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disruptions of energy supplies to the United States. The idea of emptying the Strategic Petroleum Reserve plays—would put America in a dangerous position in the war on terror. We're at war. We face a tough and determined enemy on all fronts, and we must not put ourselves in a worse position in this war. And playing politics with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would do just that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring NCAA Winter Champion Teams

May 19, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming.

Audience member. We'll be back. [*Laughter*]

The President. Whoever said, "We'll be back," it sounds like the Connecticut women's basketball team.

I'm glad you all are here. This is what we call Champions Day. It is my high honor to welcome champions to the White House. I appreciate—I notice we've got a lot of folks from Connecticut here. [*Laughter*] Yes. We've got two fine United States Senators in Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman. We're proud you're here. Nancy Johnson is here with us today. Chris Shays—you made it. Very good. And Rob Simmons is with us as well. Yes, there you go. [*Laughter*]

They're here because Connecticut—University of Connecticut has done something really unusual. They have a women's champion and a men's champion in the same year, and we're proud to welcome them here. Maybe now is the moment that I should admit that I was born in Connecticut. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Phil Austin for being here. Geno, welcome back. Geno is—he's obviously a great coach. And he is a fellow who—I've watched the games, and I've watched his attitude, and no wonder Connecticut women's basketball does so well, because he knows how to win. And I'm proud to have him back. This is the third year that the Connecticut ladies have been here since I've been the President.

And Jim Calhoun is also a great coach and a fine man as well. Coach Calhoun looked at me and said, "I wonder if you're a point guard." I said, "I couldn't even touch the net." [*Laughter*] But he's got some people that can touch the net on his team. And both these champs really worked hard to get here—both these teams worked hard to get here, with great coaches. And I'm proud to welcome them here to the White House.

University of Denver—one of your—well, you've got a couple of alumni who work for me. One is Gale Norton, who is the Secretary of the Interior. Welcome, Gale. I'm glad you're here. The other one is Condi Rice, and I told her to keep working. [*Laughter*] No rest for the weary. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Marc Holtzman and George Gwozdecky, who is the head coach, for joining us as well. We've got Wayne Allard, who is the United States Senator from Colorado, with us. Scott McInnis and Diana DeGette is with us as well. Diana, thanks for coming. We're glad you all are here, proud the good folks from Colorado are here.

Laura Halldorson is the coach of the University of Minnesota women's hockey team. I welcome the team here. I also welcome Senators Norm Coleman and Mark Dayton. Where is Senator Dayton—he was a fine goalie, by the way.

Audience member. Long ago.

The President. Yes, long ago. [*Laughter*]

Martin Sabo, the Congressman, is with us. Martin, thank you for coming. We're proud we've got so many here. I was pleased to know that the University of Minnesota women's hockey team's slogan this year was, "Get it done, and meet George." [*Laughter*] It's my pleasure to meet you. [*Laughter*] You beat Harvard, and you became the first women's team in school history to win a national championship, and that's got to make you feel great. Congratulations.

I had met one of your players before. I warned her I was going to say this, but Krissy

Wendell, who plays for the Minnesota team, and I met at the Winter Olympics. It was there that she handed me a cell phone so I could speak to her mother. [*Laughter*] I worked hard to convince her mother it was actually the President speaking to her. [*Laughter*] I tried as hard as I could to sound exactly like myself. [*Laughter*] I will never, however, forget what her mother said. She said, "I just want you to know, I'm praying for you." And I told Krissy, when she talked to her mother, tell her how—that was—it meant a lot, and tell her mom, thanks.

I also am really glad that the women's team is here. I'm sorry that Diana is not here. She's making a living. [*Laughter*] It's part of the economic recovery package. [*Laughter*] She goes to college, and she gets a really good job with the WNBA Phoenix Mercury.

But these women know how to play basketball, and they're tough competitors. I think a lot of people probably wrote Geno's team out pretty early in the year. It seemed like the field was really a competitive field this year, and a lot of people probably said, "Well, they don't have it. They're kind of burned out. Maybe don't have what it takes." And in fact, these women show they do have what it takes. They've got great courage, great desire, and I'm really happy you're back.

And I'm really happy the men's team is here as well. It's—the NCAA Final Four is some kind of exciting for a lot of sports fans. And the Duke game was really an exciting game, and I know the people of Connecticut were—Connecticut fans were incredibly thrilled that Calhoun and his men are here today. And I am too—glad you're here.

And then there's the University of Denver hockey team—the men's hockey team. They won their first national championship in 35 years. This team wasn't expected to win either. It just goes to show you, don't write people out, particularly those who have got desire and character. You just don't write them off. You just—you never kind of take anything for granted.

I like the story of Lukas Dora. Where are you, Lukas? There you go. Lukas is from the Czech Republic. He said—they tell me he talks a lot on the ice. He's a talkative guy, but he uses unique English to confuse the opponents. [*Laughter*] Kind of sounds like the strategy I use at the press conferences. [*Laughter*]

They're champs on the court. They're champs on the ice. They've got to be champs off the court and ice too, to be true champs. You've got an opportunity now, with the spotlight on you as champions, to make a difference in the communities in which you live. Here's a chance—a chance to be more than just an athlete. It's a chance to be a hero to somebody who needs a role model, somebody who—like when you go to visit the children in the hospital—and I know you do—somebody, when you touch their life—you go in as a champ, and you touch a life, and somebody feels better as a result of a little love and compassion, or serving food, or helping with toy drives. All of it matters, see. All of it counts.

And now that you've got the spotlight on you, I hope you continue to seize that moment and make America a better place, by changing a heart and a soul, one person at a time. See, true champs are those that show courage and work hard to win, but they're also people who show compassion and love and decency when given the chance.

We're welcoming true champs here to the White House, and it's my high honor to do so. Congratulations for what you have done. May God continue to bless you all, your schools, and your families. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Phil Austin, president, Geno Auriemma, women's basketball head coach, Diana Taurasi, former player, and Jim Calhoun, men's basketball head coach, University of Connecticut; Marc Holtzman, president, and George Gwozdecky, men's hockey head coach, University of Denver. The President honored the University of Connecticut men's and women's basketball teams, the University of Denver men's hockey team, and the University of Minnesota women's hockey team.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Implement Project BioShield

May 19, 2004

I commend the Senate for passing legislation that will bolster the Nation's defenses against biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear threats. Project BioShield will speed the development of new vaccines and treatments that would help prevent harm to Americans in a terrorist attack. This legislation carries out my proposal to encourage accelerated research and development of medical countermeasures based on the latest scientific discoveries, provides for rapid stockpiling of critical new drugs and vaccines, and makes these treatments available quickly in emergency situations. America is more secure today because we have placed a strong emphasis on homeland defense, and initiatives like Project BioShield are another important step in winning the war on terror.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

May 19, 2004

President Bush. Thank you for coming. You just interrupted a conversation about how we're working on a strategy to help the Iraqis become a free nation.

First, I want to thank my friend Silvio Berlusconi for being here this evening. He's a man of good judgment, good advice, and he's a good friend. And after we have dinner, we're going to go to the Sons of Italy banquet tonight.

I also want to thank the Italian people for the great humanitarian mission that they're undertaking in Iraq. I appreciate their contribution to a free society in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom.

The Prime Minister and I have spent time working on a strategy that's based upon the following points: One, there will be a full transfer of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government on June the 30th. That will be accompanied by a United Nations Security Council resolution. He had some very good ideas about what should be in that resolution. I, of course, listened to his good ideas.

We also talked about the need to make sure there is a security force to help the Iraqis move toward elections. It's tough work there now, because killers want to stop progress. It will be tough work after sovereignty is transferred, because there will still be people there trying to derail the election process. And that's why one of the discussion points we had was how to continue to broaden the coalition. And finally, we talked about how to make sure that Iraq does have free elections, as Mr. Brahimi has scheduled.

It's an easy conversation to have with Silvio, because we share values. We believe in human rights, human dignity, rule of law, and the right for people to self-govern.

And so I'm proud my friend is here. I appreciate your leadership.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you for your advice.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. As far as I'm concerned, I'm very happy to be here, and I'm very happy to have had this discussion with my friend President Bush, discussion on this plan, which is very detailed in terms of the date and is a very convincing plan.

As the President already said, within 2 weeks or even probably before, by the end of this month, the envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations will indicate the names of the members of the interim government.

And something else that President Bush did not mention right now, but we discussed, is the possibility, opportunity of convening a meeting in New York, where your President should be invited and he should meet the members of the Security Council of the United Nations and the top representatives of the countries—members of the coalition. And this in order to provide this government with an international legitimization which is not only useful for the international community but mostly for domestic purposes for this government in Iraq.

And by month—the end of July, there would be the possibility of setting up an electoral commission which will be formed and