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Remarks on the Shootings at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia

April 16, 2007

Our Nation is shocked and saddened by the news of the shootings at Virginia Tech today. The exact total has not yet been confirmed, but it appears that more than 30 people were killed and many more were wounded.

I've spoken with Governor Tim Kaine and Virginia Tech President Charles Steger. I told them that Laura and I and many across our Nation are praying for the victims and their families and all the members of the university community who have been devastated by this terrible tragedy. I told them that my administration would do everything possible to assist with the investigation, and that I pledged that we would stand ready to help local law enforcement and the local community in any way we can during this time of sorrow.

Schools should be places of safety and sanctuary and learning. When that sanctuary is violated, the impact is felt in every American classroom and every American community.

Today our Nation grieves with those who have lost loved ones at Virginia Tech. We hold the victims in our hearts; we lift them up in our prayers; and we ask a loving God to comfort those who are suffering today.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:01 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Steger, president, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks During a Memorial Convocation at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia

April 17, 2007

Governor, thank you. President Steger, thank you very much. Students and faculty and staff and grieving family members and members of this really extraordinary place: Laura and I have come to Blacksburg today with hearts full of sorrow. This is a day of mourning for the Virginia Tech community, and it is a day of sadness for our entire Nation. We've come to express our sympathy. In this time of anguish, I hope you know that people all over this country are thinking about you and asking God to provide comfort for all who have been affected.

Yesterday began like any other day. Students woke up, and they grabbed their backpacks, and they headed for class. And soon the day took a dark turn, with students and faculty barricading themselves in classrooms and dormitories, confused, terrified, and deeply worried. By the end of the morning, it was the worst day of violence on a college campus in American history, and for many of you here today, it was the worst day of your lives.

It's impossible to make sense of such violence and suffering. Those whose lives were taken did nothing to deserve their fate. They were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Now they're gone, and they leave behind grieving families and grieving classmates and a grieving nation.

In such times as this, we look for sources of strength to sustain us. And in this moment of loss, you're finding these sources everywhere around you. These sources of strength are in this community, this college community. You have a compassionate and resilient community here at Virginia Tech. Even as yesterday's events were still unfolding, members of this community found each other; you came together in dorm rooms and dining halls and on blogs. One recent graduate wrote this: "I don't know most of you guys, but we're all Hokies, which means we're family. To all of you who are okay, I'm happy for that. For those of you who are in pain or have lost someone close to you, I'm sure you can call on anyone of us and have help any time you need it."

These sources of strength are with your loved ones. For many of you, your first instinct was to call home and let your moms and dads know that you were okay. Others took on the terrible duty of calling the relatives of a classmate or a colleague who had been wounded or lost. I know many of you feel awfully far away from people you lean on, people you count on during difficult

times. But as a dad, I can assure you, a parent's love is never far from their child's heart. And as you draw closer to your own families in the coming days, I ask you to reach out to those who ache for sons and daughters who will never come home.

These sources of strength are also in the faith that sustains so many of us. Across the town of Blacksburg and in towns all across America, houses of worship from every faith have opened their doors and have lifted you up in prayer. People who have never met you are praying for you; they're praying for your friends who have fallen and who are injured. There's a power in these prayers, a real power. In times like this, we can find comfort in the grace and guidance of a loving God. As the Scriptures tells us, "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

And on this terrible day of mourning, it's hard to imagine that a time will come when life at Virginia Tech will return to normal. But such a day will come. And when it does, you will always remember the friends and teachers who were lost yesterday and the time you shared with them and the lives they hoped to lead. May God bless you.

May God bless and keep the souls of the lost. And may His love touch all those who suffer and grieve.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:36 p.m. at Cassell Coliseum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tim Kaine of Virginia; and Charles W. Steger, president, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 8126—Honoring the Victims of the Tragedy at Virginia Tech

April 17, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation grieves with those who have lost loved ones at Virginia Tech. We hold the victims in our hearts. We lift them up in our prayers, and we ask a loving God to comfort those who are suffering.

As a mark of respect for the victims of the senseless acts of violence perpetrated on Monday, April 16, 2007, by the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff at the White House and upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions until sunset, Sunday, April 22, 2007. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same length of time at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, 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, 8:53 a.m., April 18, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 19.

Remarks at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

April 18, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you all very much. I appreciate your hospitality, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for the fine job you're doing. I am honored to have just taken a tour of this important museum with Sara Bloomfield, who arguably is one of the best museum directors in the country—[*applause*]—particularly if you can put up with the board of directors that I've named. [*Laughter*]

I thank you all for serving. I appreciate you taking on this important assignment. For—my friends on the board will tell you that I hold the Holocaust Museum dear to