Secretary—1193, 1615, 1622

Housing
 Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac corporations, reform—1058, 1529
 Foreclosure avoidance initiative—1152, 1156
 Homeownership—1150
 HOPE NOW Alliance—1528, 1532, 1558
 Housing market, decline—1058, 1214, 1527, 1558, 1587
 Mortgages and loan financing
 Counseling programs—1529
 Loan forgiveness and debt relief, legislation—1278
 Mortgage bonds, tax-exempt—1529
 Housing Administration, Federal
 FHAsecure program—1152, 1156, 1528, 1532, 1558
 Modernization legislation—1151, 1156, 1335, 1529, 1565, 1580
 Housing and Urban Development, Department of, Secretary—1527
 Housing Finance Board, Federal—1614
 Human rights
 Detainee Treatment Act of 2005—1407
 Torture, prohibition—1290
 Humanities, National Endowment for the—1472
 Hurricanes. *See* Disaster assistance; Natural disasters; *specific State or country*
 Hydrographic Organization, Convention on the International—1377
 Illinois
 Disaster assistance—1607, 1612
 U.S. Representative, retirement—1074
 Immigration and naturalization
See also Defense and national security; *specific country or region*
 American “melting pot”—938, 991, 1316
 Citizenship—937, 990, 1316
 Illegal immigration—936, 989, 990, 1266
 Reform—937, 990, 1066, 1267, 1272, 1315, 1316
 Temporary-worker program—937, 990, 1267, 1315
 Visa policy—935, 938, 970
 Visa Waiver Program—1040
 Independence Day—912, 913, 1599
 India
 Energy cooperation with U.S.—1026
 Nuclear energy—1026
 Prime Minister—1605
 Indiana
 Disaster assistance—1621
 One Southern Indiana organization—1463
 President's visit—1462, 1463, 1618

Indiana—Continued

Unemployment rate—1463

Indonesia

Defense cooperation with U.S.—1187

Education reforms—1187

Environment, protection efforts—1187

President—1187

Terrorist attacks—1142

U.S. assistance—1180

Intelligence, Office of the Director of National Director—1601

Principal Deputy Director—1600

Intelligence. *See* Defense and national security; *specific Federal agency*

Interior, Department of the

Park Service, National, Centennial Initiative—1357, 1358

Secretary—1615

International. *See other part of subject*

Iowa, disaster assistance—1610

Iran

Nuclear weapons development—905, 1049, 1060, 1119, 1214, 1270, 1273, 1284, 1330, 1332, 1374, 1437, 1440, 1443, 1447, 1455, 1458, 1479, 1515, 1516, 1520, 1521, 1524, 1525, 1538, 1565

President—1215, 1217, 1274

Relations with Afghanistan—1049

Relations with Iraq—1058, 1060, 1061

Terrorism, sponsorship—1049, 1058, 1060, 1118, 1120, 1334

U.S. national emergency, continuation—1453

Iraq

Benchmark assessment report—952, 965, 967, 1200

Blackwater USA incident—1221

Blocking property of persons who threaten stabilization efforts—979

Compact for Iraq, International—953

Democracy efforts—960, 1056, 1081, 1106, 1110, 1121, 1158, 1163, 1189, 1195, 1196, 1235, 1273, 1283, 1285, 1446, 1494, 1577

Former regime—1216, 1282

Government

President—1599, 1601, 1607, 1613

Prime Minister—1235, 1286, 1494, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1607, 1609, 1613, 1615, 1619

Vice Presidents—1599, 1601, 1607

Infrastructure and economic development—1418, 1494

Iraq—Continued

Insurgency and terrorist attacks—932, 957, 960, 977, 992, 993, 999, 1006–1008, 1019, 1060, 1074, 1105, 1107, 1112, 1119, 1120, 1146, 1149, 1162, 1182, 1195, 1202, 1205, 1272, 1283, 1285, 1366, 1417, 1495

International assistance—996, 1123, 1145, 1198

Iraqi military and security forces—952, 1196, 1418, 1495

Kurdistan region, President—1607

Military contractors, U.S.—1338

Multi-National Force—Iraq, commanding general—1222, 1608

Oil revenue legislation—1221

President Bush's visit—1157, 1159, 1188, 1608

Provincial Reconstruction Teams—966, 1074, 1154, 1205

Reconciliation efforts—957, 993, 1019, 1075, 1081, 1110, 1149, 1159, 1163, 1182, 1189, 1195, 1196, 1215, 1332, 1418

Reconstruction efforts—1056, 1075

Relations with Iran—1058, 1060, 1061

Sunni tribal and Provincial leaders, meeting with President Bush—1608

Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq—1620

U.S. journalists, casualties—1010

U.S. military forces

Casualties—982, 1124, 1198, 1366, 1417, 1450, 1601, 1616

Deployment—915, 916, 925, 932, 933, 951, 953, 954, 960, 961, 968, 992, 994, 1009, 1010, 1019, 1020, 1032, 1056, 1057, 1063, 1080, 1104, 1112, 1120, 1123, 1141, 1158–1160, 1162, 1167, 1189, 1192, 1195–1197, 1199, 1201, 1215, 1220, 1236, 1262, 1270, 1282, 1366, 1394, 1417, 1418, 1436, 1510, 1552, 1602, 1607

Funding—994, 1001, 1394, 1484

Ireland, Northern. *See* United Kingdom

Israel

See also Middle East

Gaza and West Bank, withdrawal of settlements—973

Prime Minister—1492, 1498, 1501, 1617, 1620

Italy

President—1538, 1614, 1622

Prime Minister—1615

Relations with U.S.—1538

Japan

- Afghanistan and Iraq, role—1479
- Energy cooperation with U.S.—1150, 1480
- Former Prime Minister—1604
- NHK Japan—1148
- North Korea, past abductions of Japanese citizens—1139, 1149, 1479
- Prime Minister—1186, 1478, 1609, 1618
- Relations with U.S.—1143, 1148, 1164, 1478
- U.S. beef imports—1480
- U.S. military forces, realignment—1479
- War on terror, role—1143, 1148, 1186

Jordan, King—1602

Judiciary

- Federal court nominations and confirmations—1328, 1384, 1415, 1477
- Fifth Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals for the—1384
- Judicial branch, independence—1476, 1477
- Judicial confirmation process—1477, 1478
- Supreme Court, Chief Justice—1603

Justice, Department of

- Acting Attorney General—1611
- Acting Deputy Attorney General—1601
- Assistant Attorneys General
 - Civil Division—1618
 - Civil Rights—1618
 - Tax Division—1618
- Associate Attorney General—1618
- Attorney General—1062, 1109, 1205, 1391, 1407, 1408, 1411, 1415, 1420, 1452, 1470, 1475, 1606, 1607, 1611
- Deputy Assistant Attorney General—1611
- Deputy Attorney General—1618
- Civil Rights, Acting Assistant Attorney General for—1621
- Violence Against Women, Office of—1603

Kansas, disaster assistance—1599, 1623

Kennedy Center. *See* Smithsonian Institution

Kentucky, President's visit—1618

Kosovo, KFOR international security force, U.S. military forces, deployment—1553

Kuwait, U.S. Ambassador—1614

Kwanzaa—1590

Kyoto Protocol. *See* Environment

Labor Day—1155

Labor, Department of

- Chief Financial Officer—1612
- Disability Employment Policy, Assistant Secretary for—1619
- Labor Statistics Commissioner—1611
- Solicitor—1608

Latvia, U.S. Ambassador—1620

Lebanon

- Army Staff Director for Operations, assassination—1544

- Blocking property of persons undermining sovereignty or democratic processes and institutions—1037

- Democracy efforts—1211

- Former Prime Minister, assassination—1277, 1287

- Lebanese military and security forces—1286

Parliament

- Assassination of Member—1211, 1220

- Member—1277

- Presidential election—1277, 1286, 1448, 1499, 1544, 1582

- Relations with Syria—1582

- Syrian occupation—1287, 1448

- Terrorist attacks—1277, 1286

- U.S. military assistance—1277, 1286

Legion, American—1116, 1461

Legislation, enacted

- America COMPETES Act—1053, 1064

- College Cost Reduction Access Act—1244

- Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008—1591

- Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2008—1468

- Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007—1569

- Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007—1200

- Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007—1040

- Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007—1541

- Internet Tax Freedom Act Amendments Act of 2007—1616

- Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007—1587

- Prevent taxation of payments from the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund to Virginia Tech victims and families—1571

- Protect America Act of 2007—1044

- Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007—1596

- To provide that the Great Hall of the Capitol Visitor Center shall be known as Emancipation Hall—1623

- United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act—1546

Legislation, proposed

- "Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007"—1276, 1541

- Legislation, proposed—Continued
“Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008”—1469
“National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008”—1592
“Water Resources Development Act of 2007”—1420
- Legislative Exchange Council, American—1012
- Liberia
Debt relief—1341
Education reform—1341
Former President—1000
Liberian refugees in the U.S., status—1193
Peace Corps, return—1342
President—1341, 1423, 1613
U.S. national emergency, continuation—1000
- Library of Congress, Book Festival Gala, National—1612
- Libya
Bulgarian nurses, release—1602
U.S. Ambassador—1600
- Lithuania, Vilnius Energy Security Conference in Vilnius—1613
- Louisiana
Civil rights issues—1217
Education officials, meeting with President—1607
Education system, Federal funding—1128
Governor-elect—1615
Hurricane Katrina, recovery efforts—1125, 1126
New Orleans
Elected officials and community leaders, meeting with President—1125
Levee system, improvements—1127
Rebuilding efforts—1130, 1487
Teachers—1129
President's visit—1125, 1126, 1130, 1607
Wetlands conservation and restoration—1127
- Maine
Disaster assistance—1604
President's visits—903, 904, 1068, 1599, 1605
- Malaria Initiative, President's—996, 1233
- Malaria. *See* Diseases
- Malaysia
Democracy efforts—1143
Independence, 50th anniversary—1606
Prime Minister—1143
Trade with U.S.—1143
- Management and Budget, Office of
Budget, Federal, Mid-Session Review—946
Director—1065, 1171, 1191, 1603
- March of Dimes—1603
- Marine Corps, U.S. *See* Navy, Department of the
- Maritime Commission, Federal—1603
- Maryland
Annapolis Conference. *See* Middle East
Fallen Firefighters Memorial, National, in Emmitsburg—1292
Man & Machine, Inc., in Landover—1601
National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda—1572, 1623
National Security Agency at Fort Meade—1210, 1611
Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel—1615
President's visits—980, 1028, 1045, 1210, 1292, 1357, 1360, 1496, 1506, 1572, 1599, 1601–1604, 1610, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1616, 1619, 1620, 1623, 1624
- Mauritania, U.S. Ambassador—1602
- Medal of Valor Review Board—1616
- Medals. *See* Decorations, medals, and awards
- Medical liability reform. *See* Health and medical care
- Medicare and Medicaid Services, Centers for. *See* Health and Human Services, Department of
- Medicare and Medicaid. *See* Health and medical care
- Mexico
Energy, cooperation with U.S.—1091, 1093
Hurricane Dean, damage and recovery efforts—1078
Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts—1087, 1088
President—1076, 1090, 1606
Relations with U.S.—1085, 1087, 1090
- Micronesia, disaster assistance—1603
- Middle East
See also Palestinian Authority and Palestinians; *specific country*
Annapolis Conference—1491, 1495, 1496
Peace and democracy efforts—971–973, 1229, 1269, 1270, 1288, 1333, 1491, 1492, 1496, 1498, 1499, 1501
President Bush's visit—1623
Quartet Representative—1611
Relations with U.S.—936, 1281
Terrorism—971, 974, 1270, 1498
U.S. assistance—1279
Women's rights—1289
- Millennium Challenge Corporation—1610
- Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, Federal—1622
- Minnesota
Disaster assistance—1606

Minnesota—Continued

Floods, damage and recovery efforts—1097

Governor—1603

Minneapolis

Interstate 35W bridge collapse—1038,
1041, 1042, 1054, 1097, 1487, 1603,
1604, 1606

Mayor—1603

President's visit—1042, 1097, 1604, 1606

Republican Party event—1606

Missile Defense Agency—1374

Mississippi

Hurricane Katrina, recovery efforts—1131,
1607

President's visit—1131, 1607

U.S. Senator

Appointment—1595

Retirement—1493

Missouri

Community leaders, meeting with President—
1098

Disaster assistance—1611, 1623, 1624

President's visit—1098, 1099, 1606

Monetary Fund, International—1599

Mongolia

President—1364, 1614, 1615

Relations with U.S.—1364

Trade with U.S.—1364

War on terror, role—1364

Montreal Protocol. *See* Environment

Mortgage Association, Government National—
1614

NAFTA. *See* Commerce, international

NASA. *See* Space program

National Guard, U.S. *See* Armed Forces, U.S.;
specific State

National security. *See* Defense and national se-
curity

National. *See other part of subject*

Native American rights and tribal sovereignty—
940

NATO. *See* North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Natural disasters

See also Disaster assistance; *specific State or*
country

California wildfires—1371, 1378, 1385, 1387,
1389–1391, 1615

Federal disaster response capabilities—940

Greece, wildfires—1611

Hurricane Dean—1078, 1605

Hurricane Katrina, second anniversary—1607

Midwest winter storms—1622

Minnesota, floods—1097

Natural disasters—Continued

Peru, earthquake—1605

Tropical Storm Erin—1605, 1613

Navy, Department of the

Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Assistant Sec-
retary for—1610

Marine Corps, U.S.—1199, 1454, 1610

National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda,
MD—1572, 1623

Naval Academy, U.S., in Annapolis, MD—
1620

NBC News—1608

Nebraska

Disaster assistance—1602, 1607

Omaha shootings—1527

OneWorld Community Health Centers in
Omaha—1526, 1621

President's visit—1525, 1526, 1621

Republican Party event—1621

U.S. senatorial candidate—1525

Nevada, President's visit—1116, 1607

New Freedom Initiative—1022

New Mexico

President's visit—1110, 1607

Republican Party event—1607

U.S. Senator, retirement—1278

New Year's Day—1596

New York

Disaster assistance—1599, 1607

New York City

Department of Education, Chancellor—
1612

Mayor—1242

School system, Broad Prize for Urban Edu-
cation—1241

President's visit—1229–1231, 1235, 1237–
1241, 1611, 1612

Republican Party event—1612

New York Times—1611

News & World Report, U.S.—1600, 1611

NewsMax magazine—1611

News media. *See* Communications

Nigeria

Democracy efforts—1542

Education reform—1542

President—1542, 1621

U.S. Ambassador—1600

No Child Left Behind Act. *See* Education

North American Competitiveness Council—
1090, 1606

North American Free Trade Agreement. *See*
Commerce, international

North Atlantic Treaty Organization—1579

- North Carolina, Ocean Isle Beach fire, student deaths—1414
- North Dakota, disaster assistance—1601, 1609
- Northern Ireland. *See* United Kingdom
- North Korea
- Ballistic missiles, testing—1374
 - Chairman—1184, 1545
 - Japanese citizens, past abductions—1139, 1149, 1479
 - Nuclear weapons development—1136, 1138, 1140, 1149, 1165, 1183, 1216, 1273, 1275, 1331, 1479, 1545, 1613
- Nuclear energy. *See* Energy; *specific country*
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission—1621
- Nuclear Security Administration, National. *See* Energy, Department of
- Nuclear weapons. *See* Arms and munitions; *specific country*
- Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission—1612
- Office. *See other part of subject*
- Ohio
- Cleveland
 - Cleveland Clinic—1600
 - Community leaders, meeting with President—1600 - Disaster assistance—1607
 - GrafTech International Ltd. in Parma—925
 - Greater Cleveland Partnership—926
 - President's visits—926, 1600, 1616
 - Republican Party event—1616
 - U.S. Representative-elect—1622
 - U.S. Representatives, retirements—1073, 1307
 - Unemployment rate—930
- Oklahoma, disaster assistance—1600, 1606, 1608, 1622, 1623
- Olympic games. *See* Sports; *specific country*
- OPIC. *See* Overseas Private Investment Corporation
- Oregon, disaster assistance—1622
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation—1600, 1611
- Pakistan
- Counterterrorism efforts—1003
 - Defense relationship with U.S.—1047, 1054, 1055
 - Democracy efforts—1459
 - Former Prime Minister, assassination—1592, 1624
 - Parliamentary elections—1054, 1427, 1428, 1445
 - President—1054, 1427, 1428, 1445, 1457, 1459, 1605, 1617, 1619, 1624
- Pakistan—Continued
- Relations with Afghanistan—1046
 - Relations with U.S.—935, 1459
 - U.S. journalist, death—1534
 - War on terror, role—1457, 1459
- Palestinian Authority and Palestinians
- See also* Middle East
 - Ad Hoc Liaison Committee—973
 - Democracy and reform efforts—971–973, 1288
 - Gaza and West Bank, withdrawal of Israeli settlements—973
 - President—1229, 1492, 1498, 1501, 1620
 - U.S. assistance—972, 1288
 - U.S.-Palestinian Public-Private Partnership—1512
- Panama, free trade agreement with U.S.—1305, 1308
- Park Service, National. *See* Interior, Department of the
- PATRIOT Act, USA. *See* USA PATRIOT Act
- Pennsylvania
- President's visits—1012, 1257, 1602, 1613, 1616
 - Republican Party event—1616
 - West Nickel Mines Amish School, shootings in Nickel Mines—1259
- People magazine—1619
- Peru
- Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts—1605
 - Economic growth and development—1547
 - Free trade agreement with U.S.—919, 1248, 1304, 1308, 1451, 1514, 1519, 1524, 1546
 - President—1546, 1622, 1623
 - Trade with U.S.—1547
- Philippines, counterterrorism efforts—1180
- Poland
- Afghanistan and Iraq, role—970
 - Ambassador to Iraq—1617
 - Economic growth and development—970
 - President—970, 1601
 - Visa policy, U.S.—970
- Portugal
- Afghanistan and Iraq, role—1207
 - Prime Minister—1207, 1607
 - Relations with U.S.—1207
 - U.S. Ambassador—1610
- Presidency, U.S.
- Agenda—1442
 - Emergency Board No. 242, Presidential—1620
 - Ford, former President Gerald R.—1065

- Presidency, U.S.—Continued
 - Powers and duties, temporary transfer—1003, 1004
- President. *See other part of subject*
- Proliferation Security Initiative—1141
- Ramadan—1193, 1279
 - Reconstruction and Development, International Bank for. *See* World Bank
- Red Cross, American—1619
- Religious leaders
 - See also specific country, State, or position*
 - Meetings with President—1533, 1606, 1614
- Republican Party
 - See also specific State*
 - Republican Governors Association—1615
 - Republican National Committee—1355, 1605, 1611, 1614, 1616, 1621
- Review, National—1600, 1611
- Roman Catholic Church. *See* Holy See (Vatican City)
- Rosh Hashanah—1175
- Russia
 - Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with U.S.—1373
 - Democracy efforts—1575
 - Economic reform and growth—908
 - Human rights issues—906, 1441, 1493
 - Nuclear energy, cooperation with U.S.—910
 - Parliamentary elections—1522
 - President—904, 906, 910, 1185, 1336, 1441, 1575, 1599, 1621
 - Relations with U.S.—904, 907, 910, 1335, 1375, 1441, 1443, 1522, 1615
- Saint Lucia, Prime Minister—1192, 1610
- Saudi Arabia
 - King—1288
 - Relations with U.S.—1289
 - Sexual assault case—1518
- Security Agency, National—1210, 1611
- Security Council, National—1601, 1605, 1614, 1621
- Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee, President's National—1600
- Senegal, U.S. Ambassador—1622
- Service and Civic Participation, President's Council on—1605
- Singapore, free trade agreement with U.S.—1303
- Slavery (historical) in U.S.—1486
- Slovakia, U.S. Ambassador—1609
- Slovenia, U.S. Ambassador—1602, 1622
- Smithsonian Institution, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—1610, 1621
- Social Security reform—943, 949, 1016, 1218, 1442
- South Carolina
 - Charleston Air Force Base in Charleston—1005, 1602
 - Charleston firefighters, deaths—1602
 - Fort Jackson Army Base
 - Fit To Win course—1617
 - U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School—1617
 - President's visits—1005, 1414, 1416, 1602, 1616
 - Republican Party event—1616
- South Korea
 - Free trade agreement with U.S.—1306, 1308, 1431, 1548
 - President—1183, 1613
- Space program
 - Aeronautics and Space Administration, National—934
 - Moon exploration—934
 - Shuttle—1617, 1618
- Space Station, International—1618
- Special Olympics. *See* Sports
- Sports
 - 2008 Olympic games—1174
 - Baseball—903, 969, 1545, 1599, 1604, 1616
 - Golf—1617, 1620
 - Little League—1616
 - NCAA championship teams—1224
 - Pan American games—1600
 - Special Olympics—1021, 1611
 - Tee-ball—968
- State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). *See* Health and Human Services, Department of
- State, Department of
 - Afghanistan, U.S. Coordinator for—1604
 - Ambassadors. *See specific country*
 - Arms Control and International Security, Acting Under Secretary for—1612
- Assistant Secretaries
 - Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor—1623
 - East Asian and Pacific Affairs—1612
 - Education and Cultural Affairs—1618
 - International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs—1601
 - Political-Military Affairs—1600
- Civilian Reserve Corps—1154
- Deputy Secretary—1619
- Foreign policy team, meeting with President—1604

State, Department of—Continued

Provincial Reconstruction Teams—966, 1074, 1154, 1205

Public Diplomacy, U.S. Advisory Commission on—1617

Secretary—1495, 1604, 1608, 1612, 1615

Under Secretaries

Management—1614

Public Diplomacy—1622

States, Organization of American—1621

Sudan

African Union, peacekeeping efforts—1238

Darfur, conflict and human rights crisis—997, 1029, 1233, 1237, 1238, 1394, 1596

First Vice President—1618

Peace efforts—997, 1394

Sanctions, U.S.—997

U.S. national emergency, continuation—1414

Supreme Court. *See* Judiciary

Syria

Damascus Declaration, National Council of the—1551

Democracy efforts—1551

Human rights issues—1551

President—1582

Relations with Lebanon—1582

Troops and intelligence officers in Lebanon—1287

Taxation

Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)—1466, 1484, 1509, 1511, 1514, 1532, 1558, 1573

Mortgage bonds, tax-exempt—1529

Tax Code

Housing provision, reform—1152, 1156, 1278, 1335, 1529, 1559, 1587

Reform—1061

Tax relief—917, 927, 928, 946, 948, 949, 983, 984, 1013–1015, 1050–1052, 1107, 1113, 1125, 1191, 1214, 1217, 1228, 1253, 1259, 1275, 1290, 1301, 1311, 1399, 1404, 1442, 1464, 1556, 1563, 1576, 1584, 1595

Tennessee

Nashville Bun Company in Nashville—1601

President's visits—982, 1601, 1614

Republican Party event—1614

Tennessee Valley Authority—1600

Terrorism

See also Defense and national security; *specific country or region*

Abu Sayyaf terrorist group—1179

Terrorism—Continued

Al Qaida terrorist group—915, 958, 961, 964, 977, 992, 993, 1002, 1003, 1006–1010, 1019, 1047, 1055, 1067, 1182, 1186, 1332, 1418, 1457, 1459

Communications, interception—995, 1412, 1574

Counterterrorism efforts—995, 1002, 1039, 1041, 1119, 1319, 1372, 1373, 1553

Counterterrorism team, meeting with President—1039, 1604

Global threat—1009, 1179

Jemaah Islamiya (JI) terrorist group—1185

Maritime Terrorism, Convention on the Prevention of—1257

Persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism, U.S. national emergency—1223

September 11, 2001, attacks—1017, 1192, 1289, 1410, 1610

Terrorist attacks, U.S. national emergency—1194

Terrorists

Detention, conditions—1290, 1407, 1408, 1411

Interrogation procedures—1575

Prosecution—1059

Texas

Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, Center for the Intrepid—1449, 1617

Disaster assistance—1605, 1612

President's visits—1109, 1449, 1453, 1455, 1461, 1605–1607, 1614, 1617, 1618, 1624

Republican Party events—1617

Thanksgiving—1485, 1487, 1488, 1490, 1619

Tibet, Dalai Lama—1329, 1340, 1614

Trade agreements or negotiations. *See* Commerce, international; *specific country or region*

Trade and Development Agency, U.S.—1619

Trade and Investment, White House Forum on International—1430

Trade Policy and Negotiations, Advisory Committee for—1608, 1622

Trade Representative, Office of the U.S.—1623

Trade. *See* Business and industry; Commerce, international

Transportation

Gasoline taxes, reduction—1313, 1564

Highway system modernization efforts, funding—1313, 1564

Transportation, Department of

Governmental Affairs, Assistant Secretary for—1613

- Transportation, Department of—Continued
 - Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration—1616
 - Secretary—1246, 1473, 1603
 - Surface Transportation Board—1620
- Transportation Safety Board, National—1616
- Treasury, Department of the
 - Inspector General—1618
 - Internal Revenue Commissioner—1619
 - International Affairs, Assistant Secretary for—1618
 - Secretary—1527
- Troopers Coalition, National—1618
- Turkey
 - Defense relationship with U.S.—1427
 - Iraq, Turkish military forces, deployment—1328, 1429
 - Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)—1427, 1429
 - Parliamentary elections—1602
 - President—1607, 1615, 1624
 - Prime Minister—1427, 1602, 1616
 - Relations with Armenia—1298, 1328
 - Relations with U.S.—1298
- Uganda
 - HIV/AIDS epidemic, prevention and treatment—1394
 - President—1394, 1614
 - Trade with U.S.—1394
- UNESCO. *See* United Nations
- United Arab Emirates, President—1601
- United Kingdom
 - Afghanistan and Iraq, role—1028
 - Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty, U.S.-U.K.—1223
 - Glasgow, Scotland, attempted terrorist attacks—903
 - Iraq, British military forces, deployment—1032, 1146
 - Juniper Communications—1603
 - London, attempted terrorist attacks—903
 - Northern Ireland
 - Deputy First Minister—1531, 1618
 - First Minister—1531, 1618
 - U.S. business interests—1531
 - U.S. Special Envoy—1608
 - Prime Minister—1028, 1035, 1602, 1603, 1612
 - Relations with U.S.—1034
 - Terrorist attacks, prevention—1410
- United Nations
 - Democracy and human rights, promotion efforts—1232
- United Nations—Continued
 - Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—1603
 - General Assembly—1231, 1610, 1612
 - Human Rights Council—1235
 - Human Rights, Universal Declaration of—1231
 - Iraq, International Compact for—953
 - Kyoto Protocol. *See* Environment
 - Nuclear Terrorism, International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of—966
 - Reform—1235, 1439
 - Secretary-General—976, 1240, 1600, 1612, 1616
 - Security Council—1235, 1237, 1439, 1460
 - Sudan, role—997, 1238
 - U.S. Mission to the U.N. staff, meeting with President Bush—1612
- United Service Organizations, Inc.—1620
- U.S. *See other part of subject*
- USA Freedom Corps. *See* Freedom Corps, USA
- USAID. *See* Development, U.S. Agency for International
- USA PATRIOT Act—995, 1372
- Utah
 - Crandall Canyon Mine, accident—1050, 1157, 1604, 1605
 - Governor—1604
- Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission—1616
- Vatican. *See* Holy See (Vatican City)
- Venezuela, democracy efforts—1521
- Vermont, disaster assistance—1604
- Veterans Affairs, Department of
 - Funding—1099, 1117, 1326, 1328, 1454
 - Human Resources and Management, Assistant Secretary for—1610
 - Secretary—978, 1396, 1454, 1551, 1585, 1616
 - Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center—1071
- Veterans Day—1454, 1461
- Veterans of Foreign Wars—1099
- Vice President. *See* White House Office
- Virginia
 - Berkeley Plantation in Charles City—1485, 1486, 1619
 - Central Virginia Foodbank in Richmond—1487, 1619
 - Marine Corps Base Quantico in Quantico—1199, 1610
 - President George Washington's estate in Mount Vernon—1617

Virginia—Continued

President's visits—918, 1199, 1254, 1444, 1485, 1505, 1555, 1599, 1601, 1612, 1617, 1619, 1620, 1623

U.S. Representative-elect—1622

U.S. Senator, retirement—1155

Virginia Tech shootings—1487, 1571

Visa policy, U.S. *See* Immigration and naturalization; *specific country*

Voluntarism—1569

Wall Street Journal—1613

Washington

Disaster assistance—1622

President's visit—1110, 1607

Republican Party event—1110

Washington, DC. *See* District of Columbia

Washington Post—1600, 1601, 1611

Washington Times—1611

Weapons of mass destruction. *See* Arms and munitions

Weekly Standard—1600, 1611

West Virginia

National Guard, deployment—913

President's visit—912, 1599

Western Hemisphere

See also Central America; Commerce, international; Developing countries

U.S. assistance—919

White House

Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, fire—1623

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, renovation—945

White House Office

Assistants to the President

Advance, Deputy Director of—1331

Advance and Operations, Deputy Assistant for—1611

Advance for Press, Deputy Director of—1601

Biological Defense Policy Senior Director—1620

Communications Director—1622

Communications, Special Assistant for—1602

Communications for Policy and Planning, Deputy Director of—1620

Communications for Production, Deputy Director of—1611

Chief of Staff—1612

Chief of Staff, Deputy, and Senior Adviser—1072

White House Office—Continued

Assistants to the President—Continued

Counsel to the President, Associate—1601, 1605

Counsel to the President, Senior Associate—1614

Counselor to the President—1600

Cybersecurity and Information Sharing Policy, Senior Director of—1620

Domestic Policy—1605, 1614

Domestic Policy, Deputy Assistant for—1605

Economic Policy—1621

Homeland Security, Special Assistants—1601, 1620

Homeland Security and Counterterrorism—1488

Intergovernmental Affairs—1601

International Economic Affairs—1621

Iraq and Afghanistan Policy Implementation, Senior Director of—1605

Iraq and Afghanistan, Strategic Planning and Policy Development, Senior Director of—1601

Legislative Affairs—1549, 1601, 1602

National Security Adviser—1612

National Security Adviser, Deputy—1603

Political Affairs, Deputy Director for—1620

Presidential Personnel—1609

Presidential Personnel, Deputy Director of—1614

Presidential Personnel, Director of—982

Press Secretary—1153

Press Secretary, Deputy—1621

Regional Affairs, Deputy National Security Adviser for—1601

Russia, Senior Director for—1605

Speechwriting—1550

Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs—1609, 1616, 1622

Strategic Initiatives Director—1609

Trip Director—1602

Counsel to the President, Office of, Executive Secretary—1609

Economic Council, National—1502, 1621

Vice President—1612, 1615, 1623

Vice President, Office of the, former Chief of Staff—908, 910, 959, 1062

Wisconsin, disaster assistance—1607

World AIDS Day—1506, 1620

World Bank—1618

World Health Organization—1623

Subject Index

Wounded Warriors, President's Commission on
Care for America's Returning—1010, 1011,
1071, 1317, 1318, 1324, 1326, 1328, 1337,
1397, 1449, 1454, 1566, 1586

Yom Kippur—1222

Young Presidents' Organization—1227

Zimbabwe
Democracy and human rights issues—1233
U.S. Ambassador—1602

Name Index

- Aaronovitch, David—1603
 Abbas, Mahmoud—971–974, 1229, 1269, 1288, 1334, 1491, 1492, 1495–1499, 1501, 1620
 Abd Al-Mahdi, Adil—958, 1110, 1158, 1189, 1286, 1599, 1601, 1607
 Abdel Rahman, Omar Ahmed Ali—1206, 1421
 Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi—1143, 1180
 Abe, Shinzo—934, 994, 1020, 1113, 1139, 1143, 1148, 1149, 1163, 1186, 1609
 Abizaid, John P.—1141
 Abu Daqqa, Tahani—1512, 1513
 Adams, John D.—1605
 Adelson, Sheldon G.—1622
 Adelstein, Jonathan S.—1620, 1632
 Ahmadi-nejad, Mahmud—1060, 1123, 1215, 1217, 1274, 1284, 1333, 1516, 1518, 1520
 Akin, W. Todd—1371
 Alegria Gallo, Vivian—922, 923
 Alexander, Keith B.—1210
 Alexander, Lamar—1053, 1224, 1244, 1614
 Alfonso, Olga—1380
 Alito, Martha-Ann—1476, 1477
 Alito, Samuel A., Jr.—1109, 1415, 1476, 1477, 1550
 Allen, Thad W.—1023, 1536, 1585
 Almond, Lincoln D.—1477, 1631
 Ameri, Goli—1618, 1631
 Anderson, A. Paul—1603, 1626
 Anderson, Douglas—1621
 Anderson, Jeff—1198
 Anderson, Sam—1462
 Anderson, Stanley T.—1628
 Anderson, Tracy—1198
 Andrews, Robert E.—1152, 1587
 Ansley, Judith—1601
 Anwar, Javaid—1612
 Armstrong, Mother Benedict de la Passion—1569
 Arrizurieta, Jorge L.—1608
 Asad, Bashar al- —1123, 1287, 1582
 Ashcroft, John D.—1470
 Asman, David—1618
 Atkins, Rodney—1483
 Aung San Suu Kyi—1134, 1164, 1181, 1232, 1321, 1354, 1355, 1479, 1540
 Awani, Mamoun Sami Rashid Al- —1195
 Ba'asyir, Abu Bakar—1142
 Babineau, Gary—1042
 Bagge, Christian—1450, 1451
 Bagley, Elizabeth F.—1617, 1630
 Baier, Bret—1611, 1618
 Bailey, John P.—1614
 Balch, Stephen H.—1472
 Baldrige, Tom—1258
 Ballard, Greg—1463, 1465
 Ban Ki-moon—976, 997, 1231, 1235, 1237, 1240, 1394, 1495, 1496, 1600, 1612, 1616
 Banks, Ernie—1611
 Barbour, Haley R.—1131, 1132, 1595
 Barbour, Marsha D.—1131
 Barco Isakson, Carolina—1535, 1536, 1546
 Barkoff, Benjamin—1470
 Barkoff, Corey—1470
 Barkoff, Jessica—1470
 Barkoff, William—1470
 Barnes, Fred—1600
 Barnum, Harvey C. “Barney,” Jr.—1369
 Barone, Michael—1600, 1611
 Barr, William P.—1476
 Barrett, Craig R.—1608
 Barrett, J. Gresham—946
 Barrett, Mario D.—969
 Bartiromo, Maria—1613
 Bartlett, Daniel J.—1600
 Bartlett, Roscoe G.—1293
 Barzani, Masoud—1110, 1158, 1189, 1607
 Basham, W. Ralph—1267
 Bashir, Umar Hassan Ahmad al- —1238
 Baucus, Max S.—1587
 Bauer, Andre—1005
 Bauknight, Leslie—1005
 Bauknight, Mark—1005
 Beals, Melba Pattillo—1239
 Beck, Thomas M.—1633, 1634
 Becker, Gary S.—1422
 Becker, Grace C.—1475, 1618, 1621, 1631
 Belmar, Adam—1611
 Bement, Arden L., Jr.—1024
 Bench, Johnny L.—1616
 Benko, Katy—1208
 Benko, Ryan—1208
 Bennett, Lew, III—1616
 Bergman, Cynthia—1602
 Bernanke, Ben S.—1217, 1527

- Bernhardt, David L.—1600
Bernicat, Marcia S.B.—1622, 1633
Berry, Nabih—1448
Beyer, Wayne C.—1634
Bhatia, Karan K.—1606
Bhutto, Benazir—1459, 1592, 1624
Bierman, Brock D.—1604
Billbray, Brian P.—1385, 1386, 1389
Bingaman, Jesse F. “Jeff,” Jr.—1053, 1570
bin Laden, Usama—958, 977, 992, 1006–1008, 1010, 1019, 1100, 1104, 1112, 1179, 1263, 1410, 1413, 1418
Biscet, Winnie—1422
Biscet Gonzalez, Oscar Elias—1383, 1422, 1423
Bishop, Timothy H.—1369
Blahous, Charles P., III—1621
Blair, Anita K.—1610, 1629
Blair, Tony—972, 1495, 1496, 1611
Blanco, Kathleen Babineaux—1125–1130
Blank, Krist—1259
Blankley, Tony—1611
Blaya, Joaquin F.—1614, 1629
Blitzer, Wolf—1620
Bloomberg, Michael R.—1241–1243
Blum, H. Steven—1388
Blunt, Roy—1192
Bodman, Samuel W.—1569, 1570
Boehner, John A.—1044, 1576
Bolling, Bill—1485
Bolten, Joshua B.—1028, 1613
Bomar, Mary A.—1530
Bond, Christopher S. “Kit”—1044, 1100
Bonds, Barry L.—1604
Bonner, Josiah R., Jr.—946
Booth, Edmund A., Jr.—1631
Boozman, John—1310, 1313
Borlaug, Norman E.—975
Boucher, Richard A.—1634
Boulware, Mark M.—1602, 1626
Bouteflika, Abdelaziz—1623
Box, John G.—1621
Brady, Kevin P.—1546
Branca, Ralph T.J.—969
Brandenberger, Joel—1489
Braunstein, Todd F.—1605
Bresland, John S.—1600, 1625
Brock, Roslyn McCallister—969
Brooks, Dan—1225
Brooks, David—1611
Brooks, Irene B.—1623
Broumand, Clifton—981
Brower, Gregory A.—1631
Brown, Derek—914
Brown, Gordon—903, 1028, 1146, 1602, 1603, 1612
Brown, Henry E., Jr.—1005
Brown, Janice Rogers—1477
Brownback, Sam D.—1470
Bruno, Hal—1293
Bryant, Phil—1131
Burch, Therese—1614
Burns, Brad—1358
Burns, Raymond M.—1310
Burns, William J.—1634
Burt, Robert F.—1369
Bush, Barbara—921, 982, 1069, 1185
Bush, Barbara P.—1068, 1272, 1289
Bush, George H.W.—903, 934, 982, 994, 1020–1022, 1068, 1069, 1113, 1133, 1185, 1263, 1270, 1310, 1320
Bush, George P.—1600
Bush, Jeb—1302
Bush, Jenna—1068, 1272, 1289, 1485, 1508, 1613
Bush, Laura—903, 912, 916, 918, 919, 922, 926, 945, 946, 950, 951, 969, 978, 982, 996, 1004, 1005, 1012, 1020–1022, 1038, 1041, 1045, 1068–1070, 1073, 1074, 1111, 1125–1127, 1129–1133, 1155–1157, 1162, 1174–1176, 1186, 1190, 1192, 1193, 1208, 1209, 1212, 1241, 1243, 1258, 1278, 1279, 1281, 1292, 1301, 1307, 1320, 1321, 1341, 1342, 1354, 1355, 1357, 1360, 1362, 1364, 1390, 1398, 1406, 1414, 1422, 1423, 1426, 1434, 1453, 1463, 1469, 1471–1473, 1482, 1485, 1488, 1489, 1493, 1502, 1506, 1508, 1512, 1513, 1526, 1530, 1531, 1534, 1535, 1540, 1550, 1555, 1556, 1569, 1573, 1589–1592, 1597
Butler, Susan—912
Butler, Terry L.—912
Byrd, Robert C.—1340
Cabral, Anna Escobedo—1298
Cabral, Victor G.—1298
Cade, Gregory B.—1293
Calderon, Justin—1537
Calderon Hinojosa, Felipe de Jesus—1076, 1090, 1359, 1536, 1606
Caldwell, William B., IV—1100
Campagna, Dianna—1609
Campbell, Charles C.—1116
Campbell, Michael E.—1608
Canterbury, Kenneth C., Jr.—1616
Cantor, Eric—1485, 1555, 1558, 1563
Canu, Mariano—919
Capecchi, Mario R.—1619
Capito, Charles L., Jr.—912

- Capito, Shelley Moore—912
 Capka, J. Richard—1038, 1041
 Carlson, Brian L.—1416
 Carlton, Dennis W.—1603, 1626
 Carman, Virginia—1100
 Carmony, Paul—1618
 Carnegie, Georgina—1599
 Carper, Thomas C.—1618, 1631
 Carson, Julia M.—1555
 Cartwright, James E. “Hoss”—1208, 1371, 1427
 Cartwright, Sandee—1208
 Casey, Germaine—1116, 1607
 Casey, Lisa—1116, 1607
 Casey, Pat—1224
 Castillo, Guillermo—1546
 Castro Ruz, Fidel—1232, 1299, 1307, 1379
 Cavuto, Neil P.—1604
 Chabot, Steve—1616
 Chao, Elaine L.—1476, 1585, 1621
 Chase, Leah—1125
 Chealander, Steven R.—1616, 1630
 Cheney, Dick—908, 1154, 1191, 1192, 1208, 1254, 1360, 1368, 1398, 1489, 1585, 1587, 1612, 1615, 1623
 Cheney, Lynne V.—1192, 1254, 1472, 1615
 Chertoff, Michael—941, 1066, 1371, 1534, 1615, 1619, 1622
 Chilufya, Martha—1508
 Choksy, Jamsheed K.—1634
 Chryst, Dana—1258, 1259
 Chryst, Jay—1258, 1259
 Ciafardini, Andrew D.—1601
 Cipolla, Vin—1530
 Clark, David M.—1614
 Clarke, Victoria—1617, 1630
 Clausen, Matthew N.—921, 922
 Cleaver, Emanuel, II—1100
 Clement, Paul D.—1109, 1207
 Clemons, Kortney—1325
 Clinton, William J.—1303–1305
 Cloud, John A.—1613
 Cobb, Charles E.—1302
 Cochran, Andrew R.—1603, 1626, 1629
 Cochran, W. Thad—946
 Cody, Richard A.—1585
 Cohen, Robert F., Jr.—1622, 1633
 Coldebella, Gus P.—1613, 1629
 Cole, Bruce—1472
 Coleman, Norm—1042, 1043, 1097, 1098, 1606
 Collins, Arthur D., Jr.—1608
 Collins, Francis S.—1423, 1424
 Colom Caballeros, Alvaro—1618
 Comparetto, Elizabeth—948
 Comparetto, Gary—948
 Compean, Jose A.—998
 Compton, Ann—945
 Compton, John—1192, 1610
 Connaughton, James L.—1249
 Conner, Charles F.—1212, 1406, 1430, 1546, 1615
 Connot, Martha—1621
 Conrad, Robert J., Jr.—1625
 Cornyn, John—1617
 Cosgrove, Delos M. “Toby”—926, 928, 929
 Cotton, Reginald W.—1416
 Craddick, Christi—1012
 Craddick, Nadine—1012
 Craddick, Tom—1012, 1016, 1017
 Crawford, Edward F.—1620
 Cretz, Gene A.—1600, 1625
 Crocker, Ryan C.—915, 952, 953, 966, 967, 993, 999, 1056, 1058, 1060, 1081, 1122, 1123, 1154, 1158, 1167, 1189, 1190, 1192, 1195–1197, 1199, 1201, 1205, 1328, 1336, 1608
 Cronin, JoAnn—1116
 Crowley, Candy—1522
 Cummings, Julie F.—1603, 1626
 Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—1165, 1329, 1340, 1614
 Daly, Jim—1606
 Danforth, John C.—997
 Daroff, William C.—1608
 d’Arvor, Patrick Poivre—1435, 1446
 Davis, Charles E., II—1292
 Davis, Charles E., III—1292
 Davis, Christopher—1124
 Davis, Christopher—1292
 Davis, Guy “Buck”—1124
 Davis, Jeff—1566
 Davis, Jo Ann—1292
 Davis, Mark S.—1477, 1631
 Davis, Tess—1124
 Dayton, Keith W.—972
 de Boer, Yvo—1249
 Dee, Pat—1607
 Delahunt, William—1610, 1628
 Delbanco, Dawn Ho—1634
 Deschamps, Marie M.H.—923, 924
 Diaz, Manuel A.—1302
 Diaz-Balart, Lincoln—1302, 1307, 1379
 Diaz-Balart, Mario—1302, 1307, 1379
 Dickerson, Karen—1023
 Dignazio, Joe—1569
 Dimenstein, Gilberto—923
 Dingell, John D., Jr.—1570
 Dobriansky, Paula J.—1608, 1627
 Doherty, Peter—945

- Dolan, Timothy—1042
Dole, Robert J.—1010, 1011, 1071, 1072, 1317, 1324–1326, 1328, 1337, 1397, 1449, 1450, 1454, 1551, 1566, 1586
Domenici, Nancy—1278
Domenici, Pete V.—954, 955, 1053, 1278, 1570, 1607
Dominick, Chris—1508
Donohue, Mary O.—1628
Donohue, Thomas J.—1608
Dooley, Calvin M.—1398, 1399
Douglass, Madonna C.—1612
Dow, Robert M., Jr.—1626
Dower, John W.—1102
Downs, Catherine—983, 1601
Downs, J. Kevin—983, 1601
Downs, Joe—983, 1601
Duehring, Craig W.—1618, 1631
Dujanah, Abu—1179
Dummermuth, Matt M.—1634
Duncan, Neil—1011, 1012
Duncan, Robert M. “Mike”—1356
Dungy, Anthony K.—1605
Dunn, Bryant—1175
Dunn, Jennifer Blackburn—1175
Dunn, Reagan—1175
Durbin, Richard J.—1468
Dybul, Mark R.—1506
Dyer, Cynthia—1603, 1626
Eckford, Elizabeth—1239
Edelman, Eric S.—1613
Edwards, Thomas C. “Chet”—1461, 1585, 1586
Egland, Eric—1002
Ehlers, Vernon J.—1053
Eid, Talal Y.—1606
Eisenberg, Judith A.—1610
El Hajj, Francois—1544
Emanuel, Rahm—1213
Enders, Joy—915
England, Gordon—1071, 1369, 1467, 1505, 1615
Engle, Karen—1538
Enkhbayar, Nambaryn—1364, 1614, 1615
Ensign, John E.—1053
Enzi, Michael B.—1244, 1576
Erdogan, Recep Tayyip—1123, 1408, 1427, 1602, 1616
Espinal Jacobo, Flavio Dario—1546
Esser, Luke—1111
Estefan, Emilio, Jr.—1298
Fallin, Mary—1398
Fallon, William J. “Fox”—1201, 1277, 1286, 1608
Farris, Gerris—1600
Favre, Edward A.—1131, 1132
Fayyad, Salam—971–973, 1229, 1288, 1498, 1499
Feinstein, Dianne—1044, 1340, 1385–1387, 1389
Fenwick, George—1358
Fernandez, Mariano—1546
Fernandez de Kirchner, Cristina E.—1616, 1621
Feulner, Edwin J.—1409
Filip, Mark R.—1475, 1618, 1632
Finnerty, Kathleen—1126, 1128
Fischer, Chris—1615
Fischer, Melissa—1615
Fitzgerald, Patrick J.—908, 959
Fleischer, Yitzchok “Jules”—1608
Flores Bermudez, Roberto—1546
Fondren, Walter W., III—1361
Forbes, J. Randy—1485
Ford, Nelson M.—1621
Ford, Susan E.—1025
Frank, Barney—1565
Franks, Tommy R.—960
Frans, Luke R.—1620
Freedman, Russell—1472
Freeman, Darrell, Sr.—982, 986
Freeman, Roger P.—1530
Frist, William H.—1610, 1628
Fryzel, Michael E.—1620, 1632
Fuchs, Lynn S.—1611
Fukuda, Yasuo—1478, 1618, 1619
Gambari, Ibrahim Agboola—1355
Garcia, John A.—1609
Garcia, Robert—1245
Garcia, Shirlen—1298, 1321, 1380, 1613
Garcia Antunez, Damaris—1380
Garcia Paneque, Jose Luis—1298, 1300, 1321, 1380, 1613
Garcia Perez, Alan—1546, 1622, 1623
Gardner, Ronald J.—1621
Gargano, Charles A.—1617, 1630
Garner, James E., Sr.—1463
Gastright, John A., Jr.—1604, 1627, 1632
Gates, Robert M.—953, 955, 962, 992, 1010, 1011, 1071, 1154, 1158, 1201, 1205, 1216, 1254, 1256, 1324, 1333, 1479, 1505, 1509, 1511, 1566, 1585, 1604, 1608, 1615, 1619
Gearan, Mark D.—1603, 1627
Geddes, Leslie A.—1026
Geissinger, Spencer—1611
Geren, Preston M. “Pete,” III—1208, 1369
Gerlach, Jim—1012
Getchell, E. Duncan, Jr.—1628
Ghafari, Yousif B.—1622, 1633

- Ghanem, Antoine—1211, 1220
 Gibbons, James A.—1116
 Gibson, Charles—1619
 Gibson, John H.—1616, 1630
 Gilchrest, Wayne T.—1361
 Gilliland, Thomas C.—1600, 1625
 Gillmor, Karen L.—1174
 Gillmor, Paul E.—1174
 Gioia, Anthony H.—1608
 Gioia, Dana—1472
 Girard-diCarlo, David F.—1610
 Glassman, James K.—1622, 1633
 Glendon, Mary Ann—1617, 1630
 Glenn, Gary D.—1634
 Goldman, Marc S.—1608
 Gonzales, Alberto R.—1062, 1109, 1128, 1206, 1298, 1471, 1607
 Gonzales, Gabriel—1109, 1471
 Gonzales, Graham—1109, 1471
 Gonzales, Jared—1109, 1471
 Gonzales, Rebecca Turner—1109, 1206, 1471, 1607
 Gonzalez, Marlenis—1380
 Gonzalez, Melissa—1380
 Gonzalez Alfonso, Ricardo—1380
 Gonzalez Tanquero, Jorge Luis—1380
 Gordon, Barton J.—1053, 1249, 1570
 Gore, Albert A., Jr.—1580, 1619
 Gorton, Sally—1111
 Gorton, T. Slade, III—1111
 Gough, Kay—1133
 Graham, Daniel R. “Bob”—1304
 Graham, Lindsey O.—1005, 1415, 1416, 1470, 1616
 Graham, William F.—1606
 Gramm, Phil—1622
 Grant, Harriet—909
 Graves, Samuel—1100
 Graves, William H.—1600, 1625
 Green, Ernest—1239
 Greenspan, Alan—1218
 Gregor, Joie A.—1609
 Gregory, David—1573
 Gregory, Rebecca A.—1631
 Griffin, Mervyn E., Jr.—1073
 Grim, Charles W.—1601, 1628
 Gros, Simon C.—1613, 1629
 Groves, Ryan—1325, 1326
 Guevara, Ana M.—1618, 1631
 Guinand, Brenda—1614
 Gul, Abdullah—1607, 1615, 1624
 Gutierrez, Carlos M.—918, 1024, 1066, 1359, 1360, 1363, 1379, 1382, 1546, 1606, 1619
 Gyr, William B.—1398
 Hackett, Kenneth F.—1610, 1628
 Hadi al-Iraqi, Abd al- —1007
 Hadley, Stephen J.—1525, 1613
 Hager, Henry—1485
 Hager, John H.—1485, 1611
 Hager, Michael W.—1610, 1629
 Hagin, Joe—945
 Hagin, Robert—1555
 Hakim, Abdul Aziz al- —1620
 Hall, Keith—1611, 1629
 Hallman, Harry M., Jr.—1005
 Hammerschmidt, John P.—1310
 Hanson, Victor D.—1472
 Harbert, Karen Alderman—1613
 Harding, James R., II—1621
 Hariri, Sa’ad al-Din al- —1277, 1286, 1287, 1448
 Harper, Stephen—1076, 1090, 1305, 1521, 1603, 1606, 1611
 Harrell, Robert W., Jr.—1005
 Harrington, Cordia—982, 983, 1051
 Harrington, Tom—982, 983
 Hashimi, Tariq al- —958, 1110, 1158, 1189, 1286, 1328, 1599, 1601, 1607
 Haslach, Patricia M.—1617, 1630
 Hasselbeck, Matt—1111
 Hastert, J. Dennis—1074, 1604
 Hastert, Jean—1074
 Hasyim Muzadi, Ahmad—1180
 Hatch, Orrin G.—1244
 Havel, Vaclav—1423
 Hawe, William J.—1631
 Hawkins, Damarcus—1530, 1531
 Hawks, Sharon—948
 Hawley-Bowland, Carla G.—1588
 Hawryluk, Peter—1608
 Hayden, Michael V.—957, 963, 1575
 Hayes, Stephen F.—1600
 Haynes, Catharina—1626
 Hays, Sharon L.—1619
 Hearon, Matthew—969
 Heath, Daniel D.—1599, 1625
 Heller, Dean—1116
 Heller, Lynne—1116
 Hennessey, Keith B.—1502
 Herger, Walter W.—1546
 Herman, Ken—1562
 Hernandez, Jeremy—1042, 1487
 Hernandez Gonzalez, Normando—1383
 Herring, James H.—1604
 Herrmann, John M., II—1621
 Hertog, Roger—1472
 Hertz, David—1634
 Hickler, Hans—1022

- Hicks, Doris—1126, 1128, 1129, 1487
Hill, Baron P.—1463
Hill, Christopher R.—1166, 1276, 1613
Hill, David R.—1620, 1632
Hillman, Reed V.—1631
Hinojosa, Ricardo H.—1632
Hite, William P.—1608
Hoagland, Richard E.—1627
Hochman, Nathan J.—1475, 1618, 1631
Hoekstra, Peter—1044
Hooks, Benjamin L.—1424
Hooks, Frances—1424
Hoover, Jim—1293
Horowitz, Michael E.—1633
Houlahan, Carly—1602
Houlahan, Molly—1602
Howard, Janette—1162, 1171
Howard, John W.—1136, 1142, 1145–1147, 1160, 1169, 1171, 1176–1178, 1182, 1183, 1604, 1608, 1609
Howe, John P., III—924
Howell, Judd—1358
Howell, William J.—1556, 1557, 1563
Howland, Kevin—1540
Howland, Richard—913
Hoyer, Steny H.—1293, 1570
Hu Jintao—1022, 1137, 1138, 1165, 1173, 1329, 1458, 1621
Hubbard, Allan B.—1327, 1402, 1502
Hubbard, Kathryn F.—1502
Hubbard, Katie—1502
Hubbard, Sara—1502
Hubbard, Will—1502
Hueske, Clayton—1461
Hughes, Karen P.—922, 936
Humbert Arias, Federico Antonio—1546
Humetewa, Diane J.—1631
Huntsman, Jon M., Jr.—1050, 1604
Hybl, William J.—1617, 1630
Hyde, Henry J.—1425, 1426, 1506
Hyde, Robert—1425, 1426
Inglis, Robert D.—1416
Inouye, Daniel K.—1570
Isaacson, Walter—1512
Isamuddin, Nurjaman Riduan “Hambali”—1179
Ishimaru, Stuart J.—1599, 1627
Jackson, Alphonso R.—969, 1125, 1130, 1131, 1150, 1152, 1156, 1335, 1519, 1520, 1527, 1532, 1558, 1580, 1587, 1610
Jackson, Barry—1609
Jackson, Frank G.—926
Jacob, Gregory F.—1608, 1627
Jacobson, Tracey A.—1606
Jaczek, Gregory B.—1621, 1632
Jaffe, Ira F.—1620
Jamieson, Judy—1485
Jamieson, Malcolm E. “Jamie”—1485
Jamison, Robert D.—1608, 1627, 1634, 1635
Javits, Joshua M.—1620
Jean, Michaelle—1606
Jeanfreau, Rebecca—1129
Jeffcoat, Jay—1385, 1386, 1391
Jeffcoat, Kendra—1385, 1386, 1391
Jefferson, William J.—1125, 1126
Jeffery, James F.—1603
Jeffery, Philip M.—1609
Jeffery, Reuben, III—1600
Jeffrey, William A.—1025
Jeffries, Richard R.—1572
Jenkins, Kristy—1042
Jenkins, Nina—1042
Jindal, Piyush “Bobby”—1615
Johanns, Michael O.—1212, 1268, 1400, 1406, 1525, 1526, 1621
Johanns, Stephanie—1212, 1406, 1526
Johndroe, Gordon—1135, 1621
Johnson, Carl T.—1616, 1630
Johnson, Claudia A. “Lady Bird”—950, 951
Johnson, David T.—1601, 1626
Johnson, Eric—1127
Johnson, Harvey E., Jr.—1609, 1628, 1633
Johnson, Sara—1537
Johnson, Stephen L.—1580
Johnson Sirleaf, Ellen—1341, 1423, 1613
Johnston, Ann Thomas G.—1602
Johnston, J. Bennett, Jr.—1304
Jones, Deborah K.—1614, 1629
Jones, Eric—1406
Jones, James L., Jr.—1196
Jones, Kari—1406
Jones, Stephanie Tubbs—1587
Joyner, Donna Richardson—1600
Juster, Kenneth I.—1608
Justesen, Tracy R.—1618, 1631
Kabila, Joseph—1389, 1613
Kaczynski, Jaroslaw—970
Kaczynski, Lech—970, 1601
Kadlec, Robert P.—1620
Kaine, Timothy M.—1571
Kane, Sean—1108
Karamanlis, Konstandinos—1611
Karlmark, Gloria R.—1239
Karzai, Hamid—1045, 1066, 1203, 1240, 1578, 1601, 1604, 1605, 1617
Kashkari, Neel T.—1618, 1631
Katsas, Gregory G.—1475, 1618, 1633

- Kaufman, Edward E.—1614, 1630
 Kavanaugh, Brett M.—1477
 Kays, David G.—1477, 1631
 Keating, Timothy J.—1190
 Keating, Wandalee—1190
 Keeney, John C.—1611
 Keisler, Peter D.—1207, 1471, 1477, 1611
 Keller, Richard—1244, 1246
 Keller, Scott A.—1628
 Kelley, Thomas G.—1369
 Kellogg, Scott—1607
 Kempthorne, Dirk—969, 1357–1360, 1362, 1363, 1530, 1615
 Kennedy, Anne—1186
 Kennedy, D. James—1186
 Kennedy, Edward M.—1244, 1576
 Kennedy, Patrick F.—1614, 1629
 Kerim, Srgjan—1231, 1240, 1612
 Kerr, Donald M.—1600, 1625
 Kessler, Ron—1611
 Kethledge, Raymond M.—1477
 Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nuhayyan—1601
 Kiir Mayardit, Salva—1618
 Kim, Harold H.—1601
 Kim Jong Il—1136, 1140, 1184, 1273, 1274, 1545
 Kimmitt, Mark—1600, 1625
 Kinard, Andrew—1616
 Kinder, Brianna—1530, 1531
 King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud—1288, 1518
 King Abdullah II—1602
 King, Clyde E.—969
 King, Julia A.—1609
 Kirsanow, Peter N.—1620
 Klein, Hank—1302
 Klein, Joel I.—1241–1243, 1612
 Klobuchar, Amy—1042, 1043, 1097, 1098
 Knight, Kelly G.—1610, 1628
 Koch, Dorothy Bush—1068
 Koike, Yuriko—1102
 Koizumi, Junichiro—934, 994, 1020, 1263, 1270, 1320
 Kojaian, C. Michael—1610
 Konare, Alpha Oumar—1238
 Kostinsky, Michael—980
 Kouchner, Bernard—1436, 1446
 Kraft, Greg—1224
 Kramer, David J.—1623, 1634
 Krane, Bernie—1607
 Krauthammer, Charles—1600, 1611
 Kress, Carl B.—1603, 1627
 Kristol, William—1600, 1611
 Kudlow, Larry—1600, 1611
 Kulish, Kennedy—1613
 Kunzel, Erich—1472
 Kurpius, Gary—1099
 Kurpius, Nancy—1099
 Kuykendall, Patrick—1617
 Kwan, Michelle W.—1611
 Lacy, James L.—1556
 LaFleur, Christopher J.—1606
 Lafond, Jean-Daniel—1606
 Lamb, Brian P.—1426
 Lamborn, Alyssa—1392
 Lamby, Stephan—1612
 LaMunyon, Richard—1022
 LaMunyon, Sharron—1022
 Landrieu, Mary L.—1125
 Lanier, Carlotta Walls—1239
 Lara, Rick—1124
 Larson, Charles W., Jr.—1620, 1632
 Lasorda, Thomas C.—969
 LaTourette, Steven C.—926, 934, 937, 942
 Latta, Robert E.—1622
 Lauridsen, Morten—1472
 Lautenbacher, Conrad C., Jr.—1360
 Leavitt, Michael O.—918, 919, 941, 980, 981, 1022, 1214, 1222, 1327, 1402, 1433, 1559, 1600, 1610, 1619
 Lee, Christopher—1601
 Lee Hsien Loong—1180, 1183
 Lee Myung-bak—1585
 Lee, N. Harper—1425
 Lee Tae-sik—1546
 Lehmiller, Bob—1591
 Leibovich, Mark—1426
 Leo, Leonard A.—1476
 Leon Rodriguez, Rene Antonio—1546
 Levine, Cathy—1607
 Lewis, Ron—1152
 Libby, I. Lewis “Scooter”—908, 910, 959, 1062
 Lieberman, Joseph I.—1123
 Limbaugh, Stephen N., Jr.—1633
 Lingle, Linda—1190
 Lisicki, George J.—1100
 Liu Peng—1022
 Llanes Labrada, Yamile—1298, 1300, 1321, 1380, 1613
 Long, Mary Beth—1617, 1630
 Longo, Tommy—1132
 Lopez, Israel “Cachao”—1298, 1300
 Lopez, Kathryn—1611
 Lott, C. Trent—1131, 1133, 1475, 1493, 1502, 1595, 1596
 Lott, Patricia Thompson—1131, 1493
 Loving, David—1540

- Lowry, Rich—1600
Lozano, Henry C.—1610
Lugar, Richard G.—954, 955, 1133
Lukken, Walter—1609, 1628
Lula da Silva, Luiz Inacio—923, 1230
Luter, Fred, Jr.—1125
Luttrell, Marcus—1370
Macapagal-Arroyo, Gloria—1181
Mahoney, Tim—1379
Maliki, Nuri al- —958, 1058–1060, 1106, 1110, 1121, 1123, 1158, 1189, 1221, 1235, 1285, 1286, 1423, 1494, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1607, 1609, 1613, 1615, 1619
Mandela, Nelson R.—1216, 1423
Mansfield, Gordon H.—1100, 1324, 1397, 1585, 1586
Mansfield, John E.—1601
Marburger, John H., III—1024
Marchant, Kenny—1012
Mares, Marc—938
Margo, Adair—1472
Markey, Edward J.—1249, 1570
Marriott, Donna Garff—1610
Martinez, Melquiades R.—1302, 1355, 1379
Mashadani, Fatah Da'ud Mahmud al- —1007
Mashhadani, Mahmud al- —1235
Maskin, Eric S.—1619
Masri, Abu Ayyub al- —1007
Matthews, Charles—1612
Matthews, Steve A.—1628
Maung Aye—1354
Maynor, Linda—1620
McCarthy, Maureen—1475
McClellan, Mark B.—980
McConnell, Addison M. “Mitch”—1044, 1476
McConnell, J. Michael—1002, 1027, 1039–1041, 1043–1045, 1210, 1211, 1298, 1511, 1516, 1601
McCormack, Brian V.—1616
McCormick, David H.—1611
McCormick, Richard L.—1294
McCotter, Thaddeus G.—1379
McCrery, James O., III—1546, 1587
McCue, Susan M.—1614, 1630
McDonald, Robert A.—1608
McDonnell, Bob—1485
McGee, James D.—1602, 1626
McGinn, Michael G.—1631
McGowan, Marion—1257, 1258
McGraw, Harold, III—1622
McGuinness, Martin—1531, 1618
McGurk, Brett H.—1601
McGurn, Grace—1550
McGurn, Julie—1550
McGurn, Lucy—1550
McGurn, Maisie—1550
McGurn, William—1550
McKillop, Harry—1605
McNeill, Dan K.—1578
McSllarrow, Kyle E.—1600
McSwain, Robert G.—1623, 1634
McVea, Kristine—1526
Meader, David—1100
Meader, Linda K.—1100
Meese, Edwin, III—1476
Melick, Neil K.—1621
Mendelowitz, Allan I.—1614, 1630
Mendez, John A.—1628
Merkel, Angela—1437, 1439–1441, 1453, 1455, 1612, 1617, 1618
Mertz, Dolores—1013
Meyer, Daniel—1549
Meyer, Eugene B.—1475, 1476
Middleton, Earl M.—1602
Millander, Deb—1005
Millander, John C. “Red”—1005
Miller, Brian S.—1629
Miller, George—1244, 1246, 1576
Miller, Thomas R.—1609
Mitchell, George J.—1545
Miyazawa, Kiichi—1604
Mohammed, Khalid Sheikh—958, 1007, 1179
Momaday, N. Scott—1472
Moore, Terri Teuber—1620
Moores, Leon E.—1572
Morales, Hector E.—1621, 1632
Morejon, Elsa—1423
Morford, Craig S.—1601
Morial, Marc H.—969
Moriarty, James F.—1608, 1627
Morin, Paul A.—1116
Morrison, Richard T.—1632
Mothershed-Wair, Thelma—1239
Mozena, Dan W.—1605, 1627
Mueller, Robert S., III—1039
Mugabe, Robert—1233
Mukasey, Jessica—1206
Mukasey, Marc L.—1206, 1470
Mukasey, Michael B.—1205, 1328, 1391, 1407, 1408, 1411, 1412, 1415, 1420, 1421, 1452, 1470, 1475, 1534, 1540, 1611, 1629
Mukasey, Susan—1206, 1470
Mulhaupt, Dennis M.—1614, 1630
Mullen, Deborah—1255
Mullen, John—1255
Mullen, Michael—1255
Mullen, Michael G.—1254, 1369, 1505, 1619

- Mulvaney, Sean R.—1601, 1626
 Mulvey, Francis—1620, 1632
 Murin, Joseph J.—1614, 1629
 Murkowski, Lisa—1224
 Murphy, Daniel—1369, 1370
 Murphy, John—1225, 1369
 Murphy, Maureen—1369, 1370
 Murphy, Phoebe—1225
 Murphy, Stephen J., III—1477
 Museveni, Yoweri Kaguta—1394, 1614
 Musharraf, Pervez—936, 939, 964, 1003, 1046, 1047, 1054, 1427, 1428, 1445, 1457, 1459, 1605, 1617, 1619, 1624
 Myers, Richard B.—1254
 Myers, Todd—1540
 Myerson, Roger B.—1619

 Nagin, C. Ray—1125
 Naima, Abu Abdullah al- —1007
 Nakouzi, Elie—1280
 Nance, Frederick R.—926
 Naples, Nancy A.—1618, 1631
 Napolitano, Giorgio—1538, 1614, 1622
 Negroponte, John D.—1379, 1619
 Neuberger, Roy R.—1472
 Newcombe, Donald—969
 Nicholson, R. James—978, 1010, 1011, 1071, 1208, 1397, 1586
 Nicholson, Suzanne M.—978, 1397, 1586
 Niemiec, Sally M.—1622
 Nigro, Louis J., Jr.—1605, 1627
 Noel, R. Craig—1472
 Nolan, L.C.—1616
 Nolan, Sharon—1616
 Norris, Thomas R.—1369
 Novak, David J.—1477, 1632
 Novak, Robert D.—909
 Nunn, Samuel A.—1133, 1304
 Nussle, James A.—918, 1038, 1171, 1191, 1227, 1301, 1327, 1402, 1574
 Nussle, Karen Chiccehitto—1191
 Nussle, Mark—1191
 Nussle, Sarah—1191

 O'Beirne, Kate—1600, 1611
 O'Brien, Thomas P.—1625
 Obsitnik, Vincent—1602, 1609, 1626, 1628
 O'Connor, Kevin J.—1475, 1618, 1633
 Odierno, Raymond T.—1205
 O'Dorney, Evan M.—1610
 Okoshi, Kensuke—1148
 Okun, Deanna T.—1623, 1634
 Olmert, Ehud—972, 973, 1229, 1288, 1334, 1491, 1492, 1495–1499, 1501, 1617, 1620
 Olson, Theodore B.—1476

 Osborne, Tom—1603, 1627
 Ourisman, Mary M.—1610
 Owen, Priscilla R.—1477
 Ozick, Cynthia—1472

 Pace, Lynne—1256
 Pace, Lynsey Olczak—1256
 Pace, Peter—1205, 1254, 1256
 Pace, Tiffany M.—1256
 Pacheco, Maria—919–921, 924
 Padilla, Christopher A.—1608, 1612, 1627
 Paisley, Ian R.K.—1531, 1618
 Palmer, David—1628
 Papagianis, Christopher—1614
 Parker, Kathleen—1600, 1619
 Parks, Janet—1606
 Parnes, Stuart—1360
 Parvanov, Georgi—1602
 Pastorek, Paul G.—1126
 Pataki, George E.—1610, 1629
 Patterson, Anne W.—1634
 Paul, Les—1472
 Paulson, R. David—1292, 1293, 1371, 1615
 Paulson, Henry M., Jr.—918, 924, 1024, 1050, 1051, 1061, 1137, 1150, 1152, 1156, 1252, 1335, 1341, 1430, 1467, 1484, 1511, 1519, 1520, 1527, 1532, 1546, 1565, 1580, 1587
 Paulson, Wendy—1357
 Pavarotti, Luciano—1175
 Pawlenty, Timothy J.—1038, 1041–1043, 1097, 1098, 1603
 Peake, James B.—1396, 1454, 1551, 1585, 1616, 1631
 Peake, Janice—1396, 1585
 Peake, Kimberly—1396, 1585
 Peake, Thomas—1396
 Pearl, Judea—1535
 Pearl, Ruth—1535
 Pearson, Christina H.—1612
 Peck, Veronique—1425
 Pelosi, Nancy—975, 976, 1192, 1327, 1340, 1523, 1570, 1603, 1612
 Perdue, George—1622
 Perino, Dana—1153, 1518
 Perkins, Edward J.—1608
 Pernet Hernandez, Omar—1380
 Pernet, Mirta—1380
 Peters, Mary E.—1038, 1041–1043, 1054, 1097, 1098, 1246, 1318, 1319, 1473, 1564, 1603
 Petraeus, David H.—915, 933, 952–956, 961, 962, 967, 968, 992, 993, 999, 1001, 1009, 1019, 1020, 1030, 1031, 1056, 1057, 1060, 1067, 1080, 1081, 1112, 1121, 1123, 1154, 1158, 1163, 1167, 1189, 1190, 1192, 1195–

- Petraeus, David H.—Continued
 1199, 1201, 1205, 1209, 1221, 1236, 1262,
 1328, 1336, 1366, 1417, 1418, 1427, 1510,
 1608
- Pietramala, Dave—1225
- Pietrzyk, Edward—1617
- Pinheiro, Paulo S.—1540
- Pipes, Richard—1472
- Pitts, Joseph R.—1259
- Plame, Valerie—908
- Poe, Ted—1610, 1629
- Pollock, Gale S.—1117
- Portman, Robert J.—946, 1038, 1546, 1603
- Potts, Stephen D.—1601
- Powell, Alma—1470
- Powell, Colin L.—1470
- Powell, Donald E.—1126–1128, 1131
- Powers, William C.—1610
- Pratter, Gene E.K.—1477, 1632
- Preston, Steven C.—980, 1546
- Price, Daniel M.—1621
- Principi, Anthony J.—1397, 1586
- Pritzlaff, Ann A.—1609
- Prodi, Romano—1614
- Pryce, Deborah D.—1073
- Pryor, William H., Jr.—1477
- Pullman, Rodrick “Rocky”—1132
- Putin, Vladimir V.—903, 904, 910, 1134, 1185,
 1330–1333, 1335, 1374, 1375, 1441, 1458,
 1575, 1599, 1615, 1621
- Raddatz, Martha—1603, 1622
- Radzely, Howard M.—1600
- Ramos, Ignacio—998
- Ramsey, Max—1011, 1012
- Randt, Clark T., Jr.—1611
- Rangel, Charles B.—1391
- Rashid, Jubeir—1195, 1202
- Rath, Diane D.—1600, 1625
- Ravech, Karl—969, 1600
- Recher, Jason—1602
- Regula, Mary—1307
- Regula, Ralph S.—1307
- Reichert, David G.—1110
- Reichert, Julie—1110
- Reid, Harry—975, 976, 1192, 1327, 1340, 1467,
 1510, 1570
- Renner, Karl—982
- Renuart, Victor E., Jr.—1388, 1615
- Reynolds, David—912
- Rice, Condoleezza—903, 935, 938, 953, 962,
 972, 973, 1024, 1139, 1158, 1166, 1201, 1205,
 1208, 1220, 1229, 1262, 1269, 1276, 1333,
 1334, 1354, 1359, 1379, 1382, 1390, 1423,
- Rice, Condoleezza—Continued
 1427, 1446, 1495, 1517, 1525, 1546, 1566,
 1604, 1608, 1612, 1615, 1619
- Riley, Joseph P., Jr.—1005
- Rivera, Crystal—1612
- Robb, Lynda Bird Johnson—951
- Robert, Joseph E., Jr.—1610
- Roberts, John G., Jr.—1109, 1415, 1470, 1472,
 1476, 1550, 1603
- Roberts, Marie—1288
- Roberts, Terrence—1239
- Robichaux, Gary—1129
- Robinson, Frank—969
- Robinson, J—1225
- Robinson, Kalise—1245
- Rockefeller, John D. “Jay,” IV—1475
- Rodman, Peter W.—1104
- Rodriguez Saludes, Omar—1383
- Roh Moo-hyun—1183, 1613
- Roman, Joseph D.—926
- Romano, Neil—1619, 1632
- Roncska, Robert A.—1426
- Rood, John C.—1612
- Rordam, Ron—1571
- Rose, Rusty—1357
- Rosenker, Mark V.—1616, 1630
- Rosenstein, Rod J.—1477, 1632
- Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana—1302, 1307, 1340, 1379
- Roughead, Gary—1369
- Rove, Andrew—1072
- Rove, Darby—1072
- Rove, Karl—1072
- Rudd, Kevin M.—1141, 1142, 1145, 1147, 1166,
 1609
- Rumsfeld, Donald H.—1218, 1254, 1256, 1550
- Runge, Jeffrey W.—1603, 1627
- Runkles, Brad—914
- Russell, Luther E.—947, 948
- Russoniello, Joseph P.—1632
- Rutz, Michael—1612
- Ryan, Paul—1191
- Rybak, R.T.—1038, 1041–1043, 1097, 1603
- Saca Gonzalez, Elias Antonio—1503, 1619
- Saifulislam, Abuhena M.—1279
- Salih, Barham—1158, 1189
- Sanchez, Gloria—1617
- Sanchez, Ricardo S.—1337
- Sandberg, Annette M.—1620
- Sanders, Robin R.—1600, 1625
- Sanford, Mark C., Jr.—1414, 1416
- Sarkozy, Cecilia—1068
- Sarkozy, Nicolas—1068, 1233, 1237, 1238, 1434–
 1437, 1439, 1444, 1604, 1605, 1615, 1617

- Sarukhan Casamitjana, Arturo—1535, 1536, 1546
 Sasse, Benjamin E.—1602, 1626
 Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi, Abdul—1189, 1195, 1202
 Sauer, Joachim—1453, 1455, 1617, 1618
 Saunders, Jordan—1485
 Saunders, Thomas A., III—1485
 Scalia, Antonin—1475
 Scanlon, Joel A.—1609
 Schafer, Edward T.—1400, 1405, 1616, 1633
 Schafer, Ellie—1406
 Schafer, Nancy Jones—1406
 Schafer, Tom—1406
 Schanberg, Sydney H.—1103
 Schieffer, J. Thomas—1149, 1604
 Schmidt, Richard—1294
 Schneider, Paul A.—1614
 Schoomaker, Eric B.—909
 Schultz, Pauline L.—1472
 Schulz, Ralph J., Jr.—982
 Schumer, Charles E.—1368
 Schwab, Susan C.—1219, 1298, 1430, 1432, 1546
 Schwarzenegger, Arnold A.—1371, 1378, 1385–1389, 1392, 1615
 Schwitters, James H.—1416
 Sciarrone, Marie O'Neill—1620
 Scott, Marvin B.—1634
 Scott, Robert C.—1485
 Scott, Timothy E.—1005
 Scudder, Michael Y., Jr.—1614
 Scully, Steve—945, 946
 Sedotto, Louise—1241–1243
 Seeman, Lee—1608
 Seger, Ted—1489
 Seidenberg, Ivan G.—1600
 Sell, Jeffrey C.—1606, 1613
 Sessions, Jefferson B., III—1476
 Shalala, Donna E.—1010, 1011, 1071, 1072, 1302, 1304, 1317, 1324–1326, 1328, 1337, 1397, 1450, 1454, 1551, 1566, 1586
 Shalit, Gilad—973
 Shannon, Thomas A., Jr.—920
 Sharon, Ariel—973
 Sharp, Jess—1605
 Shawcross, William—1104
 Shearer, Charles R.H.—1600, 1625
 Sherzer, David—1622
 Shinn, James—1615, 1630
 Shirzad, Faryar—1622
 Short, Carolyn P.—1477, 1632
 Shriver, Eunice Kennedy—1022, 1611
 Shriver, Timothy P.—1022, 1612
 Shulman, Douglas H.—1619, 1633
 Simmons, Steven J.—1614, 1630
 Simon, Raymond—1604
 Simons, Paul E.—1605, 1627
 Singh, Manmohan—1605
 Siniora, Fuad—1277, 1286
 Skillman, Becky—1463
 Skolkin, Andrea—1526
 Smith, Christopher H.—1379
 Smith, Gordon H.—1224
 Smith, Mark—945
 Smith, Sharon—1224
 Smith, William E.—1633
 Smithies, Oliver—1619
 Smolen, Robert L.—1603, 1626
 Smucker, Jim—1258
 Snow, G. Murray—1633
 Snow, Jill—1153
 Snow, Kendall—1153
 Snow, Kristin—1153
 Snow, Robbie—1153
 Snow, Tony—904, 906, 945, 1153
 Snyder, Henry—1472
 Sobel, Clifford M.—1600
 Socrates, Jose—1207, 1607
 Sodrel, Keta—1463
 Sodrel, Michael E.—1463
 Solomon, Susan—1619
 Solomont, Alan D.—1603, 1627
 Sommer, John F., Jr.—1116
 Soriano, James—967
 Southwick, Leslie H.—1384, 1477
 Spanogle, Robert W.—1116
 Speckhard, Daniel V.—1610, 1629
 Specter, Arlen—1012, 1258, 1470, 1585, 1586
 Speers, David—1145
 Spellings, Margaret—918, 920, 1021, 1128, 1241–1244, 1295, 1603, 1611, 1619, 1627
 Spratt, John M., Jr.—1244, 1246
 Stabenow, Deborah A.—1152, 1335, 1587
 Stallman, Robert—1608
 Stanek, Richard W.—1042
 Stark, Fortney H. "Pete," Jr.—1303
 Steger, Charles W.—1571, 1572
 Steinberg, Lawrence E.—1608
 Steinway, Henry Z.—1472
 Stemler, Kerry M.—1463
 Stephenson, Thomas F.—1610, 1629
 Stevens, Theodore F.—1368, 1371, 1570
 Stone, Shalom D.—1626
 Stouse, Allison—1607
 Stout, Audrey—1198
 Stribling, Bill—1309, 1310
 Strong, Mack—1111

- Stuart, Richard—1556
Stultz, Jack C.—1100
Sturgell, Robert A.—1246, 1473, 1615, 1630
Stutler, Denver, Jr.—1618, 1631
Suboleski, Stanley C.—1622, 1633
Suddaby, Glenn T.—1633
Sullivan, John J.—1621, 1632
Sullivan, Sarah—1426
Summey, R. Keith—1005
Summitt, Pat—1225
Sunbarger, Rachael L.—1601
Sutton, Johnny—998
Sutton, Ralph—1555
Swain, Carol M.—1634
Sweeney, Anne—1612
Tackett, Allen E.—912
Talabani, Jalal—958, 1110, 1158, 1189, 1285, 1286, 1599, 1601, 1607, 1613
Talbot, Gary L.—1621
Tanenblatt, Eric J.—1617, 1630
Taylor, Charles—1000
Taylor, Ezekiel—1603
Taylor, Gary E. “Gene”—1131
Taylor, Margaret—1131
Taylor, Mary—926
Than Shwe—1354, 1540
Thernstrom, Abigail—1620
Thiessen, Marc—1550
Thomas, Clarence—1476, 1478
Thomas, Harry K., Jr.—1626
Thomas, Jefferson—1239
Thomas, Virginia L.—1476, 1478
Thompson, Mark—1370
Thomson, Angus—1175
Thomson, Keith—1175
Thornburgh, Richard L.—1470
Thornton, Michael E.—1369
Thorson, Eric M.—1618, 1631
Tiant Vega, Luis C.—1600
Tillman, Patrick D.—1054
Tinder, John D.—1626
Tom, Caroline—1609
Tooker, George—1472
Townsend, Frances Fragos—1488
Townsend, James—1488
Townsend, John—1488
Townsend, Patrick—1488
Trammell, Leon—1608
Tredick, Peter W.—1620
Trickey, Minnijean Brown—1239
Tritch, Stephen R.—1608
Turpin, Luci Baines Johnson—951
Uribe Velez, Alvaro—1305, 1431, 1521, 1536, 1624
Urquhart, Felicity—1608
Valdes Morejon, Yan—1422
Valladares, Armando—1381
Vallas, Paul G.—1126, 1128
Vander Myde, Jeanne—1155
Van Orsdel, Kirk—1540
Van Schaik, Graham—1616
Venables, George W.—1633
Voinovich, George V.—1152, 1587
Volkow, Nora D.—1535
Vollmecke, Eric W.—912
Vollmecke, Sigrid—912
Waiz, Robert L., Jr.—1463
Wallace, Robert E.—1100
Walsh, Dan—1473
Walters, John P.—1535, 1538, 1546
Walther, Larry W.—1619, 1632
Walton, Reggie B.—910
Walz, Tim—1098
Wamp, Kim—1224
Wamp, Zachary P.—1224
Wardlow, Jennifer Polk—1612
Warlick, Mary Burce—1605
Warner, John W.—969, 1155
Wasserman Schultz, Debbie—1379
Watson, Harlan L.—1619
Watson, Jerry—1013
Wayne, E. Anthony—1621
Webster, Douglas W.—1612
Weems, Kerry N.—1608
Welch, C. David—1634
Welch, Jenna—1012
Wellinghoff, Jon—1622, 1633
Wells, Barry L.—1602, 1626
West, Mike—1565
White, Gen—1130
White, John A., Jr.—1310
Wicker, Roger F.—1595
Wiesel, Elie—1340
Wilder, Dennis C.—1135
Williams, Donna N.—1603, 1627
Williams, Jody L.—1616
Williams, Juan—1611
Williams, Ronald C.—1601
Williams, Susan Richardson—1600, 1625
Wilson, Addison G. “Joe”—1416
Wilson, Frances C.—1370
Wilson, Heather—1044
Wilson, Michael—1546
Winter, Donald C.—1208, 1369
Wirajuda, Noer Hassan—1187

- Wisniewski, Anthony C.—1605
Wisse, Ruth—1472
Witoelar Kartaadipoetra, Rachmat Nadi—1249
Witt, Helen Mercer—1620
Wittman, Robert J.—1556, 1558, 1622
Wolff, Candida—1549
Wolff, Claire—1550
Wolff, Mark—1550
Wolff, Terry A.—1605
Wolff, Veronica—1550
Wollack, Tom—1483
Womack, Stephen A.—1310
Wood, William B.—1606
Woodruff, Bob—1010
Worley, Caroline—1614
Wright, Donald J.—1623
Wright, Liza—982
Wuerl, Donald W.—1569
Wyeth, Andrew N.—1472
Wynne, Michael W.—1369
Yancey, Bill—1601
Yang Jiechi—1612, 1620
Yar'Adua, Umaru—1542, 1621
Yarbrough, Edward M.—1625
Yocum, Dennis—1506
Yokota, Megumi—1139, 1149, 1479
Yokota, Sakie—1139, 1149, 1479
Young, Hilda—1126
Young, Rodger D.—1610, 1629
Yudhoyono, Susilo Bambang—1138, 1180, 1187
Yuhl-Torres, Kirsten—1591
Zafirovski, Mike S.—1600
Zahir Shah, Mohammed—1004
Zarkasih—1179
Zatkowski, Jennifer—948
Zawahiri, Ayman al- —1006, 1104
Zebari, Hoshiyar Mahmud—1235
Zerhouni, Elias A.—1024
Zhang, Chi—1614
Zinser, Todd J.—1609, 1628
Zoeller, Frank U. “Fuzzy,” Jr.—1462

Document Categories List

Addresses to the Nation

Military operations in Iraq—1194

Addresses and Remarks

See also Addresses to the Nation; Appointments and Nominations; Bill Signings and Vetoes; Interviews With the News Media; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials; Resignations and Retirements

American Legion

National convention in Reno, NV—1116

Post 121 in Waco, TX—1461

American Legislative Exchange Council in Philadelphia, PA—1012

America's Promise Alliance, dinner honoring—1469

Annapolis Conference in Annapolis, MD—1496

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation business summit in Sydney, Australia—1176

Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey, swearing-in ceremony—1470

Berkeley Plantation in Charles City, VA—1485

Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, visit with wounded troops—1449

Budget, Federal

Nashville, TN—982

New Albany, IN—1463

Rogers, AR—1310

Burma situation—1354

Cabinet meetings—1038, 1378, 1544

Christmas

Children's holiday reception—1512

National Christmas tree lighting ceremony—1530

Columbia, SC, arrival—1414

Congress

Congressional leaders, meeting—1192

House Republican Conference, meeting—1393

Congressional Gold Medal

Borlaug, Norman E., presentation to—975

Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, presentation to—1340

Addresses and Remarks—Continued

Congressional Medal of Honor

Murphy, Lt. Michael P., posthumous award to—1368

Counterterrorism team, meeting—1039

Defense Department

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, farewell to Gen. Peter Pace and an Armed Forces hail for Adm. Michael G. Mullen at Fort Meyer, VA—1254

Senior officials, briefing—1505

Democracy, meeting in New York City—1237

Economic advisers, meetings—1023, 1050, 1301

Economy, national, and homeland security—1290

Energy security and climate change, meeting—1248

Federalist Society's 25th Annual Gala Dinner—1475

Fort Jackson, SC, basic training graduation ceremony—1416

Fredericksburg, VA—1555

GrafTech International Ltd. in Parma, OH, tour—925

Greater Cleveland Partnership in Cleveland, OH, remarks and a question-and-answer session—926

Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association fall conference—1398

Gulf coast reconstruction in Bay St. Louis, MS—1131

Hanukkah menorah, lighting—1534

Health care

Landover, MD—980

Omaha, NE—1526

Heritage Foundation—1409

Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu, HI, visit with wounded troops and their families—1190

Hispanic Heritage Month reception—1298

Homeownership financing—1150

Iftar dinner—1279

Import Safety Working Group, meetings—981, 1433

Independence Day in Martinsburg, WV—912

Intelligence reform legislation—1297

Addresses and Remarks—Continued

Iraq
Iraqi leaders, meeting at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq—1157
Iraqi leaders, remarks congratulating at Kirtland Air Force Base, NM—1110
Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders and brigade combat commanders, briefings—966, 1205
Jewish community leaders, meeting—1533
Legislative agenda, congressional action—1390, 1510
Little Sisters of the Poor's Jeanne Jugan Residence, visit—1569
Management and Budget, Office of
Director James A. Nussle, swearing-in ceremony—1191
Mid-Session Review—946
Marine Corps Base Quantico in Quantico, VA, luncheon with military personnel—1199
Miami, FL—1302
Middle East—971
Military support organizations, meetings—1001, 1208
Minneapolis, MN
Interstate 35W bridge collapse and Minnesota floods, briefing—1097
Interstate 35W bridge damage, tour—1042
National Adoption Day—1482
National Defense University—1370
National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, MD—1292
National Medal of Arts and National Humanities Medal, presentation—1472
National Medals of Science and Technology, presentation—1024
National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, visit with wounded troops—1572
National Security Agency at Fort Meade, MD, visit—1210
NCAA championship teams—1224
New Albany, IN, business and community leaders, lunch meeting—1462
New Orleans, LA
Elected officials and community leaders, meeting—1125
Hurricane Katrina, recovery efforts—1126
New homeowners, visit with—1130
No Child Left Behind Act
New York City—1241
Reauthorization legislation, meeting—1295
Washington, DC—1295
Omaha, NE, arrival—1525

Addresses and Remarks—Continued

Pakistan, death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, remarks in Crawford, TX—1592
Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, MD—1357
Presidential Medal of Freedom, presentation—1422
President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors
Briefing—1010
Meeting—1324
Report—1010
Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor, presentation—1540
Radio addresses—917, 967, 1002, 1027, 1041, 1066, 1074, 1107, 1156, 1188, 1201, 1225, 1253, 1291, 1308, 1356, 1391, 1420, 1454, 1483, 1490, 1509, 1532, 1554, 1590, 1594
Rep. David G. Reichert and the Washington State Republican Party, reception in Bellevue, WA—1110
Riverside, MO, community leaders, meeting—1098
Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr., and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson, meeting—1527
Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and Federal Aviation Administration Acting Administrator Robert A. Sturgell, meetings—1246, 1473
Secretary of Veterans Affairs James B. Peake, swearing-in ceremony—1585
Southern California wildfires
Escondido, CA, first-responders, meeting—1389
Escondido, CA, remarks—1387
San Diego, CA, remarks following tour of damaged areas—1385
Washington, DC, remarks prior to departure for a tour of damaged areas—1385
Special Olympics Global Law Enforcement Torch Run ceremony—1021
State Department
Annapolis Conference participants dinner hosted by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice—1495
Remarks—1379
Stribling Packaging, Inc., in Rogers, AR—1309
Striped bass and red drum fish populations, signing the Executive order on protection in St. Michaels, MD—1360

Addresses and Remarks—Continued

Supplemental appropriations, congressional action—1366
Teen drug use statistics, discussion—1535
Thanksgiving turkey presentation ceremony—1488
U.S. military personnel
 Al Asad Air Base in Iraq—1159
 Charleston Air Force Base in Charleston, SC—1005
U.S.-Palestinian Public-Private Partnership, meeting—1512
United Nations in New York City
 Dinner hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon—1240
 General Assembly—1231
 Security Council meeting—1237
Veterans of Foreign Wars national convention in Kansas City, MO—1099
Walter Reed Army Medical Center, visits—909, 1588
Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center, visit—1071
West Hempfield Township, PA, remarks and a question-and-answer session—1257
White House Conference on the Americas in Arlington, VA—918
White House Forum on International Trade and Investment—1430
White House, James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, ribbon-cutting ceremony—945
White House press pool—1406
White House tee-ball—968
World AIDS Day in Mount Airy, MD—1506
Young Presidents' Organization—1227

Appointments and Nominations

See also Digest (Appendix A), Nominations Submitted (Appendix B), and Checklist (Appendix C)
Agriculture Department, Secretary, remarks—1405
Economic Council, National, Chairman, statement—1502
Justice Department, Attorney General, remarks—1205
Veterans Affairs Department, Secretary, remarks—1396
White House Office
 Legislative Affairs, Assistant to the President for, statement—1549
 Speechwriting, Assistant to the President for, statement—1550
 Press Secretary, remarks—1153

Bill Signings and Vetoes

America COMPETES Act, statement—1064
“Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007,” vetoes, messages—1276, 1541
College Cost Reduction and Access Act, remarks—1244
Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, statement—1591
Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2008, statement—1468
“Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008,” veto, message—1469
Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, remarks—1569
Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, statement—1200
Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, statement—1040
Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, statement—1541
Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007, remarks—1587
“National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008,” veto, memorandum—1592
Prevent taxation of payments from the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund to Virginia Tech victims and families, remarks—1571
Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007, statement—1596
United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act, remarks—1546
“Water Resources Development Act of 2007,” veto, message—1420

Communications to Congress

Australia-U.S. Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty, message transmitting—1514
Burma, Executive order blocking property and prohibiting certain transactions, message—1353
Colombia, significant narcotics traffickers, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1352
Congo, Democratic Republic of the, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1384
Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996, review of title III, letter—975
Defense Department, supplemental budget revisions, letter transmitting request—1036

Communications to Congress—Continued

- Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty between the United States, United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland, message transmitting—1223
- District of Columbia, Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Request Act, letter transmitting—1065
- Export control regulations, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—1073
- Federal employees, locality pay increases, letter transmitting alternative plan—1500
- Homeland Security and Justice, Departments of, letter transmitting budget amendments—1434
- Hydrographic Organization, Convention on the International, message transmitting protocol amending—1377
- Iran, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1453
- Iraq
 - Benchmark Assessment Report, message transmitting—1200
 - Executive order blocking property of additional persons in connection with the national emergency, message—979
 - Initial Benchmark Assessment Report, message transmitting—965
- Lebanon, Executive order blocking property of persons undermining its sovereignty or democratic processes and institutions, message—1037
- Liberia, former regime of Charles Taylor, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1000
- Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, Convention on the Prevention of, message transmitting protocol—1172
- Maritime Terrorism, Convention on the Prevention of, message transmitting protocols—1257
- Military and intelligence operations, ongoing, and other international activities, letter transmitting supplemental appropriations request—1367
- Nuclear Terrorism, International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of, message transmitting—966
- Peru-U.S. free trade agreement, message transmitting legislation—1248
- Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, Convention on the, message transmitting amendment—1173

Communications to Congress—Continued

- Powers and duties of the President
 - Resumption, letter—1004
 - Temporary transfer, letter—1003
- Sudan, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1414
- Terrorism, persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1223
- Terrorist attacks, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1194
- U.S. Combat-Equipped Armed Forces, letter reporting on deployments—1552
- Weapons of mass destruction, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—1452

Communications to Federal Agencies

- See also* Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register* (Appendix D)
- Combined Federal Campaign, memorandum—1023
- Ford, former President Gerald R., funeral expenses, reimbursement, memorandum—1065
- Illicit drug production and transit countries, memorandum—1202
- Liberians in the U.S., measures regarding, memorandum—1193

Directives

- Public health and medical preparedness—1343

Interviews With the News Media

- Exchanges with reporters
 - Kennebunkport, ME—903, 1068
 - Omaha, NE—1526
 - San Diego, CA—1412
 - Washington, DC—909
 - White House—945, 1010, 1150, 1153, 1406, 1427, 1544

Interviews

- ABC News—1603, 1622
- ABC News, “ABC World News Tonight with Charles Gibson”—1619
- Al Arabiya—1280
- APEC, “Visions of Leadership” program—1599
- ARD German Television—1612
- Associated Press—1620
- CBS News—1608
- CNBC’s “Closing Bell” program—1613
- Economic reporters—1604
- ESPN—1600

Interviews With the News Media—Continued

Interviews—Continued

ESPN's "Offshore Adventures" program—1615

Foreign print journalists—1135

FOX Business Network—1618

FOX News—1604, 1611, 1618

Juniper Communications—1603

Kathleen Parker, syndicated columnist—1600, 1619

National Review—1600, 1611

NBC News—1608

New York Times—1611

NewsMax magazine—1611

NHK Japan—1148

People magazine—1619

RTL Television and N-TV of Germany—1439

Sky News of Australia—1145

TF1 Television of France—1435

Travel pool reporters aboard Air Force One—1608

U.S. News & World Report—1600, 1611

Wall Street Journal—1613

Washington Post—1600, 1601, 1611

Washington Times—1611

Weekly Standard—1600, 1611

Joint news conferences

Afghanistan, President Karzai—1045

Australia, Prime Minister Howard—1160

Canada, Prime Minister Harper—1076

France, President Sarkozy—1444

Germany, Chancellor Merkel—1455

Mexico, President Calderon Hinojosa—1076

United Kingdom, Prime Minister Brown—1028

News conferences

July 12—951

August 6—1045

August 9—1052

August 21—1076

September 5—1160

September 20—1213

October 17—1327

November 7—1444

November 10—1455

December 4—1514

December 20—1573

Joint Statements

Australia, Prime Minister Howard, climate change and energy—1169

Joint Statements—Continued

Canada, Prime Minister Harper, Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America—1090

Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki, Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship—1494

Mexico, President Calderon Hinojosa, Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America—1090

Russia, President Putin, nuclear energy and nonproliferation joint actions—910

Letters and Messages

See also Communications to Congress

Christmas, message—1589

Eid al-Adha, message—1573

Eid al-Fitr, message—1301

Hanukkah, message—1513

Holiday greetings to members of the Armed Forces, message—1589

Kwanzaa, message—1590

Labor Day, message—1155

New Year's Day, message—1596

Ramadan, message—1193

Rosh Hashanah, message—1175

Yom Kippur, message—1222

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials

See also Interviews With the News Media; Joint Statements

Afghanistan, President Karzai—1045, 1240, 1604, 1605, 1617

Algeria, President Bouteflika—1623

Argentina, President-elect Fernandez de Kirchner—1616

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders—1609

Australia

Governor General Jeffery—1608

Opposition Leader Rudd—1609

Prime Minister Howard—1160, 1169, 1171, 1604, 1608, 1609

Belarus, prodemocracy political parties' leaders—1621

Brazil, President Lula da Silva—1230

Bulgaria, President Parvanov—1602

Canada

Governor General Jean—1606

Prime Minister Harper—1076, 1090, 1603, 1606, 1611

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials—Continued

China

Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang—1612, 1620

President Hu—1173, 1621

Colombia, President Uribe Velez—1624

Congo, Democratic Republic of the, President Kabila—1389

El Salvador, President Saca Gonzalez—1503

France, President Sarkozy—1068, 1434, 1444, 1605, 1617

Germany, Chancellor Merkel—1453, 1455, 1617, 1618

Greece, Prime Minister Karamanlis—1611

Guatemala, President-elect Colom Caballeros—1618

India, Prime Minister Singh—1605

Indonesia, President Yudhoyono—1187

Iraq

Kurdistan Region of Iraq, President Barzani—1607

President Talabani—1599, 1601, 1607, 1613

Prime Minister Maliki—1235, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1607, 1609, 1613, 1615, 1619

Sunni tribal and Provincial leaders—1608

Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Chairman Hakim—1620

Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi—1599, 1601, 1607

Vice President al-Hashimi—1599, 1601, 1607

Israel, Prime Minister Olmert—1492, 1501, 1617, 1620

Italy, President Napolitano—1538, 1622

Japan

Prime Minister Abe—1186, 1609

Prime Minister Fukuda—1478, 1619

Jordan, King Abdullah II—1602

Lebanon, Parliament Member al-Hariri—1277

Liberia, President Johnson Sirleaf—1341

Mexico, President Calderon Hinojosa—1076, 1090, 1606

Middle East, Quartet Representative Blair—1611

Mongolia, President Enkhbayar—1364, 1615

Nigeria, President Yar'Adua—1542

Northern Ireland, First Minister Paisley and Deputy First Minister McGuinness—1531

Pakistan, President Musharraf—1605, 1617, 1624

Palestinian Authority, President Abbas—1229, 1492, 1501, 1620

Peru, President Garcia Perez—1546, 1623

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials—Continued

Poland

Ambassador to Iraq Pietrzyk—1617

President Kaczynski—970, 1601

Portugal, Prime Minister Socrates—1207

Russia, President Putin—904, 1185, 1599, 1615, 1621

South Korea, President Roh—1183, 1613

Southeast Asian leaders—1183

Sudan, First Vice President Kiir—1618

Tibet, Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—1614

Turkey

President Gul—1607, 1615

Prime Minister Erdogan—1427, 1602

Uganda, President Museveni—1394

United Arab Emirates, President Khalifa—1601

United Kingdom, Prime Minister Brown—1028, 1041, 1603, 1612

United Nations

General Assembly President Kerim—1612

Secretary-General Ban—976, 1612, 1616

U.N. leaders—1611

Resignations and Retirements

Agriculture Department, Secretary, resignation, remarks—1212

Economic Council, National, Chairman, resignation, statement—1502

Justice Department, Attorney General, resignation, remarks in Waco, TX—1109

Veterans Affairs Department, Secretary, resignation, statement—978

White House Office

Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, Assistant to the President for, resignation, statement—1488

Legislative Affairs, Assistant to the President for, resignation, statement—1549

Speechwriting, Assistant to the President for, resignation, statement—1550

Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser, resignation, remarks—1072

Presidential Personnel Director, resignation, statement—982

Press Secretary, resignation, remarks—1153

Statements by the President

See also Appointments and Nominations; Bill Signings and Vetoes; Joint Statements; Resignations and Retirements

Annapolis Conference—1491

Statements by the President—Continued

Border security and immigration, improve-
ment reforms within existing law—1066
Budget, Federal—1107
Burma situation—1134, 1247, 1540
Central High School in Little Rock, AR, 50th
anniversary of integration—1239
Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, 15th
anniversary—1133
Damascus Declaration, National Council of
the, formation—1551
Deaths
Carson, Rep. Julia M.—1555
Casey, Germaine—1116
Compton, John, Prime Minister of Saint
Lucia—1192
Davis, Rep. Jo Ann—1292
Dunn, Jennifer Blackburn—1175
El Hajj, Brig. Gen. Francois, of Lebanon—
1544
Ghanem, Antoine, Parliament Member of
Lebanon—1211
Gillmor, Paul E.—1174
Griffin, Mervyn E., Jr.—1073
Hyde, Henry J.—1506
Johnson, former First Lady Claudia A.
“Lady Bird”—950
Kennedy, D. James—1186
Pavarotti, Luciano—1175
Zahir Shah, Mohammed, former King of
Afghanistan—1004
Domenici, Sen. Pete V., decision not to seek
reelection—1278
Economy, national—1124
Educational Progress, National Assessment
of—1239
Energy Information Administration, report—
1502
Hastert, Rep. J. Dennis, decision not to seek
reelection—1074

Statements by the President—Continued

India, peaceful nuclear cooperation bilateral
agreement, conclusion of negotiations—
1026
Intelligence reform legislation
Congressional passage—1044
House of Representatives passage—1043
Senate passage—1043
Libby, I. Lewis “Scooter,” granting executive
clemency—908
Lott, Sen. C. Trent, decision not to seek re-
election—1493
Military leaders, meeting—1154
Mortgage forgiveness debt relief legislation,
House of Representatives passage—1278
Mukasey, Michael B., Senate confirmation as
Attorney General—1452
North Korea, six-party talks—1275
Nussle, James A., Senate confirmation as Of-
fice of Management and Budget Director—
1171
Peake, James B., Senate confirmation as Sec-
retary of Veterans Affairs—1551
Peru, free trade agreement with U.S.
House of Representatives approval—1451
Senate approval—1524
Pryce, Rep. Deborah D., decision not to seek
reelection—1073
Regula, Rep. Ralph S., decision not to seek
reelection—1307
Republican National Committee, chairman,
resignation—1355
Russia situation—1493
Southwick, Leslie H., Senate confirmation as
U.S. Circuit judge for the Fifth Circuit—
1384
Utah, Crandall Canyon Mine situation—1157
Warner, Sen. John W., decision not to seek
reelection—1155
Wicker, Rep. Roger F., appointment as U.S.
Senator for Mississippi—1595