

to the people of Tibet and the man we honor today.

Nearly two decades have passed since the Dalai Lama was welcomed to the White House for the very first time. Members of both of our political parties and world leaders have seen His Holiness as a man of faith and sincerity and peace. He's won the respect and affection of the American people, and America has earned his respect and affection as well.

As a nation, we are humbled to know that a young boy in Tibet—as a young boy in Tibet, His Holiness kept a model of the Statue of Liberty at his bedside. Years later, on his first visit to America, he went to Battery Park in New York City so he could see the real thing up close. On his first trip to Washington, he walked through the Jefferson Memorial, a monument to the man whose words launched a revolution that still inspires men and women across the world. Jefferson counted as one of America's greatest blessings the freedom of worship. It was, he said, “a liberty deemed in other countries incompatible with good government and yet proved by our experience to be its best support.”

The freedom of belief is a yearning of the human spirit, a blessing offered to the world, and a cherished value of our Nation. It's the very first protection offered in the American Bill of Rights. It inspired many of the leaders that this rotunda honors in portraits and in marble. And it still defines our way of life.

Consider where we gather today. This great symbol of democracy sits quietly near a Catholic parish, a Jewish synagogue, a Muslim community center, a Greek Orthodox cathedral, and a Buddhist temple—each with faithful followers who practice their deeply held beliefs and live side by side in peace. This diversity is not a source of instability; it's a source of strength. This freedom does not belong to one nation; it belongs to the world.

One of the tragic anomalies of the past century is that in an era that has seen an unprecedented number of nations embrace individual freedom has also witnessed the stubborn endurance of religious repression. Americans cannot look to the plight of the religiously oppressed and close our eyes or turn away. And that is why I will continue

to urge the leaders of China to welcome the Dalai Lama to China. They will find this good man to be a man of peace and reconciliation.

Throughout our history, we have stood proudly with those who offer a message of hope and freedom to the world's down-trodden and oppressed. This is why all of us are drawn to a noble and spiritual leader who lives a world away. Today we honor him as a universal symbol of peace and tolerance, a shepherd for the faithful, and a keeper of the flame for his people.

I congratulate His Holiness on this recognition. I'm so honored to be here with you, sir. Laura and I join all Americans in offering the people of Tibet our fervent prayer that they may find days of prosperity and peace.

And now I ask the Speaker and Senator Byrd to join me for the gold medal presentation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Nobel Prize winner and author Elie Wiesel.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia

October 18, 2007

President Bush. It is such an honor to welcome back to the Oval Office the President of our friend and ally Liberia. Madam President, thanks for coming. Thanks for your very strong spirit and your deep desire to enhance democracy and improve the lives of your people in Liberia.

We had a good discussion. I want to emphasize a couple of points that we discussed. First of all, we are committed to helping you relieve your debt. This weekend, IMF will be meeting in Washington, DC, and it's very important for our friends in the IMF to recognize that debt relief is—for Liberia is a part of our agenda, and I would hope that they would help you—help you with debt relief. I think it's important. And so Secretary Paulson will be taking that message to the IMF.

Secondly, I want to thank you very much for your dedication and focus on helping the children of Liberia get a good education.

You've worked extremely hard to encourage parents to send their children to school, and we want to help you to the extent that you ask for help. The United States believes it's important that young boys and girls get a good education not only here in America but around the world. And the President is committed to universal education in Liberia and have made great strides since the days of your civil strife.

I also am very dedicated to helping you on malaria. Laura and I care deeply about the fact that young babies die on the continent of Africa and elsewhere needlessly. They die simply because of a mosquito bite. And so the President and I talked about our desire to put in place a malaria initiative that will save lives in Liberia. And we're going to—we'll be sending a person on the ground there pretty soon to help implement the malaria initiative, and that initiative will mean spreading nets and insecticides throughout the country so that we can see a reduction in death of young children that—a death that we can cure.

And finally, the Peace Corps has been gone from Liberia, and we talked about the fact that now we'll be able to—we're going to move the Peace Corps back in. And the Peace Corps has been in touch with our State Department and the Liberia folks, and it looks like we're going to start moving some teams pretty quickly back into Liberia. And the reason why we feel comfortable doing that is because of the leadership of this strong person right here.

And so, Madam President, proud to call you friend and proud to welcome you back to the Oval Office.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Mr. President, thank you. We're so pleased to be back here.

Liberia continues to make progress, despite the many challenges we face, and this progress we owe a lot to you and to Mrs. Bush for the support we've received. The State Department, National Security Council, Treasury have all just been there for us. Whether we're working on debt relief, or whether we're trying to improve our edu-

cational system or get our infrastructure fixed, we've always had a willing hand. The Ambassador has been supportive and been a real partner on the ground with us.

We were very pleased, Mr. President, that you granted the delayed enforced departure for some of our citizens who couldn't go back home because we weren't prepared to receive them——

The President. Right.

President Johnson Sirleaf. ——with the jobs and the homes and the basic services they needed. So the 18-month reprieve you've given them gives them time to prepare themselves and enable us to prepare to receive them at some point.

Liberia was included among three other African countries in the special education initiative, and we're very pleased about that. And we've just discussed today that you'll be behind us as we try to fight malaria. Malaria is one of the greatest killers in our country, particular among our young children. And so we'll be working to make sure that we get a program where we can have some measurable actions so we can reduce this scourge that afflicts our children.

Overall, we're just so pleased with the relationship. Liberians are very proud that you were one of the first ones that set us on this road to peace and a road that's enabled us to get the progress we have today. We are committed to make Liberia a post-conflict success story. We want it to be part of your legacy. We want you to be able to look back and say, when I was there I helped Liberia to be a success, to come out of the ashes of war and to be a successful economy responding to the needs of its people. Thank you for being there for us.

President Bush. Madam President, thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Johnson Sirleaf referred to U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Donald E. Booth.

Directive on Public Health and Medical Preparedness

October 18, 2007

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/
HSPD-21

Subject: Public Health and Medical Preparedness

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes a National Strategy for Public Health and Medical Preparedness (Strategy), which builds upon principles set forth in *Biodefense for the 21st Century* (April 2004) and will transform our national approach to protecting the health of the American people against all disasters.

Definitions

(2) In this directive:

(a) The term “biosurveillance” means the process of active data-gathering with appropriate analysis and interpretation of biosphere data that might relate to disease activity and threats to human or animal health—whether infectious, toxic, metabolic, or otherwise, and regardless of intentional or natural origin—in order to achieve early warning of health threats, early detection of health events, and overall situational awareness of disease activity;

(b) The term “catastrophic health event” means any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in a number of ill or injured persons sufficient to overwhelm the capabilities of immediate local and regional emergency response and health care systems;

(c) The term “epidemiologic surveillance” means the process of actively gathering and analyzing data related to human health and disease in a population in order to obtain early warning of human health events, rapid characterization of human disease events, and overall situational awareness of disease activity in the human population;

(d) The term “medical” means the science and practice of maintenance of health and prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and alleviation of disease or injury and the provision of those services to individuals;

(e) The term “public health” means the science and practice of protecting and improving the overall health of the community through disease prevention and early diagnosis, control of communicable diseases, health education, injury prevention, sanitation, and protection from environmental hazards;

(f) The term “public health and medical preparedness” means the existence of plans, procedures, policies, training, and equipment necessary to maximize the ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events, including efforts that result in the capability to render an appropriate public health and medical response that will mitigate the effects of illness and injury, limit morbidity and mortality to the maximum extent possible, and sustain societal, economic, and political infrastructure; and

(g) The terms “State” and “local government,” when used in a geographical sense, have the meanings ascribed to such terms respectively in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).

Background

(3) A catastrophic health event, such as a terrorist attack with a weapon of mass destruction (WMD), a naturally-occurring pandemic, or a calamitous meteorological or geological event, could cause tens or hundreds of thousands of casualties or more, weaken our economy, damage public morale and confidence, and threaten our national security. It is therefore critical that we establish a strategic vision that will enable a level of public health and medical preparedness sufficient to address a range of possible disasters.

(4) The United States has made significant progress in public health and medical preparedness since 2001, but we remain vulnerable to events that threaten the health of large populations. The attacks of September 11 and Hurricane Katrina were the most significant recent disasters faced by the United States, yet casualty numbers were small in comparison to the 1995 Kobe earthquake; the 2003 Bam, Iran, earthquake; the 2004 Sumatra tsunami; and what we would expect from a 1918-like influenza pandemic or large-scale WMD attack. Such events could