

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,

it's going to be a lot harder to do the job we need to be able to defend America.

People say, "Oh, it doesn't matter if this law hasn't been renewed." It does matter; it matters for a variety of reasons. It matters because the intelligence officials won't have tools necessary to get as much information as we possibly can to protect you. And it matters because these telephone companies that work collaboratively with us to protect the American people are afraid they're going to get sued. And the American people have got to understand, these lawsuits make it harder for us to convince people to help protect you. And so by blocking this good piece of legislation, our professionals tell me that they don't have all the tools they need to do their job.

And so now the House and Senate are off on a 12-day recess without getting the people's business done. And when they come back from that 12-day recess, the House leaders must understand that the decision they made to block good legislation has made it harder for us to protect you, the American people, and we expect them to get a good bill to my desk—which is the Senate bill—as soon as possible.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John G. Peters, president, Northern Illinois University. He also referred to H.R. 3773.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations *February 15, 2008*

President Bush. Mr. Secretary-General, welcome back to the White House. Thank you for your efforts to make the United Nations a constructive force for good.

I appreciate your tireless work to help solve some of the real humanitarian crises that we face, such as the crises in Sudan, the issues in Burma. I appreciate very much your leadership when it came to Kenya, and thank you for going to support former Secretary-General Annan.

I thank you very much for the leadership that you've shown in Iraq. This young democracy is beginning to gain confidence and make progress, and the U.N. mission there has been very constructive.

I appreciate very much your desire to help the poor and feed the hungry. And on my trip to Africa this week, that's exactly the same message I'll be taking, that the American people are a compassionate people and decent people who want to help moms with—deal with malaria or families

deal with HIV/AIDS, the need to feed the hungry.

So I'm honored you're here. I appreciate your vision. And thank you for your leadership and your friendship.

Secretary-General Ban. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President and ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for your warm welcome and strong support you have shown me during last 1 year while I was carrying out my duty as Secretary-General. It has been instrumental and very much appreciated.

I've been trying my best to make United Nations more trust-proof, transparent, and accountable and more effective organization. This effort will continue. At the same time, with your strong support and international community, I've been doing my best to address all these regional country issues, starting from the situation in Darfur, Lebanon, Myanmar, and also Kenya. There are so many problems that challenge at this