conditions there; let's just ignore it, or let's promote stability, which was part of the foreign policy of the past. I chose a different course. Stability didn't work. Stability created the conditions that were ripe for these terrorists to emerge and recruit. I happen to believe free societies provide hope. And I would hope that people in Europe, for example, understand that freedom has led to peace and ought to be supporting the freedom movements and not shy away from the responsibility of the comfortable to help those who long for freedom.

And it's hard work. It's really hard work, and it doesn't happen instantly. You know, we live in a world—like, in all due respect to 24-hour news, we live in a world where everything is, like, instant. But the work we're doing is—it takes patience, but most importantly, it takes faith in the universality of freedom that exists in every heart.

And so yes, I'm not only happy to defend decisions, I'm confident that they will lead to a better tomorrow.

Mr. Frei. Mr. President, I gather we've run out of time. Thanks for doing this.

The President. Thank you, sir. You bet.

Mr. Frei. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:12 a.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; and Speaker Mahmud al-Mashhadani, First Deputy Speaker Khalid al-Attiya, and Second Deputy Speaker Arif Tayfur of the Iraqi House of Representatives. He also referred to H.R. 2082. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 15.

Interview With Foreign Radio Journalists
February 14, 2008

The President. Thank you all. Just a couple of comments. I'm very much looking forward to the trip. This will be my second trip to the continent of Africa, my wife's fifth trip. The reason why I'm looking forward to it is I want the people on the continent of Africa to know that the American people care deeply about the human condition; that when we see suffering, it troubles our conscience, and we want to help. I believe to whom much is given, much is required. A lot has been given to America, and therefore, a lot is required of us to deal with human misery in the form of hunger and disease and hopelessness.

And so this is going to be a trip that I bring the good will of American people, with a strategy to help nations deal with the problems they have. I appreciate the leadership on the continent of Africa, and I'm looking forward to working with the leaders there as partners in solving some of the problems that I believe can be solved.

And so thank you for coming. I'd be glad to answer questions.

Democracy in Benin/U.S. Foreign Policy in Benin

Q. I'm Jean Jonas from Benin.

The President. Yes, sir. First up.

Q. Well, people from my country are very delighted to welcome you on Saturday. And I wish to say what they are expecting from you and from America. You, President Bush, have said that the best way we can build a peaceful world for the future is to share the principle of freedom with other nations. I took this from the U.S.

Government site—this is a word I appreciate. But we highly appreciate how your Government fight poverty and encourage growth building. But we would like all this take place in a perfectly democratic context. What will be the implication of your trip to Benin, in terms of guaranteeing a perfect democracy for building hope and prosperity?

The President. Democracy is a commitment by government and by people. The people of Benin have committed to democracy. However, to achieve a perfect democracy is very difficult. In my country, we're a great democracy. We were imperfect. After all, we enslaved people. And democracy is work and requires a lot of work. And it requires support from—to help leaders deal with everyday problems.

One such problem in Benin is malaria. Your President has made a strong commitment to help eradicate malaria. Today, in a speech that inaugurated my trip—or kicked off my trip, I talked about your President's commitment to provide nets to every child 5 and under. That's a strong commitment. We have got what's called Millennium Challenge Account programs. These are significant aid programs, but they're given to countries that adhere to rule of law and fight corruption and invest in the health and education of their people.

This is a different type of foreign policy. It's a different type of foreign aid. Foreign aid in the past was just, here, take and spend. This is foreign policy that reinforces the conditions necessary for just and peaceful societies to develop. And Benin is such a country. And so I'm looking forward to confirming our desire to help and reinforcing the President's desire to achieve a democracy in which people have got confidence.

Yes, ma'am, Yvonne.

U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa

Q. I'm Yvonne from Tanzania. I was happy to hear about you congratulating President Kikwete, calling him a good guy, because I agree he's a good guy as well. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, actually, that's just Texas vernacular, you know, it's not a very—[*laughter*]—it's not diplomatic talk, but, you know—[*laughter*]—he is a good guy.

Q. He's a good guy, yes, and we're happy to receive the MCC money, which we're about to receive when you come down to Tanzania. Now my question is that Tanzania is among 15 countries that have benefited from the U.S. initiative on HIV/AIDS, PEPFAR program, as well as the malaria initiative. But being an undeveloped country, while—would expect that to see more assistance in terms of helping poor countries such as Tanzania develop economically.

So I'd like to know, as you're winding your term in office, what commitment has America made to ensure that developing countries such as Tanzania is assisted in terms of trade and development issues and private sector development as well?

The President. That's good. First of all, just in general, our commitment to the continent of Africa was doubled when I first came into office, and then when I got—started my second term, doubled again.

Secondly, I do agree that the most substantive way to help any developing nation is through the development of commerce and wealth as a result of growing industry and businesses, both small and large. And the best way to foster that is through trade. And that's why AGOA, passed by my predecessor, reauthorized during my Presidency, is a great source of hope for people on the continent of Africa because they now have a market in which to sell.

Today in my speech, I talked about this statistic: Exports to the United States from the continent of Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, have tripled. Exports from the United States to sub-Saharan Africa have doubled. In other words, this trade has been good. One way to firm up the commitment to

make sure that our Nation remains nonprotectionist—in other words, a free-trading nation—is to complete the Doha round. That's a difficult set of negotiations. The United States has made it clear that we will reduce our agricultural subsidies, but in return, we expect other developed nations—and developing—large developing nations—to also reduce their tariffs and subsidies so that I can come to the Congress and say, here's an agreement that is fair for everybody.

And so the other thing we can do is—so, our assistance aid, by the way, is helping—in some cases helps business. One way to do that is through OPIC. And I announced today a new multimillion dollar—hundreds of millions of dollars of OPIC-type investment funds that will be available for African businesses.

What's interesting is, capital inflows into Africa now exceed grants, development aid. And that's important because capital inflows means jobs and commerce and hope and small businesses. So our plan is a plan that, hopefully, will sustain the gains that have been made. It's not like a one-time shot. It's got structural implications.

The other thing is, is that you can't have a hopeful economy if your people can't read. And so education is a vital link to providing hope. And we've got a strong education initiative on the continent—and started early in my administration; we're following through on it. We're trying to get, I think, like, 12 million textbooks and train 900,000 teachers and provide scholarships to 550,000 girls, all aiming to provide a basis by which these investments and these capital flows will actually be able to take hold—and that is an educated workforce, an educated population.

Albert.

Millennium Challenge Grants/Democracy in Africa

Q. Mr. President——

The President. You're living in Rwanda now?

Q. Yes, I do.

The President. Good.

Q. And I hope I'll be there before you reach, so I can welcome you.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. You somehow already replied to the question I wanted to ask you, but I can maybe define it a bit more. It is clear that the increase of support of your administration—your two mandates—increased a lot. And don't you think the U.S. should maybe also develop a higher level political strategy on Africa, that would benefit the U.S. and Africa?

The President. That's a very interesting question. A couple of approaches to aid in the past: One was, "We're feeling terrible for you, here's money," and not much asked in return. The other approach oftentimes has been: "You've got resources; we want them. We'll exploit them and leave behind something that really doesn't benefit the people." I know those are extreme cases, but nevertheless, if you really think about the history of supporting Africa, it's one way to characterize how things were approached. Some of it had to do with the guilt of colonialism; some of it had to do with just the gluttony of need for raw materials. In either case, it didn't work.

So we've taken this approach that said we will invest in countries where leadership has made a firm commitment to some basic principles: rule of law, fighting corruption, investment in people through health and education programs, and adherence to the marketplace. Nations that have received Millennium Challenge grants have met a test. In other words, there is a criterion to qualify for the money.

What's happening, Albert, is that other nations desirous of a Millennium Challenge grant ask, "What did you do to get your grant," to other leaders. And so the habits of a just society become an integral part of the receiving of help. We're more than willing to help, but in this case, we're saying the help has got to be to reinforce those decisions by leaders that'll have a

long-lasting impact toward a free society. There's nothing more debilitating to a society than corruption. If the people think that the leadership is there to enrich themselves, they'll have no trust in government. There will be no trust in form of—any form of government.

And so one of the criterion for Millennium Challenge is honesty. We want the leadership and government to be honest with the people. And when we first put out—when I first put out this initiative, I was criticized by some. That's just part of the job, evidently. And it was, "How dare you insist upon conditions for your aid." And my answer is, how can we not? Shouldn't we expect good leadership? Shouldn't we have faith in people from a different part of the world demanding the same things that we expect of our Government?

The answer is, absolutely we should hold people up to a high standard. Absolutely we should expect leaders to adhere to some basic principle. And absolutely we should trust people to want to live in a free society.

And so we changed the policy. Not only did we have a more robust approach to the issues facing Africans than ever before in our Nation's history, by a significant amount, but we have a strategy to do just what you asked. How do we make sure that a free society is lasting, that it's not just a moment—you know, let's just do what old George wants us to do, and then he'll go away and then societies can revert back its norm. And so we have—there's a constant evaluation of results based upon high standards.

Edwin. How are you?

U.S. Role in Africa

Q. Thank you very much. I'm fine.

The President. Yes, good, me too.

Q. Mr. President, I'm impressed by your policy statement on Africa today.

The President. Were you listening?

Q. Yes, for the—yes.

The President. You were the only people in this room; the rest of them fell asleep back there. [*Laughter*]

Q. But just what I've from the—what I've listened to here now, I'm mostly impressed; it's quite encouraging. But I just want to know, what is the motivating factor for the increasing interest in Africa?

The President. Why?

Q. The motivating factor of the interest in Africa. Well, somebody may say it's the new oil finds or the fight against terrorism or we want to promote democracy.

The President. Yes. A couple of things, Edwin. First of all, my passion toward Africa has been sustained throughout 7 years. In other words, my speech today, if you listened carefully to it, indicated a strategy that was first adopted early in my administration.

Secondly, there are two reasons why. Now, one, conditions of life overseas matters to the security of the United States. In other words, if there's hopelessness, then it's liable that extremists who are recruiting people to create havoc not only in their respective countries or neighborhoods but also in our country—if there's hopelessness, they have a better chance to recruit. So it's in our national security interest, Edwin, that we deal with the conditions that enable ideologues—the ideologues of hate to recruit.

Remember that the ideology that is prevalent, that uses murder as a weapon, cannot recruit in hopeful places. I mean, who would want to follow somebody that says: "Follow me; my vision is—if you're a female, follow me; my vision is, you have no rights"? Or, "If you disagree with my religious interpretations, you'll be whipped in the public square." So it's in our national interests.

Equally, if not more important, it is in our moral interests that we help people. I firmly believe—as I said earlier, I firmly believe in the admonition that to whom much is given, much is required. I believe that is a principle by which people should

make decisions in their individual lives and for the collective conscience of the United States. It is in our moral interest that we help a brother and sister who's dying of AIDS. And by helping that soul, it really helps ourselves.

America's generosity has been prevalent throughout the decades. And every time America reaches out to help a struggling soul, we find that we're a better nation for it. And so my interest and my focus and my insistence upon results on the continent of Africa are based on those two premises.

The other thing, Edwin, I will tell you is that I've got a lot of resources—or we have a lot of resources at our disposal. And the idea of an entire generation of people dying because of HIV/AIDS troubled my heart. And I felt like America could do something about it. Fifty thousand people were receiving antiretroviral drugs when we first started PEPFAR. Today, 1,300,000 people are receiving antiretrovirals in a very short period of time.

And it's not enough. It's just a beginning. And so you say, "Why, Mr. President, do you feel that way?" It's because I couldn't live with myself if I didn't develop an effective strategy and call upon the American people to help. And the good news is, the American people have responded—$15 billion over 5. We're now going to double our commitment.

Equally important, other nations have stepped up. The G–8 has committed to match the U.S. So all of a sudden, the strategy—and most of these strategies, Edwin, are really based upon—oftentimes when you see human suffering, it's based upon something that affects your heart. And so that's why I've made the decisions I made.

Patience. You've been very patient so far.

Liberian Refugees in the United States

Q. Well, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for considering Liberia as one of the countries you are going to be visiting this time.

The President. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And the Government and the people of Liberia do appreciate all that you've done for us. Now, Mr. President, last year, your administration extended by 1 year the temporary protective status of hundreds of Liberians. Now what happens when you leave office?

The President. Yes.

Q. Is your Government considering anything permanent for them, like what most host countries did for Liberian refugees, integrating them locally, those who wanted to stay? And those who wanted to go back home, taking them back home? Because this might—it will definitely allow these Liberians to continue to contribute to the growth of the economy of the country and also support their families back home.

The President. Interesting; yes, thank you for that. I did extend TPS to Liberians here in America for, I think, 18 months. And there are no plans to make it permanent. I would hope that many of the Liberians who have come and been fine contributors here in America think about going home to help this young country get on its feet after unspeakable violence and terrible times.

You've got a great President, in my judgment. I gave her the National Medal of Freedom. After all, she's the first woman President on the continent of Africa. And she—you know, in my speech today, I said, Africa's greatest resource is not oils or diamonds or rubber, it's really people.

And so, my hope, of course, is that people that have been here trying to save themselves from the violence go help this young—not young, but this country get back on its feet.

Donaig.

Darfur and Chad

Q. Mr. President——

The President. What kind of name is that, Donaig?

Q. Actually, I'm French, but it's a Celtic name.

The President. Really?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's a pretty name.

Q. The situation in Darfur has always been a matter of great concern for you. U.N. officials say that the situation on the ground has been worsening over the last few days. There's also been very heavy fighting in Chad. Do you think there's a link between the two, between Darfur and Chad?

The President. I do, yes.

Q. And where do we go from there?

The President. I appreciate that. I do think there's a link, first of all, and I think that—let me just step back and say that the United States has called the situation in Darfur a genocide. And I made a decision early on that we would work through the United Nations to help expedite troops that would help alleve the suffering and provide some breathing space, hopefully, for the negotiations between rebel groups and the Government.

Unfortunately, the rebel groups that were one time three are now a multiple of three. And unfortunately, a government that could have made a difference early on in Khartoum chose not to do so.

So the United States continues to work with the international community to put pressure on the Sudanese Government. I have issued very harsh sanctions against individuals and Sudanese companies. I also did so against at least one rebel leader I'm aware of, because I wanted to send a signal that your behavior is causing there to be some consequences. We're continually working with other nations to get them to take the same tough approach—nations throughout the world. Some are reluctant to move; some are anxious to help.

In terms of the conditions on the ground, one thing the United States has done is, we're providing enormous amounts of aid and obviously are concerned as to whether or not that aid makes it into the camps.

Secondly is, I have told the folks at the United Nations that we would provide training and equipment to expedite the movement of troops. The question is, will the troops show up? One way I can help call the world to action is when I'm in Rwanda to thank the troops of Rwanda, the Kagame Government, for being so proactive.

I'm frustrated by the pace of development on the ground. I am not pleased that other nations—some other nations don't take necessary steps to pressure the Government. I am—I've named another Envoy to the Sudan, whose job it is to really help bring a negotiating framework that will work.

And again, I'll repeat to you, one of the unfortunate issues has been that the rebel groups have gone from 3 to more than 10—12, I think it is, or 18, if I'm not mistaken. And there needs to be the U.S. and others to pull the groups together so that there is somebody to negotiate with—that can speak with—more likely with a unified voice.

And I do believe that the instability in Darfur affects Chad and French interests. And I do thank the Sarkozy Government for being a responsible nation, rallying EU forces to come and provide some help.

And it's a very unfortunate, sad situation that is frustrating. And on the other hand, there are some hopeful moments, such as the fact that many in the world are providing help for the people in the camps. The problem is the people who are in the camps. And obviously, we'd like them to get back to their villages.

Scott.

Zimbabwe

Q. In your first trip to Africa, you embraced President Mbeki as the honest broker in Zimbabwe. It looks like President Mugabe is a month away from being reelected. So what now?

The President. Well, obviously, we're disappointed that the situation in Zimbabwe

since my first trip has gotten worse. And it's very important for people to recognize types of government can affect the well-being and welfare of a country. Zimbabwe used to be a net exporter of food. Today, it is a net importer of food. Mr. Mugabe has ruined a country, and we have—we and frankly Great Britain have been the most vociferous advocates for change, and we still are advocates for change.

I was hoping that the South African Government would have been more proactive in its intercession to help the people of Zimbabwe. It's not anti anybody; it's pro people, and that has yet to happen, admittedly.

One more round here real quick. Yes, Jean.

U.S. Trade With Africa

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Is that "Jean"?

Q. Jean Jonas. I will——

The President. Like they say "Juan"—[*laughter*]—where I'm from?

Q. Mr. President, I will recommend you, during your short visit to my country, to have a taste in our juicy, tasty, and nicely perfumed pineapples.

The President. Pineapples.

Q. Yes. And then you will figure out that it will be an opportunity for all the American people to have a taste—[*inaudible*].

The President. Yes, that's a smart move. That's good marketing. [*Laughter*] It's called a taste test. [*Laughter*]

Q. But yet, my country does not benefit much from——

The President. From AGOA?

Q. Yes.

The President. Why? Because fruits are not a part of the AGOA——

Administration official. Pineapples can be imported under AGOA.

The President. So then what we're going to have to do is, I'm going to have to talk to your President and point out the opportunities that pineapples are a part of the AGOA trade list that can enter into the United States relatively duty free.

Q. Yes, but apart from the pineapple, we have so many things and so many products that can profit from the AGOA but do not——

The President. You need some export credit—I mean, not export credit, you need some help in developing industries that know how to export. Yes, I'll be glad to talk to the President about that. There are several ways the U.S. can help. Some grant money that encourages people to learn how to be an exporting company, microloans can also help. And so can OPIC, which is a way for people to get the capital necessary to be able to develop an infrastructure so that they can take the pineapple from the field, do whatever you're supposed to do, put it in a crate and ship it to the United States for sale—if you know how to market.

In other words, this is a—and so yes, we'd like to help enterprise. The whole purpose of our strategy, which is commerce, is much more effective than aid to governments. It's got a more lasting impact. And one of the things I'm going to do in Ghana is visit entrepreneurs that are taking advantage of marketplace access. And I'm confident I'm going to hear from leaders in the region saying: "That's fine; you're talking about nice things. And we like AGOA, but you've got to do something about your agriculture, because it provides a distinct disadvantage for our farmers."

And my answer is going to be, we're more than willing to do so, but we expect other partners in the world to do the same thing. We expect there to be fairness. And this is a tough issue to get all countries to agree to have equity when it comes to reducing our respective subsidies and tariffs, including African nations.

One of the things I point up to African leaders—point out to African leaders is that oftentimes it is virtually impossible to ship goods from one African country to the next because there are high intra-Africa tariffs and barriers to trade. And so it's a—trade

is complicated, and we just want to be treated fairly in America. In order to get something passed, it has to be viewed as a fair and equitable transaction, and I believe we can achieve such a thing. I'm looking forward to that pineapple. [*Laughter*]

Yvonne.

Government Corruption/Millennium Challenge Corporation

Q. Mr. President, your Government has been supporting Tanzania address the issue of corruption as well as good governance through the MCC initiative and through the Threshold Program. And it is now been eligible to receive the funds, but what's going to happen once you step down to make sure what is being done—to make sure that it's going to be sustainable——

The President. That's a good question.

Q. ——it won't end with you.

The President. You're right; my Presidency does end. And that's one of the great things about American democracy: There will be a peaceful transfer of power. And yet I'm hopeful that we leave behind an institution such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which has a monitoring device that will more likely assure the people of Tanzania that today's anticorruption measures are for real and lasting.

It's a very interesting question. I mean, you know, today's concern about corruption may not be tomorrow's. I suspect any American President is going to be worried about corruption, particularly since we've changed how aid is granted in the first place. And so the fact that the Millennium Challenge exists will make it more likely future administrations will ask the very same questions we've asked.

Albert.

Democratic Republic of the Congo/Rwanda

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Your thing turned off there, by the way, Yvonne. It clicked off. I think yours did. Anyway, far be it for me to interfere with your——

Q. Mr. President, you will see when you visit Rwanda that 14 years later, after the genocide, Rwanda has incredibly developed. But for development in Rwanda, one of the things that are key—that is key is security. And when you started your first mandate, there was already a threat, and 8 years later, the threat is still there, Mr. President. What do you forecast for the future?

The President. I presume you're referring to those groups that exist——

Q. FDLR.

The President. ——in your neighbor.

Q. Yes. And which are even listed as terrorist organizations, even by the U.S.

The President. Right, right, right. We're working with President Kabila on a disarmament program. We've been very engaged diplomatically in the eastern part of the Congo. I've talked to him about this personally. Our diplomats out of the State Department and on the ground are very actively engaged in getting people to honor the agreement. And I fully understand the issue and the concerns.

Q. Because we don't want to be dragged again——

The President. Back into the—no, no question. First of all, the amazing thing is, is that the recovery of your country. And I'm really looking forward to going. President Kagame has been a very strong leader in the right sense of the word. To be able to come from where you were to where you are today is pretty remarkable. I think I said Rwanda is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, if I'm not mistaken. Now, obviously, that's really good news, and, of course, one of the things that's going to matter is that the people benefit from that economic vitality and growth.

But you're right, it's one of the ongoing issues that I talked about in my speech today, and the reason I did so, is I wanted the President and the people of Rwanda to know that we understand the seriousness of this issue; that nobody wants a replay

of a very difficult—very terrible period in your history.

Edwin.

Africa-U.S. Relations/Trade

Q. Yes, Mr. President, your planned visit to Africa shows that the continent has become important to you and your country. Well, that's why the administration has set up AFRICOM for development but not for war——

The President. Africa for development but not for war.

Q. War, war fighting, and then the AGOA, Millennium Challenge Account, all for development—but to the ordinary African, he or she can see these things clearly or feel the impact well, maybe because of the gravity of the situation or poverty. And one way you made mention of it is to trade, not just aid. But we have problem with the African culture produced cotton and all that, because of the subsidies here, the effects are depressed prices back in Africa. What's official—what are you doing to solve this problem of subsidies? Is delicate issue.

The President. Well, thank you. First of all, if you're a mother who's worried about a child dying of malaria, and you see a net provided by an American child, then all of a sudden, the—you get a direct connection between the hearts of Americans and your life. So, in other words, you asked me whether—how does the average person sometimes feel the effects of American commitment to the continent?

And my answer to you—and I'll answer the subsidy thing—but my answer to you is, first of all, it's a very important question, because oftentimes, years ago, aid would never make it beyond the palaces. They would kind of end up in a handful of people's pockets. And our program, Edwin, is really aimed at focusing on individuals. If you believe every human life has dignity, therefore, your programs ought to reflect that concept. And the way you do that is you make sure that the aid gets to the people. In this case, we're focusing on problems that affect the people most directly.

And so, at Christmas, I got a—a couple years ago, I got nets given in my name or in Laura's name to families on the continent of Africa. I'll never know who they were, and they probably don't know who I am, but the idea that an American family decided to spend money on a Christmas gift aimed at helping a stranger is really an important part of an effective foreign aid policy.

Secondly, our AIDS initiative works very closely with the leaders to design programs that meet the needs of the country—not meet our needs but meet your needs. But the other thing that comes with the AIDS program is a great outpouring of faith-based groups from America. There are thousands of my citizens, Edwin, that would—that long to spend time in parts of Africa delivering help to a total stranger. Other countries—I'm sure that happens, but I happen to say that this is the greatest strength of America.

And so there will be, hopefully, somebody in a village in Ghana that runs into one of these missionaries on a mission of love, that will see the direct help of an AIDS program or a malaria program and education benefits. It may not be that somebody recognizes that a teacher has been trained by U.S. dollars, but our policy is to—we're more focused on the person learning. Maybe there will be a benefit to the United States, a direct benefit, where somebody says, wow, this is great; America did this. On the other hand, our focus is more on making sure that the child learns to read in the first place, because our overall objective is a hopeful society and a peaceful society.

To subsidies, I fully understand the angst about the leadership—by the leadership on U.S. subsidies. And I've said I'm more than willing to—on the Doha round—by the most effective place—first of all, AGOA has helped address that to a certain extent. One

way it has—because it's opened up markets. On the other hand, it has not made your farmers feel more comfortable because of the—in their view, that the United States farming is not only efficient, but there's a subsidy to make it even more competitive. I understand that.

In order to deal with this issue, however, there has to be full reciprocity by developing—large developing and developed nations. In other words, the United States farmer is willing to take less of a subsidy if his—can be assured that his product will get a fair hearing in somebody else's market—particularly those that can afford to buy crops on a large scale—and that's not the case. Same thing if we reduce our subsidies on agriculture; we expect other nations to be more opening to manufactured goods and services.

And it's a very complex issue, but it's one that we're trying to work through. And hopefully, if we can get a successful Doha round, your very question will be answered in a way that is hopeful to the farmers there in Ghana.

Patience. Patience, where were you educated? I know I'm not supposed to be asking questions, but—[*laughter*].

Growth of Liberia

Q. Some part of my education was in Nigeria.

The President. Oh, really? Interesting.

Q. Yes. Well, sir——

The President. Are you living——

Q. I'm living in Liberia right now.

The President. Are you? Good. How's it going?

Q. Good.

The President. Is the capital, like, improving——

Q. Well, we're sort of, like, accelerating——

The President. This is off the record, right? [*Laughter*]

Q. ——road construction work, so you can have a safe——

The President. Well, you don't need to worry about me. [*Laughter*]

Q. We're rushing up everything so you can——

The President. You're building things because of my arrival? Maybe I ought to come every other month. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. Is there noticeable construction now——

Q. Yes.

The President. ——besides my trip?

Q. Yes. Yes. From 2003 to date, there has been an increase in road construction. We've got infrastructure——

The President. Can you see it, a big difference?

Q. Yes, you can. Yes, you can.

The President. Are people feeling safer?

Q. Yes. People are feeling safer. Those on the ground are feeling safer.

The President. Particularly in the city?

Q. But, like, for Liberians here in America—I have been talking to most of them—for them to go back home and join in this young democracy.

The President. Thank you.

Security Situation in Africa

Q. And some of the things they've been saying is the security. And some of them went back, after the first bout of war and were forced to come back. Now they keep saying security, and each time, I say, we have the U.N. mission down there. But right now the U.N. mission is gradually drawing down faces.

Now, will your Government consider establishing AFRICOM in Liberia, which would consolidate security there? You know, like a couple of the subregions bring in investment into Liberia, which is what mostly Liberia needs right now.

The President. First of all, AFRICOM is a brand new concept aimed at strengthening nations' capacities to deal with trafficking or terror, but also to help nations

develop forces capable of doing the peacekeeping that unfortunately too often is needed on the continent.

Secondly, we are in the process of evaluating exactly how AFRICOM will work. Now, because it's a new concept, it was a brand new military-type command—and, by the way, it's going to be more than just military; there will be a State Department component with it, which makes it a very interesting issue. And so we're in the process of determining where and how AFRICOM should be situated on the continent. I'm not avoiding—I guess I'm avoiding your answer, but I don't mean to be avoiding it. I'm just telling you exactly where we are in the process.

And obviously, if there is going to be a physical presence on the continent of Africa in the forms of a headquarters that you just described, obviously, we would seriously consider Liberia. Liberia is a friend. The President has made it abundantly clear to me that she would like us to seriously consider Liberia, and I have told her I would.

I just want to make sure people understand that the makeup and the construct of AFRICOM is still really being thought through, because, as I mentioned to you, this is not—I mean, when you think of, you know, U.S. command structures, you think military, which is fine. But this is a different military mission than Central Command, for example. And as I told you, there's going to be a strong State Department component with it, and we're in the process of making sure we understand what that integration means and then evaluating if and where the facilities will be built. It's on my radar screen.

Donaig.

Kenya's Presidential Election

Q. About Kenya, Mr. President, there's been a month-and-a-half now of continuous ethnic violence. Who won this election? And what should be done to stop this violence?

The President. Yes. I don't think we can say we're certain to who won the election. That's part of the problem. Secondly, there is a way forward, which is for the parties to come together in good faith and work out a way forward until there are new elections, the date of which would be determined by the parties.

I don't think the United States ought to go in, or anybody else, to say, "You must have an election now." But I do think we can go in and help Kofi Annan convince the parties to work together in a cooperative way so that the people can see there's a way forward. And to this end, when I'm in Rwanda, I'm going to ask Condi to go over to Kenya and sit down with the leaders in Kenya to see if we can't help Kofi advance the—Kofi Annan advance the way forward.

Situation in the Horn of Africa

Q. One of the U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Africa has centered on the Horn. Any concern about the continuing instability in Somalia and, again, worsening relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the impact that that has not only on stability on the Horn but counterterrorism efforts?

The President. Yes, we're concerned about instability anywhere, really, but instability is what—and confusion and chaos and fear is the conditions under which a group like Al Qaida can thrive. That's why they like to kill people, innocent people, to create doubt about existing security, to create fear among the population. So any time you see that kind of instability, we're deeply concerned about it.

Secondly, there have been Al Qaida—some Al Qaida operating out of Somalia, and therefore, when you know some Al Qaida have been in and out of Somalia and there is some chaos and confusion, the conclusion is, we better be worried about it and do something about it. And we are. We've got cooperative arrangements in the region that will make it more likely for

us to be able to provide protections for the people in the region and ourself.

In terms of—yes, and we're also conscious of Ethiopia and Eritrea's border dispute. And I'm constantly talking to Condi about making sure that we're on top of the situation as the best we can make a positive contribution. I feel pretty comfortable that the State Department and our Embassies are fully aware of the issues on the border and are making sure that the respective leaders understand the position of the U.S., which is to solve this thing through mediation and not stack up the troops to the point where they get—where some spark ignites some kind of border dispute.

But the Horn is an area of deep concern for the U.S. We actually happen to have a base there as well, in Djibouti. And we take the issues there seriously and are very engaged with it on a regular basis.

Okay, here's what we're going to do: We'll get a picture, unless you don't want one. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The interview began at 1:18 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin; President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; President Paul Kagame of Rwanda; Special Envoy to Sudan Richard S. Williamson; President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana; President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and former Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations. A reporter referred to President Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki of South Africa. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 15. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders
February 15, 2008

This morning I spoke to the president of Northern Illinois University. I told the president that a lot of folks today will be praying for the families of the victims and for the Northern Illinois University community. Obviously a tragic situation on that campus, and I ask our fellow citizens to offer their blessings, blessings of comfort and blessings of strength.

We also just discussed a serious problem facing our country, and that is the fact that House leaders blocked a good piece of legislation that would give our intelligence community the tools they need to protect America from a terrorist attack.

The American citizens must understand—clearly understand that there is still a threat on the homeland, there's still an enemy which would like to do us harm, and that we've got to give our professionals the tools they need to be able to figure out what the enemy is up to so that we can stop it.

The Senate passed a good bipartisan bill that makes sure our intelligence community has the tools necessary to protect America from this real threat. And I want to thank you all and thank the Democrats in the United States Senate who worked closely with Mitch and John to get a strong piece of legislation, with a 68-vote majority, out of the Senate.

This bill comes to the House of Representatives, and it was blocked. And by blocking this piece of legislation, our country is more in danger of an attack. By not giving the professionals the tools they need,