

Remarks on Departure From Waco, Texas January 1, 2008

The President. Laura and I wish our fellow Americans a happy and healthy 2008. I particularly want to say something to our troops and their families: This country respects you, we admire you, and we wish you a great 2008 as well.

We've just come off the ranch; had a good rest and good New Year's with some friends. And I'm looking forward to getting back to Washington to work on policies to

keep this country safe and to keep this country prosperous.

I just wanted to stop by and wish everybody a happy 2008. Thank you.

The First Lady. Happy New Year, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. at Texas State Technical College. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Interview With Nahum Barnea and Shimon Shiffer of Yedioth Ahronoth January 2, 2008

President's Upcoming Visit to Israel/Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel

Q. First of all, we would like to thank you very much for your readiness to see us and to have this interview for us. We can assure you that in Israel, you can be elected for the third term—[laughter]—with one exception: The day after the first day in office, the media will kill you. [Laughter] This is Israel. But you have so many, really, admirers in Israel.

The President. Well, thank you. I'm really looking forward to going again. As you know, this is my first trip as the President. I had the honor—

Q. I saw you. I had the opportunity to shake your hand in the Knesset.

The President. I was thrilled to go in 1998. One of the great ironies of my first trip to Israel was that, as well documented, I was given a tour of the West Bank by Ariel Sharon. Little did we both realize then that we would be sitting together in

the hopes of constructing peace, that we knew we'd be—we didn't know that we'd be President and Prime Minister at the time.

Q. And yet he was the leader of the opposition at the time.

The President. Well, he was in the Cabinet. He was a settlements man. And we were flying, and it was a very interesting moment. And I can remember so well Prime Minister Sharon pointing to a hill, and he said, "This is where I engaged as a young tank officer, my first battle, and see how far it is to our capital and our civilization." In other words, it was—his purpose was to make it clear to me the strategic issues facing Israel. And then we flew over the West Bank, and it was a fascinating moment.

And it was—history works in odd ways, and sometimes you're never sure about the twists and turns that life will bring. And so I'm looking forward to meeting with the