

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sandra E. Roelofs, wife of President Saakashvili.

Statement on the 175th Anniversary of Thailand-United States Relations *March 19, 2008*

Laura and I join in celebrating the 175th anniversary of relations between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand. The United States and Thailand have long been linked by bonds of trust, appreciation, and friendship. The Treaty of Amity and Commerce, signed on March 20, 1833, solidified our commitment to working together for mutual benefit and marked the first agreement of its kind between the United States and an Asian nation. Over the past 175 years, our two governments have worked together on issues such as economic development, health care, and security. Today, we share a commitment to

democracy and to free and fair trade, as well as a respect for human rights. Our tradition of cooperation and support remains strong.

I thank His Majesty the King and the citizens of Thailand for our enduring partnership. This anniversary is an opportunity to underscore our shared ideal of liberty and reinforce our bonds of friendship and understanding. We are proud to celebrate this historic day.

NOTE: The statement referred to King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand.

Statement on the Appointment of Kenneth L. Wainstein as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism *March 19, 2008*

I am pleased to announce that I have selected Kenneth L. Wainstein to serve as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. Ken is a proven leader and a dedicated public servant with nearly two decades of law enforcement experience, including as United States Attorney for the District of Columbia. As Assistant Attorney General for National Security, he helped improve our ability to confront the threats of a new era. His experience at the Federal Bureau of Investiga-

tion as general counsel and Chief of Staff has provided him with a clear understanding of the dangers we face and the importance of ensuring that we have the necessary tools to protect America.

In his new role, Ken will coordinate our Nation's homeland security efforts to ensure that we continue to make progress on combating terrorism, securing our borders, and strengthening our emergency preparedness. I look forward to working with Ken to make America safer.

Message on the Observance of Nowruz March 19, 2008

I send greetings to those celebrating Nowruz.

For the millions of people who trace their heritage to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and Central Asia, Nowruz is a time to celebrate the New Year with the arrival of spring. This cherished and ancient festival brings together family and friends to reflect on what has come before and celebrate a season of new beginnings.

Our country is proud to be a land where individuals from many different cultures can pass their traditions on to future gen-

erations. The diversity of America brings joy to our citizens and strengthens our Nation during Nowruz and throughout the year.

Laura and I send our best wishes to all those celebrating Nowruz, both here in the United States and abroad. May the year ahead be filled with peace and many blessings.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Interview With Setareh Derakhshesh of VOA Persian News Network March 19, 2008

Ms. Derakhshesh. Mr. President, let me thank you first on behalf of the Voice of America, on behalf of the Persian News Network for giving us your time. We really appreciate that, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Iran

Ms. Derakhshesh. As you know, Mr. President, this is the eve of Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. What is your message to the Iranian people as they face tough economic circumstances and infringement on their freedoms?

The President. Well, first, *Nowruz a tan Mubarak*. Secondly, that the people of the United States respects the people of Iran, that we respect the traditions of Iran, the great history of Iran. We have differences with the Government, but we honor the people. And we want the people to live in a free society. We believe freedom is a right for all people and that the freer the world is, the more peaceful the world is. And so my message is: Please don't be

discouraged by, you know, the slogans that say America doesn't like you, because we do, and we respect you.

Ms. Derakhshesh. What do you say to the regime, sir? What would you say to the regime?

The President. I'd say to the regime that they've made decisions that have made it very difficult for the people of Iran. In other words, the Iranian leaders, in their desire to, you know, enrich uranium, in spite of the fact that the international community has asked them not to, has isolated a great country. And that if—there's a way forward. I mean, the Iranian leaders know there's a way forward. And that is, verifiably suspend your enrichment, and you can have new relationships with people in the U.N. Security Council, for example.

And it's just sad that the leadership is in many ways very stubborn because the Iraqi—the Iranian people are not realizing their true rights. And they're confusing people in Iraq, as well, about their desires.