

11th, because I now realize the stakes. I realize the world has changed. My most important obligation is to protect the American people from further harm. And I will do that.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:12 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Prime Minister Blair referred to Hans Blix, Executive Chairman, United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission. A reporter referred to journalist Bob Woodward.

Statement on the Return of Governors Island to the People of New York

January 31, 2003

I am pleased to announce the return of Governors Island to the people of New York. Last April, I informed the Governor and the mayor of my intention to make this transfer, and today, the transfer is complete. Also, I am reaffirming our support for the Governors Island National Monument, which now will encompass approximately 22 of the Island's 172 acres, including historic Castle Williams and Fort Jay.

Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg have shared with me their vision of a Governors Island dedicated to public and civic purposes. New York's stewardship of the island combined with the National Park Service's management of the monument will lead to the development of an outstanding resource for the people of New York and all who visit.

I commend the parties that worked together to make this historic transfer a reality, including the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the United States Coast Guard, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and especially the State and City of New York.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Achieving Militarily Significant Benchmarks for a Sustainable Peace in Kosovo

January 31, 2003

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 1212 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Public Law 106-398, I hereby submit a report, prepared by my Administration, on the progress made in achieving the militarily significant benchmarks for conditions that would achieve a sustainable peace in Kosovo and ultimately allow for the withdrawal of the United States military presence in Kosovo.

The term "militarily significant" relates to tasks and objectives significant from a military standpoint that once accomplished, would allow for withdrawal of military forces from Kosovo. In the establishment of the Kosovo benchmarks, four critical tasks for NATO forces were identified: military stability; public security; border/boundary issues; and war crimes/support to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Objectives for these tasks were drawn from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, the NATO Operations Plan, the Military Technical Agreement, and the Kosovo Liberation Army Undertaking.

I anticipate that Kosovo Force—and U.S. participation in it—will gradually reduce in size as public security conditions improve and Kosovars assume increasing responsibility for their own self-government.

George W. Bush

The White House,
January 31, 2003.

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