

One of the things that's important for the American people to understand is that the Attorney General has a right to recommend to me to replace U.S. attorneys; U.S. attorneys serve at the pleasure of the President. In other words, we have named them, and I have the right to replace them with somebody else. And as the investigation, the hearings went forward, it was clear that the Attorney General broke no law, did no wrongdoing. And some Senators didn't like his explanation, but he answered as honestly as he could. This is an honest, honorable man, in whom I have confidence.

Thank you all for coming. General, it's good to have you here.

Gen. Petraeus. Great to be here, Mr. President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the meeting were Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England; and Gen. Peter Pace, USMC, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru

April 23, 2007

President Bush. *Que es mi honor para recibir el Presidente de Peru.* It's my honor to receive the President of Peru. I appreciate very much the President's time. I thank you for coming to visit the United States. *Es hombre muy amable.* He talks—he gives good advice.

We talked about the neighborhood. As we discussed, the United States wants the people of South America to fully understand, we care about their future, that we want there to be prosperity in the region, that we respect leaders who provide basic education and health care. So we had a very constructive conversation.

The President is here to urge the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to pass the free trade agreement with Peru, and I urge them to vote yes. We talked about our mutual desire to succeed in preventing drugs from coming to the United States and

preventing U.S. citizens from using drugs in the first place.

The President's got a very clear vision of South America, and I really appreciated his advice and his counsel. It always helps for a person sitting here in the United States to get clarity of what the environment is like.

And finally, I expressed our country's deepest condolence to the student, the Peruvian student who lost his life on the campus at Virginia Tech. And our prayers go to this person's family, and we ask for God's blessings on the family.

Bienvenidos, hombre.

President Garcia. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, we would like to express our deepest condolences to the United States and to you, Mr. President, for all the victims that died in Virginia Tech. A Peruvian student lost his life there, and our prayers and our thoughts are with their families.

Second of all, I am here in the United States to promote the FTA between the United States and Peru. It is vital for our country. It is fundamental to continue this path of growth and social redistribution that we have started in my country.

We have achieved an 8 percent annual growth in my country. This year, we're expecting a similar growth, 8 percent annually, with a 1 percent inflation, which creates more job opportunities. But this growth, as towards development, needs a greater space and a greater degree of investment, and for that, the FTA is essential. It would help us keep and maintain a strong democracy, a democracy that takes care of the poorest and that provides work to the unemployed. It is important to show the world that a democracy, with investment leads to development. And development is not achieved by becoming static and not opening our doors to the market.

The United States, ever since its Founding Fathers, has had an ideal, a mission to the world. In the forties, it sacrificed the lives of many young people to achieve the freedom of the world. Nowadays, we need to focus on democracy and free trade. And I am sure that both Republicans and Democrats would understand that this is key to the mission the United States has for the world.

President Bush and I talked about our contribution to the hemisphere and to humanity, to mankind, and that is the fight against drugs and the fight against coke. We have started a head-on fight against drug trafficking in my country, against money laundering, and against coca leaf production by offering farmers alternative crops, which is a way for them to earn a living in a just and legal way.

I have also congratulated President Bush on the very intelligent action he took against North Korea. It could have become a very serious problem for the world had it not been for the tactful intervention by the United States and its allied countries.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Garcia. In his last trip to Latin America, in spite of some political reactions, which are typical, it has been essential to see the President work with Brazil on ethanol as the new fuel. This will help us refocus on Latin America, which is very favorable for the region.

If President Bush allows me, I am sure that during the time that we will coexist as Presidents, he will achieve great things in the world. And he will visit Peru next year. But thank you very much, Mr. President, for the relationship we have of friendship. You are a very nice person, and I'm sure that our relationship will continue to grow.

Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Garcia spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Medicare Prescription Drug Benefits April 23, 2007

Thank you all for coming. Today I have been discussing the Medicare Part D reforms that Congress passed and I signed and that Mike Leavitt and a lot of other people helped to implement.

This reform of Medicare has been a great success. Most importantly, it's been a great

success for our senior citizens. The cost of the prescription drug plan has been less than anticipated. The individual stories about people saving money and getting better health care has warmed my heart.

It took a monumental effort by a lot of citizens around the country to make the options that our seniors were given easy to understand. In other words, we reformed Medicare and gave seniors a lot of choices, and it took a lot of loving Americans a lot of time to make these choices available for our senior citizens. Now that the plan is in place, 39 million have signed up for it, drug costs are less than anticipated, and the cost to the taxpayer is about \$200 billion less than anticipated.

The lesson is, is that when you trust people to make decisions in their lives, when you have competition, it is likely you'll get lower price and better quality. It is the spirit of this reform that needs to be now extended to Medicare overall.

The trustees report will be coming out today on Social Security and Medicare. It will make clear that senior citizens are in great shape when it comes to the government making their promises. It'll make clear that baby boomers like me are in good shape, that the government will meet its promises. But for a younger generation of Americans, it sends yet another warning signal to the United States Congress that now is the time to work to make sure the Social Security is solvent for the future, as is Medicare.

And as we begin to think through solutions for Medicare, we ought to make sure that we remember the principles inherent in this Medicare reform that has worked so well for our seniors—and that principle is, competition works. Competition can lower price and improve the quality of people who are a beneficiary of such a plan.

Thank you all very much for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.