

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

Statement on Signing Legislation To Provide for the Conveyance to the Utrok Atoll Local Government of a Decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ship, and for Other Purposes

April 13, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2584, a bill to provide for the conveyance to the Utrok Atoll local government of a decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ship, and for other purposes.

Section 101(c) of the bill purports to require the Utrok Atoll local government, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to submit a plan to four committees of the United States Congress for the use of the ship to be conveyed. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, of which Utrok is a political subdivision, is a self-governing republic with a sovereign right to self-determination whose government has the capacity to conduct foreign affairs. Accordingly, in light of the status of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the exclusive authority of the President with respect to the conduct of the foreign affairs of the United States, the executive branch shall construe section 101(c) as asking the President to request, rather than as requiring, that the Utrok political subdivision submit a plan for use of the ship to be conveyed. The Secretary of State, after consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, shall communicate on my behalf as appropriate with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to effectuate to the extent permissible the purposes of section 101.

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 13, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 2584, approved April 13, was assigned Public Law No. 108–219.

Proclamation 7771—Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2004

April 13, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Each year on Pan American Day and during Pan American Week, we honor the bonds of friendship that unite the Pan American community. With the exception of one country, the nations of the Western Hemisphere recognize the importance of working together to strengthen democratic institutions, promote economic prosperity, invest in our people, and improve our security. At the recent 2004 Special Summit of the Americas, the 34 democratic nations of the Western Hemisphere reaffirmed their commitment to the Inter-American Democratic Charter to defend democracy and freedom whenever they are threatened. Our unity and support of democratic institutions, constitutional processes, and basic liberties give hope and strength to those struggling around the world.

The nations of the Western Hemisphere will continue to draw upon the Charter to strengthen the rule of law, protect human rights and freedoms, encourage economic growth, and promote good governance. As neighbors, we are expanding prosperity through open markets and economic reforms—creating new opportunities for millions of people and continued economic progress benefiting the nations of our hemisphere. My Administration will continue to work toward the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, scheduled for completion in 2005.

To protect the rights and freedoms of all our citizens, the Pan American community must also combat the forces that threaten democracy: terrorism, drug trafficking, and other crimes that transcend national borders. The Declaration on Security in the Americas, adopted at the October 2003 Organization of American States Special Conference on Security, underscores our hemisphere's interest in collectively maintaining peace and security across the Americas. The United States welcomes the opportunity to work

with our neighbors to advance the Declaration's goals to safeguard our citizens as we build for a future that is peaceful, just, and prosperous.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 14, 2004, as Pan American Day and April 11 through April 17, 2004, as Pan American Week. I urge the Governors of the 50 States, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the officials of other areas under the flag of the United States of America to honor these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 16.

The President's News Conference

April 13, 2004

The President. Good evening. Before I take your questions, let me speak with the American people about the situation in Iraq.

This has been tough weeks in that country. Coalition forces have encountered serious violence in some areas of Iraq. Our military commanders report that this violence is being instigated by three groups: Some remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, along with Islamic militants, have attacked coalition forces in the city of Fallujah; terrorists from other countries have infiltrated Iraq to incite and organize attacks; in the south of Iraq, coalition forces face riots and attacks that are being incited by a radical cleric named Al Sadr. He has assembled some of his supporters into an illegal militia and publicly supported the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Al Sadr's methods of violence and intimidation are widely repudiated by other

Iraqi Shi'a. He's been indicted by Iraqi authorities for the murder of a prominent Shi'a cleric.

Although these instigations of violence come from different factions, they share common goals. They want to run us out of Iraq and destroy the democratic hopes of the Iraqi people. The violence we have seen is a power grab by these extreme and ruthless elements. It's not a civil war. It's not a popular uprising.

Most of Iraq is relatively stable. Most Iraqis, by far, reject violence and oppose dictatorship. In forums where Iraqis have met to discuss their political future and in all the proceedings of the Iraqi Governing Council, Iraqis have expressed clear commitments. They want strong protections for individual rights. They want their independence, and they want their freedom.

America's commitment to freedom in Iraq is consistent with our ideals and required by our interests. Iraq will either be a peaceful, democratic country, or it will again be a source of violence, a haven for terror, and a threat to America and to the world. By helping to secure a free Iraq, Americans serving in that country are protecting their fellow citizens. Our Nation is grateful to them all and to their families that face hardship and long separation.

This weekend, at a Fort Hood hospital, I presented a Purple Heart to some of our wounded, had the honor of thanking them on behalf of all Americans. Other men and women have paid an even greater cost. Our Nation honors the memory of those who have been killed, and we pray that their families will find God's comfort in the midst of their grief. As I have said to those who have lost loved ones, we will finish the work of the fallen.

America's Armed Forces are performing brilliantly, with all the skill and honor we expect of them. We're constantly reviewing their needs. Troop strength, now and in the future, is determined by the situation on the ground. If additional forces are needed, I will send them. If additional resources are needed, we will provide them. The people of our country are united behind our men and women in uniform, and this Government will