

Our men and women in uniform and their families deserve better than this. Around the world, our troops are taking on dangerous missions with skill and determination. In Afghanistan, they're delivering blows to the Taliban and Al Qaida. In Iraq, they've helped bring violence down to its lowest point since late March of 2004. Civilian deaths are down; sectarian killings are down. As security has improved, the economy has improved as well, and political reconciliation is taking place at the grassroots and national levels. The Iraqi security forces are becoming more capable, and as they do, our troops are beginning to come home under a policy of return on success.

Each day, the men and women of our Armed Forces risk their lives to make sure their fellow citizens are safer. They serve with courage and honor. They've earned

the respect of all Americans, and they deserve the full support of Congress. I often hear Members of Congress say they oppose the war but still support the troops. Now they have a chance to prove it. Congress should pass a responsible funding bill that gives our men and women in uniform the resources they need and the support they have earned.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:30 a.m. on June 6 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 6, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Jim McKay June 7, 2008

Laura and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Jim McKay. For a generation of Americans, Jim was more than the much-honored host of "Wide World of Sports" and ABC's Olympic coverage. He was a talented and eloquent newsman and storyteller whose special gift was his ability to make the viewers at home genuinely care about more than just who won or lost.

Jim was at his best during what had to be his most difficult assignment, hosting

with skill and sensitivity ABC's blanket coverage of the 1972 Munich Olympics hostage crisis.

Off camera, he was a compassionate and generous person and devoted family man.

We are also grateful for Jim's service to his country as a naval officer aboard a minesweeper during World War II.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Jim's wife Margaret, his children Sean and Mary, and all of his family and friends.

Interview With Natasa Briski of Slovenia's POP TV June 6, 2008

Ms. Briski. First of all, I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity and for your time, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

The President. You're welcome.

President's Visit to Slovenia

Ms. Briski. Your first—7 years ago—and what just might be your very last trip to

Europe as President include both—includes both times a stop in Slovenia. Excellent choice, I might add. [Laughter]

The President. I don't blame you for saying it. First of all, my first trip was consequential because that's where I first met Vladimir Putin. This trip is consequential because, of course, we're going to have an EU-U.S. summit. And my impressions of Slovenia—I've told this to a lot of people—is first of all, it's a beautiful country.

Ms. Briski. It is.

The President. Probably somewhat undiscovered in America, but my fellow citizens ought to go and explore Slovenia cause it's, I think, not only—it's got—I mean, you can ski, you can play golf.

Ms. Briski. It's a lot of opportunities for mountain biking.

The President. You can fish, mountain biking. So it's beautiful. And plus, the people are incredibly friendly.

EU-U.S. Summit

Ms. Briski. You are coming for the U.S.-EU summit.

The President. Right.

Ms. Briski. To—no dramatic announcements expected. But it will be the last summit for you.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Briski. What outcome would you like to see?

The President. Well, you know, look, the important thing about these summits is that it reaffirms our mutual values of human rights and human liberty, of our desire to work together on some key issues. And the United States and Europe has had its differences on certain issues, and—but we've always had the same common values. And it's important for me to signal to the Europeans, as well as my fellow citizens, that this relationship is an important relationship. And I'm confident the next President will see it as an important relationship as well. But we'll discuss a lot of important issues there too.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Europe-U.S. Relations

Ms. Briski. You're also coming to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Marshall plan and Berlin Airlift, the historic role U.S. had after World War II in supporting Europe. And you know, Europe has changed a lot recently: Western Balkans, two new states; Kosovo high on a priority list for Slovenia's Presidency. I would like to hear, what do you think are the most memorable events, Europe-wise, that your administration helped to achieve in the past 7 years?

The President. Well, one, of course, is the expansion of NATO. And it's a—I'll never forget going to Romania right after nations—some nations were admitted into NATO and talking about Article 5—an attack on one is an attack on all. And a lot of countries had come from a different style of government and a different type of security arrangements to one in which free nations were bound together. And so the expansion of NATO and the offering of—sending a positive signal to Georgia and Ukraine recently has been an incredibly positive accomplishment.

I think working together in Afghanistan is a—is going to be an historic achievement; helping a young democracy recover from a society in which women, for example, were treated as unbelievably second-class citizens. I mean, it was just a barbaric regime.

Hopefully, in terms of trade, that we'll fight off protectionism and keep trade open. I know there's some trade disputes going on, but that shouldn't prevent us from being active in terms of perpetuating free and fair trade. And so one of the things, of course, we'll be discussing is the Doha round of the WTO.

Iran/U.S. Foreign Aid

Ms. Briski. That's true. And it probably—Iran might be also high on the agenda at the summit?

The President. Yes, Iran—kind of the common threats will be on the agenda. For

me—as you know, I’m a big believer in freedom. Interesting that Europe is now whole, free, and at peace, and there’s a reason why. And we got to, in my judgment, extend that same concept to the Middle East, from which a lot of violence comes. And obviously, one of the problems that we face is preventing Iran from developing the know-how as to how to make a nuclear weapon.

And so we’ll be discussing that kind of joint efforts, multilateral efforts. But you know, I also want to emphasize that—but the United States—and I personally feel very strongly about helping people realize the blessings of life by freeing them from HIV/AIDS or malaria or hunger. And I’m very proud of our Nation’s accomplishments in terms of those agenda items. And I’m looking forward to working with our European colleagues to see if we can’t make it even more robust.

Visa Waiver Program

Ms. Briski. Next question would be on visa waiver.

The President. Yes. [Laughter]

Ms. Briski. It’s an issue, I know. It’s an issue in Europe.

The President. It is an issue. It is an issue.

Ms. Briski. And you know that currently, United States enforces two different systems for travelers from—

The President. Yes.

Ms. Briski. —European countries. Plus, you just announced new, stricter rules for countries that are part of the Visa Waiver Program. I wanted to hear your opinion on that, and maybe your answer to those in Europe who say that America is not as welcoming a place that it used to be.

The President. Yes. No, look, I’m concerned about that impression, because we are a welcoming place. We want our friends to come. We want investment to be open.

You know, first of all, I can understand why many of our friends in Europe who aren’t treated like other nations within the

EU are treated on visas are concerned. They say: “Wait a minute. We’re very supportive of the United States. We like the United States. And yet we’re treated differently when it comes to visas.” And this is a hangover from the old visa system, which I have been assiduously working to change. And we are making good progress. As a matter of fact, there—I think there’s going to be quite a few nations that were—will get visa waiver.

As to whether or not we’ve made it harder for visa waiver countries to come to the United States, actually not; we’ve made it easier. In other words, you file your paperwork online before you come to the United States, which should actually facilitate travel, we hope. But look, I am concerned that people say, “Well, America no longer wants us to come,” when it’s the exact opposite of my personal point of view and the view of my government.

U.S. Image Abroad

Ms. Briski. Sure. And I have to ask you this: Public surveys taken globally indicate kind of anti-Americanism, and—

The President. Yes.

Ms. Briski. —Europe is no exception in that. Do you believe that the American brand needs a makeover?

The President. No. I mean, we stand for liberty and human rights and freedom. Look, I’ve had to make some tough decisions that some people didn’t like. But the truth of the matter is, when you really look at—like, for example, our relations in the Far East, we got great relations with Japan, China, and Korea—South Korea. Or India, for example—we got new relations with India that no administration has ever pushed—South America, and Central America.

My attitude is this—this is what I tell people: First of all, you can’t make decisions based upon opinion polls. Secondly, that a lot of people like America; they may not sometimes necessarily like the President, but they like America. They like what

America stands for. Otherwise, why would so many people wanting to be—come here, for example, which we welcome. And so I don't—I hear just stuff like that, and I just—I dismiss it as kind of like what happens when there's, kind of, gossip and rumors and—because the truth of the matter is, America, just like many nations in Europe, stands for what's right, which is decency and freedom of speech and freedom to worship. And I'm very proud of my country, obviously.

2008 Presidential Election

Ms. Briski. Okay. And on American Presidency, actually on elections, international policies are the aspects where the President's work—that—where the Commander in Chief has an opportunity to change the history's course.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Briski. And that is why people around the world follow the American elections very, very closely. It's been very interesting so far.

The President. Yes, it has.

Ms. Briski. The Democrats—Democratic candidates have not been very easy on you.

The President. Of course not. They got me—look, if you're—that's what happens. I mean, they say, "We want change." Of course—and I tell people, every time I ran for politics I said, "We want change," unless, of course, I was the incumbent, in which case I was not for change; I was for myself. But what you'll see is a lot of rhetoric, and I understand that. It's—and,

you know, I'm in an unusual position because for the past 14 years, I've been an active candidate myself, and now I'm kind of getting to be a senior—kind of senior status. And I'll help my party, and of course, I'm for John McCain. But there will be a lot of debate, and it will be interesting to watch these candidates.

Ms. Briski. Sure. So your message to the 44th President of the United States would be?

The President. Stand on principle, stay strong, promote freedom, defend America, and work with our friends and allies to achieve common objectives.

Ms. Briski. Mr. President, thank you very much for this interview. I hope you will have a safe flight to Europe. And as you referred to Slovenia 2 years ago, on our Prime Minister's visit to the White House, as an "interesting slice of heaven," I hope you will have a heavenly stay.

The President. I'll bet I do.

Ms. Briski. Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you so much. Good to see you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:15 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, in his former capacity as the President of Russia; and Republican Presidential candidate John McCain. Ms. Briski referred to Prime Minister Janez Jansa of Slovenia. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 8.

Remarks on Departure for Kranj, Slovenia June 9, 2008

Good morning. I'm just about to leave for Europe. I'm looking forward to my trip. I'm looking forward to meeting with our friends and allies. We've got strong relations in Europe, and this trip will help so-

lidify those relations. And we got a lot to talk about.

First, I'm looking forward to talking about the freedom agenda with the European nations. You know, we've got a lot