

accident or a result of faulty planning. It is a deliberate strategy. It is the direct result of outside extremists teaming up with internal extremists—Al Qaida with the Sunni insurgents and Iran with Shi'a militia—to foment hatred and thus throttle, at birth, the possibility of nonsectarian democracy.”

The Prime Minister and I also discussed the report I received this week from the Iraq Study Group, chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. Their report provides a straightforward picture of the grave situation we face in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group's report also explicitly endorses the strategic goal we've set in Iraq: an Iraq that can “govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself.”

The report went on to say, quote, “In our view, this definition entails an Iraq with a broadly representative government that maintains its territorial integrity, is at peace with its neighbors, denies terrorism a sanctuary, and doesn't brutalize its own people. Given the current situation in Iraq, achieving this goal will require much time and will depend primarily on the actions of the Iraqi people.”

I agree with this assessment. I was also encouraged that the Iraq Study Group was clear about the consequences of a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq. The group declared that such a withdrawal would, quote, “almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence” and lead to “a significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional destabilization, and a threat to the global economy.” The report went on to say, “If we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-range consequences could eventually require the United States to return.”

The Iraq Study Group understands the urgency of getting it right in Iraq. The group also understands that while the work ahead will not be easy, success in Iraq is important, and success in Iraq is possible. The group proposed a number of thoughtful recommendations on a way forward for our country in Iraq. My administration is reviewing the report, and we will seriously consider every recommendation. At the same time, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Council are finishing work on their own reviews of our strategy in Iraq.

I look forward to receiving their recommendations. I want to hear all advice as I make the decisions to chart a new course in Iraq.

I thank the members of the Iraq Study Group for their hard work and for the example of bipartisanship that they have set. The group showed that Americans of different political parties can agree on a common goal in Iraq and come together on ways to achieve it. Now it is the responsibility of all of us in Washington—Republicans and Democrats alike—to come together and find greater consensus on the best way forward.

As part of this effort, I met this week with House and Senate leaders from both parties, as well as senior members of the Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Intelligence Committees. We had productive discussions about our shared duty to forge a bipartisan approach to succeed in Iraq. The future of a vital region of the world and the security of the American people depend on victory in Iraq. I'm confident that we can move beyond our political differences and come together to achieve that victory. I will do my part.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on December 8 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 8 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, chairman, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Outer Continental Shelf Legislation

December 9, 2006

I commend Congress for passing the Outer Continental Shelf legislation, which will help to reduce our dependence on imported sources of energy by increasing access to domestic sources of oil and gas. Developing these reliable domestic resources in an

environmentally sound manner will help address high energy prices, strengthen our energy security, and protect manufacturing jobs. The bill also provides the producing States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama a share in the royalty revenues from OCS leases. I appreciate the commitment by the State of Louisiana to use revenues from these leases to restore coastal wetlands.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 6111.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act

December 9, 2006

In 1990, Congress passed the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act to advance our domestic battle against HIV/AIDS. This landmark legislation has provided Americans in need with better access to medical care, antiretroviral treatments, and counseling and has helped them live longer lives. The act also supports HIV testing to prevent the further spread of this devastating disease.

Laura and I thank the House and Senate for reauthorizing the Ryan White CARE Act. This legislation focuses on life-saving and life-extending services and increased accountability and will provide more flexibility to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to direct funding to areas of greatest need. The Ryan White CARE Act demonstrates the compassionate and generous spirit of America, and I look forward to signing this important legislation into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 6143.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Authorize Permanent Trade Relations With Vietnam

December 9, 2006

I commend the Congress for its bipartisan support for my request to approve legislation authorizing the grant of permanent normal trade relations to Vietnam. PNTR marks a significant step forward in the process of nor-

malizing relations with Vietnam and will benefit both our nations. This designation will advance our trade and investment relations with Vietnam and ensure that the United States shares in the economic benefits generated by Vietnam's imminent membership in the World Trade Organization. Vietnam is demonstrating its strong commitment to continuing economic reforms, which will support political reform and respect for human rights. The American people welcome the remarkable transformation and economic progress in Vietnam, and we will continue to work together to strengthen our ties.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 6406.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Fisheries Management Legislation

December 9, 2006

I applaud Congress for working in a bipartisan manner to pass a stronger Magnuson-Stevens Act. Our Nation is committed to maintaining our thriving commercial and recreational fishing communities. This bill embraces my priorities of ending overfishing and rebuilding our Nation's fish stocks through more effective, market-based management and tougher enforcement. This landmark legislation also provides stronger tools to achieve progress internationally to ensure healthy fish stocks, promote better management, and halt destructive fishing practices based on sound science.

Since my administration released the Ocean Action Plan in 2004, we have been making great strides in our efforts to make our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes cleaner, healthier, and more productive. Enactment of this bill is one of the top priorities of the Ocean Action Plan and is another significant bipartisan environmental achievement.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5946.