

and women and their families for their sacrifice, devotion to duty, and patriotism.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a very Merry Christmas. May you be surrounded by loved ones and blessed by the

Author of Life during this joyous holiday and throughout the New Year.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

## Message Sending Holiday Greetings to Members of the Armed Forces *December 23, 2008*

*To the Men and Women of the United States Armed Forces*

Laura and I send season's greetings to you and your families during the holidays.

America is blessed to have brave citizens willing to step forward to defend our freedoms and keep us safe from our enemies. For many of you, this holiday season will be spent far from home, and our Nation honors your sacrifice. We remain mindful of your courage, ask God to watch over you, and pray for your safe return.

Your family members serve our country as well. During this time of year, they are a special source of hope and strength to you, and they both deserve and have the thanks and support of our whole Nation. Their selfless dedication sets an example of patriotism for all Americans to follow.

May God bless you and keep you safe, and may God bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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## The President's Radio Address *December 23, 2008*

Good morning. This week millions of Americans gather with loved ones for Christmas. This is a season of hope and joy. And it is an occasion to remember a humble birth that has helped shape the world for more than 2000 years.

One of the things that makes Christmas special is that it allows us to step back and take stock of what is truly meaningful in our lives. As years pass by, we often forget about the gifts and the parties, but we remember special moments with families and friends.

This year, as you spend time with those you love, I hope you'll also take time to remember the men and women of our

Armed Forces. Every one of them has volunteered to serve our Nation. And with their incredible sacrifices, they preserve the peace and freedom that we celebrate during this season.

This tradition of service is as old as our Nation itself. In 1776, it looked as if America's first Christmas as an independent nation might also be its last. After a series of crippling defeats by the British, George Washington's army was exhausted and disheartened. With their terms of service expiring in just a few weeks, many soldiers were planning on leaving the army. And it seemed that without a miracle, America's fight for freedom would be doomed.

That miracle took place on Christmas night, 1776. George Washington planned a surprise attack on the enemy forces camped across the Delaware River in Trenton, New Jersey. Under the cover of darkness, he led a few thousand soldiers across the icy waters in the midst of a driving snowstorm. Most generals would not have taken such a risk. But the commitment of Washington and his men was absolute. They headed into battle with a bold password, "Victory or death."

In a matter of hours, victory was theirs. Morale immediately improved. And the American people began to believe that our Nation possessed the perseverance and courage to protect our liberty. The turnaround that began that night would end with the United States triumph in the American Revolution and the permanent establishment of a free nation.

Two hundred and thirty-two years have passed since George Washington crossed the Delaware. But on this Christmas, his legacy lives on in the men and women of the United States military. Some of them are spending this holiday helping defend

emerging democracies like Iraq and Afghanistan. Others are spending it in lands where we defeated tyranny long ago, such as Germany or Japan. And some of them are spending it stateside, recovering in places like Bethesda National Naval Medical Center or Walter Reed.

Regardless of where they are, our men and women in uniform and the families who support them remind us of a clear lesson: Defending freedom is a full-time job. Our enemies do not take holidays. So the members of our Armed Forces stand ready to protect our freedom at any hour. For their service, they have the thanks of a grateful nation, this Christmas and always.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on December 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2008 *December 24, 2008*

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa is the celebration of African culture, community, and family traditions. For more than 40 years, millions of people have come together to reaffirm Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa. These principles emphasize unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

As people across our country gather to commemorate this seven-day celebration, may we all be reminded that Kwanzaa is an opportunity to celebrate the many contributions of our African American citizens.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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