

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