

The President's News Conference July 2, 2008

The President. Good morning. Next week, I'm going to travel to Japan for the eighth and final G-8 summit of my Presidency.

At recent summits, G-8 countries have made pledges to help developing nations address challenges, from health care to education to corruption. Now we need to show the world that the G-8 can be accountable for its promises and deliver results. As I said the other day, we need people who not only make promises, but write checks, for the sake of human rights and human dignity and for the sake of peace.

Accountability is really important when it comes to our work on the continent of Africa. In 2005, G-8 leaders promised to double development assistance to Africa by 2010. America is on track to meet our commitments. And in Japan, I'll urge other leaders to fulfill their commitments as well.

We must also fulfill our commitments in the battle against HIV/AIDS and malaria. I've asked Congress to reauthorize and expand the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, doubling our funding for this vital effort. It's very important that Congress reauthorize this plan, but in the meantime, we're fulfilling our promises that we made, not only to—at the G-8, but more importantly, to the people of—on the continent of Africa.

It's important that over the next 5 years that we support antiretroviral treatment for approximately 2.5 million people, that we prevent 12 million new AIDS infections, and that we care for 12 million people also affected by HIV/AIDS, including 5 million orphans and vulnerable children. Last year, the G-8 agreed to meet those commitments; they agreed to match. They also agreed to help us reduce malaria in affected countries by half. And I just—I hope that these countries understand the great

promise and hope that comes when we help alleviate this suffering. And so one of my really important agenda items is going to rally our partners to make commitments and meet commitments.

We'll also discuss additional steps to confront some other challenges, such as the need to train health care workers in G-8 partner countries in Africa. It's one thing to say we're going to help people with their—deal with disease, but a lot of these countries need workers that are capable of helping, of reaching out to people in need. We should set a goal to treat at least 75 percent of the people with neglected tropical diseases in the most affected countries. We've got to work to confront higher food prices. I'm confident we'll be talking about energy and food.

On the food issue, I've announced that the United States would make available nearly \$1 billion in new resources to bolster global food security. Once again, I'll be going to the G-8 and talking about the great compassion and concern of the American people in addressing problems.

At Toyako, I'll also ask leaders of the G-8 to make other important strategic moves to alleviate hunger, such as increasing the shipments of food, fertilizers, and seeds to countries in need. It's one thing to talk about the problem; this is a practical way to help countries deal with the lack of food.

We need to help severely affected nations grow more of their own food. It's one thing to provide food; it seems like—to make sense to me to say, we're going to help you become more agriculturally self-sustaining. This has been an issue in the United States Congress, by the way. Unfortunately, we tried to get this in the farm bill. Our Members of Congress decided against this plan, this way forward. But it makes sense for the United States, if we're

going to be providing food aid, to encourage people to grow their own food so we don't have to deal with this problem on a regular basis.

I'm also going to make sure that the world understands the importance of advanced agricultural technologies, including biotechnology, to help nations grow food so they don't have to come to the world for help. We'll also be talking about export restrictions and tariffs and subsidies. We will work to tear down barriers to trade and investment around the world. It's an opportunity for those of us in the G-8 and the other nations coming to talk about a successful round of Doha. The United States is firmly committed to Doha. We're working hard to get this done by the end of the year, and it will be a good opportunity in Japan to discuss what we need to do together to open up market access and to reduce agricultural subsidies.

We'll be talking about energy security and, of course, at the same time, the climate change issue. I'll be reminding people that we can have better energy security and we can be better stewards of the environment without sacrificing economic growth.

And the principle is pretty simple. It's going to be hard to have the amount of money necessary to invest in new technologies if we don't have the money to spend, and therefore, we need to make sure our economies are vibrant.

We're now implementing new mandatory programs that will reduce billions of tons of emissions. I'll remind people at the G-8 and other nations that we're taking effective steps. We're going to make available more than \$40 billion in loan guarantee authority to support private sector incentives and innovative clean energy technologies.

The 2009 budget requests more than \$4 billion to support technologies that have the potential to avoid, reduce, and sequester greenhouse gases. In other words, we've got a strong agenda when it comes to providing money to encourage the advent of

new technologies. And as well, when—we'll be meeting with leaders of the major economies to discuss shared strategies and practical actions for addressing greenhouse gas emissions. This is called the major economies process that we proposed and G-8 leaders endorsed.

All this is aiming, by the way, to develop a strategy in which major economies are a part of the strategy. Look, we can't have an effective agreement unless China and India are a part of it. It's as simple as that. I'm going to remind our partners that's the case. And we want the United Nations Framework Convention to be effective. And so we've got to reach common ground on how to proceed.

And we're making some progress there, including the knowledge that we've got to have a long-term emissions reduction goal, midterm goals with national plans to achieve them, and cooperation in key industrial sectors.

And also, we're going to talk about the struggle against violent extremists. The temptation is to kind of say, well, maybe this isn't really a war; maybe this is just a bunch of disgruntled folks that occasionally come and hurt us. That, you know—that's not the way I feel about it. This is an ongoing, constant struggle to defend our own security and, at the same time, help people realize the blessings of liberty. I'll, of course, talk about Afghanistan and Iraq and ask the G-8 to continue to help.

So this is an historic opportunity to meet, to exchange ideas, and to address some of the problems we all face. And I'm looking forward to going. And now I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions.

Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].
Afghanistan/U.S. Troop Levels

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. June was the deadliest month for U.S. troops in—since we began the war in Afghanistan. Has Afghanistan replaced Iraq as the central front of the war on terror? And is Al Qaida and the Taliban taking the upper hand?

And also, is it possible that we could send additional U.S. troops there sooner than the 2009 date that you've been talking about?

The President. First of all, any time a troop loses their life, whether it be in Afghanistan, Iraq, or elsewhere, our hearts go out to their families. And I am so appreciative that, in a time of danger, Americans are willing to step up and volunteer and sacrifice.

Secondly, it has been a tough month in Afghanistan, but it's also been a tough month for the Taliban. You know, one reason why there have been more deaths is because our troops are taking the fight to a tough enemy. You know, an enemy who doesn't like our presence there because they don't like the idea of America denying safe haven. America is pressing an ideology that's opposite of theirs, and so of course there's going to be resistance.

I am confident that the strategy is going to work, which is to confront the Taliban, confront elements of Al Qaida, and, at the same time, encourage the growth of a free society by good economic policy, good education policy, and good health policy.

We're constantly reviewing troop needs, troop levels. We're halfway through 2008; as I said, we're going to increase the troops by 2009. One thing, however, that you've got to understand is that we have doubled Afghan troops—coalition troops have doubled from 2 years ago. So there is an active presence, and there are more troops there than there were. But we're constantly reassessing and seeing whether or not we can change tactics in order to achieve our objective.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

U.S. Monetary Policy/Energy

Q. What do you realistically expect to accomplish at the G-8 to deal with soaring oil prices and the weak dollar, which are having effects on the U.S. economy? Even the Chinese now are saying that the United States needs to stabilize the dollar.

The President. Yes. Well, we're strong-dollar people in this administration, have always been for a strong dollar and believe that the relative strengths of our economy will reflect that. One thing we need to make clear when I'm with our partners is that we're not going to become protectionists; that we believe in free trade and open markets. One of the fears around the world is the United States becomes a protectionist nation.

Secondly, I'll remind people it took us a while to get into the energy situation we're in, and it's going to take us a while to get out of it. But one thing is for certain here in the United States, that we can help alleviate shortages by drilling for oil and gas in our own country. Something I've been advocating ever since I've been the President. I've been reminding our people that we can do so in environmentally friendly ways. And yet the Congress, the Democratically controlled Congress now has refused to budge. It makes no sense for—to watch these gasoline prices rise when we know we can help affect the supply of crude oil, which should affect the supply of gasoline prices.

And so yes, we'll be talking about energy. Ultimately, of course, we're going to transition away from hydrocarbons. But we're now just in a transitional period, and we need more oil to be able to do so. And I'm also going to remind people that our habits are changing. If you notice in these newspapers that automobile sales have slowed down dramatically as automobile manufacturers shift from cars that are using more gasoline to cars that are more efficient, more fuel efficient?

And I'll also tell them, it's a tough period for American consumers. I mean, nobody likes high gasoline prices, and I fully understand why Americans are concerned about gasoline prices. But I want them to understand fully that we have got the opportunity to find more crude oil here at home, in environmentally friendly ways. And they ought to be writing their Congresspeople

about it. And they ought to say, “You ought to be opening up ANWR and Outer Continental Shelf and increasing oil shale exploration for the sake of our consumers, as well as become less dependent on oil.”

McKinnon [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

Environment/Technology/Trade

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Can you tell me what is the outlook for getting an agreement with the emerging economies that will limit emissions in a meaningful way in the midterm? What’s the outlook for that, and how are you going to get them to come around?

The President. Yes, well, the first thing, John, is to make sure we get a understanding that all of us need to agree on a long-term goal. And part of the reluctance has been—on some nations that are major economies—to participate at all, because initially, I’m confident, they thought they were going to get a free pass from any international agreement. I mean, after all, the Kyoto international agreement excluded major economies. And therefore, they probably think, well, maybe history will repeat itself.

The idea is to say, look, we want to be effective. Effectiveness comes when major economies come to the table. The first step is to agree to a long-term goal. And I’ve talked to our sherpa about that, and he feels pretty good that people are now coming to that clear understanding that we’re going to have to come to a long-term goal. Hopefully we can do it at this meeting. If not, we’ll continue to press forward to get it done.

Secondly, one of the—a lot of the developing world says, well, it’s unfair; the developed world gets to develop, and we don’t. Well, our attitude about that is, why don’t we set up a technology fund, and that—make it easier for people to be able to afford the new technologies that nations like ours and others will bring to the marketplace.

Thirdly, if you really do want to make sure technologies move around the world, we got to reduce these trade barriers and tariffs that prohibit technologies from moving like they should.

And so I—we’ll see, John. I mean, this is a tough issue. It’s tough to get consensus. People—there’s a consensus that it’s a problem, but it’s tough to get a consensus that all of us have a responsibility to do something about it—not just some, but all of us, so that whatever we do is effective.

Bret Baier [FOX News].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. There have been a spate of recent stories about possible military action against Iran before the end of the year, if not by the U.S. then by Israel. And that prompted Iranian officials to say, if they’re attacked, they’ll essentially shut down the Strait of Hormuz. One, how confident are you that Israel will not act independently as the diplomatic process moves forward? And two, what do you make of the mixed messages out of Iran: one of defiance and one of willingness to negotiate?

The President. I have always said that all options are on the table, but the first option for the United States is to solve this problem diplomatically. I’ve also made it clear—made it clear that you can’t solve a problem diplomatically unless there are other people at the table with you. And that is why we have been pursuing multilateral diplomacy when it comes to convincing the Iranians that the free world is sincere about, you know, insisting that they not have the technologies necessary to develop a nuclear weapon.

And we’re making progress along those lines. There’s been the numerous Security Council resolutions. And in my recent trip to Europe, I was very encouraged to see these leaders stand up and speak out about the need to keep our coalition active and keep the pressure on.

I will talk to Martha Raddatz [ABC News].

Israel/Iran

Q. Let me follow up on that. Would you strongly discourage Israel from going after Iran militarily? And do you believe, when you leave office, Iran will be pursuing a nuclear weapon?

The President. I have made it very clear to all parties that the first option ought to be to solve this problem diplomatically. And the best way to solve it diplomatically is for the United States to work with other nations to send a focused message, and that is, that you will be isolated and you will have economic hardship if you continue trying to enrich.

As you might remember, I worked closely with Vladimir Putin on this issue. When I said that—when asked at one of these innumerable press conferences, “Did you—do you think they ought to have a civilian nuclear program?” I said, “Of course, they should, but they can’t be trusted to enrich.”

And therefore, I agree with Russia that Russia—when Russia said she will provide enriched uranium for a civilian nuclear power program and will collect the enriched uranium, thereby negating the need for the Iranian regime to enrich at all.

And so we will continue working diplomatically.

Listen, thank you very much. I’ve enjoyed being with you. I hope you’ve enjoyed being with me. You haven’t? Thank you.

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 10:31 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Daniel M. Price, in his capacity as personal representative (sherpa) of the President in preparation for the G–8 summit; and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, in his former capacity as President of Russia.

Message on the Observance of Independence Day, 2008
July 2, 2008

I send greetings to all Americans on Independence Day.

More than two centuries ago, bold and courageous visionaries pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor in signing the Declaration of Independence. Guided by ancient and eternal truths, our forefathers proclaimed to the world that liberty was the natural right of all mankind and in doing so began one of the greatest chapters in human history. On the Fourth of July, our country commemorates the great achievements of these heroes and reaffirms its unwavering confidence in the power of freedom.

It was the desire for freedom that inspired our Founding Fathers, and it is the belief in the universality of freedom that guides our Nation. On this occasion, we pay special tribute to the men and women of our Armed Forces, both past and present, who have answered freedom’s call and defended the values that make America the greatest country on earth.

May God bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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