

Q. One press conference every week if you're elected, Senator?

*The President.* Thank you all very much. It's been a pleasure to see you. Obviously, we've invited some unruly members of the fourth estate here. I'm disappointed in the conduct of some of the people that have come. I told John it would be a nice and polite crowd. Thank you all very much.

*Sen. McCain.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Frank W. Buckles March 6, 2008

Sitting next to me is Mr. Frank Buckles, 107 years young, and he is the last living doughboy from World War I. And it has been my high honor to welcome Mr. Buckles and his daughter, Susannah, here to the Oval Office.

Mr. Buckles's mind is sharp, his memory is crisp, and he's been sharing with me some interesting anecdotes. I asked him where he lived, and he said, "That reminds me of what General Pershing asked me." And he told the general that he was raised on a farm in Missouri. And the general said, "Well, you know, as the crow flies,

it's 40 miles from where I was raised." So Mr. Buckles has a vivid recollection of historic times.

And one way for me to honor the service of those who wear the uniform in the past and those who wear it today is to herald you, sir, and to thank you very much for your patriotism and your love for America.

So we're glad you're here. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

## Remarks on the Fifth Anniversary of the Department of Homeland Security March 6, 2008

Thank you very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your kind introduction, and I appreciate your outstanding leadership for this Department. I'm really pleased to join you on the fifth anniversary of the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Man, does time fly. *[Laughter]*

When this Department was established following the September the 11th terrorist attacks, it was hard to imagine that we

would reach this milestone without another attack on our homeland. For those of you who were here 5 years ago, if you think back to that time, I don't think we would have predicted that 5 years later there had not been another attack on us. Yet we've been—*[applause]*—and it's your vigilance and your hard work that have helped keep this country safe. And so I want to thank you. I hope you take enormous pride in the accomplishments of this Department,

and I hope you know the American people are grateful for your service, and so am I.

On this anniversary, we must also remember that the danger to our country has not passed. Since the attacks of 9/11, the terrorists have tried to strike our homeland again and again. We've disrupted numerous planned attacks, including a plot to fly an airplane into the tallest building on the west coast and another to blow up passenger jets headed for America across the Atlantic Ocean. The lesson of this experience is clear. It's clear to me, and I know it is clear to you. The enemy remains active, deadly in its intent, and in the face of this danger, the United States must never let down its guard.

I thank Tom Ridge for being the first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, and it's good to see him again. I appreciate—[*applause*—]I want to welcome the members of my Cabinet who've joined us, the leadership team at the Department. I appreciate the fact that a fine United States Senator and a great patriot has joined us today, Senator Joe Lieberman.

I appreciate the members of the diplomatic corps who've joined us. I appreciate the former DHS employees who are here; I appreciate all the current DHS employees for serving our country. And I want you to thank your families for the sacrifices you're making. I want to thank—[*applause*—]and I appreciate the Homeland Security partners from across the country who've joined us for this fifth anniversary.

The events of September the 11th, 2001, demonstrated the threats of a new era. I say new because we found that oceans which separate us from separate—different continents no longer separate us from danger. We saw the cruelty of the terrorists and extremists, and we glimpsed the future they intend for us. In other words, there's some serious lessons on September the 11th that it's important for all Americans to remember. Two years ago, 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." All of us, particularly those charged with protecting the American people, need to take the words of this enemy very seriously. And I know you do.

At this moment, somewhere in the world, a terrorist is planning an attack on us. I know that's inconvenient thought for some, but it is the truth. And the people in this hall understand that truth. We have no greater responsibility, no greater charge than to stop our enemies and to protect our fellow citizens.

To protect the American people, we are on the offense against the terrorists around the world. It is better to defeat them over there than to face them here in the United States. Since the enemy attacked us, since they declared war, since we've responded, we've captured or killed hundreds of Al Qaida leaders and operatives in more than two dozen countries. With our allies, we removed dangerous regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan that had harbored terrorists and had threatened our people.

Our men and women in uniform, those in the United States military are helping people of those countries fight the terrorists and build free societies and secure the peace for their children and ours. We owe our military a debt of gratitude, and we owe them something more. We owe them all the tools necessary to do the jobs we expect of them.

This war against these extremists and radicals who would do us harm is the great ideological struggle of our time. We're in a battle with evil men. I call them evil because if you murder the innocent to achieve a political objective, you're evil. These folks have beliefs. They despise freedom. They despise the right for people to worship an Almighty the way he or she sees fit. They desire to subject millions to their brutal rule. Our enemies oppose every principle of humanity and decency that we hold dear. They kill innocent men and

women all the time. The only way these terrorists can recruit operatives, the only way they can convince somebody that their dim vision of the world is worth following is to feed on hopelessness and despair.

And so our policy is to oppose this hateful ideology by offering an alternative vision, one based upon freedom and liberty. Across the world, America feeds the hungry; we fight disease; we fight tyranny. We promote the blessings of a free society, not only because it's in our national interest—national security interests, but because it's in our moral interests. You see, by bringing the hope of freedom to these societies, we'll help peaceful people marginalize the extremists and eliminate the conditions that feed radicalism. And so for the sake of our security, for the sake of the peace of our children, the United States of America will stay on the forefront of spreading freedom and liberty around the world.

As we wage this struggle abroad, we're also building the institutions we need here at home to keep our country safe. The second part of the strategy is to protect the homeland. The first part is to stay on the offense, bring people to justice where we find them, and spread liberty as the great alternative to their hateful ideology. The second part of the strategy, of which you're intricately involved, is to protect America. And that's why I'm here to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Department of Homeland Security, because you're on the frontlines of doing what the American people expect us to do, and that's to protect them.

Before 9/11, there was no single department of Government charged with protecting the homeland. So we undertook the most sweeping reorganization of the Federal Government since the start of the cold war. We merged 22 different Government organizations into a single department with a clear mission: Secure America, and protect the American people from future attacks.

The past 5 years, the men and women of this Department have carried out that mission with skill and determination. In ways seen and unseen, you work each day to protect our people from dangerous and determined enemies. I know how hard you work; a lot of Americans don't. And perhaps on this fifth anniversary, the message will get through that there's a lot of dedicated, decent, honorable folks working their hearts out to protect the country.

The Department of Homeland Security is working to stop terrorists from infiltrating our country. On 9/11, America was attacked from within by 19 men who entered our country, hid among us, and then killed thousands. To stop this from happening again, we've taken important steps to prevent dangerous people from entering America. We made our borders more secure. We've deployed new technologies for screening people entering America.

We're on track to double the number of Border Patrol agents who serve our country. For those of you who—that wear the uniform of the Border Patrol, thanks for what you're doing. We've unified our terrorism databases into one central database. We are enhancing it with biometric capabilities. We've improved the way we evaluate visa applicants. We made it harder to counterfeit travel documents. We want to know who's coming to our country and who's leaving our country, and we take significant steps to be able to tell the American people the answer to those questions.

Secondly, the Department of Homeland Security is working to stop terrorists from smuggling biological and chemical and nuclear weapons into our cities. The Department has deployed a layered system of protections against these dangerous materials that starts overseas, continues along our borders, and extends throughout our country. We've launched innovative programs to protect major metropolitan areas by providing early detection of biological or nuclear or radiological attacks. We are determined to stop the world's most dangerous

men from striking America with the world's most dangerous weapons.

The Department of Homeland Security is working to protect our transportation systems and other critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks. Our enemies have declared—they have made it abundantly clear that if they can strike economic targets here in America, they can terrorize our people and do great harm to our economy. So in the face of this threat, the Department of Homeland Security has taken decisive action. Since 9/11, we've worked with the private sector to develop comprehensive security plans for 17 of the Nation's critical sectors, including our food and water supplies, chemical and nuclear facilities, power grids and telecommunications networks.

Under Operation Neptune Shield, the men and women of the Coast Guard are protecting more than 360 ports and more than 95,000 miles of coast guard [coastline].\* We've taken action to protect our transportation systems, including a massive overhaul of security at our airports and new steps to protect our railways and mass transit systems.

The message should be clear to the American people: We will protect our country; we will protect our economy from those who seek to do us harm.

The Department of Homeland Security is working to strengthen our defenses against cyber attacks. Our enemies understand that America's economy relies on uninterrupted use of the Internet and that a devastating attack in cyberspace would be a massive blow to our economy and way of life. And so we've taken steps to enhance our cyber security, created a new National Cyber Security Division in this Department charged with protecting against virtual terrorism. We've established a Computer Emergency Readiness Team to provide 24-hour watch, so we can stop cyber attacks before they spread and cripple our economy. The United States Secret

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\* White House correction.

Service has established 24 Electronic Crimes Task Forces with a mission to prevent, detect, and investigate cyber attacks on our country.

As we protect our cyber networks, we're also working to deny our enemies the use of the Internet to recruit and train operatives and plan attacks on America. Our strategy is to deny the terrorists safe haven anywhere in the world, and that includes a virtual safe haven on the Internet.

The Department of Homeland Security is working to strengthen cooperation with State and local governments, so we can prevent terrorist attacks and respond effectively if we have to. Before 9/11, the Federal Government sent threat information to authorities—local authorities by fax machine. Today, we've established 21st-century lines of communication that allow us to share classified threat information rapidly and securely. We've helped State and local officials establish intelligence fusion centers in 46 States. These centers allow Federal officials to provide intelligence to our State and local partners and allow locally generated information to get to officials here in Washington who need it.

Even all these steps—with even all these steps, we know that a free society—there's no such thing as perfect security. That's the challenge. To attack us, the terrorists only have to be right once; to stop them, we need to be right 100 percent of the time. And so we're working to ensure that if attack does occur, this country is ready. We'll do everything we can to stop attacks, and we are. I can confidently tell the American people, a lot of folks are working hard to protect them with a good, comprehensive strategy.

But if the enemy is able to make it here and attack us, we want to be able to respond. And so since September of 2001, we've provided more than \$23 billion of equipment and training and other critical needs for America's State and local first-responders. We want people at the local level prepared.

We've worked with officials in 75 major metropolitan areas to improve the ability of first-responders to communicate clearly in an emergency. We've helped establish mutual aid agreements with States and strengthened the Emergency Management Assistant Compact among States, so that when communities need help from their neighbors, the right assistance will get to the right people at the right time.

We've greatly expanded the Nation's stockpile of drugs and vaccines that would be needed in the event of a bioterrorist attack or a mass casualty incident. We now have enough smallpox vaccine for every American in case of an emergency. We've increased our investments in biodefense medical research and development at the National Institutes of Health by more than 3,000 percent since 2001. We launched Project BioShield, an effort to speed the development of new vaccines and treatments against biological agents that could be used in a terrorist attack.

We've learned from our mistakes to improve our response when disaster strikes. When Hurricane Katrina hit our Nation's Gulf Coast, it exposed weaknesses in America's emergency response capabilities, so we retooled and restructured FEMA. Since Hurricane Katrina, we've improved FEMA's logistics management, strengthened its operations planning, augmented disaster assistance programs, and provided the Agency with additional personnel and resources.

And we have seen outstanding results as a result of these efforts. FEMA's response to the California wildfires, to the Minneapolis bridge collapse, and the tornadoes that struck the Mississippi Valley last month were exemplary. Despite these efforts, today, FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security—because of these efforts, FEMA and the Homeland Security are better prepared. There's still work to do, but we're doing it. We're never satisfied here in the Department of Homeland Security. We're constantly assessing weak-

nesses and needs and constantly adjusting, because there's no greater calling than to protect our country.

The Department of Homeland Security is vital to our safety, and it's just one of the institutions that have been built or transformed to keep our Nation safe. We created the new Office of Director of National Intelligence, which led a broad restructuring of our Nation's intelligence agencies for the threats of the 21st century. We transformed the FBI into an agency whose primary focus is stopping terrorism and reorganized the Department of Justice to help combat the threat.

We created the National Counterterrorism Center, where members of this Department, as well as the FBI and the CIA and other departments and agencies, work side by side to track terrorist threats and prevent new attacks.

At the Department of Defense, we created a new Northern Command responsible for homeland defense and enhanced Strategic Command that is responsible for defending America against long-range attacks.

We created the Proliferation Security Initiative, a coalition of more than 85 nations that are working together to stop shipments of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, and related materials.

And to find out what the terrorists know about planned attacks, we established a program run by the CIA to detain and question key terrorists and operatives.

My administration is determined to ensure those in our Government charged with defending America have the tools they need to fight the terrorists. One of the most important tools is the ability to monitor terrorist communications. To stop new attacks on America, we need to know who the terrorists are talking to, what they're saying, and what they're planning.

We cannot get this vital information without the cooperation of private companies. Unfortunately, some private companies have been sued for billions of dollars because they are believed to have helped

defend America after the attacks of September the 11th. Allowing these lawsuits to proceed is—would be unfair because if any of these companies helped us, they did so after being told by the Government that their assistance was legal and their assistance was necessary to defend the homeland.

Allowing these lawsuits to proceed would be unwise because litigation could lead to the disclosure of information about how we conduct surveillance and give Al Qaida and others a roadmap as to how to avoid the surveillance. Allowing these lawsuits to proceed would be dangerous because private companies besieged and fearful of lawsuits would be less willing to help us quickly get the information we need.

The United States Senate passed a good bill that will protect companies from these lawsuits and ensure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to keep us safe. This bill passed by a strong bipartisan majority of 68 to 29, and a bipartisan majority of the House stands ready to pass the Senate bill if a vote were held. Unfortunately, House leaders blocked a vote on the Senate bill about 3 weeks ago. At the time, House leaders declared they needed 21 more days to work out their differences and get a bill to my desk. The deadline arrives on Saturday. If House leaders are serious about security, they will need to meet the deadline they set for themselves, and pass the bipartisan Senate bill, and get it to my desk this Saturday.

The men and women of the Department of Homeland Security can be proud of all that you have accomplished in 5 years. I've just laid out some of that which you've accomplished, and it took me about 30 minutes. You have built a vital and effective Department that is helping to prevent dangerous enemies from striking our people.

Your efforts and all the institutions we have built since 9/11 are a lasting legacy that will give future generations and future Presidents the instruments they need to keep our country safe.

The most important legacy we can leave behind is a commitment to remain vigilant. With the passage of time, the memories of September the 11th have grown more distant. For some, there is temptation to think that the threats to our country have grown distant as well. They haven't. And our job is to never forget the threat and to implement strategies that will protect the homeland from those who seek us harm.

Under the superb leadership of Secretary Chertoff, that is what the men and women of this Department do each day. And so on behalf of the people, thanks for stepping forward; thanks for shouldering this awesome responsibility. You're working with vital partners in State and local and tribal governments, in the private and nonprofit sectors, and the international community to meet the threats of our time. Many of you serve in dangerous circumstances, and on this anniversary, we remember all those who have given their lives to keep our people safe.

I appreciate every member of the Department of Homeland Security for your dedication and your courage and your resolve. You're helping to ensure that as we wage the war on terror across the world, we never forget where it began: in our homeland.

May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. at DAR Constitution Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

## Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Jerusalem March 6, 2008

I condemn in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attack in Jerusalem that targeted innocent students at the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva. This barbaric and vicious attack on innocent civilians deserves the condemnation of every nation.

I have just spoken with Prime Minister Olmert to extend my deepest condolences to the victims, their families, and to the people of Israel. I told him the United States stands firmly with Israel in the face of this terrible attack.

## Remarks on the Situation in Cuba March 7, 2008

*Sientese. Gracias. Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca.* Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here; Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished officials, honored guests.

We gather today to remember a tragic moment in the history of Cuba. Five years ago this month, Cuban authorities rounded up scores of citizens and charged them with offenses against the regime. Those arrested included teachers and librarians and journalists. They committed no crimes. They simply held views their Government did not like, and they refused to be silent. In all, 75 people were given long prison terms. In the world of Cuban dissidents, that crackdown 5 years ago is remembered as the Black Spring.

A few moments ago, I met with one of the men arrested in that crackdown, Miguel Sigler Amaya, *y su esposa*, Josefa. Miguel was arrested in this crackdown because he and his brothers had long opposed the Castro regime. Over many years, they had been harassed and they had been beaten by Cuban authorities. Miguel once had his ribs cracked by one of the regime's mobs. One of the brothers survived an assassination attempt, and the entire family had received death threats. Now during the Black Spring, Miguel was charged with disobedience. He was sentenced to 26 months

in prison. His brothers, Ariel *y* Guido, each received sentences of 20 years.

When Miguel went to prison, his wife Josefa found common cause with the wives of other political prisoners. They formed a group and chose as their symbol the color white, the color of peace. Every Sunday, these Ladies in White—*las Damas de Blanco*—attend Catholic mass, and then together they walk in silence through the streets. In Cuba, even that simple act is considered dangerous defiance. The women have been subjected to harassment and beatings. Josefa herself was stopped by an assailant who told her that he was sending her a message, and then he clubbed her with a blunt object on the back of her head.

Josefa was ordered to leave Cuba with Miguel once he was released from prison in 2006. In Cuba, they are considered outlaws. In America, they are heralds of freedom, and I'm proud to stand with them in the White House.

Miguel and Josefa tell a compelling story about brutal repression right off the shores of the United States. And I want to thank you for letting us share your stories, and I thank you for your courage.

I've asked Josefa to please tell the Ladies in White—*las Damas de Blanco*—that as they pray for a free Cuba, the American