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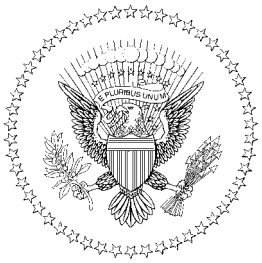

Monday, August 25, 2003
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Editor's Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on August 22, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

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Remarks at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Thousand Oaks, California

August 15, 2003

Thank you all for coming. This is a beautiful place to gather. It's a little different from Crawford—[*laughter*]—but the work is just as hard. If it looks like I'm kind of sweaty, it's because I am. [*Laughter*] I've been shoveling dirt to make sure the trails are maintained so people can use them.

Before I talk about our park system, I do want to say that the people of New York City and New York State and the people of the Northeast and Midwest who were affected by last night's blackout were—kept their calm, were decent to their neighbors, really showed the rest of the country and the world the true character of the American people. I want to thank all of them for how they dealt with a very difficult situation and assure them that Federal, State, and local authorities are working hard to get the power up and running to take care of the needs of the people. And at the same time, we'll figure out what went wrong, and we'll address it. We will view this rolling blackout as a wake-up call, a wake-up call for the need to modernize our electricity delivery systems, and we'll respond.

And what we're here to talk about today is how do we make sure our national asset, the National Park System, has got a modern infrastructure system as well, so that the people who own the park, the American people, can use the parks. After all, the parks are owned by the people of this country, and we want the park system to work well, and we want there to be a modern infrastructure. We want the 80 million acres of national park land to be accessible and comfortable to use for the American people, and at the same time, we want to respect nature and honor God's great gift to our country by conserving these beautiful properties all across the country.

The responsibility to maintain our parks has not always been met in America. It's a problem that we will address, and helping me address the problem is the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton. You know, I picked somebody from the West to run the Interior Department because I felt like, in her case, she was sensitive to the needs of the people and to the needs of the land. And she's doing a heck of a good job on behalf of the American people. And I appreciate you being here.

And Fran Mainella is with us today. She's the Director of the National Park Service. Hi, Fran. When I tell you what we're going to do about maintaining our parks, really what I'm doing is telling you what she's going to do—[*laughter*]—in collaboration with the good folks who work for the Interior Department, the good folks who wear the hats, the people that are out on the frontline of maintaining our parks and making sure our parks are accessible to the American people, the park rangers, the dedicated employees who are—really make a difference in the people's lives. I want to thank you all for your hard work on behalf of the American people.

I had a chance to spend some quality time with such a person, Woody Smeck; he's the Superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains. [*Applause*] Woody, it's a good sign when people who work with you cheer for you. [*Laughter*] I can see why. Woody cares a lot about the land. He cares deeply about the people who use the land. Woody has got a tough job. He manages the largest urban park in America, but it's a park that requires collaboration with State officials—and I want to thank the State officials who are here—requires cooperation with the local officials, and it requires collaboration with private property owners in order to make sure the park works the way we want it to work. And

Woody, you're doing a heck of a good job, and I appreciate your service to our country.

We've got some mayors with us today, and I'm honored you all are here. Andy Fox and Greg Hill and James Bozajian are here with us. The local mayors of Thousand Oaks and Redondo Beach and Calabasas, California, are integral players in making sure the park system works. I asked the question, how are the local people—they were responding well to your initiatives that Woody has laid out? And he said, ''Absolutely.'' He said the cooperation is fantastic. So Mayors, I want to thank you for coming, but more importantly, I want to thank you for doing your job in a way that makes your citizens proud.

I'm also am so proud that my friend Elton Gallegly is here with us. He is the congressman from this area. He cares a lot about this park. He cares a lot about the people who live in this congressional district. And Elton and I are going to work hard to make sure the appropriations process reflects our desire, our common desire, to maintain the park system of America. And Elton, thank you for coming.

One of the things that makes the park systems go and really function well is the volunteer effort all around our country, and you've got a fantastic volunteer effort here. I met two such people today. Melvin Caradine, he is a volunteer here. He leads tours. He shares his knowledge with the people who come to visit. And Ralph Waycott, he is the volunteer coordinator for the Rancho Sierra Vista Nursery. I don't know if Ralph was a botanist in college or not—[*laughter*]—but it sure sounded like it. [*Laughter*] He knows a lot about what he's talking about.

He and Melvin really represent the best of the country, when you think about it—people who are willing to take time out of their lives and to, in this case, make the park system work and make our fellow citizens feel comfortable and knowledgeable when they come to the parks. I'm told there's a couple hundred volunteers who come here on a regular basis to help make sure this park works, and I want to thank you. And I urge others that if you're interested in serving your community, interested in serving your country, volunteer at a park. Make it work better. Help restore it. Help the hard-working employees and dedicated folks that are in charge of our parks; help make their job easier. And so for those of you who are here who volunteer, thanks a lot for what you do.

What's interesting about this place is, there are over 33 million visitors who come here. That's a lot. [*Laughter*] There are a lot of people who use this park, and that's good. That's the way it should be. And I can see why they come. It's a beautiful spot. Fantastic trails—it's a good opportunity for people to care of their physiques—[*laughter*]—by taking off in the hills and a getting yourself a good walk on a daily basis. But 33 million people use this.

The truth of the matter is, God designed this park's beauty, but men and women make sure it remains beautiful. And that's an important part about conservation: It's man's ability to make sure that God's beauty is maintained and preserved and that when people use it, they use it in a respectful way. The park rangers and the landowners and the local businesses have made it so that people from all over the world can come here and use this place. Because of wise stewardship, this park has flourished. This is good for all of us, to understand what works.

You see, Gale mentioned we've got 388 national park areas. Now, this includes historic sites and battlefields and recreation areas and monuments and shores. But all of them are a point of pride for the local communities surrounding the particular site, and they need to be a point of pride for our country as well. And after all, our park system is the crown jewel of America's recreation system.

In the past, though, the sites have really, in some cases, been ignored. And that's the reality, and that's the truth. For many years, our Federal Government did not even have the basic information it needed to set priorities about what should be repaired or not repaired, because we had a haphazard system of dealing with the people's asset. We just kind of—as we say down there, catch as catch can, without a national strategy to maintain this incredibly important asset.

And so I've set out to do something about it. And the first thing we've got to do is, we've got to get a commitment from the appropriators in Congress to spend enough money

to maintain our parks. And so I'm calling on Congress to spend $5 billion over the next 5 years. I made that call 2 years ago. I've said, ''If you're interested in helping us maintain the park system, put some money out there so that we can actually do the job.'' And Congress responded for the last 2 years by appropriating $1.8 billion to meet the needs to make sure our parks are modernized and maintained and get the needed repairs to make the parks accessible to the people. In this year's budget, this year's request, I put in $1.1 billion and then plan on asking 2.2 total for '05 and '06, so that we spend $5 billion on maintenance projects and repair projects in the park system all across the country.

And I expect Congress to respond. We've got a national asset that in some cases needs needed repairs, and now is the time to get after it on behalf of the American people. This is a problem, and now let's address the problem. And I think they'll respond.

In the first 2 years in my administration, under Gale and Fran's leadership, we've undertaken 900 park maintenance projects, and that's a good start. We're making progress. We'll do another 500 this year and 400 next year. Slowly but surely, we're beginning to deal with the backlog of much needed maintenance.

And these are projects that—I'll talk about some of them we're doing here, under Woody's supervision, but for example, there's repairs to a visitors center at Cape Cod National Seashore. I mean, when visitors show up for the Cape Cod National Seashore and its beauty, we want there to be a visitors center that's worth going into. We want the toilets to flush. [*Laughter*] We want the potholes to be taken out of the parking lot. Whatever the problem is, we need to address it so that the people, when it comes to using their own park, are able to do so in a comfortable way.

We've got a new wastewater system being developed at Yellowstone National Park, and that's important. We've got a new lighting and electrical systems on the U.S. *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor. At the Redwood National Park, we're removing abandoned roads to protect the park and to improve the watershed. There are just practical things that need to be done on a park-by-park basis in order to do our job on behalf of the American people.

In order to have a strategy, we felt it was important to develop a national system to take a national inventory so you can set priorities. If the information is scattered and haphazard, you'll have a haphazard and scattered response to a problem. And so I tasked Gale and Fran with the idea of setting up a national database that will track maintenance needs on a asset-by-asset basis. And so the Interior Department and the parks department have tasked the park superintendents to conduct an inventory of buildings and trails and monument roads and assets and let us know the condition on a park-by-park basis. And the data will be centralized in Washington. So far, 384 out of the 388 park superintendents have responded. We're chasing down the other four—[*laughter*]—to make sure we get inventories.

And then when you get an assessment of what is needed, we can set priorities. And when you set priorities, it is more likely that the $5 billion will be spent wisely on behalf of the American people to maintain their park system.

In the Santa Monica Mountains, Woody was telling me that—first of all, he was one of the first to apply to the system, first to input into the system. He determined that the buildings were in good shape but the trails were eroded and needed work. He sent out a priority list to Washington, DC. I think we've sent back $2.4 million of trail maintenance money, if I'm not mistaken, which has improved a lot of the trails for the people who use the trails.

And as importantly, you've made it possible for people to see the beauty of the land, to access the beauty without destroying the land. The more modern the trail system, the more repaired our trail system is, the less likely it is that people will trample the beauty—that they'll stay on the trails, and so you'll be able to have people take wonderful hikes or bike rides throughout this beautiful countryside without the fear of damaging the countryside.

Woody accessed the system; he put out a plan; and the Government responded. And we expect other park superintendents to do

so. And when Congress appropriates the money, which I'm confident they will, particularly after this moment—[*laughter*]—that we'll better spend the money on behalf of the people.

As Woody said, for the first time, we now have a system that moves us from reactive to proactive, and that's how we're able to track real improvements. And that's what we're going to be with America's park system: We're going to be proactive and doing what's right on behalf of the American people.

I mentioned the volunteers that make these parks work—and particularly, this park work. And I ran into some folks from Woodrow Wilson East High School in Los Angeles. Stan is with us. Stan is a teacher. Thank you, Stan, for being a teacher. Rosa Gomez and Susan Lam and Denise Sanchez are with us as well. Thank you all for coming. I see other students from Woodrow Wilson, as well, or Wilson—the Wilson Mules, I take it. [*Laughter*] But we were repairing the trails together. By the way, the three ladies I just mentioned are high school grads. They're going to college. A couple of them are the first time anybody in their family has ever gone to college, which is fabulous.

But I want to thank them for coming out and working hard on the trails. It's a—it's got to be a fantastic educational experience to get out in this beautiful part of our country and put something back into the system. After all, that's really what makes America great, when people realize that patriotism means serving something greater than yourself, serving the country you love, doing your part to make sure that the community in which you live is as good as it can possibly be, loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Whether it be maintaining park roads or helping somebody who hurts, helping somebody who's addicted, we can all make a difference in changing our country.

And that's what the Harmans are doing. I ran into Terry and Holly Harman. Terry and Holly challenged me to a 6-mile run. [*Laughter*] I took one look at them; I said, "No thanks." [*Laughter*] But the Harmans are here. They love to use the park. They ride their bikes; they run. They've enjoyed this park for a lot of years, and part of their enjoyment is to make it a better place for other people. I want to tell you what Terry said. He said volunteering here has helped him feel ownership for the park. You're kind of protective. You realize, in his words, "This is my park too."

Well, it is your park. It's the park of every person who lives in America, and we've got to remember that. We're stewards of the people land. We have an obligation to leave this park a better place than when we found it. And there's no doubt in my mind, thanks to the hard work of the park employees, to the volunteers who come, thanks to a Congress that recognizes that we need to maintain this incredibly important asset for our country, we'll do our job.

Thanks for coming. May God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Stan Katase, teacher, Woodrow Wilson High School. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Irvine, California

August 15, 2003

Thank you very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the friendship. It's great to be back in the great State of California, and it's wonderful to see so many friends from Orange County. I'm honored you all are here. I appreciate the strong financial support you've given.

I want to thank those who have worked so hard to make this a major success. Really what we're doing is, we're laying the foundation for next year's campaign, putting the process in place and the foundation in place for what's going to be a great victory in November of '04.

And I need to count on you, particularly when it comes to energizing the vote, to making sure the grassroots gets our message. I want you to remind your Republican friends, your Democrat friends, your independent friends that this administration is one that is serving all the people of the United States of America.

I'm getting ready—[*laughter*]—and I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But the political

season will come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do, and right now I'm focused on the people's business. We'll continue to work hard to earn the confidence of the American people by keeping this Nation strong and secure and prosperous and free.

I regret that our First Lady is not with us. I just talked to Laura. She's in Midland visiting her mother, and I'm going to see her tonight for dinner. But she sends her love, and I tell you, I love her a lot. She is a great lady.

I appreciate my friends Brad Freeman and Gerry Parsky and Mercer Reynolds for working so hard to organize what is going to be a great nationwide effort in terms of collecting the resources necessary to run a viable campaign.

I want to thank Duf Sundheim, the party chairman of the State of California, for his leadership. I'm honored that members of the mighty California congressional delegation are with us, friends of mine, people who work hard on behalf of the citizens of California: Congressmen David Dreier and Ed Royce and Ken Calvert and Congressman Chris Cox. I want to thank them for coming.

I appreciate John Campbell and Bob Pacheco, State reps, people who represented their districts well and who were strong supporters of mine in 2000.

But most of all, I thank you all for coming.

In the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future presidents or future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. We are meeting the test of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of Al Qaida, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. We increased the defense budget to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we inherited an economy in recession. And then our country was attacked, and we found out that there were some CEOs in America who forgot to tell the truth. We had corporate scandals. War affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

I believe that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and someone is more likely to find a job. And I understand whose money we spend in Washington. It is not the Government's money; it is the people's money. We're returning more money to people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're providing small businesses with incentives to expand so they can hire people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so that every single citizen in this country can realize the great promise of America.

Two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reform in a generation. We're bringing high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. We believe every child can learn the basics of reading and math, and we expect every school in America to teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excuse-making are over. We expect results in return for Federal money in every classroom in America so that not one child is left behind.

We reorganized our Government to create the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed

trade promotion authority to open up new markets for California manufacturers and farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs. We passed budget agreements to help maintain much-needed spending discipline in Washington, DC.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The United States Congress has shared in these great achievements, and I appreciate their hard work. I've got a great relationship with Speaker Hastert and Leader Frist. I'll continue to work with them to change the tone in Washington, DC, and to focus on results as opposed to process and politics.

And those are the kind of people I've assembled in my administration. I have put together a great administration on behalf of the American people. We have no finer Vice President in our Nation's history than Dick Cheney. Mother might have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 2½ years, we've come far, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion so that every single citizen, regardless of their background, regardless of their religion, regardless of their status, has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of our land.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we're keeping it.

Our war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

Yet, our national interest involves more than eliminating aggressive threats to our security. Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty. Free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. And free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. And we believe that freedom is the right of every person. And we believe that freedom is the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. And when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. I'm so proud of our great land. We're leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home, and our actions are equal to those challenges. I will continue to work to lay the foundation for economic growth, to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, to encourage job creation so that anybody who wants to work today and can't find a job will be able to do so.

And we have a duty to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. A few weeks ago, the Congress took historic action to improve the lives of older Americans. For the first time—the first time—since the creation of Medicare, the House and Senate have passed reforms to increase the choices for our seniors and to provide coverage for prescription drugs. The next step is for both bodies to get together and iron out some details and get a bill to my desk. The sooner they finish the job, the sooner Americans will get a modernized Medicare system.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet, the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget; they affect the Medicare budget, the Medicaid budget, the veterans health care budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. The House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the Senate—the system. It is stuck in the Senate. It is now time for

the United States Senate to act on behalf of the patients of America. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench.

In California, I nominated Carolyn Kuhl to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. She is a—tremendous bipartisan support. She's respected as a State judge. Yet, some Senators are distorting her record; they're threatening to block an up-or-down vote. Unfortunately, she's not alone. They're doing that to too many of my nominees, and that is wrong. All judicial nominees deserve a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan that, among other things, will help us modernize our infrastructure around America. We must promote energy efficiency and conservation, develop cleaner—develop technology to help us explore for energy in environmentally sensitive ways. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism. We will apply the best and most innovative and effective ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

Congress should complete the ''Citizen Service Act'' to encourage more Americans to serve their communities and their country. And both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative so that we can support the armies of compassion which are mentoring children, caring for the homeless, and offering hope to the addicted.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for every citizen, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, and I've got a plan to close that gap. We want people owning their own retirement systems and managing their own retirement systems. We want people controlling their own health care systems. We want more people owning and operating their own small business in America, because we understand that when somebody owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future in the United States of America.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another and take responsibility for the decisions they make. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, ''If it feels good, do it,'' and ''If you've got a problem, blame somebody else,'' to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're concerned about the quality of education in your community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in America, you have the responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. And we can see the culture of responsibility and service growing around us here in America. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been strong. People from all walks of life are signing up to figure out how to help and do their duty as an American citizen.

Charities are strong and the faith-based organizations are vibrant, bringing hope and healing to citizens who hurt. Policemen and

firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself in life. Once again the children believe in heroes, because they see them every day in America.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We are a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:57 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Irvine Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and Gerald Parsky, Team California chairman, and Duf Sundheim, party chairman, California Republican Party. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on the 2003 Combined Federal Campaign

August 15, 2003

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: 2003 Combined Federal Campaign

I am delighted that the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Mel R. Martinez, has agreed to serve as the Chair of the 2003 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) of the National Capital Area. I ask you to enthusiastically support the CFC by personally chairing the campaign in your agency and appointing a top official as your Vice Chair.

The Combined Federal Campaign is an important way for Federal employees to support thousands of worthy charities. Public servants not only contribute to the campaign but also assume leadership roles to ensure its success.

Your personal support and enthusiasm will help positively influence thousands of employees and will guarantee another successful campaign.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Iraq

August 15, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to post-liberation Iraq under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–338).

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 16.

The President's Radio Address

August 16, 2003

Good morning. This week, I traveled to Arizona and California to see some of America's forests and parks and to talk about my commitment to good stewardship of these natural treasures.

On Monday, I visited the Coronado National Forest in Arizona, where wildfires recently consumed thousands of acres of forest and destroyed hundreds of homes. Nearby,

I also saw forests that remained largely intact thanks to wise forest-management policy. Fire professionals and forest and park rangers agree, by thinning overgrown forests we will reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and restore the health of forest ecosystems.

That is the purpose of my Healthy Forest Initiative. We're cutting through bureaucratic redtape to complete urgently needed forest-thinning projects. We are speeding up environmental assessments and consultations required by current law. And we're expediting the administrative appeals process to resolve disputes more quickly. By the end of this fiscal year in September, we will have treated more than 2.6 million acres of overgrowth, more than twice the acreage that was treated in the year 2000.

Under current law, however, litigation often delays projects, while some 190 million acres of forest remain at high risk of dangerous fires and nearby communities remain vulnerable. So I'm asking Congress to reform the review process for forest projects. The "Healthy Forests Restoration Act" would make forest health a high priority when courts are forced to resolve disputes, and it would place reasonable time limits on the litigation process after the public has had an opportunity to comment and a decision has been made. For the health of America's forests and for the safety and economic vitality of our communities, the Congress must complete work on this bill. The House has passed the legislation, and now the Senate must act.

As we protect America's forests, we must also preserve the beauty of America's nearly 80 million acres of national parkland. On Friday, I visited the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in southern California. It is one of America's 388 national park areas, including historic sites and battlefields, recreation areas, monuments, and shores. Every one of them is a point of pride for the Nation and for local communities.

Yet in the past, not all of these sites have been given the attention they require. Some of our national park areas are not in good condition. And for many years, Government did not even have the basic information about which places were most in need of repair or restoration. To meet this challenge, I pledge to spend $4.9 billion over 5 years on needed work and maintenance in our national park areas.

With the support of Congress, we're keeping that commitment. In the first 2 years of my administration, Congress provided nearly $1.8 billion for park maintenance and roads. And my request for the next three budgets will bring total funding for park maintenance and roads to more than $5 billion over 5 years.

With this funding, we've already undertaken approximately 900 park maintenance projects. This year, the Park Service is working on 500 more projects, and nearly 400 more are planned for next year. As we attend to needed repairs, we're also putting in place a new system of inventory and assessment to assure that America's parks stay in good condition. We have set a new course for our national parks, with better management and renewed investment in the care and protection. After all, the parks belong to the people.

I look forward to traveling next week to Oregon and Washington State, and I will be carrying the same message: Our system of national parks and forests is a trust given to every generation of Americans. By practicing good management and being faithful stewards of the land, our generation can show that we're worthy of that trust.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:55 a.m. on August 14 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 15 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Interview With the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service

August 14, 2003

Liberia

Q. Thank you for joining us today. We really appreciate you being here and taking time out to talk with us.

I'd like to start out with a topic that's in the news this morning, and that's Liberia. Two weeks ago, you authorized Secretary Rumsfeld to send a small contingency into

that war-torn country to help out. And now this morning, we hear that a couple of hundred more U.S. forces are there to help out. What's the status there? Do you see this as a long-term deployment for our troops? Or do you think this is more short-term?

The President. No, I know it's short-term. Here's what I said. I said, look, we have a special obligation in Liberia to help with humanitarian aid, and therefore, we will. And I said, secondly, we will have a limited mission of limited duration and limited scope and that we will help what's called ECOMIL, which is the western African nations' militaries, go in and provide the conditions necessary for humanitarian aid to move.

We have yet to deploy anybody, really. Today you mentioned 200 troops. Those 200 troops will be the first really deployed, other than assessment teams, and their job is to help secure an airport and a port so food can be offloaded and the delivery process begun to help people in Monrovia. We'll be out of there by October the 1st. We've got U.N. blue-helmeted troops ready to replace our limited number of troops.

But our mission there is to help ECOWAS—help ECOMIL provide humanitarian aid.

Coalition Operations in Iraq

Q. I'd like to turn to Iraq now.

The President. Yes.

Q. On May 1st, you flew aboard the *Abraham Lincoln,* and you addressed the Nation, and you announced the end of combat operations.

The President. Actually, major military operations.

Q. Okay, I stand corrected.

The President. Because we still have combat operations going on.

Q. We do, sir; you're right. But as you say, duty there continues to be tough, dangerous work. But ironically, more of our troops have died since May 1st than during the main hostility. What do your advisers tell you about the security threat in Iraq today? Is it getting better? Is it worse? Where do we stand?

The President. Well, it's certainly getting better on a day-by-day basis. And the reason why is because we're routing out former Ba'athists and some foreign terrorists from the country. These are people who can't stand the thought of a free Iraq.

Really, the way I'd like for your viewers to understand the Iraq theater is that the—Iraq is an integral part on the war on terror. See, Saddam Hussein was funding terrorist activities. He was providing money. Who knows what kind of armament he was providing. We know he had illegal weapons, and those weapons in the hands of terrorists would be very dangerous to the United States.

Iraq is in the middle of a part of the region that has produced terror and terrorists. And therefore, a free Iraq is an integral part of winning the war on terror, because a free Iraq is going to be one that will help—will have an amazingly positive effect on its neighborhood. A free Iraq will no longer be a threat to the United States and our friends and allies. And so what you're seeing now is a continuation on the battle for Iraq; it's just a different kind of battle. The first wave of military operations was to get rid of—the first major goal of military operations was to get rid of Saddam Hussein and his regime, and we have done that. And now it is to make the country secure enough for democracy to flourish. And it's a different kind of combat mission, but nevertheless, it's combat—just ask the kids that are over there killing and being shot at.

Listen, as Commander in Chief, I grieve for any loss of life. And I stand in—I send my deepest sympathies to the loved ones who grieve over the loss of a soldier, a loved one. But the cause is a good cause, because we will never forget the lessons of 9/11. This is part of the war on terror. And the effect of what we have done in Iraq and what we're doing in Iraq will be a very positive effect on future generations of Americans, and that's very important for people to understand.

Q. You talked about a democracy in Iraq. August 8th was the 100th day since the end of combat operations there. But we've got a lot of forces that are still there. I guess my question to you is, will U.S. forces continue to bear the brunt of the responsibility there? I believe down in Crawford you told the press that America was committed to staying in Iraq until they were free.

The President. Right.

Q. But will that responsibility continue to fall on U.S. forces, or will our coalition partners step up and give us some relief?

The President. Yes, I think what you'll find is, is that there will be a variety of different elements that will give relief to U.S. forces.

First of all, we will stay there until the job is done. If America pulls out, there's no telling what'll happen. It'll certainly embolden terrorists to think that we are going to a mission and don't complete it. But think about the following dynamics. First of all, Britain is still there. Polish troops are now moving in and will be in, I think, by September 4th of this year, which is in 2 weeks. That's a major Polish contingent. There will be other nations going in to support not only the Polish contingent but the British contingent.

We're developing an Iraq police force as well as an Iraqi army. And the idea is at some point in time, the Iraqi army is able to secure the powerlines and prevent the looting. See, what's happening there is there's a handful of people, an element of people who are willing to destroy the power grid as we rebuild it, in order to try to terrorize people. It would be helpful if other patrolled the power grid, other than our U.S. hunter-killer teams. And that's what's happening now. And this fall you'll see a lot of protective load, kind of the guarding role, being taken off the shoulders of U.S. troops and shared by coalition forces.

But you know, you mentioned 100 days. I want to put this in perspective. Saddam Hussein had 12 years or so, or more, to hide weapons and to fool the world. I say ''12 years'' because that's really the timeframe from '91, the last U.S. incursion, until today, but no telling what he was doing prior to '91. He has had years to terrorize people. This is the guy, if you disagreed with him, you're liable to be dead and your family would be tortured as well or killed as well.

And so we're dealing with a mindset and kind of a condition, an environment that has been in place for a long time, and yet we've only been there for 100 days. But we've done a lot in 100. In other words, my expectations aren't the democracy will flourish after 100 days. Of course, my expectations were that—I wasn't certain how long it was going to take for us to do an incredibly difficult, complex military operation. I knew that we had a good plan, because General Franks told me we had a good plan. But it happened a lot quicker than I thought.

So I don't—my point is, I don't tend to put time, artificial timelines; I try to be realistic, however, about how long it takes to accomplish a complex mission.

Afghanistan/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to talk about Afghanistan for a moment, formerly a hotbed of terrorist activity, and the first country to feel America's wrath and compassion in the war on terrorism after 9/11. But today, significant numbers of U.S. troops are still there helping to rebuild that country. My question for you is, is there a timetable for when U.S. forces will start to come home from there? Or is Afghanistan tied to Iraq?

The President. Well, listen, we've got about 10,000 troops there, which is down from, obviously, major combat operations. And they're there to provide security, and they're there to provide reconstruction help. But both those functions are being gradually replaced by other troops. Germany, for example, is now providing the troops for ISAF, which is the security force for Afghanistan under NATO control. In other words, more and more coalition forces and friends are beginning to carry a lot of the burden in Afghanistan.

We'll still have hunter-killer teams there to chase down remnants of Taliban and Al Qaida, because—we want, of course, Afghanistan to be a secure and democratic country. And we want to use—now that we're locked and loaded, as they say in the military, we want to chase down those who could eventually come back and harm America.

In other words, Afghanistan and Iraq—they're linked. They're linked because they're both integral theaters in the war on terror. And a free Afghanistan and a free Iraq will make America more secure, and that's, after all, the mission that we're after. Nine-eleven taught us a lesson, that we're vulnerable, and 9/11 reminded me that my obligation as the Commander in Chief is to hunt down an enemy and bring them to justice

before they would ever harm America again. And that's what we're going to do, so long as I am the President.

North Korea

Q. I'd like to go to the other side of the world for a moment, if I could, to North Korea.

The President. Yes.

Q. What is the status on their weapons of mass destruction and their ability to use them? And most specifically, how concerned should U.S. forces in the Pacific theater be—South Korea, Japan—that North Korea would use nuclear weapons against them?

The President. Well, you know, we believe he has got a warhead. We know he's got rockets. And we know he's a dangerous man, and that's why we take his threats seriously. You know, the best thing to do, in my judgment, is to convince others to join us to convince Kim Chong-il to change his behavior.

In other words, we tried the bilateral approach, and it didn't work because he didn't tell the truth. And so now our strategy is to get the Chinese involved, which they are, and to get the Russians involved and the Japanese involved and the South Koreans involved, all of us involved to tell Kim Chong-il that we expect him to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula for the sake of peace. And that's where we're headed.

I'd like to solve this diplomatically, and I believe we can. It's going to take a lot of persuasion by countries besides the United States to convince him. He loves the idea of, you know, making people nervous and rattling sabers and getting the world all anxious. And my job is to tell others that let's speak with one voice and convince this man that developing a nuclear weapon on the Korean Peninsula is not in his interests.

Military Pay and Benefits/Military Families

Q. I'd like to talk about people for a minute. You've talked about them earlier, and nobody knows better than you the sacrifices that our servicemembers are making day in and day out on the war on terrorism, whether it's Iraq, Afghanistan, here at home. What can servicemembers look for in the way of benefits, pay, housing, health care, that kind of thing, to repay them for their unselfish sacrifice to the Nation?

The President. When I first came in, I made the commitment that help was on the way. I said that during the campaign to the military, help was on the way, and I've lived up to that commitment.

Pay is going up. I think if you talk to the servicemen, they do feel the pay increases that we've—that I proposed and Congress has passed. And when you couple that with two significant tax cuts, our servicemen have got more money in their pocket than before.

I ask the question all the time to troops. I don't know if I got—I hope I get the straight answer. You don't know; it must be a little awesome for a sergeant to talk to the Commander in Chief.

Q. It's very awesome, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. And I turn to the guy and say, ''Can you feel your pay raise?'' And to a person, the answer is yes, they feel their pay raise, which is good. And that's what I want.

The other thing is that when you and I first met at Fort Stewart, Georgia, I was given a tour of substandard housing. And I went back and talked to Don Rumsfeld about that and said, ''We've got to do something about that.'' Pay is one thing, and housing is another. And both of them are compatible; both of them are important for families in the military.

And I think you'll find that we have—we're living up to our commitment to have a full-scale housing program ongoing for our troops. And the housing issue is getting a lot—the housing condition is improving, compared to the way it was in the past, and so I'm mindful of it.

And health care is good for our troops. I think, again, if you ask the troops—that's who I ask, and they tell me they're pleased with the health care. And so the key is to continue the progress that we've made about making sure that the human condition in the military is excellent.

Q. One final question, Mr. President. The families of America's fighting forces, they make huge sacrifices in the name of freedom, just like the servicemembers. You touched on it earlier. You touched on it in your speech

today. For months at a time, they give up their servicemembers. They don't know where they are. They don't hear from them. They don't know if they're safe. They don't know if they're dead or alive. What message do you have for the families today?

The President. Well, my message is that what your loved one is doing is the right thing for the country. We are called upon to defend the United States of America. I take that oath, and every soldier takes that oath. And on 9/11, our world changed, and we realized this country is vulnerable and we better do something about it. And the best way to secure the homeland is to get the enemy before he gets us. At least, that's my attitude. And so, I—first of all, the commitment that their loved ones have made, the families of the service ones have made, is in line with this business about winning and fighting war.

Every person is a volunteer in our military. They've chosen to defend the United States of America. And therefore, they need to get the best—if that's their attitude, and they made up their mind that's what they want to do, then my job is to get them the best equipment, the best pay, the best training possible, so that if we ever have to send them in, they'll be able to do the job.

And I hope their loved ones understand that, that this is a volunteer army and it requires sacrifice. Look, I understand what it must mean for the moms and dads and sons and daughters to wonder about their loved one. It must be a nerve-wracking experience. On the other hand, it's for a good cause.

I would tell you as well, as I think our military does is—I'm going to tell you two things I think the military does really well that will hopefully give comfort to people. One, there is a lot of communication that takes place with troops overseas and their loved ones at home. There are—there's e-mail efforts that go on, a lot of e-mail efforts. In other words, there's a capacity to communicate from afar, the likes of which our military has never had.

Secondly, I have visited our wounded. One of my jobs as the Commander in Chief is to try to comfort those who grieve and to comfort those who are wounded—those who grieve as a result of loss of life, and those—and to comfort those who have been wounded, and I do. I'm responsible for putting them into combat, and I know that. And so I go to hospitals on occasion, Walter Reed or Bethesda.

Ours is a country that can take a young, wounded soldier off the battlefield and have him in the best care in a number of days. I met many a troop that was wounded in Iraq and 3 days later was at Bethesda Naval Hospital getting the best possible treatment. And to me that speaks volumes about the commitment of our country to take care of our fighters and our soldiers and marines and sailors and airmen. If somebody gets hurt far from home, we will deliver the best care in the world in a rapid time. And I understand that doesn't replace an injured limb for a loved one, but it certainly should say loud and clear that this country cares deeply about those who are willing to sacrifice on its behalf.

Q. As you say, sir, freedom isn't free.

The President. That's right.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, very much. I really appreciate the time.

The President. You bet. Thank you, sir. Good job.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:55 p.m. in Hangar Five at the Marine Corps Air Station in Miramar, CA, for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 18. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA (Ret.), former combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on Signing the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003

August 18, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 1412, the "Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003." This Act permits the Secretary of Education to waive or modify Federal student financial assistance program requirements to help students and their families or academic institutions affected by a war, other military operation, or national

emergency. The executive branch shall construe section 2(c) in a manner consistent with the President's authority under the Recommendations Clause of the Constitution to submit for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President shall judge necessary or expedient.

George W. Bush

The White House,
August 18, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1412, approved August 18, was assigned Public Law No. 108–76.

Memorandum on Resumption of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Colombia

August 18, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2003–32

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Resumption of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Colombia

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by section 1012 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995, as amended (22 U.S.C. section 2291–4), I hereby certify, with respect to Colombia, that: (1) interdiction of aircraft reasonably suspected to be primarily engaged in illicit drug trafficking in that country's airspace is necessary because of the extraordinary threat posed by illicit drug trafficking to the national security of that country; and (2) that country has appropriate procedures in place to protect against innocent loss of life in the air and on the ground in connection with such interdiction, which shall at a minimum include effective means to identify and warn an aircraft before the use of force is directed against the aircraft.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this determination in the *Federal Register* and to notify the Congress of this determination.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., August 22, 2003]

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 19, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on August 25.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Crawford, Texas

August 19, 2003

Proposed Energy Legislation/Power Blackout

The President. Good morning, everybody. How are you? Last night I talked to Pete Domenici and Billy Tauzin. Pete is the chairman of the Senate committee dealing with energy and Billy is the chairman of the House committee dealing with energy. Pete believes they can get the conference up and running in 20 days to deal with this very important energy bill. Both Members are very optimistic about reaching agreement, obviously, on infrastructure modernization but, as importantly, other issues related to energy.

One thing is for certain. There is—very confident they'll have mandatory reliability standards in the energy bill. What that means is that companies transmitting energy will have to have strong reliability measures in place; otherwise, there will be a consequence for them. There will be incentives in the new bill to encourage investment in energy infrastructure.

So I'm very pleased with the attitude of the two Members, their desire to get a bill done quickly and get it to my desk. I have been calling for an energy bill for a long time. And now is the time for the Congress to move and get something done.

I also talked to Energy Secretary Abraham. Tomorrow the joint inquiry with the Canadians will begin. I don't know how long it's going to take to find out what went wrong, but I know it's not going to take long to get the meeting started to determine what went wrong.

I'll answer a couple of questions; then I've got to get moving.

Former Vice President Taha Yasin Ramadan of Iraq

Q. They've just captured Saddam's Vice President. Does that give you hope that we're closer to catching Saddam?

The President. Well, I don't know the facts of where he was, what was going on. I'm really pleased that we've captured the Vice President. Slowly but surely, we'll find who we need to find. It's just a matter of time. Listen, we've got a lot of brave people doing a lot of hard work in Iraq. And it's—because Iraq was terrorized and dominated by a dictator, it's going to take a while to get this country to understand what's necessary to be a free country. But we'll find him, and we'll bring him to justice.

Stevenson [Richard Stevenson, New York Times].

Proposed Energy Legislation

Q. Sir, I realize it's early to find out what went on with the blackout, but do you know enough at this point to be able to say whether there's anything new or different that you would like in the energy bill beyond what you proposed——

The President. Well, listen, I thought the energy bill was very comprehensive. We particularly liked the House—a lot of the House bill. The Senate, as you know, in order to get out of town, expedited a piece of legislation. The House bill is a very comprehensive bill. And I'm confident the two bodies can work out differences. If they do what's in the—if they do what's in the House bill, for example, and what's in the—a lot in the Senate bill, we'll get us a good bill.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Sir, the cease-fire by the Palestinians runs out in a few weeks. Do you think it should be extended, and why?

The President. Well, you know, look, here's my view on cease-fires and—I'm happy there's calm, and I think that's important. But the most important thing is to—for the parties that care for their—for peace to dismantle terrorist organizations that want to kill. That's how we're going to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Calm is good. The fact that people aren't dying is good. But the ultimate solution—and this can happen quickly, in my judgment—is to find those who would—who believe killing is the best approach to dealing with the very difficult problems in the Middle East.

Q. Sir, Israel has kind of eased off of their request for actual dismantling the terrorists, and they're putting their faith in the Palestinian Authority to contain these guys. Do you have——

The President. I don't want to put words in the Israelis' mouth, but I can assure you that they're interested in dismantling organizations such as Hamas.

Q. But do you think that the Palestinian Authority right now can contain these——

The President. I think that the Palestinian Authority needs to continue to work with the United States and others who are interested in dismantling terrorist organizations and ask for the help necessary so they can go and do what they need to do, which is dismantle and destroy organizations which are interested in killing innocent lives in order to prevent a peace process from going forward.

Tax Cuts/National Economy

Q. Mr. President, your budget director gave an interview to the Wall Street Journal suggesting that there won't be any corporate tax cuts to deal with this World Trade Organization trade dispute—about $100 billion in tax cuts making its way through Congress. Are we done with tax cuts for the foreseeable future?

The President. Well, we'll see. As I said the other day, as we stand right now, I believe the tax relief packages we have in place are doing their job. But I'm a flexible person. I want to make sure that the conditions for economic growth and vitality are strong. But we'll take a look and see. I'm pleased the markets have responded. I'm pleased that there's economic vitality and growth. But until everybody finds a job who wants one—today—and can't find one, is able to work, then I'm going to continue working on the economy.

Coalition Operations in Iraq

Q. Sir, given the decreasing likelihood of there being another United Nations resolution on Iraq, should the American people be

prepared for a longer and larger deployment of American forces there?

The President. Well, one of the things that's happening is that international forces are now coming into Iraq. There's a significant reconstruction effort going on in which other nations besides the United States and our initial coalition partners are participating.

In other words, there is an international effort going on that will help Iraq reconstruct itself and help Iraq develop into a peaceful, democratic country. And that's in our country's interest, that Iraq become a peaceful, free, democratic country. Part of the war on terror is to promote freedom in the Middle East. I like to remind people that a free Iraq will no longer serve as a haven for terrorists or as a place for terrorists to get money or arms. A free Iraq will make the Middle East a more peaceful place, and a peaceful Middle East is important to the security of the United States.

Listen, I've got to go. Thank you. I hope you all have a wonderful morning.

First Lady Laura Bush/President's Vacation

Q. How's the First Lady?

The President. She's great. Thanks. She actually suggested maybe bringing the press corps out to the ranch. Her idea.

Q. Good idea.

The President. What?

Q. Good idea.

The President. Well——

Q. What is she keeping busy with?

The President. You know, she's—you'll see, if you ever get out there, that she's got a lot of wildflowers. And she's restoring a lot of the area around the house, the native grasses. By the way, we've got quail back—bobwhite quail has now returned around our house. It wasn't there when we first bought the place. And because the grasses have been restored, we've got a nice little family of bobwhites. It's a fantastic experience to hear them call in the morning.

My friend Blossman caught about a 6-pound bass yesterday. So the bass are growing, and they're getting healthy. Life out there at the ranch is just fine. It gets a little toasty about 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon, though.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 a.m. at the Fina gas station. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A reporter referred to Office and Management and Budget Director Joshua B. Bolten. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Bombing of the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, in Crawford

August 19, 2003

Today in Baghdad, terrorists turned their violence against the United Nations. The U.N. personnel and Iraqi citizens killed in the bombing were in that country on a purely humanitarian mission. Men and women in the targeted building were working on reconstruction, medical care for Iraqis. They were there to help with the distribution of food. A number have been killed or injured. And to those who suffer, I extend the sympathy of the American people.

A short time ago, I spoke with Ambassador Bremer and directed him to provide all possible assistance to the rescue and recovery effort at the United Nations headquarters. I also spoke to Secretary-General Kofi Annan about the personal loss the U.N. has suffered, about the assistance my country has offered, and about the vital work in Iraq that continues.

The terrorists who struck today have again shown their contempt for the innocent. They showed their fear of progress and their hatred of peace. They are the enemies of the Iraqi people. They are the enemies of every nation that seeks to help the Iraqi people. By their tactics and their targets, these murderers reveal themselves once more as enemies of the civilized world.

Every sign of progress in Iraq adds to the desperation of the terrorists and the remnants of Saddam's brutal regime. The civilized world will not be intimidated, and these killers will not determine the future of Iraq. The Iraqi people have been liberated from a dictator. Iraq is on a irreversible course toward self-government and peace. And America and our friends in the United

Nations will stand with the Iraqi people as they reclaim their Nation and their future.

Iraqi people face a challenge, and they face a choice. The terrorists want to return to the days of torture chambers and mass graves. The Iraqis who want peace and freedom must reject them and fight terror. And the United States and many in the world will be there to help them.

All nations of the world face a challenge and a choice. By attempting to spread chaos and fear, terrorists are testing our will. Across the world, they are finding that our will cannot be shaken. We will persevere through every hardship. We will continue this war on terror until the killers are brought to justice, and we will prevail.

May God bless the souls who have been harmed in Iraq. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on the Death of United Nations Special Representative for Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello

August 19, 2003

I was deeply saddened to hear of Sergio Vieira de Mello's death at the hand of terrorists in Iraq. Special Representative Vieira de Mello committed his life to advancing the cause of human rights, most recently as U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. When Secretary-General Annan asked him to take a leave of absence from those duties to work in Iraq, he agreed without hesitation. Just as he selflessly coordinated international efforts in East Timor and Kosovo, Mr. de Mello was helping the Iraqi people move down the path towards a democratic country governed by the rule of law. My deepest condolences go to his family and to the people of Brazil, who have lost one of their finest public servants.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Portland, Oregon

August 21, 2003

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome and the cool day. It seems the temperature is a little better here than it is in Crawford. [*Laughter*] But I want to thank you all for coming. I am so honored that we have set a record today, a record fundraiser, which indicates the depth of support here in Oregon, for which I am most grateful. I want to thank you for what you have done; I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is to energize the grassroots all across this important State, to put up the signs and to mail out the mailers, but most importantly, to remind people that I have a vision that includes everybody, a vision that is hopeful and optimistic, a vision that believes in the best of America.

I want you to know that I'm getting ready for the coming campaign. I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But there's going to be ample time for politics, because I've got a job to do. I got a lot on the agenda. But I want you to know that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

My main regret for coming here is the fact that I'm not traveling with the First Lady. She is a great First Lady. I love her dearly. I'm proud to call her wife, and I already miss her. But she's in San Antonio, Texas, today. She's honoring a friend of ours, and she's working on a library event. But I'll be with her on the ranch Friday night and continuing our period of relaxation before we get back to the Nation's Capital. But it's a great comfort to have her by my side.

I'm also proud to call Gordon Smith friend. He's a great United States Senator. And I appreciate so much working with my friend Congressman Greg Walden as well. After this event here, we're going to a different part of your beautiful State to talk about a Healthy Forest Initiative, a commonsense policy to do everything we can to thin out the forest beds so that we can prevent

the catastrophic forest fires that seem to be occurring all over the West. I'm proud to have two commonsense conservatives with whom I can work to bring some sense to the forest policy of the United States of America.

I thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is with us today. He's the national finance chairman for this campaign. I appreciate Bill McCormick, who is the Oregon State chairman for the Bush-Cheney 2004 campaign. Sorry we're not using your restaurant. I appreciate Kevin Mannix, who is the chairman of the Republican Party here in the State of Oregon.

It was such an honor to be able to shake hands once again with a fine American, a great Oregonian, Senator Mark Hatfield. I appreciate you coming, Senator.

I want to thank so very much the leadership of the University of Portland for opening up this beautiful campus. But most of all, I want to thank you all for coming. I'm proud to have you as supporters. I'm proud that we're on the same team, working hard to do what's right for America.

See, I ran for office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I'm serving to seize opportunities, and that's what we're doing. I believe you can tell your neighbor that this administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Thanks to the United States of America and friends, 50 million people in those 2 countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. We increased the defense budget to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Two-and-a-half years ago, as Gordon mentioned, we inherited an economy in recession. And then we had attacks on our country and scandals in corporate America as well as a war, which affected—all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We took action. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

Here's what I believe, and here's what I know, that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, to invest, the whole economy will grow, and people are more likely to find a job.

I also understand whose money we spend in Washington, DC. It's not the Government's money. It's the people's money. We're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundations for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so that every single person in this country—every person—has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action in Washington, DC, so I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reform in a generation. We're bringing high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. In return for Federal dollars, we now expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is finally challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excuse-making are over. We now expect results in every classroom so that not one single child in America is left behind.

We reorganized the Government and created a Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open new markets for Oregon's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this

administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

And the United States Congress shares in this credit. I've got a great relationship with Speaker Denny Hastert and Majority Leader Bill Frist. I appreciate being able to work with them and, as I mentioned, Greg and Gordon. We'll continue to work hard to try to change the tone in Washington, DC, to focus on results, not petty politics.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I have assembled a great team of people to serve the American people. People in my administration are results-oriented people. They asked the question, what's best for the American people? And they're doing a great job. There has been no finer Vice President of the United States than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a different opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 2½ years, we've come far. In 2½ years, we've done a lot. But the work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion, so that every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of this country.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender, and we welcome—we welcome—this charge of history, and we are keeping it. Our war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

Yet our national interest involves more than eliminating aggressive threats to our safety. Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors, and free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. And we believe that freedom is the right of every person, and we believe that freedom is the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great, strong, and compassionate Nation is bringing the healing power to medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This great land, America, is leading the world in the incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home as well, and our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. I understand there's a lot of people hurting in the State of Oregon. Your unemployment rate is too high. I will continue to try to create the conditions necessary for job creation, so long as there's anybody who's looking for work.

And we have a duty as well to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. The Congress took historic action to improve the lives of older Americans. For the first time—for the first time—since the creation of Medicare, the House and the Senate have passed reforms to make the system work better, to give our seniors more choices, and to provide coverage of prescription drugs. It's now time for both Houses to iron out their differences and to get a bill to my desk as soon as possible, so that we can say to our seniors of today and those of us who are going to be seniors tomorrow, we have kept our commitment in Washington, DC.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doctor deserve their day in court, yet the system should not reward lawyers who are fishing for rich settlements. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform, therefore, is a national issue that requires a national solution. The House of Representatives have passed a good piece of legislation. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. The Senate must act on behalf of the people. They must understand that no

one has ever been healed by a frivolous or junk lawsuit. If Gordon has his way, he would unstick it in the Senate.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Yet, some Members of the United States Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. We had a good bill pass the House, bill pass the Senate. They need to come together and get an energy plan, an energy bill to my desk as soon as possible, an energy bill which will encourage the modernization of the electricity infrastructure of America. I have proposed such a plan. We need an energy bill that will encourage energy efficiency and promote conservation, an energy bill which will encourage the use of technologies to help us explore for energy in environmentally sensitive ways. For the sake of economic security, for the sake of national security, this Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who hurt or fellow citizens in need.

There are still millions of men and women in our country who want to end their dependence on Government and to become independent through work. We must build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

Congress should complete the ''Citizen Service Act'' to encourage more Americans to serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should finally reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children, who are caring for the homeless, that offer hope to the addicted. This Nation of ours should not be fearful of faith. We ought to welcome faith to help solve many of the Nation's seemingly intractable problems.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. My administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society all across America. We want more people owning a home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America. I have laid before Congress a plan to solve it. We want people owning their own health care plan. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. And we want more people owning a small business because, you see, we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of the United States of America.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, and they take responsibility for the decisions they make. You know, it seems like to me, I'm confident—not just seems like, I am confident that we're changing the culture of America from one that has said, ''If it feels good, just go ahead and do it,'' and ''If you've got a problem, blame somebody else,'' to a culture in which each of us understands that we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in your community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us are responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We can see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us, particularly after September the 11th, 2001. Shortly after September the 11th, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to somebody who hurts. And the response has been terrific. Our faith-based groups and

our charities are vibrant and strong, because people understand it's important to serve something greater than yourself in life. After all, that's what policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis. Our children once again believe in heroes because they see them every day in America.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. in the Chiles Center at the University of Portland. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon.

Remarks in Redmond, Oregon

August 21, 2003

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you. You know you're in a pretty good country when you see a lot of cowboy hats out in the crowd—[*laughter*]—and when you got horses guarding the perimeter.

Thank you for your hospitality. It is like home, except the temperature seems to be a little cooler and a little more hospitable. But thanks for your hospitality. I'm thrilled to be in Deschutes County, Oregon. I've been planning to come for a while. I'm sad that I had to come to see another forest fire.

We just toured two fires that are burning in the area. It's hard to describe to our fellow citizen what it means to see a fire like we saw. It's the holocaust; it's devastating. We saw the big flames jumping from treetop to treetop, which reminds me about the brave men and women, what they have to face when they go in to fight the fires. I first want to start by thanking those who put their lives at risk to protect our communities, to protect our people, to protect our national treasures, the U.S. forests. I appreciate our firefighters. All those firefighters know something that I've come to realize, that we can thin our forests, that we can use commonsense policy to make the fires burn less hot and protect our forests.

And that's what I want to talk about here. Before I do so, I want to thank Secretary Ann Veneman, Secretary Gale Norton for doing a fine job on behalf of all Americans. I want you to notice that these two ladies are from the West. I appreciate Dale Bosworth, who's the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. I also want to thank Leslie Weldon. Where are you, Leslie? Where? Oh, hi, Leslie. Thank you. Leslie is the Forest Supervisor of the Deschutes National Forest. She was our tour guide. She is a dedicated professional, just like the people she works with from the U.S. Forest Service. I want to thank those who work for the U.S. Forest Service, for the BLM, for serving your Nation in the communities in which you live. I appreciate the hard work you put in. I appreciate your dedication to the preservation and conservation of one of the greatest assets the United States has, which is our land and our forests.

I appreciate your Governor, Governor Kulongoski, who came with me today. I'm honored that he is here. It should say loud and clear to everybody that preserving and protecting our forests is not a political issue. It is not a partisan issue. It is a practical issue that we must come together and solve. So I'm very honored that the Governor is here.

I'm also honored to be with the two members of the legislative branch of our Government in Washington, DC—a great United States Senator, Gordon Smith, and a great Congressman, Greg Walden. I appreciate being able to work with these two fine men. You've just got to know they represent your interests well. They're constantly talking about the people of Oregon. Every time I'm around them, they bring you up. They say, "Let's have some commonsense policy in Washington, DC, to help people help themselves in our State. That's all we want. We

just want the Federal Government to respond in a responsible way.'' And that's what we're here to talk about, how best to be able to do that.

I don't know if you know this, but today are the Waldens' 21st anniversary. Congratulations to you both. Eileen must be a patient soul—[*laughter*]—kind of like Laura. We both married above ourselves, Congressman. [*Laughter*]

Laura sends her love and her best, by the way. She's still in Texas and wasn't able to travel today, but I wish she could come and see how beautiful this country is. See, we both grew up in the desert of west Texas. This is really a beautiful part of the world.

I appreciate the mayors who are here today, Mayor Unger of Redmond, Mayor Teater of Bend, Mayor Allen, Mayor Uffelman, Mayor Elliott. I thank the mayors and the local authorities who have taken time to come and give me a chance to visit with you. I appreciate your service to your communities. I think mayor is a little tougher than being President because you've got to make sure the potholes are all full and the garbage is collected. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Garland Brunoe, who is the Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, and I want to thank all the tribal members who are here with us today as well.

Today when I landed, I had the honor of meeting a fellow named Curtis Hardy. Curtis is sitting right there. The interesting thing about Curtis is, he's volunteered 5,000 hours over the last 10 years to the Deschutes National Forest. I asked Leslie if he was doing any good. [*Laughter*] She said, ''Absolutely.'' She says it's people like Curtis Hardy that make her job easier. It's very important for people to know that they can take time out of their lives, if they care about their beautiful surroundings, and make a positive, significant difference. Curtis is doing that. Curtis, thank you for setting such a good example, and I appreciate your service.

Ann was right: I was here a year ago. Unfortunately, when I came a year ago, I witnessed the effects of fires. I saw the Biscuit fire and the Squires Peak fire. Both of them were devastating forest fires. They destroyed buildings and homes, changed lives. They destroyed natural resources. The Biscuit fire alone scorched nearly half a million acres, cost more than $150 million. It burned down over a dozen homes. You know, anytime our communities face the devastation of wildfire, it really does test the character of the people. For those whose lives have been deeply affected and probably will be affected by this fire, we send our sympathies, and we wish God's blessings on their families.

The Federal Government can help. We will give grants, and the FEMA grants, all the SBA loans, the different things that happen when there's an emergency. I can assure you, Gordon and Greg will be all over us to make sure we appropriate the proper money to spend.

But the Government has got to do more than just spend money. I mean, we'll spend it, but we've got to effect wise policy, it seems like to me. I mean, how often—we write checks a lot on firefighting, and we'll continue to do that. But it seems like to me we ought to put a strategy in place to reduce the amount of money that we have to spend on emergency basis by managing our forests in a better, more commonsensical way.

The forest policy—the conditions of our forests didn't happen overnight. The experts who know something about forests will tell you that the condition, the overgrown and unhealthy condition, of a lot of our forest land happened over a century. It's taken a while for this situation to evolve. It may interest you to know that today there's 190 million acres of forests and woodlands around the country which are vulnerable to catastrophic fire because of brush and small trees that have been collecting for literally decades. A problem that has taken a long time to develop is going to take a long time to solve. So what we're going to talk about today is the beginnings of a solution. But we've got to get after it now. We have a problem in Oregon and around our country that we must start solving.

You see, the undergrowth issue, the problem of too much undergrowth, creates the conditions for unbelievably hot fires. These forest firefighters will tell you that these hot fires that literally explode the big trees can be somewhat mitigated by clearing out the

undergrowth. And by the way, the undergrowth chokes off nutrients from older trees. It makes our forests more susceptible to disease. We got a problem. It's time to deal with the problem. And that's what we're going to talk about.

Before I talk about the solutions, I do want people to understand that if you are concerned about the endangered species, then you need to be concerned about catastrophic fire. Fires destroy the animals which, obviously, live amidst the raging fire. If you're concerned about old growth, large stands of timber, then you better be worried about the conditions that create devastating fires. The worst thing that can happen to old stands of timber is these fires. They destroy the big trees. They're so explosive in nature that hardly any tree can survive. We saw that with our own eyes, choppering in here. Thinning underbrush makes sense, makes sense to save our species. It makes sense—of animals. It makes sense to save the big stands of trees.

You know, what I'm telling you about a strategy to deal with our forests to make them healthy is not something that was invented in Washington, DC. It's the collective wisdom of scientists, wildlife biologists, forestry professionals, and as importantly, the men and women who risk their life on an annual basis to fight fires. That's who I've been listening to.

Our administration is taking their advice. Congress needs to take their advice. Congress needs to listen to the—[*applause*]. So having listened and realized that we've got a problem, I've proposed a Healthy Forest Initiative. And I proposed it right here in Oregon one year ago. At my direction, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, Connaughton, who is here with us today, on my staff—these three—that's why they're here, by the way. I want you to look at them. They are responsible for putting this initiative into place.

Their job is to cut through bureaucratic redtape to complete urgently needed thinning projects. That was the first task I gave them. We're going to focus on areas where thinning is the most critical, where the damage can be most severe by—caused by fires. We're working with the Western Governors Association to determine projects of the highest priority in each State. In other words, we're setting priorities, and we're getting after it.

We are speeding up the process of environmental assessments and consultations required by law. Look, we want people to have input. If somebody has got a different point of view, we need to hear it. This is America. We expect to hear people's different points of view in this country. But we want people to understand that we're talking about the health of our forests, and if there's a high priority, we need to get after it before the forests burn and people lose life.

We're expediting the administrative appeals process so that disputes over thinning projects are resolved more quickly. We want to hear people. We want them to have a point of view. We want to save our forests, too. That's what we want to do here in America. We want to deal with the problem. Nobody's to blame. The problem has existed for years. Now let us be the ones who start solving the problem. And that's what I'm going to ask Congress to do when they come back.

Our approach relies on the experience and judgment and hard work of local people. Metolius Conservation Area is such an example. Leslie was describing it to me. The Friends of the Metolius, a conservation group, came to the Forest Service with an interesting idea. What I'm about to tell you is called a collaborative effort—to do some commonsense things in our forests to protect them and protect the communities around the forests.

So these good folks came and said, ''Look, why don't we set up some sample plots in the Deschutes Forest to be treated with thinning and burning and mowing and to leave some of the plots untreated, so people can see the difference between a treated plot and an untreated plot, to kind of break through the myths, the mythology, the propaganda of what it means to protect our forests?'' And the Forest Service agreed, and they worked together, and they shared costs. And thousands have now come and have seen good forest management practices in place. They've seen what is possible to do. And I want to thank the folks for working hard in a collaborative way to share your wisdom and

your hard work, to help educate our fellow citizens about the realities of what we're talking about when it comes to maintaining a healthy forest.

Bill Anthony is not with us today—I think he's fighting the fires—deserves a lot of credit for this program, as does Leslie. They're in the process, by the way, of treating 12,500 acres—additional 12,500 acres. I want to thank the Friends of the Metolius. I want to thank the local citizenry here for doing what is right. Ranger Bill says community participation has been critical to the success of the project, and that's the kind of initiatives we like and want. We want initiatives where the Federal Government works closely with the State government, with community groups, conservation groups, local people, in order to do what is right for our country and our States. You see, there's too much confrontation when it comes to environmental policy. There's too much zero-sum thinking. What we need is cooperation, not confrontation.

I appreciate the stewardship contracting programs that will be going on. I hope you do, as well. You see, the thinning projects that are going to go forward should help some of these local communities that hurt. And by the way, I fully understand Oregon's unemployment issue. It's the highest in the Nation. I'm sorry it's the way it is. There are some things we can do to help people. We want people working. We want people to have food on the table.

Stewardship contracting—what that means is, is that private organizations or businesses will be able to do the necessary thinning, and they'll be able to remove small trees and undergrowth, and they'll be able to keep part of what they remove as partial payment. That seems to make sense to me. First of all, somebody's working. It seems like the taxpayers come out okay. After all, if you're able to keep some of the thinning, which protects our forests, as part of the payment, it's a—takes a little load off the taxpayer. The local community's tax base will get better when somebody spends the money they make from thinning the projects, and the forests are more healthy. Stewardship contracting makes sense. It's an integral part of our plan.

I'll give you a quick report. The Healthy Forests Initiative is producing results. Last year, we treated 2¼ million acres of overgrown forests. By the end of the fiscal year in September, we will have treated more than 2.6 million acres of forest and rangeland. We're slowly but surely getting after it, as we say in Crawford, Texas. We're beginning to deal with the problem that we've—that will help make the country, by solving the problem, a better place.

This year alone, we'll spend more than $43 million of forest treatment projects here in the State of Oregon. And as we go forward with the Healthy Forests Initiative, if we can ever get it authorized by Congress, I look forward to working with the appropriators, working with Gordon and Greg, to get the projects funded. We just don't want the initiative authorized; we want the initiative funded so we can solve the problem.

But the initiative I've laid out is one step. Congress needs to act. People ought to understand up there in Washington that—or over there in Washington, way over there in Washington—[*laughter*]—that current law makes it too difficult to expedite the thinning of forests because it allows the litigation process to delay progress and projects for years and years. That's the problem. And those delays, the endless litigation delays, endanger the health of our forests and the safety of too many of our communities.

So I've asked Congress to fix the problem. Gordon and Greg are working hard to fix the problem. The law called the ''Healthy Forests Restoration Act'' would bring government and communities together to select high-priority projects relevant to local needs. In other words, it's part of the prioritization of what I just described to you earlier. It would also direct courts to consider the long-term threats to forest health that could result if thinning projects are delayed. In other words, it says, ''We have a national goal to protect our—one of our finest assets, and that is our forests. And therefore, you—Mr. Judge, make sure you understand that a healthy forest is a part of your consideration when you're listening to these appeals.''

The legislation makes forest health the priority, a high priority, when courts are forced to resolve disputes. And it places reasonable

time limits on litigation after the public has had an opportunity to comment and a decision has been made. Congress must move forward with this bill. It's a good, commonsense piece of legislation that will make our forests more healthy, that will protect old-growth stands, that will make it more likely endangered species will exist, that will protect our communities, that will make it easier for people to enjoy living on the edges of our national forests.

The House of Representatives passed the bill—and I appreciate your good work, Greg. The Agriculture Committee has agreed on a bill. The Agriculture Committee agreed on a bill, and when the Senate returns, they need to pass the healthy forests legislation and get it to my desk.

The administration is also working to help communities of this region by implementing the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. This plan was designed to protect wildlife and to support a viable woods-products industry in the Northwest. It was designed, obviously, before I arrived in Washington. It's a good plan. It makes a lot of sense. It was a plan forged by conservationists, industry professionals, government officials who came together to decide on a reasonable target for sustainable timber harvesting on a small portion of our forests. The plan calls for harvesting of about a billion board foot of timber per year. It will strengthen our communities. It will help rural America. It will help our homebuilders. It makes sense. It was a promise made to the people of the Northwest. It's a promise I intend to work with the Federal Government to keep.

Good forest policy can be the difference between lives surrounded by natural beauty or natural disaster. And we're watching a natural disaster unfold right here in this part of the world. And we can do a better job protecting our assets. We can do a better job protecting people in the communities. Now it's time for people who represent different parts of the country to come together to see the devastation that takes place out West on an annual basis and allow these good people out West to manage their assets in a way that we'll not only be able to say we've done a job well-done for future generations but we're protecting something that we hold dear, and that is the forest lands of America.

Before I finish, I do want to talk about another conservation issue that affects the people of the West Coast, and that's energy reliability. First, I thought our Government response to the power outage out East and in the Midwest was a good response. You know, after September the 11th, we came together in a way to be able to better deal with emergencies that affected America. The Federal Government, the State government, the local governments all worked in a very close way, and the communications was good. The system survived. The system responded well. We had a lot of good people who didn't panic and dealt with the problem in a very professional way. And I want to thank our citizens out East and up in the Midwest for doing such a fine job of responding to a very difficult situation and being respectful for their neighbor.

And yesterday Secretary of Energy Abraham and the Canadian Minister of Natural Resources met in Detroit. It's the joint effort to find out what went wrong. We're going to try to find out as quickly as we can exactly what caused the rolling blackout. But this rolling blackout and the problem we've got here with hydropower, the problem in California recently should say loud and clear to members of the legislative branch of Government that we've got an energy issue that we need to solve in America.

I called together a—put the task force together and made 105 recommendations for our Government to look at about a comprehensive national energy plan, one that encourages conservation, one that encourages energy efficiency, one that realizes that we've got to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy. And part of that was to recognize that our infrastructure, the electricity infrastructure, needs to be modernized.

And we've taken some action without law passed by the legislative branch. For example, there's a bottleneck that plagued California for years. In other words, electricity wasn't able to move as freely from south to north, north to south, as we wanted. And we're now permitting lines so that that bottleneck can be removed. And the Department of Energy is working with the private

sector to get the lines up and running so we can move more electricity.

And we've been dealing with the shortage of hydropower. As you know, you've got an issue in the Klamath Basin, and we've been trying to come up with reasonable policy so that people can farm the land and fish can live at the same time.

But Congress needs to act. I don't know if you know this or not, but for many years the reliability of electricity in America depended on companies observing voluntary standards to prevent blackouts. I don't think those standards ought to be voluntary. I think they ought to be mandatory. And if there's not reliability backup for electricity, there ought to be a serious consequence for somebody who misuses the public trust. And Congress needs to have that in the law.

We ought to authorize the Federal Government to step in as last resort to put up new power lines where it best serves the national interest. We ought to make investment—new investment in a transmission of electricity easier to make. We've got some old laws that were passed a long time ago that make it harder for people to invest in new electricity lines, new transmission lines. That doesn't make any sense. If we've got a problem, let's deal with it.

The law that passed out of the House of Representatives deals with it. I'm confident—and the Senate passed a bill—in other words, out of the two bodies, they need to get together. I talked to Pete Domenici, the Senator from New Mexico. I talked to Billy Tauzin, the chairman from Louisiana. They both agreed on what I've just described to you as necessary in a new bill, so that we can say we solved the problem; we're modernizing our electricity system so the people of America don't have their lives disrupted like what happened during the rolling blackout that took place last week. So we're going to get us a good energy bill. We need an energy bill, an energy strategy, and we need the will to implement it.

Let me conclude by telling you that I'm incredibly proud of our country. You know, we've been through a lot. We've been through a recession. You're still in it here in Oregon. We had these people attack us because of what we stand for. We love freedom in America, and we're not going to change. We stood tall and strong. We're a determined country, to not only protect ourselves; we're determined as well to protect ourselves by spreading freedom throughout the world. We know that free societies will be peaceful societies. We believe in America that freedom is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to every single human being on the face of the Earth.

We've been through some tough times, and these tough times came to the right nation. Our values are strong. Our people are courageous and strong and compassionate. I love being the President of the greatest nation on the face of the Earth.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:23 p.m. at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Ted Kulongoski of Oregon; Mayors Alan Unger of Redmond, Oran Teater of Bend, Richard Allen of Madras, Stephen Uffelman of Prineville, and David Elliott of Sisters, OR; Garland Brunoe, tribal council chairman, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; Bill Anthony, Sisters District Ranger, Deschutes National Forest; and Minister of Natural Resources Herb Dhaliwal of Canada.

Remarks at Ice Harbor Lock and Dam in Burbank, Washington

August 22, 2003

Thank you all very much. I appreciate you coming out to say hello. Thank you. Be seated, please. Thanks for coming out to say hello. It's a little different view from the views we have in Crawford. [*Laughter*] The temperature is a little cooler, too, I want you to know.

But thanks for coming. It's such an honor to be here at the Ice Harbor Lock and Dam. I found it interesting that another Texan came to dedicate the dam. Vice President Lyndon Johnson dedicated this unbelievable facility in 1962. He said it's ''an asset of astounding importance to the region and to America.'' He was right in 1962, and when I tell you it's an asset of astounding importance to this region of America in 2003, I'm right as well.

We just had a great tour, seeing this facility and its technological wonders. This work has added to the strength of your State, and it's added to the prosperity of the people. It's really important that we remember that when we're talking about national assets. After all, people's money built this facility, and we want the facility to help the people. The facility has been a crucial part of the past in this region, and I'm here to tell you it's going to be a crucial part of the future as well.

I was pleased to see the incredible care that goes into protecting the salmon that journey up the river. It's an important message to send to people, it seems like to me, that a flourishing salmon population is a vital part of the vibrancy of this incredibly beautiful part of our country. I appreciate the commitment that we are making as a country and that you're making as a community for salmon restoration. What I saw was and what you know firsthand is that we can have good, clean hydroelectric power and salmon restoration going on at the same time. And that's what I want to spend some time talking about. We have a responsibility to work together to make sure the human condition is strong and to make sure that the salmon flourish. And we'll meet that challenge.

I thank Gale Norton for her leadership. She is the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. She is a lady from the West. She understands land management. She knows what I know, that the folks who live closest to the land are those that care most about the land. And we appreciate that attitude.

I'm traveling in some pretty darn good company too, when it comes to the congressional delegation. Old Doc Hastings has made a pretty good hand—[*applause*]. He informed me first thing, before he even said hello, that he was a grandfather again today. So congratulations, Doc. I wouldn't take too much credit for it, Doc, if I were you. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate so very much traveling with George Nethercutt as well. Both Doc and George are always telling me about how important eastern Washington is. Every time I talk to them, they're reminding me not only that the folks here are just fine, fine, down-to-earth, hard-working people, but our Nation is blessed to have the resources that are coming from this part of your beautiful State.

The western part of your State is beautiful as well, and it's well represented—parts of it are well represented by my close friend Jennifer Dunn. I'm glad you're here, Jennifer.

The Acting Secretary of the Army, Les Brownlee, is with us today. I appreciate you coming, Les. Thank you for being here. We've got a lot of folks from the Corps of Engineers that are with us, people who are making this dam work, and I want to thank them for their service to our country. I appreciate so very much the National Marine Fisheries Service, through the Commerce Department, the representatives that are here as well.

I thank all the mayors that have come out, the State and local officials. I like to tease the mayors and tell them they've got a pretty darn tough job. After all, if the pothole isn't filled, they're going to hear from somebody firsthand at the coffee shop. [*Laughter*] That doesn't happen to the President much. [*Laughter*] I thank the mayors for coming. Just keep the garbage picked up. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate so much the tribal chiefs that are here with us today, distinguished leaders that are here to make sure that the heritage of the salmon is protected and honored and revered, Chief Burke and Black Wolf, Sockeye, Sailor. I'm honored you all are here, and thank you for coming as well, for taking time.

One of the things I've learned about Washington, DC, there's a lot of experts on the environment there. [*Laughter*] At least they think they are. They're constantly trying to tell people what to do. My judgment is, they—those who think they know what they're doing in Washington, DC, ought to come out and visit with the folks that are actually protecting the environment, people such as yourself. I have been to your State enough to know that the people of this great State are never very far away from some of nature's most beautiful sights. And the people who appreciate those beautiful sights the most are those who live close to the sights. They understand best of all what it means to be a good steward of land and water.

The Washington way of life depends and always will depend on the wise protection of the natural environment. It's been a part of your past; it's going to be an important part of the future of this State and our country, for that matter. And a vital part of the natural environment is the Pacific salmon.

Lewis and Clark, as Doc was—made sure to point it out, where Lewis and Clark stayed—where he thought they stayed. [*Laughter*] But he did say that they stayed in this part of the world a long time. I can see why. The weather's nice, and the scenery is beautiful. But think about what it was like when those rivers in 1805-timeframe were just full of salmon. It must have been an unbelievable sight for them, particularly if they were hungry. [*Laughter*]

Today, there are a lot fewer salmon in the waters. And the mission has got to be to fight the decline. The mission has got to be to make sure that we understand that without the salmon in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, that this would be a huge loss to this part of the world. That's part of what the focus of my short discussion is today, is to let you know that we understand in this administration that we want to work with the local folks to revitalize the salmon runs.

The good news is that salmon runs are up. And that's really positive. And we just need to make sure we keep that momentum. I want to talk about some ways we're going to do it. Gale mentioned one thing is that we can spend that money in Washington, and we're writing a pretty good-size check in '04. It helps keep the commitment about what I said when I ran for President. I said, look, we are concerned about the fish. We're also concerned about the citizens of Washington State who depend upon the dams for electricity and the water to water their land so we can have the crops necessary to eat in America.

But the economy of this part of the world has relied upon the steady supply of hydropower. And we've got an energy problem in America. We don't need to be breaching any dams that are producing electricity. And we won't. Part of a national energy policy has got to make sure that we increase supply and maintain supply. And I saw the six generators that are able to capture a steady flow of water that produces that power that enables people to live. We want the salmon to live; we want the quality of life in this part of the world to be strong as well.

You know something, I talk about people closest to the land care about the land more than most. Every day is Earth Day if you're a farmer. Farmers depend upon the quality of the land and the quality of the water. And I understand that. And I understand that this dam and the dams along this river have a got a lot to do with the ability for people to farm the land.

You know, one of the great things about our national security is that we don't have to worry about food from some other country. We produce enough to eat here in America, and that's good for our national security. I can't say the same for energy, by the way. We're reliant upon foreign sources of energy. That is a problem for national security. We're not reliant upon foreign sources of food, and that's important. This dam helps us become—so that we don't get reliant upon foreign sources of food.

Our farmers depend upon the dams on this river. People who run the barges need the dams. The dams accommodate—in other words, commerce happens, people can make a living, people have food on the table so they can feed their families. At the same time, the salmon are getting more plentiful. And it's a positive story, and it's a story we've got to continue to make sure this stays positive.

We have shown the world that we can have good quality of life and, at the same time, save salmon. And that's exactly what this administration will continue to do. I understand we can't do it alone, but we can help. We can make a difference. As Gale mentioned, the budgets are increasing. We're helping on technology. I just saw some technology that enables the young salmon and steelhead to pass through the dam near the surface of the dam at lower speeds and lower pressures. That will help the young salmon runs. The technology is employed at the Lower Granite Dam. It will be installed soon here at Ice Harbor. In other words, the Federal Government is doing its part by gathering the technologies that will make the salmon runs stronger and better over time.

I bet in '62 there wasn't that much concern about salmon runs, when Vice President Lyndon Johnson was here. I haven't reviewed his entire speech; I don't know how much time he spent talking about technologies necessary to save salmon. But in 2003, we can say we're developing good, strong technologies to save salmon. We're getting better at it. And that's what—[*applause*].

And I appreciate so much the hard work of the Federal employees that are doing what we pay them to do. I also know my friend Donnie Evans, who is the Secretary of Commerce, has got conservation plans that are now being developed and implemented in Chelan and Douglas County public utility districts. It's a good, creative use of Federal money, it seems like to me, to create these conservation plans and habitat restoration programs, to be smart about how we develop the strategies necessary to encourage salmon runs to increase. The plan will minimize the impact of dams, improving fish-bypass systems and hatchery programs. And we'll continue to work to fund local habitat restoration programs. In other words, there's a lot going on. But the truth of the matter is, in order to make this strategy work, we're going to have to work with the local folks. That's the reality of the situation.

I know that—I saw some of the irrigation systems, spray systems—they look pretty darn modern to me. I suspect some of the oldtime farmers here will tell you that there's been a lot of technological advancement when it comes to conservation of water. The more water our farmers conserve by using efficient sprinkler systems, obviously the less operating costs they have. But also it helps the salmon. And so for the farmers who are here, I want to thank you for doing your part not only feeding America but being good stewards of the water you use.

There's a group called Fish First. I met a fellow named Gary Loomis. And I appreciate Gary coming today. Gary is a guy who cares about restoring salmon runs, salmon habitat. So he and a group of volunteers have come together to work on the salmon projects around the State of Washington. They're installing culverts to accommodate the fish. They're creating side channels and ponds. They're getting their money through private donations. There's a lot of people who care about salmon runs, and they ought to be helping by contributing money. And they're using volunteers and some public grants.

As I understand that Gary Loomis' group is going to add another 4,900 foot of stream channel, mainly through volunteer work. And I appreciate what you're doing, Gary. I want to—why don't you stand up and give people a chance to look at you and let you know the—[*applause*]. I want to thank you for what you're doing. This will give me a chance to tell the people of the great State of Washington and Oregon that if you're interested in salmon runs, if you want to do your part about conserving this great legacy, volunteer with groups like Gary Loomis' group.

There's a lot of good conservation groups that have a good commonsense view about making sure that the quality of human life is strong and the quality of fish life is vibrant and healthy as well. Volunteer help makes a difference.

I appreciate the positive attitude that people have here in this part of the world, the can-do attitude: ''Here is a problem; let's go solve it together.'' And that's what we're here to confirm. It makes a—it's a lot better than what happens a lot of times when it comes to conservation issues. And that is, people just file lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit, just kind of tie everything up in endless litigation, and nothing gets better.

We've got that issue, by the way, with our forests. I was in Oregon yesterday, saw the devastating forest fires that are taking place. It's just sad to see national assets just go up in tremendous flames because we have not done a good job of thinning out our forests and protecting our forests. And a lot of the reason why is because people just file lawsuits, and we get stuck in the court, and nothing happens. The forests don't benefit. People in the communities close to the forest are—have their lives endangered because of the kindling that has piled up. We need to cut through all this business and get solving the national problems.

And so the good news about what's happening here is it looks like you've been able to bypass all the endless litigation, come up

with solutions to the problem so that the people can say, you know, ''Job well done.'' Generations—future generations can say these folks had a chance and they responded.

And I want to thank you for what you do to make sure that this part of the world is as vibrant and healthy, the heritage of the salmon remains strong. There's no doubt in my mind you will accomplish the objective, no doubt in my mind we will help. We want to be helpers, not hinderers, coming out of Washington, DC.

You know, the amazing thing about this country is when we put our mind to something, we can do a lot. We can do a lot. My mind is still focused on protecting America, by the way. We're going to hunt the terrorists down wherever they are and bring them to justice. And we're making progress. See, in America we know that freedom—free countries will be peaceful countries. We also know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; it is the Almighty's gift to every human being.

Abroad, this great Nation will lead the world to more peaceful times. We'll promote freedom. We worry about the human condition when people are enslaved by tyranny. And at home, we'll protect our assets. We'll conserve our beautiful environment, and at the same time, we'll work to make sure that people can make a living, that people can work hard, put money on the table; they can do their duty as a mom or a dad for—to feed their families.

Listen, America is a fabulous country, fabulous not only because of the values we hold dear but fabulous because of the nature of the people, who are the American people.

Thank you for coming. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gary Loomis, president, Fish First.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters in Seattle, Washington

August 22, 2003

The President. It's a pleasure to be here in beautiful Seattle. I just met with members of the congressional delegation and also members of the business community, both large and small businesses, to talk about the fact that this economy here in Washington State is not as strong as it should be.

I'm fully aware that the unemployment numbers here are some of the highest in the country, and that's of concern. This is a resource-based State with a significant high-tech component. Both of those sectors have been hit very hard by the economic downturn. And so we talked about ways to stimulate growth.

The first thing I talked about was the fact that the tax plan that the Congress passed and I signed, the most recent tax plan, is now kicking in. People are getting their child tax credits, which will be positive. It will be positive for the people of this State. People are getting more money back, and the more money they have, the more money they'll have to spend. And that's good news.

I talked about trade policy which will help the high-tech industry here in the State of Washington. We talked about the Healthy Forests Initiative, which is a commonsense plan to make sure that we save our forests before they get destroyed by catastrophic fire.

Yesterday I choppered over the fire in Oregon and saw the effects of a backward forest policy, a policy that has allowed for undergrowth to develop and provide the kindling necessary for explosive fires. I saw some interesting signs—said, ''Save our mature large trees.'' I agree. I also saw the fires destroy the mature stands of large trees. It's unbelievable how powerful these fires raged throughout. And we've got to do something about it. A healthy forests initiative will help protect the resources of a resource-based economy.

I talked today—we talked today about energy. The good folks in the State of Washington, or the capital—people who spend money on capital investment know that we need to have an energy policy. Today I talked about something that made eminent sense to me, and that is when you've got good, clean sources of energy like hydropower, you don't destroy those sources, particularly with the Nation short of energy. And so we had a very good discussion about ways to create

the conditions of economic vitality and growth.

The Federal Government can help, and the State of Washington has got to also set the conditions necessary for people to want to be here. I mean, one of the things we can do at the Federal level is pass medical liability reform. It's a national issue. I mean, it makes sense for us to have medical liability reform. If the State of Washington needs to send a message that this would be a good place to do business, they may—ought to have the legislature pass liability reform or workers' compensation reform. There's a lot of things the State of Washington can do as well.

And we had a very vital discussion. And the reason why I wanted to have this discussion is I'm concerned about the size of the unemployment rate here in this important State.

I'll answer a couple of questions, then I've got to go to another event. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Thank you, sir. I want to ask you about the Middle East.

The President. Middle East, yes.

Q. Palestinians militants have promised more suicide bombings. Israel itself has talked about more pinpoint strikes on militant chiefs. What can you do to make sure that the progress in the recent months doesn't get destroyed?

The President. Yes, well, we'll just keep working the issue, of course, hard and reminding people of this important fact, that if people want there to be peace in the Middle East, if the Palestinians want to see their own state, they've got to dismantle the terrorist networks.

You just opened your question by saying that some in the Palestinian territories have announced there's going to be more suicide bombings. Suicide bombings are acts of terror. Suicide bombings kill innocent people. Children, women—they don't care; they're indiscriminate. They just kill for the sake of killing. Those people who conduct suicide bombings are not interested in the vision that I have outlined, and that is a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace.

What the United States will continue to do is to remind those who love peace and yearn for freedom in that part of the world to join together and to battle those few who want to destroy the ambitions of many. I will continue to work with leaders in the neighborhood to encourage them to cut off the money and the aid and the help that goes to these terrorist organizations, all of which aim to destroy any hope for peace.

I am and will continue to work the issue. I think it's important for us to—for the United States to stay very much engaged, and I will.

Randy [Randy Mikkelsen, Reuters].

Iraq/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, it seems like the conflict in Iraq is becoming more of a guerrilla war directed against the West or international institutions. How important is it that more countries contribute troops to Iraq? And are you willing to give more political authority to the United Nations to achieve that goal?

The President. Yes, well, look, that's a very interesting question. It's—the way I view this is that Iraq is turning out to be a continuing battle in the war on terror. You know, it's one thing to remove the Saddam Hussein regime from power in order to protect America and our friends and allies, which we did. And then there are—we found resistance from former Ba'athist officials. These people decided that, well, they'd rather fight than work for peaceful reconstruction in Iraq because they weren't going to be in power anymore.

I also believe there's a foreign element that is moving into Iraq, and these will be Al-Qaida-type fighters. They want to fight us there because they can't stand the thought of a free society in the Middle East. They hate freedom. They hate the thought of a democracy emerging. And therefore, they want to violently prevent that from happening. And it's hard to characterize what kind of movement it is since this is the—this is one of the major battles of the first war of the 21st century.

As I told the American people after 9/11, one, I would never forget 9/11 and the lessons learned about protecting the security of this country, but also that we were facing a

different kind of war. And having said that, we do need and welcome more foreign troops into Iraq, and there will be more foreign troops into Iraq. And what that will do is that will enable many of those troops to guard the infrastructure. If you notice what's happening, of course, is as the life of the average Iraqi begins to improve, those who hate freedom destroy the infrastructures that we've been improving. It's part of their strategy. So we'll get more people guarding that.

And in the meantime—and that will help free up our hunter teams. We're getting better human intelligence. Every day that goes by, we're getting more solid evidence from Iraqi citizens about the whereabouts of certain former thugs—or current thugs of a former regime, is a better way to put it, like ''Chemical Ali.'' And we're winning.

And it's—we've been there for 120 days since major operations, or something like that. We've haven't been there a long time. And these people—let me finish. Just getting warmed up. [*Laughter*] These people have been subjugated for years and years and years. Torture chambers were prevalent throughout the Iraqi society. Mass graves—discovered mass graves of innocent people whose lives were slaughtered because they didn't agree with Saddam Hussein. And you can imagine the psychology of a country that has been through a—life under Saddam. Slowly but surely, people are now beginning to develop the habits necessary for a free society to emerge.

But we're going to stay the course. Now, your other question was the United Nations. Well, I've always said the United Nations ought to have a vital role, and they were playing a vital role in Iraq, such a vital role that the killers decided to destroy the very people that were providing food for the hungry and medicine for the afflicted. Now, what kind of mindset is that? That's—it is that type of mentality that we must defeat if we expect the world to be secure and peaceful.

And so yes, there will be a vital role for the U.N. As a matter of fact, we're discussing regulation—I mean, resolutions now about how to encourage other nations to participate in the process.

And let me—one more. Ryan [Ryan Donmoyer, Bloomberg News].

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. Fine, Ryan. That's a short question? If it is a short question, I can call on Bennett [Bennett Roth, Houston Chronicle]. If it's not a short question, he gets filibustered.

National Economy

Q. Sir, three tax cuts, two wars, and now a new military role in Liberia, and your administration is now projecting deficits up near a trillion dollars this year and next. Meanwhile, a major jobless recovery, as you've just mentioned here today in Washington, and Wall Street is becoming more and more nervous about the effect of these deficits in the long-term economy. Can this economy sustain long-term deficits?

The President. We'll have the deficit in half over a 5-year period of time if Congress holds the line on discretionary spending. And one of my jobs is to make sure they do. I proposed reasonable budgets on discretionary spending, and I expect Congress to join me on those budgets.

Let me remind the people that—to whom you're writing this erudite article what caused the deficit. It was caused by the lack of revenues coming into the Treasury because of a recession. Half of the deficit was because of the recession that took place in the first quarter—first three quarters of 2001.

And remember, the stock market started to decline in March of 2000. That caused a lack of revenue coming into the Treasury. Then the country went into recession. And recession by its very nature means less business activity, less money in circulation, less monies coming into the Treasury.

And then we were at war, and I decided to request from Congress enough money to fight and win the war. That's what the American people expect. They expect a Commander in Chief to support the troops. And that's what I did and will continue to do.

Part of the deficit is also caused by the fact that Congress passed the tax relief I asked for. But the reason I asked for the tax relief is to stimulate economic growth. And so the—those who are worried about the deficit must first worry—I hope would worry first about people being able to find work,

like in Washington State. I am more concerned about somebody finding a job than I am about numbers on paper. But having said that, I want to repeat that we've got a plan to reduce the deficit in half in 5 years.

Final question, Bennett of the Houston Chronicle. I've known him for a long time. For those of you who don't know him, he's a fine lad. [*Laughter*]

Report on the February 1 Space Shuttle Columbia Accident

Q. And it's sort of a Texas-related question. Mr. President, next week there's going to be a report issued on the Space Shuttle *Columbia* that's expected to be highly critical of NASA. Do you support the resumption of manned space flights? Do you think the program should be better funded and restructured? Where do you see the future?

The President. Let me first—I've been a strong supporter of NASA. I want to look at the report before I comment. You may have seen the report; I haven't, in which case I want to look at it. I do believe that a space program is important for a country that is trying to stay on the leading edge of technological change. But let me look and first see what the report says, how critical it is, what it says, what it means. And I'll answer—try to answer that very question after I've had a chance to enrich my knowledge about a pending report.

Thank you all.

Birthday of Jennifer Loven

Q. It's her birthday.

The President. Today is your birthday?

Q. No. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, it is.

The President. You shouldn't be so shy in front of national cameras. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'd rather it not be a topic, thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Would you like for your compadres to break out in a ''Happy Birthday'' here on TV?

Q. They've already done that, thank you.

The President. They have? Should we have the business community sing? [*Laughter*] Happy birthday.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at Boeing Field-King County International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and former Iraqi Ba'ath Party official Ali Hassan al-Majid (known as ''Chemical Ali''). A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the Designation of Hamas Leadership and European Funding Sources Under Executive Order 13224

August 22, 2003

At my direction, the Treasury Department has moved today to block and freeze the assets of six top Hamas leaders and five nongovernmental organizations that I am advised provide financial support to Hamas. By claiming responsibility for the despicable act of terror on August 19, Hamas has reaffirmed that it is a terrorist organization committed to violence against Israelis and to undermining progress toward peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.

I call upon all nations supportive of peace in the Middle East to recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization and to take all appropriate actions to deny it support.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

August 16

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

August 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham to discuss the recent power blackout in portions of the Northeastern and Midwestern United States and Canada.

August 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil to express his condolences concerning the death of Brazilian citizen Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to Iraq, who died in the August 18 terrorist bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom to discuss the Baghdad terrorist attack.

August 20

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel to discuss the August 18 terrorist attack in Jerusalem. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President participated in a video conference call with the National Security Council, including Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq, and Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command.

August 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Portland, OR.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Redmond, OR, where he participated in a briefing on the Bear Butte and Booth fires in Deschutes National Forest. Later, aboard Marine One, he took an aerial tour of the forest fires.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Bend, OR.

The President announced his intention to nominate Hugh Douglas Barclay to be Ambassador to El Salvador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael David Gallagher to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

The President announced his intention to appoint Lydia Irene Beebe; William Wilson III; and Joseph Thomas Yew, Jr., as members of the Board of Directors of the Presidio Trust.

The President announced his intention to appoint Carl Michael Morgan, Jr., and Deborah Doris Wetsit as members of the President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities.

August 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Burbank, WA. En route, aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing. Following his arrival, he participated in a briefing and tour of Ice Harbor Lock and Dam. Later, he traveled to Seattle, WA.

In the afternoon, the President attended a Bush-Cheney luncheon at a private residence. Later, he returned to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gordon England to be Secretary of the Navy.

The President announced the recess appointments of Charlotte A. Lane and Daniel Pearson as members of the U.S. International Trade Commission.

The President announced the recess appointment of A. Paul Anderson as a Federal Maritime Commissioner.

The President announced the recess appointment of Daniel Pipes as a member of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The President announced the recess appointment of John Paul Woodley, Jr., as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

The President announced the recess appointments of David W. Fleming, Jay Phillip Greene, and John Richard Petrocik as members of the Board of Trustees of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation.

The President announced the recess appointment of Juanita Alicia Vasquez-Gardner as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released August 16

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2195, H.R. 2465, H.R. 2854, and S. 1015 on August 15

Released August 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Liberian Peace Agreement Signed in Accra, Ghana

Released August 19

Statement by the Press Secretary: Presidential Determination Regarding U.S. Assistance to the Government of Colombia Airbridge Denial Program

Released August 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released August 21

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released August 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: President Bush Highlights Salmon Recovery Successes

Acts Approved by the President

Approved August 15 *

H.R. 2195 / Public Law 108–72
Smithsonian Facilities Authorization Act

H.R. 2465 / Public Law 108–73
Family Farmer Bankruptcy Relief Act of 2003

H.R. 2854 / Public Law 108–74
To amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to extend the availability of allotments for fiscal years 1998 through 2001 under the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes

S. 1015 / Public Law 108–75
Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health Act

Approved August 18

H.R. 1412 / Public Law 108–76
Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003

* These Public Laws were not received in time for inclusion in the appropriate issue.