

I do want to thank Jill and Kendall, Robbie and Kristi. They have watched a man they love take on a big job and, at the same time, fight disease with a lot of courage. And so I accept; I love you; and I wish you all the best.

And so I had to make a choice, who to replace Tony, and I've chosen Dana Perino. I did so because Dana is a smart, capable person who is able to spell out the issues of the day in a way that people listening on TV can understand. She can handle you all. [Laughter] She's capable of handling your questions.

Q. She has done—[inaudible].

The President. She has? Good. Okay. I'm glad to get a little—I'm glad to get that choir singing. [Laughter] So I'm not worried about her standing here at the podium. What I look for in somebody like Dana is somebody who can walk in that Oval Office and give me sound judgment and good advice. And I have found that over the course of the time I've known her, she's capable of doing that. And she's also capable of running the shop that she'll be in charge of.

And so we say to the man we admire a lot, good luck; Godspeed. And to Dana Perino, I'm looking forward to working with you, and I'm looking forward to the American people to get to know you like I've gotten to know you.

Tony.

President's Staff

Q. You've lost a lot of members in your administration—

The President. Hold up there, we're not quite through yet. [Laughter]

[At this point, Press Secretary Snow and Press Secretary-designate Perino made remarks.]

The President. Thank you.

President's Staff

Q. How do you feel about losing everybody?

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of

Press Secretary Snow and Press Secretary-designate Perino.

Statement Following a Meeting With Military Leaders

August 31, 2007

The Vice President and I met today with Secretary of Defense Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We had a very productive discussion.

We discussed our commitment to provide our military all it needs to meet the challenges of this new century. This includes a larger Army and Marine Corps. In January, I accepted Secretary Gates's recommendation to increase the overall strength of the two services by 92,000 soldiers and marines over the next 5 years. This will strengthen our military and help reset our forces to respond to multiple contingencies around the world at any given moment. The effort is well underway, but there is more to do, and the Joint Chiefs are doing a terrific job monitoring the health of our All-Volunteer Force.

We also discussed military and civilian coordination. We now have joint civilian and military teams deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and the Philippines. In Iraq, we have more than doubled the number of civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams this year, most of which are embedded with U.S. combat brigades. These teams are a force multiplier for our men and women in uniform, and they are essential to the bottom-up political progress taking place in Anbar, Diyala, and other Provinces across Iraq. The Civilian Reserve Corps now being developed will enlarge the pool of civilian volunteers to support and enhance our missions.

The American people will soon hear an assessment of the situation on the ground in Iraq and recommendations from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus. This status report comes less than 3 months since our new strategy became fully operational and will assess what is going well, what can be improved, and what adjustments might be made in the coming months. Congress asked

for this assessment, and Members of Congress should withhold judgment until they have heard it.

The stakes in Iraq are too high and the consequences too grave for our security here at home to allow politics to harm the mission of our men and women in uniform. It is my hope that we can put partisanship and politics behind us and commit to a common vision that will provide our troops what they need to succeed and secure our vital national interests in Iraq and around the world.

I always leave these meetings inspired by our men and women in uniform and resolved to do everything I can to support them. The brave men and women of our Armed Forces and their families are making heroic sacrifices to secure our country. America will honor these sacrifices by ensuring that our children and grandchildren inherit a more peaceful, just, and democratic world.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Message on the Observance of Labor Day

August 31, 2007

I send greetings to those celebrating Labor Day 2007.

Our country's economy is built on the hard work and ingenuity of the American people. There is no limit to what our citizens can accomplish when they have the skills to compete and the freedom to achieve their dreams. Through vision and determination, American workers are transforming their neighborhoods, strengthening our economy, and realizing the great promise of our Nation.

Today, productivity is high, consumers are confident, and incomes are rising across our country. Our economy has experienced one of the fastest growth rates of any major industrialized nation. More than 8.3 million jobs have been created in America since August 2003, and the unemployment rate remains low. My Administration is committed to promoting pro-growth economic policies, keeping taxes low, and supporting small busi-

nesses to keep our economy strong and growing.

On Labor Day, we honor the hard work and dedication of the men and women of our workforce. Their efforts contribute to the prosperity of our great Nation.

Laura and I send our best wishes.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

August 25

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

August 26

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush had lunch with Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and his wife, Rebecca Turner Gonzales.

The President declared a major disaster in Wisconsin and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on August 18 and continuing.

August 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Albuquerque, NM, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Pat Dee. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with President Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and Vice Presidents Tariq al-Hashimi and Adil Abd Al-Mahdi of Iraq, and Masoud Barzani, president, Kurdistan region in Iraq.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a People for Pete