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Sec. 4. *General Provisions*. (a) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) authority granted by law to an agency or the head thereof; or

(ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right, benefit, or privilege, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 16, 2007.

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The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

May 17, 2007

President Bush. Thank you. I'm pleased to welcome Tony Blair back to the White House. He is a good friend. He has led the British people for a long time, since 1797. [*Laughter*]

You know, I was sitting with Tony on the Truman Balcony last night, and we were discussing a lot of issues. And it dawned on me, once again, what a clear strategic thinker he is. Somebody asked me the other day, how would you define Tony Blair and your relationship with him? I said, first of all, it's cordial; it's open; and I appreciate the fact that he can see beyond the horizon. And that's the kind of leadership the world needs.

I do congratulate the Prime Minister for being a—when he gets on a subject, it's dogged. Witness his patience and resolve regarding Northern Ireland. And congratulations for your leadership.

We talked about a lot of issues at dinner and our meetings. We talked about, of course, Iraq. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister and I have just finished a video conference with our respective commanders and Ambassadors from Baghdad. We got a full briefing on the situation on the ground. I appreciated Tony's willingness to interface with our people there. I remind our people that the best decisions are made when you listen to the commanders. And our commanders have got good, specific advice as how to achieve our objectives—which I believe we'll achieve—objectives that I know are necessary for peace—peace in the Middle East, peace in the United States, and the United Kingdom.

We talked about Afghanistan. We strongly support our NATO mission in Afghanistan, and I informed the Prime Minister that the Secretary General of NATO will be coming to Crawford this weekend. I'm looking forward to talking to him about how we can continue to work together. And I want to thank you for your strong commitment to the NATO mission and the people of Afghanistan.

We talked about the Middle East, and we're concerned about the violence we see in Gaza. We strongly urge the parties to work toward a two-state solution. I'm looking forward to continue to work on this issue. I've instructed my Secretary of State to be actively engaged. She represents the position of the Bush Government, which is two states living side by side in peace. We believe that vision is possible, but it requires strong leadership on both sides of the issue.

The Prime Minister and I discussed the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. We recognized the deep humiliation that can come as a result of living in a land where you can't move freely and where people can't realize dreams. We talked about the need to reject and fight terrorism. We understand the fright that can come when you're worried about a rocket landing on top of your home. I'm committed to peace in the Middle East, and I appreciate Tony Blair being a partner in peace.

We talked about Iran. We fully recognize that the Iranians must not have a nuclear weapon. And therefore, it's important for us to continue to work in the international arena to speak with one voice. And if we're unable to make progress with the Iranians, we want to work together to implement new sanctions through the United Nations to continue to make it clear that Iran with a nuclear weapon is not in the interests of peace in the world.

We talked about, of course, Africa. We spent a lot of time talking about Africa. I told the Prime Minister that the AIDS initiative that got started under my administration will continue, that I'll work with Congress to make sure that the PEPFAR initiative that has been so effective at getting antiretroviral drugs to people on that continent will continue. It's an important initiative of ours.

I applaud the Prime Minister's education initiative on the continent of Africa. It's a bold stroke. And we look forward to working with you on that initiative.

We talked about Darfur and how frustrated I am, and I know the Prime Minister is frustrated, at the inability for the international community to react with consequence in Darfur. And I explained to him my strategy of moving forward with sanctions and hopefully a new, stronger United Nations resolution if we don't see some improvement in the lives of the people there.

And we talked, of course, about climate change. We spent a lot of time on climate change. And I agree with the Prime Minister, as I have stated publicly, this is a serious issue, and the United States takes it seriously, just like we take energy security seriously. We talked about the upcoming G–8, and I assured the Prime Minister we want to be a part of a solution, that we want to work constructively together. He's got some really good ideas on how to advance the technologies that are going to be necessary to help solve this problem. And I told him I've got some good ideas as how to convince China and India to be a part of a global solution. We have a lot of common ground that we've been discussing today.

Finally, we agreed to improve defense cooperation by working towards an agreement reducing barriers to trade in defense goods and services and information between the United States and the United Kingdom, including defense industries. This is an important issue for the Prime Minister; it's an important issue to me. I made it clear to the Prime Minister we will work on this issue tirelessly until we can get it solved.

It's been a joy having you back here. I appreciate—every time I'm with you, I appreciate very much the insight you provide. And here, I guess, for the final time as Prime Minister, you get to address the good folks in our country from the Rose Garden.

Prime Minister Blair. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, and thank you, as ever, for the kindness and graciousness of your welcome to me here at the White House. And thank you also for the strength of your leadership over the past few years. You have been a strong leader at a time when the world needed strong leadership. You've been unyielding and unflinching and determined in the fight that we face together. And I thank you for that.

And I also would take this opportunity of saying that I believe that the relationship between the United States of America and Britain is a relationship that is in the interests of our two countries and in the interests of the peace and stability of the wider world. And sometimes it's a controversial relationship, at least over in my country, but I've never doubted its importance. I've never doubted that it's based on principle, on shared values, and on a shared purpose, which is to make our world a better, more free, more just place in which people of all nations and all faiths can live. So I would like to thank you for the strength, also, of that relationship over these past few years.

The President has, rightly and comprehensively, gone through the various issues that we discussed. And I would like to pick out from those, first of all, the discussion we were able to have with our Ambassadors and commanders in respect of Iraq, where there's no doubt at all it's immensely challenging, immensely difficult. But also, there is a huge amount that is being done, not just to improve the security there, which is important, but also in respect to the politics where, as they were telling us, there are the majority elements in each of the main communities, whether Sunni or Shi'a or Kurd, who actually

want to live in peace with one another and want a future for that country that is not marred by terrorism and sectarianism. And we, of course, want to see that happen in the interests of that country and the interests of the stability of the wider region and the world.

Again, in respect of Afghanistan, where American troops and, of course, British troops, down in the Helmand Province, are doing an extraordinary job, a heroic job, actually, and I think we can be so proud of the Armed Forces of both countries and what they're doing in the world today. The situation is fraught with danger, which they take on with immense courage and immense determination.

And down in the south of Afghanistan at the moment, there are operations the whole time against the Taliban, in favor of, again, what the Afghan people want, which is the chance to have a better future and escape from the poverty and misery and oppression of the Taliban years.

We discussed, of course, the Middle East and the very dangerous, difficult situation there, and our belief, again, that the important thing is how we make progress towards the two-state solution, which is the only solution in the end that will offer a realistic prospect of progress in that region.

And of course, also, we talked about the upcoming G–8, where there's going to be important negotiations over the issue of climate change and over the issue of Africa. I mean, in respect of climate change, I welcome very much what the President has said today. I mean, the important thing is that we see that it is possible for people to come together on an agreement for the future that will allow us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, that will allow us to have a way forward that involves not just Europe and the United States of America but China and India and the rest of the developing world also. And that also addresses what is an issue of top, top priority now in Europe but also, I know, here, which is energy security.

So there are two reasons why this issue is on the agenda in a way that is perhaps more acute than ever before. There is the issue of the environment; there's the issue of energy security. And I think there's a synergy between those two issues and the way they come together, which offer some prospect of hope for the future.

And in respect of Africa, as you will know, at the Gleneagles summit a couple of years ago, we made Africa, if you like, the center piece of the summit. I think it's important that we recommit to the undertakings we gave there to help people in Africa and that we do not lose sight of that as a major, in some senses, the major moral course of our time, which is to lift people out of poverty on that troubled continent. And I totally agree with what the President was saying. We have the same position exactly on Darfur and the need to take action there.

And finally, can I thank the President for what he has said on the issue to do with defense and trade between our two countries. This is an issue that seems technical but actually is a very important way of trumpeting the understanding, the work that we're doing together on the issue of defense and technology between our two countries.

And so let me end where I began, which is the importance of the relationship between the United States and Britain. I mean, whether it's in respect of fighting terrorism, the big issues to do with energy and climate change, the cause that is Africa, the agreements between our two countries in respect of defense, our two nations should always work together. It's served us well in the past. But it's not a relationship that's founded on history; it's a relationship that is about a shared future.

Thank you.

President Bush. So as a parting gift to the Prime Minister, we'll take some questions. [*Laughter*]

Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations/ Emergency Supplemental Appropriations

Q. Thank you. Mr. Prime Minister, will Britain in the coming months and years be as staunch an ally in Iraq for the United States as it has been under your leadership?

And, Mr. President, will you sign a war spending bill that has consequences for the Iraqi Government if it fails to meet benchmarks for progress?

Prime Minister Blair. The answer to your question is yes, I believe that we will remain a staunch and steadfast ally in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Let me just explain one thing that came out very powerfully from the discussion we had with our commanders this morning. Essentially, what we have in Iraq at the moment is a situation where there is a renewed attempt to find political reconciliation—between Sunni and Shi'a, particularly. And I believe there are signs, real and genuine signs of progress there.

But what you are seeing in Iraq is an attempt by Al Qaida—through these appalling suicide bombs and also, particularly, down in the south, through the improvised explosive devices by Iranian-backed elements—to try to disturb any prospect of Sunni and Shi'a coming together and delivering what the people of Iraq want to see.

And the only point that I would make is this, and this is the reason why it's important that Britain holds steadfast to the course of fighting alongside America in this battle against terrorism: The forces that we are fighting in Iraq—Al Qaida on the one hand, Iranian-backed elements on the other—are the same forces we're fighting everywhere. And over these past few weeks, you can see in different parts of the world—Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan, in Saudi Arabia recently—where this extremism is rearing its head, is trying to dislodge the prospects of stability and progress in so many different countries. There is no alternative for us but to fight it wherever it exists. And that is true whether it's in our own countries, which have both suffered from terrorism, or in Iraq or Afghanistan.

And so this is not a—it's not about us remaining true to the course that we've set out because of the alliance with America. It is about us remaining steadfast because what we are fighting, the enemy we are fighting is an enemy that is aiming its destruction at our way of life and anybody who wants that way of life. And in those circumstances, the harder they fight, the more determined we must be to fight back.

If what happens is, the harder they fight, the more our will diminishes, then that's a fight we're going to lose. And this is a fight we can't afford to lose.

President Bush. I've instructed Josh to stay in touch with leaders—Josh Bolten, Chief of Staff—stay in touch with leaders, both Democrat and Republican, about moving a supplemental as quickly as possible. First, I applaud what Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi said, that time is of the essence; we've got to get the bill done, and if need be—I think they said—they would keep Members here to get the troops funded.

Secondly, I appreciate you trying to get me to negotiate here on the platform. Josh has been told that—we understand benchmarks are important. I talked specifically about benchmarks, and he'll work with Members of Congress to come up with a supplemental that we—both sides can live with. And I'm confident we can get the job done.

And there's been a series of votes in Congress that people have been able to express their opinion. Now it's time to put forth a spending bill that doesn't have artificial timetables for withdrawal, doesn't micromanage the military, and is wise about how we spend the people's money. And we'll work it hard, and I think we can get a deal.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—question?

President Bush. As I said, you're trying to get me to negotiate. Our negotiator is Josh. And we fully understand the need to have benchmarks in a bill. I accept, respect the Members' desire to have benchmarks—after all, I'm the person who laid them out initially. We will work through something we can all live with and enable us to get the job done.

And again, this is an issue that has been very emotional here in Washington. People have got strong opinions. I do appreciate the leadership of the Speaker and the leader in saying, okay, now let's work together and get it solved. Optimistic we can do so.

Finance Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom/Prime Minister Blair

Q. Adam Boulton, Sky News. During the course of this visit it has been confirmed that Gordon Brown is going to be the next British Prime Minister, taking over in 40 days' time. I wonder if I could have both your reactions to that. And, in particular, to Mr. Blair, what do you say to those people who are saying,

now there is a new Prime Minister in place, you should go sooner? And to Mr. Bush, whether——

President Bush. That's a lovely question, isn't it, for the guy. [*Laughter*]

Q. ——however inadvertently, you once said that you would like Tony Blair to stay for the duration of your Presidency. He's not doing that. Do you think you're partly to blame for that?

President Bush. I haven't polled the Labour conference, but could be. [*Laughter*] The question is, am I to blame for his leaving? I don't know.

Q. And what do you think of Brown?

President Bush. I hope to help him in office the way Tony Blair helped me. Newly elected President, Tony Blair came over, and he reached out; he was gracious—was able to converse in a way that—where our shared interests were the most important aspect of the relationship. I would hope I would provide the same opportunities for Gordon Brown. I met him, thought he was a good fellow.

But my attitude is this: This man here is the Prime Minister; we've got a lot of work to do until he finishes. He's going to sprint to the wire. He's going to finish the job that the people want him to do, and I'm going to work with him to do it. The meetings today weren't—this wasn't, like, a farewell deal; this was "how can we continue to work together for the common good?" And that's what we'll do.

As to why things happen politically in Great Britain, I'd suggest you go over there and ask people. Nice to see you again. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Blair. You had kind of forgotten what the British media were like, hadn't you? [*Laughter*] But these things——

President Bush. He woke up to ask the question. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Blair. First of all, I'm—having signed Gordon's nomination forms to nominate him as leader, of course I wish him well, and I believe he'll make a great Prime Minister. And I know he believes in the relationship with America too. And as for me, I mean, I will carry on doing the things that I've set out over the next few weeks that I need to do, not least and what we're talking about with the upcoming G–8 summit and the deal which we've been trying to put together, different countries involved on climate change and Africa.

And then, of course, you've got the European agreement then at the end of June, which is going to be very important. And just let me to stress to you, incidentally, there will be a Government position. I mean, that's—it will be a Government negotiation that goes on there. But it's very, very important so that we can make sure that Europe moves forward. And then, of course, there are various domestic issues too, as well.

But I—I'll answer the question about the President, as well, in relation to me. I mean, you can debate that as much as you like, but I want to say one thing to you, since it will be the last chance I get to do a—is to have a press conference in the Rose Garden, standing next to President Bush. I've admired him as a President, and I regard him as a friend. I have taken the view that Britain should stand shoulder to shoulder with America after September the 11th. I have never deviated from that view. I do not regret that view. I am proud of the relationship we have had. I am proud of the relationship between our two countries.

And I think that sometimes in politics, there are all sorts of issues where you've got to negotiate and compromise, but when it comes to the fundamental questions that affect our security and the future of the world, you should do what is right. I have tried to do that. And I believe that is what he has done as well. And——

Q. Would you do it again?

Prime Minister Blair. And I would take the same position of alliance with America again; yes, I would.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

World Bank President Paul D. Wolfowitz

Q. Thank you, sir. The fate of Paul Wolfowitz appears to be hanging in the balance. After all we've heard in recent days, is it still possible for him to provide the kind of leadership needed at the Bank?

President Bush. First of all, I believe all parties in this matter have acted in good faith. I regret that it's come to this. I admire

Paul Wolfowitz. I admire his heart, and I particularly admired his focus on helping the poor. There is a board meeting going on as we speak. All I can tell you is, I know that Paul Wolfowitz has a interest in what's best for the Bank and—just like he's had an interest in what's best for making sure the Bank focused on things that matter: human suffering, the human condition. I—and so I applaud his vision; I respect him a lot. And as I said, I regret that it's come to this right now.

Prime Minister Blair. David.

International Relations/Prime Minister Blair

Q. David Grossman from BBC Newsnight. Mr. Blair, you outlined some very big policy areas there in your discussions with the President. Is it really possible, do you think, to make significant progress on them in the time that you have left?

And, Mr. President, if I could ask you, is this really still the right man to be talking to?

President Bush. Yes. No question about it, it's the right man to be talking to. And, yes, we can get a lot done.

Prime Minister Blair. You know, we're going to have a G–8 summit in a couple of weeks' time, at which these issues to do with climate change in Africa are going to be debated and discussed. And, I mean, I hope very much, because you come together at the G–8, a bit like we did a couple of years ago at Gleneagles, and it's an opportunity for the international community, a major part of the international community, to come together and reach, in principle, agreements. And I think most people would accept that what happened at Gleneagles a couple of years ago was very important.

I think what happens in Germany in a couple of weeks time could be equally important, and that will be the time when we come to those decisions. So of course, I want to see that through because I've been involved in this all the way through.

And the important thing, as well, is that I think you will find at the German summit that not just the G–8 countries are there, but also China and India and Brazil and Mexico, South Africa, maybe some of the African nations. And so it will be an opportunity for us to recommit on Africa and for the world to make important commitments on that and then to see if it's possible to agree the elements that could go into a more comprehensive climate change deal. So it's a pretty important thing, and that's what we're working on.

President Bush. You know, it's interesting—like trying to do a tap dance on his political grave, aren't you? I mean, this—you don't understand how effective Blair is, I guess, because when we're in a room with world leaders and he speaks, people listen. And they view his opinion as considered and his judgment as sound.

And I find it interesting the first two questions are, is this the right guy? Well, he happens to be your Prime Minister, but more importantly, he is a respected man in the international arena. People admire him. Even if they may not agree with him 100 percent, they admire him a lot. And it's not just the American President who admires him; a lot of people admire him. And so he's effective. He's effective because he is—his recommendations to solve problems are sound. He's also effective because he is the kind of person who follows through.

There's a lot of blowhards in the political process, you know, a lot of hot-air artists, people who have got something fancy to say. Tony Blair is somebody who actually follows through with his convictions and, therefore, is admired in the international community.

And so I guess this is the appropriate question to ask—right guy, or is he still standing—yes. This guy is a very strong, respected leader, and he's absolutely the right guy for me to be dealing with.

Kelly [Kelly O'Donnell, NBC News]. By the way, if I'm not mistaken, this is your birthday. It is? Would you like me and the Prime Minister to do a duet, you know? [*Laughter*]

Q. I didn't realize the intel briefing was so far-reaching. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. That's right. Kelly O'Donnell.

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. Thank you, sir. There's been some very dramatic testimony before the Senate this

week from one of your former top Justice Department officials, who describes a scene that some Senators called stunning, about a time when the wireless—when the warrantless wiretap program was being reviewed. Sir, did you send your then Chief of Staff and White House Counsel to the bedside of John Ashcroft while he was ill to get him to approve that program? And do you believe that kind of conduct from White House officials is appropriate?

President Bush. Kelly, there's a lot of speculation about what happened and what didn't happen; I'm not going to talk about it. It's a very sensitive program. I will tell you that, one, the program is necessary to protect the American people, and it's still necessary because there's still an enemy that wants to do us harm.

And therefore, I have an obligation to put in place programs that honor the civil liberties of the American people; a program that was, in this case, constantly reviewed and briefed to the United States Congress. And the program, as I say, is an essential part of protecting this country.

And so there will be all kinds of talk about it. As I say, I'm not going to move the issue forward by talking about something as highly sensitive—highly classified subject. I will tell you, however, that the program is necessary.

Q. Was it on your order, sir?

President Bush. As I said, this program is a necessary program that was constantly reviewed and constantly briefed to the Congress. It's an important part of protecting the United States, and it's still an important part of our protection because there's still an enemy that would like to attack us. No matter how calm it may seem here in America, an enemy lurks. And they would like to strike. And they would like to do harm to the American people because they have an agenda. They want to impose an ideology; they want us to retreat from the world; they want to find safe haven. And these just aren't empty words; these are the words of Al Qaida themselves.

And so we will put in place programs to protect the American people that honor the civil liberties of our people and programs that we constantly brief to Congress.

Prime Minister Blair. Hi, Tom.

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations

Q. Hello. [*Inaudible*]—Prime Minister—[*inaudible*]—many times in the course of the last 6 years. But it's been 5 years since a leader of the British Conservative Party set foot in this city. Mr. President, does it surprise you that aides close to David Cameron say that he does not want to be seen with you? And can I ask you both what it means for the prospect of future relations between Britain and America when the leader of the opposition dare not set foot in Washington?

President Bush. Well, I can just tell you, my relationship with the leader of Great Britain has been unbelievably productive, and I have enjoyed working with Tony Blair more than I could have possibly imagined.

It's hard to define our relationship in sound bites or press conferences, or to—in a way that really reflects the depth of what we have done together. And so I—you know, I don't regret things about what may or may not have happened over the past 5 years. I honor a relationship that I truly believe has been laying the foundation for peace.

This may not interest you, but I'll tell you anyway. I read three histories on George Washington last year. It's interesting to me that they're still analyzing the Presidency of our first President. And my attitude is, if they're still analyzing 1, 43 doesn't need to worry about it. [*Laughter*] I'm not going to be around to see the final history written on my administration.

When you work on big items, items to—agendas based upon sound philosophy that will transform parts of the world to make it more peaceful, we're not going to be around to see it. So my—let me finish. My relationship with this good man is where I've been focused, and that's where my concentration is. And I don't regret any other aspect of it.

And so I—we filled a lot of space together. We have had a unique ability to speak in terms that help design common strategies and tactics to achieve big objectives. And it's—will I miss working with Tony Blair? You bet I will. Absolutely. Can I work with the next guy? Of course.

And I'm here to make it clear to the people of our respective countries that this relationship is one that is vital to accomplish big objectives. It has been vital in the past; it has

stood the free world—it has enabled the free world to do hard things. And it's a relationship that I believe is necessary to do the hard things in the 21st century. And so I honor Tony Blair.

Q. What about David Cameron?

President Bush. Never met him.

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I don't—I mean, I—it's not for me to give advice to the leader of the Conservative Party or a different political party. And that's up to them as to what they do and up to him as to whether he comes here or not.

But I do just make this observation to you, and—that what we are trying to do is—never mind these two individual leaders, but the two countries, let's accept for a moment that at least—even if people very strongly disagree with Iraq, for example, that at least people understand that there is a battle that we are fighting around the world today.

And let's at least accept, also, that it's a battle about the type of values that govern the world in the early 21st century. You don't win those battles by being a fair-weather friend to your ally. You don't win those battles by being hesitant or withdrawing support for each other when the going gets tough. You don't win those battles by losing the will to fight if your enemy's will to fight is very strong and very powerful.

And actually, the values that we represent, as two countries, are shown by what we—what we've been through today. I mean, the President gets tough questions from the American press corps; I get, I like to say, even tougher questions—[*laughter*]—or at least as tough questions in the British press corps. And——

President Bush. You want to define them as tough. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Blair. And we can—here as we speak at this press conference, I mean, I can't make out the words that they're shouting over there, but I bet they're not totally complimentary to either of us. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Wait a minute. I don't know about that. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Blair. I mean, it could be the supporters we brought in, but I've got a feeling the likelihood is, no. [*Laughter*] And that's what it's about. It's about democracy, and it's about people being free to express their views, and it's about politicians having to face the pressure to justify their decisions, to be punished if the people don't like those decisions. And it's a commonality of values that we have that is so important for the world today.

And so—you know, yes, of course, it's like—anybody who's sitting there advising a politician in any part of Europe today, if you want to get the easiest round of applause, get up and attack America. You can get a round of applause if you attack the President. You get a——

President Bush. Standing ovation. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Blair. Yes. And that's fine if everyone wants to do that, but when all of that is cleared away, you're left with something very, very simple, fundamental, and clear, that that battle for values is still going on.

And you can debate about the mistakes and the issues, and you can debate about Iraq, whether we should have done this, or we should have done that. But, actually, what is happening in Iraq today is that our enemy is fighting us, and therefore, if what happens when our enemy fights us is that we drift away from our friends, that we kind of make the little accommodations so that we don't escape some of the difficulty and the responsibility and, occasionally, a proprium of decisionmaking—if we do that, our enemy takes heart from that; they watch that. They watch what we're doing the whole time. They ask, "Are these guys standing up for what they believe, or if we carry on, is their will going to diminish and they're going to give up because it's just too difficult, because the public opinion is too difficult, because the opinion polls tell them it's too difficult?"

Now, that is the decision of leadership. And it's not just a decision for me and him; it's a decision for everybody who's engaged in politics. And people run down politics and say it's all just a series of positions and attitudes and sound bites and, occasionally, even lies and all the rest of it. Actually, what politics is in the end, when it's done in the right way, when people stand up for what they believe, is, it's about public service. And there's nothing to be ashamed of in that. And the

fact is, the decisions are difficult; of course they're difficult.

And we took a decision that we thought was very difficult. I thought then, and I think now, it was the right decision. History will make a judgment at a particular time. But one thing I know is that what we represent coming here today, speaking in the Rose Garden to you people and getting your questions and being under your pressure, that is a finer and better way of life than either a brutal, secular dictatorship or religious extremism. It's a better way of life, and it's the way of life, actually, people, any time they are given the choice, choose to have. And what we should be about, our two nations, is giving as many people in the world as possible that choice and being proud of it.

President Bush. What I know is, the world needs courage. And what I know is, this good man is a courageous man.

Thanks for coming. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:23 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Japp" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. A reporter referred to former Deputy Attorney General James B. Comey; former White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card, Jr.; Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales; and former Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Remarks at a Joint Reserve Officer Training Corps Commissioning Ceremony

May 17, 2007

Thank you. Good afternoon. Welcome. Here we are in the East Room, a room that has had a long history. When President John Adams moved in, his wife, Abigail, used it to dry the family's laundry. [*Laughter*] Abraham Lincoln's children once raced their goats in this room during a reception. [*Laughter*]

Over the years, this room has been used for dances, concerts, weddings, funerals, award presentations, press conferences, and bill signings. Today we add another event to the storied legacy of the East Room, the first joint ROTC commissioning ceremony. And we're glad you're here.

The young men and women we honor today represent the great diversity of the American people. You come from different backgrounds. You represent all 50 States and the District of Columbia as well as Guam, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. And when you leave here today, you will wear on your shoulders the same powerful symbol of achievement: the gold bars of an officer of the United States Armed Forces.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us—proud to be here with Secretary Bob Gates and Becky. I thank Pete Geren, Acting Secretary of the Army. I appreciate so very much General Pete Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; General George Casey, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. You all have brought out some of the brass. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Senator Ben Nelson, United States Senator, for taking his time out to be here today. Senator, it means a lot that you're here. I thank the ROTC members being commissioned here today. I welcome your friends, and most importantly, I welcome your families. I appreciate all the others in our military here too. Thanks for coming.

We gather at a solemn moment for this country. Many of you were still in high school when terrorists brought death and destruction to our streets on September the 11th, 2001. You were high school students. And yet, some of you understood that the cause of freedom would soon depend on your generation's willingness to step forward to defend it. And when it came time to be counted, each of you volunteered, knowing full well the risks involved during a time of war. As your Commander in Chief, I salute your decision to serve, and I congratulate you on a fine achievement.

The idea of providing college students an opportunity to train for a military commission has its roots in the old land-grant universities of the 19th century, which included a program of military science. The modern program dates to 1916, when the Government established the Reserve Officers Training