

This week is also an opportunity to honor those who have stood against oppression and advanced the fundamental right of all to live in liberty. The courage and sacrifice of these men and women reflect the fact that tyranny can never destroy the desire to be free. Inspired by their example, we will carry on their work to help others realize the universal gift of liberty and to spread the light of democracy to every corner of the world.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as "Captive Nations Week."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 16 through July 22, 2006, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to reaffirm their commitment to all those seeking liberty, justice, and self-determination.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., July 19, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 18, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on July 20.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters *July 18, 2006*

The President. I just had the pleasure of briefing the key Members of the House and the Senate on my trip to St. Petersburg and to Germany. Thank you all for coming.

You know, prior to my traveling to St. Petersburg, I thought the issue was going to be whether or not we could bring the world together to deal with North Korea and Iran—and by the way, during my stay there, we did get an unanimous United Nations Security Council agreement on North Korea. And it was my pleasure to be able to thank

the Chinese and the Russians and the Japanese and our European friends for voting favorably for that resolution—but instead, a lot of the discussion was on the Hizballah attacks into Israel.

What was really interesting was that—and I briefed this to the Members—that we were able to reach a very strong consensus that the world must confront the root causes of the current instability. And the root cause of that current instability is terrorism and terrorist attacks on a democratic country. And part of those terrorist attacks are inspired by nation-states like Syria and Iran. And in order to be able to deal with this crisis, the world must deal with Hizballah, with Syria, and to continue to work to isolate Iran.

I strongly believe every nation ought to be able to defend herself from terrorist attacks. We're also mindful—and I talked to the Members—about the need to make sure the Government of Lebanon does not collapse. It's in our interest that Lebanon be free and the Siniora Government succeed.

We also talked about the evacuation of U.S. citizens in Lebanon. And Condi briefed the Members about the joint plan with the Defense Department to make sure there's enough transportation to expeditiously provide transportation for those who want to leave. And we're in the process of doing that.

All in all, it was a very positive visit there in the G-8. We dealt with significant problems. Sometimes it requires tragic situations to help bring clarity in the international community. And it is now clear for all to see that there are terrorist elements who want to destroy our democratic friends and allies, and the world must work to prevent them from doing so.

With that, I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Let's see, here. Yes.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. In trying to defuse the situation in the Middle East, is the United States trying to buy time and give Israel a chance to weaken Hizballah militarily?

The President. Well, we have made it very clear that Israel should be allowed to defend herself. We've asked that as she does

so, that she be mindful of the Siniora Government. It's very important that this Government in Lebanon succeed and survive.

Everybody abhors the loss of innocent life. On the other hand, what we recognize is that the root cause of the problem is Hizballah. And that problem must be addressed, and it can be addressed through—internationally by making it clear to Syria that they've got to stop their support to Hizballah.

Listen, Syria is trying to get back into Lebanon—it looks like to me. We passed United Nations Resolution 1559, and finally this young democracy—or this democracy became whole—by getting Syria out. And there's suspicions that the instability created by the Hizballian attacks will cause some in Lebanon to invite Syria back in, and it's against the United Nations policy, and it's against the U.S. policy.

Q. There's a Deputy Army Chief of Israel who said that for this offensive to reach its goal will take weeks. Are you comfortable with that kind of timeframe? Are you comfortable with letting the offensive go on for weeks?

The President. I want the world to address the root causes of the problem, and the root cause of the problem is Hizballah. I also—and we've been, of course, in touch with Israel. Condi spoke to Prime Minister Olmert yesterday on the airplane flying back. And we're never going to tell a nation how to defend herself, but we are urging caution when it comes to the survival of the Siniora Government. It's essential that the Government of Lebanon survive this crisis.

We've worked hard to free—and “we” being the international community—worked hard to free Lebanon from Syrian influence. And there's a young government there. And it's in our interest that Syria stay out of Lebanon and this Government survive. And so in our consultations with countries in the neighborhood, we have urged all to address the problem—that would be Hizballah and its terrorist attacks on Israel.

Remember, this started—this crisis started when Hizballah captured two Israeli soldiers. They were unprovoked—Hizballah were unprovoked, and they then took hostages. Imagine how the United States would react if somebody provoked us with that kind of

action—and secondly, started firing rockets. And it's this provocation of Hizballah that has created this crisis, and that's the root cause of the problem.

All right, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:57 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. A reporter referred to Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinsky, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Israel Defense Forces.

Memorandum on Assignment of Reporting Functions Related to Russian Debt Reduction for Nonproliferation

July 18, 2006

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Assignment of Reporting Functions Related to Russian Debt Reduction for Nonproliferation

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and section 1321 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–228) (the “Act”), I hereby assign to you the functions of the President under section 1321 of the Act.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Importation of Certain Goods From Liberia

July 18, 2006

On July 22, 2004, by Executive Order 13348, I declared a national emergency and ordered related measures blocking the property of certain persons and prohibiting the importation of certain goods from Liberia, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–