

path for considering this agreement. At the expense of our economy and our national

security, the House has instead chosen to take a shortsighted and partisan path.

The President's Radio Address *April 12, 2008*

Good morning. Fifteen months ago this week, I announced the surge. And this week, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker gave Congress a detailed report on the results.

Since the surge began, American and Iraqi forces have made significant progress. While there's more to be done, sectarian violence, civilian deaths, and military deaths are down. Improvements in security have helped clear the way for political and economic progress. The Iraqi Government has passed a budget and three major benchmark laws. And many economic indicators are now pointed in the right direction.

Serious and complex challenges remain in Iraq. Yet with the surge, a major strategic shift has occurred. Fifteen months ago, extremists were sowing sectarian violence. Today, many mainstream Sunni and Shi'a are actively confronting the extremists. Fifteen months ago, Al Qaida was using bases in Iraq to kill our troops and terrorize Iraqis. Today, we have put Al Qaida on the defensive in Iraq, and now we are working to deliver a crippling blow. Fifteen months ago, Americans were worried about the prospect of failure in Iraq. Today, thanks to the surge, we've revived the prospect of success in Iraq.

This week, General Petraeus reported that security conditions have improved enough to withdraw all five surge brigades. By July 31, the number of U.S. combat brigades in Iraq will be down 25 percent from the year before. Beyond that, General Petraeus says he will need time to assess how this reduced American presence will affect conditions on the ground before making recommendations on further reduc-

tions. I've told him he'll have time he needs to make his assessment.

Our job in the period ahead is to stand with the Iraqi Government as it makes the transition to responsibility for its own security and its own destiny. So what would this transition look like? On the security front, we will stay on the offense, continue to support the Iraqi security forces, continue to transfer security responsibilities to them, and move, over time, into an overwatch role.

On the economic front, Iraq's economy is growing. Iraq is assuming responsibility for almost all the funding of large-scale reconstruction projects, and our share of security costs is dropping as well. On the political front, Iraq is planning to hold elections that will provide a way for Iraqis to settle disputes through the political process instead of through violence.

All our efforts are aimed at a clear goal: a free Iraq that can protect its people, support itself economically, and take charge of its own political affairs. And no one wants to achieve that goal more than the Iraqis themselves.

The turnaround that our men and women in uniform have made possible in Iraq is a brilliant achievement. And we expect that as conditions on the ground continue to improve, they will permit us to continue the policy of return on success.

I'm confident in our success because I know the valor of the young Americans who defend us. This week, I commemorated the sacrifice of Michael Monsoor, a Navy SEAL who gave his life in Iraq and became the fourth Medal of Honor recipient in the war on terror. On September 29, 2006, Mike

and two teammates had taken a position on a rooftop when an insurgent grenade landed on the roof. Mike threw himself onto the grenade. One of the survivors put it this way: "Mikey looked death in the face that day and said, 'You cannot take my brothers, I will go in their stead.' "

It is heroism like Michael Monsoor's that pays the cost of human freedom. Our prayers remain with Michael's family and with all the men and women who continue this noble fight. We look forward to the day when they return home in victory.

Thank you for listening.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting *April 14, 2008*

I want to thank members of my Cabinet for joining me this morning. We discussed a variety of subjects, including the progress being made in the freedom agenda around the world. But we also are reminded that tomorrow is tax day, and our fellow citizens will be paying taxes during a time of economic uncertainty. These are tough economic times.

This administration anticipated these times. We worked with Congress to pass a progrowth package that incensed businesses to invest and a progrowth package that will be sending some of your taxpayers' money back to you. And the Secretary mentioned again that the second week of May, checks and/or credits to your account will start coming to you. And that's going to be an important part of making sure this economy begins to recover in a way that will add confidence and hope.

One way Congress can act is to make the tax cuts permanent. If they really are that concerned about economic uncertainty, they ought to create certainty in the Tax Code.

The other thing we've been very active on is helping people stay in their homes,

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8 a.m. on April 11 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 11, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

whether it be the HOPE NOW Alliance or FHASecure. Over a million people have been helped to renegotiate and/or to find ways to stay in a home that they own.

Now Congress can help. Congress needs to modernize FHA; they need to modernize Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. I mean, there's constructive things Congress can do that will encourage the housing market to correct quickly by encouraging—helping people stay in their homes. I don't think we ought to be bailing out lenders or speculators. I think we need to be helping hard-working Americans who are creditworthy stay in their homes.

And I do want to say something about trade. There's big disappointment around this table about the action that the Speaker took on the Colombia free trade agreement. This free trade agreement is good for American workers, and it's good for American consumers. And this free trade agreement is in our national interests. Yet that bill is dead unless the Speaker schedules a definite vote. This is a unprecedented move, and it's not in our country's interest that we stiff an ally like Colombia