

our deficit, like slowing the growth of health care costs, proposing a 3-year freeze in non-security discretionary spending and a 2-year pay freeze for Federal civilian workers, and restoring the rule that we pay for all of our priorities.

I don't doubt our ability to meet this challenge, but our success depends on our willingness to engage in the kind of honest conversation and cooperation that hasn't always happened in Washington. We cannot afford to fall back on old ideologies, and we will all have to

budge on long-held positions. So I ask members of both parties to maintain an open mind and a commitment to progress as we work to lift this burden from the shoulders of future generations.

NOTE: The statement referred to Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Cochairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform; and Jacob J. "Jack" Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

### Statement on the Presidential Election in Cote d'Ivoire *December 3, 2010*

I congratulate Alassane Ouattara on his victory in Cote d'Ivoire's November 28 elections. The Independent Electoral Commission, credible and accredited observers, and the United Nations have all confirmed this result and attested to its credibility.

Cote d'Ivoire is now at a crossroads. I urge all parties, including incumbent President Laurent

Gbagbo, to acknowledge and respect this result and to allow Cote d'Ivoire to move forward toward a peaceful, democratic future, leaving long years of conflict and missed opportunities in the past. The international community will hold those who act to thwart the democratic process and the will of the electorate accountable for their actions.

### Statement on the South Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement *December 3, 2010*

I am very pleased that the United States and South Korea have reached agreement on a landmark trade deal that is expected to increase annual exports of American goods by up to \$11 billion and support at least 70,000 American jobs. Last month in Seoul, I directed our negotiators to achieve the best deal for American workers and companies, and this agreement meets that test.

American manufacturers of cars and trucks will gain more access to the Korean market and a level playing field to take advantage of that access. We are strengthening our ability to create and defend manufacturing jobs in the United States, increasing exports of agricultural products for American farmers and ranchers, and opening Korea's services market to American

companies. High standards for the protection of workers' rights and the environment make this a model for future trade agreements, which must be both free and fair.

Today's agreement is an integral part of my administration's efforts to open foreign markets to U.S. goods and services, create jobs for American workers, farmers, and businesses, and achieve our goal of doubling of U.S. exports over 5 years. It deepens the strong alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea and reinforces American leadership in the Asia-Pacific. I look forward to working with Congress and leaders in both parties to get this done and to ensure that America competes aggressively for the jobs and markets of the 21st century.

Remarks to United States and Coalition Troops at Bagram Air Base,  
Afghanistan  
December 3, 2010

*The President.* Hello, everybody! [Applause] I'm sorry, Bagram, I can't hear you. [Applause] Air Assault! [Applause] It is great to be back.

Let me first of all thank the 101st Airborne Division Band. Where's the band? Give them a big round of applause. Thank you to Chief Thomas Hager—and—the commander and conductor. I gather we had a couple of other bands playing: Manifest Destiny and Nuts. I don't know about, you know—I don't know how they sounded. What did you think? Were they pretty good?

*Audience members.* Hooah!

*The President.* It is great to be back. And I apologize for keeping you guys up late, coming on such short notice. But I wanted to make sure that I could spend a little time this holiday with the men and women of the finest fighting force that the world has ever known, and that's all of you.

I want to thank General Petraeus, not only for the introduction and the T-shirts, but for General Petraeus's lifetime of service. This is somebody who has helped change the way we fight wars and win wars in the 21st century. And I am very grateful that he agreed to take command of our efforts here in Afghanistan. He has been an extraordinary warrior on behalf of the American people. Thank you, David Petraeus.

I want to thank all your outstanding leaders who welcomed me here, including General John Campbell, Admiral Bill McRaven; from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, Colonel Todd Canterbury. I want to salute your great senior enlisted leaders, including Command Sergeant Major Scott Schroeder, Command Sergeant Major Chris Farris, and Command Chief Craig Adams.

I also want to acknowledge the outstanding work that our civilians are doing each and every day, starting with Karl Eikenberry all the way through to your senior civilian representative, Thomas Gibbons, and all the civilians who are here. They are fighting alongside you. They are putting themselves at risk. They are away from

their families. And we are very, very grateful to them as well. So give them a big round of applause.

I think we've got every service here tonight. We've got Army. We've got Navy. We've got Air Force. I think we may have a few Marines around too, and a whole lot of folks from the 101st Airborne Division, the "Screaming Eagles."

*Audience members.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* Here in Afghanistan, you are all—Coast Guard, is that what I heard? [Laughter] Here in Afghanistan, all of you are part of one team, serving together, succeeding together, except maybe in next week's Army-Navy game. As your Commander in Chief, I've got to stay neutral on that. [Laughter] We also have some ISAF partners here as well.

You know, when I was here in the spring, we had a coalition of 43 nations. Now we've got a coalition of 49 nations. And this sends a powerful message that the coalition of nations that supports Afghanistan is strong and is growing.

Now, I'm not here to give a long speech. I want to shake as many hands as I can. But let me say that at this time of year, Americans are giving thanks for all the blessings that we have. And as we begin this holiday season, there is no place that I'd rather be than be here with you.

I know it's not easy for all of you to be away from home, especially during the holidays. And I know it's hard on your families. They've got an empty seat at the dinner table. Sometimes during the holiday season, that's when you feel the absence of somebody you love most acutely.

But here's what I want you to know. As President of the United States, I have no greater responsibility than keeping the American people secure. I could not meet that responsibility, we could not protect the American people, we could not enjoy the blessings of our liberty without the extraordinary service that each and every one of you perform each and every day.

So on behalf of me, on behalf of Michelle, on behalf of Malia and Sasha, on behalf of more