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Week Ending Friday, April 25, 2003

The President's Radio Address

April 19, 2003

Good morning. This weekend, families across America will come together to celebrate Easter and continue the observance of Passover. This holy season reminds us of the value of freedom and the power of a love stronger than death.

This year, Easter and Passover have special meaning for the families of our men and women in uniform who feel so intensely the absence of their loved ones during these days. More than 250,000 American troops are serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom to protect our security and to free an oppressed people. Their families await their safe return, and our grateful Nation remembers them in prayer.

Our whole Nation has also shared in the happiness of learning that seven American prisoners of war were rescued in northern Iraq earlier this week and are now safe. Thanks to the courage of our marines and the help of Iraqis, their families have even more reason to celebrate this weekend.

After hearing the good news, the parents of rescued helicopter pilot Ronald Young, Jr., of Georgia thanked people from across America and as far away as Australia and Japan for their cards and flowers and prayers. Kaye Young, Ronald's mother, said, "You can't believe the blessings that have come out of this. Even as sad as we were, as upset as we were to think that he was being held, there have been so many blessings." Mrs. Young continued, "All over this country, people cared so much about us and about our son."

As a nation, we continue to pray for all who serve in our military and those who remain in harm's way. We also pray for those who have lost people they love in this war. I have met with some of these grieving families, and I have seen their sorrow and their strength.

Corporal Henry Brown, a 22-year-old soldier from Natchez, Mississippi, was lost in battle earlier this month. After the news arrived, his best friend, Frank Woods, Jr., said this about Henry: "He believed God was working through him, and he was part of the plan. I guess part of the plan now is God calling his soldier home."

America mourns those who have been called home, and we pray that their families will find God's comfort and God's grace. His purposes are not always clear to us, yet this season brings a promise that good can come out of evil, that hope can arise from despair, and that all our grief will someday turn to joy, a joy that can never be taken away.

Laura and I wish you all a happy Easter and a blessed Passover. Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:05 a.m. on April 16 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 18 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters at Fort Hood, Texas

April 20, 2003

The President. We just had a great church service. Like thousands of our fellow citizens, we celebrated Easter. We celebrated with our family, but we also celebrated with members of the 4th Infantry Division military families. The 4th Infantry Division is in Iraq.

We also were with two of—brave Americans, two warrant officers, chopper pilots who were captured in Iraq and recently returned to their families. They were celebrating Easter with their loved ones, moms,

dads, wives, brothers, and sisters from around our country. So it was a glorious day.

We prayed for peace and for strength, for the many blessings. I am particularly grateful that these two men were with us today. I thank God for their lives. I hope all our fellow Americans realize that we live in a great country, full of great people. And today is a day to give blessings for America as well as an Almighty and gracious God.

I'd be glad to answer a few questions.

Timetable for Ending Operation Iraqi Freedom

Q. Mr. President, you said you prayed for peace this morning. How soon can you tell the American people that this operation will be complete?

The President. When Tommy Franks says it's complete. I'll tell you this, though, the liberation of Iraq will make the world more peaceful.

Democracy in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, there have been some anti-U.S. demonstrations stirred up by religious leaders in Iraq. Are you worried that's going to hurt the rebuilding effort?

The President. I'm not worried. Freedom is beautiful, and when people are free, they express their opinions. You know, they couldn't express their opinions before we came; now they can. I've always said democracy is going to be hard. It's not easy to go from being enslaved to being free. But it's going to happen, because the basic instincts of mankind is to be free. They want to be free. And so, sure, there's going to be people expressing their opinions, and we welcome that, just like here in America people can express their opinion.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Saddam Hussein

Q. Mr. President, what is the latest that you have on the status of Saddam Hussein? And if he is not killed or captured——

The President. That Saddam Hussein is no longer in power. That's for certain. He was in power, and now he is not. And therefore, the Iraqi people's lives will be much better off. But other than that, I don't—Stretch, we'll just have to see.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—sir, any kind of a threat if he is not killed or captured?

The President. If he is alive, I would suggest he not pop his head up.

President's Agenda

Q. Sir, do you expect to return more to a domestic agenda now that the war is winding down?

The President. I will continue to promote an international agenda of peace and freedom, and I will continue doing what I have been doing, is working on our economy and working to modernize the Medicare system. I have always been involved with the domestic policy. I somehow get somewhat taken aback when I hear stories that assume I can only do one thing. I am concerned when people in our society can't find work.

And so I've been constantly promoting an aggressive jobs-and-growth program. I believe our Medicare system needs to be modernized. I've consistently talked about that. I look forward to working with Congress to see that that's done.

Then I will continue to work to make the world a more peaceful place. The United States is a powerful country, and one of the things we ought to do is use our power to make the world more peaceful and more free. And I intend to continue to do that.

Yes.

North Korea

Q. Sir, will talks with North Korea go ahead? And do you expect any breakthrough?

The President. Well, the key thing on the North Korea agenda is that China is assuming a very important responsibility, and that is that they will confirm that which—work toward that which Jiang Zemin told me in Crawford, right around the corner here, that China's policy is for a nuclear-weapons-free Peninsula. And now that they're engaged in the process, it makes it more likely that's going to occur. You've got the United States adhering to that posture. You've got China adhering to that posture. South Korea believes that the Peninsula ought to be nuclear-weapons-free. Japan strongly believes that. And I believe that all four of us, working together, have a good chance of convincing

North Korea to abandon her ambitions to develop nuclear arsenals.

How are you, sir? Good to see you again.

Q. We've been wondering about your words of encouragement to the returnees.

The President. Well, you know, they were—first of all, they were the encouraging people. They were the ones who offered encouragement. I was, believe this or not, somewhat taken aback when I was in their presence. And these guys were so uplifting and so positive and so obviously thrilled to be here. They got in last night at midnight. They can speak for themselves. I think you can speak for yourselves. At least you did in my presence.

President's Visit to the Ranch

Q. Sir, what are you doing this weekend around the ranch?

The President. Yes.

Q. What have you been doing at the ranch this weekend?

The President. Exactly. [*Laughter*] I'm enjoying myself.

Q. Someone said home projects.

The President. Yes, home projects, a little fishing. Nothing better than fishing with your dad and Barney.

Q. What did Barney catch?

The President. Well, Barney only caught that which I caught. [*Laughter*] But worked a little brush cutting, keeping that ranch—keeping those cedars away from those good hardwoods, letting that—conserving my property; a little exercise, spent some time with my family and am really glad I had some time here in Crawford.

Visit With Former Prisoners of War

Q. Did you have a chance to visit with the two pilots in the church?

The President. I did, yes. And you can visit with them too.

Q. And their families as well?

The President. Well, we did. We visited with their families, and I had a good talk with them. They're good, strong men. It's an amazing experience, when you think about it. Here we are, Easter, the great—one of the great religious holidays, and these guys arrived last night—might have actually arrived Easter day. I don't know if it was exactly midnight or a little after midnight.

Chief Warrant Officer Young. It was a little before midnight.

The President. A little before midnight. Well, Easter eve. I was trying to make the story a little more dramatic than it really was.

Q. I wondered if either of the two pilots could tell, share their experience——

The President. Yes, they can. Sure, they can. That's up to them. They don't have to. I have to speak to the press. They don't have to. But it's not that bad an experience. This guy's getting ready—I'll tell you one thing about this guy, Hillman [G. Robert Hillman, Dallas Morning News]. He is going to go see his children for the first time since he was captured. He hasn't even seen his children. So if you ask him questions, don't make it long, because, see, we're holding a dad up from hugging two children.

Q. Could you tell us a bit about your meeting with the President inside the church?

Chief Warrant Officer Williams. It was an absolute honor, sir, an absolute honor.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Officer Young? Chief Warrant Officer Young.

Chief Warrant Officer Young. We stand 100 percent behind whatever our President decides to do. We're honored to serve him, and this is definitely one of the highlights of my life, absolutely.

Syria

Q. Mr. President, are you getting any signs of cooperation from Syria yet?

The President. There's some positive signs. They're getting the message that they should not harbor Ba'ath Party officials, high ranking Iraqi officials. A lot of other countries have also sent that message. As you know, Secretary Powell will be going to visit with the Syrians. It seems like they're beginning to get the message. And when we think there is somebody there or know somebody is there, we of course will pass on the name and fully expect the Syrian Government to hand the person over.

Q. How many are there, do you have any idea, Iraqi leaders?

The President. Well, obviously we felt some were there; otherwise we wouldn't have spoken out. But probably the best diplomacy

is that not through the Associated Press or Reuters or Dallas Morning News or Houston Chronicle or any—let's see, who else—Bloomberg. But the best diplomacy is the diplomacy of having our friends, as well as ourselves, send clear messages. And we're doing that. And I'm confident the Syrian Government has heard us, and I believe it when they say they want to cooperate with us.

Listen, have a wonderful day.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all.

The First Lady. Bye, happy Easter.

Visit With Other Former Prisoners of War

Q. Are you going to visit with the other POWs?

The President. Today? I don't think so, Bennett [Bennett Roth, Houston Chronicle]. I think I'm going to head back over to the ranch. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. at the 4th Infantry Division Memorial Chapel. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and former President Jiang Zemin of China. Chief Warrant Officer Ronald D. Young, Jr., USA, and Chief Warrant Officer David S. Williams, USA, pilots of an Apache Longbow helicopter, were shot down and captured in central Iraq on March 23. They were rescued by U.S. Marines on April 13. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Presidential Determination Under the Sudan Peace Act

April 21, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2003–21

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination Under the Sudan Peace Act

Pursuant to section 6(b)(1)(A) of the Sudan Peace Act (Public Law 107–245), I hereby determine and certify that the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement are negotiating in good faith and that negotiations should continue.

You are authorized and directed to notify the Congress of this determination and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register.*

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 24, 2003]

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 22, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 25.

Statement on the Peace Process in Sudan

April 22, 2003

Today I informed Congress, consistent with the Sudan Peace Act, that the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) are negotiating in good faith and that negotiations should continue.

Both sides have made significant progress negotiating a just and comprehensive peace for the people of Sudan. There is still much work remaining. Sporadic military activities, primarily but not exclusively by the Government, have hindered these efforts and must stop. Despite these challenges, negotiators are advancing toward peace, and I believe that the current process presents the best prospects for peace.

It is now time to move the peace process to a new level where the actions of both parties replace promises as the measure of their commitment to peace. President Bashir and Chairman Garang must demonstrate the leadership necessary to ensure that their respective sides: 1) refrain from any hostile or provocative action; 2) complete negotiations on outstanding issues; and 3) sign and implement a comprehensive agreement.

The United States fully supports the invaluable mediation efforts of the Government of Kenya. We stand ready with other members of the international community to support the implementation of a comprehensive agreement when it is finalized this June.

NOTE: In the statement, the President referred to President Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan, and Chairman John Garang de Mabior, Sudan People's Liberation Movement.