

have—and the economic reforms. We have discussed about the problems of HIV/AIDS, the problem of malaria, challenges in education. And the United States Government will help us to meet these challenges as we go along. And I think this is an excellent humanitarian gesture for which I, personally, and the people and Government of Nigeria are extremely grateful.

We have discussed one—security issues and the security within Nigeria itself, within the Niger Delta region, and within the Gulf of Guinea. And we have also discussed security issues—peace and security on the African Continent. And we shall partner with—[inaudible]—to assist not only Nigeria but also the African Continent, to actualize its peace and security—[inaudible]—initiative, which is an initiative to help standby forces of brigade-size in each of the regional economic groupings within the African Continent.

I think what we have discussed has given me hope. And myself, the Government, and people of Nigeria are inspired by the United States of America's achievement and the principles which guide it. And this is a posit we are trading, and the friendship and understanding of the United States will propel Nigeria with this inspiration to make the transformations that we need to do into a modern nation from an underdeveloped nation, capable of meeting the development and needs of its people.

I thank you very much, Mr. President. This is a rare opportunity.

**President Bush.** Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

### **Statement on the Death of Brigadier General Francois El Hajj of Lebanon** December 13, 2007

I strongly condemn yesterday's assassination of Lebanese Brigadier General Francois El Hajj and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the innocents who were murdered alongside him.

This assassination marks the 12th political assassination or attempted assassination Leb-

anon has suffered since October 2004. Like the many victims before him, General El Hajj was a supporter of Lebanon's independence and an opponent of Syria's interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. I call on the international community to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these vicious attacks and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to safeguard their freedom, sovereignty, and democracy.

This act of terrorism again reminds us of the importance of the international tribunal established by the U.N. Security Council earlier this year and of the urgency of ensuring that the tribunal is fully funded and capable of commencing its operations as soon as possible, to begin holding accountable those responsible for this systematic campaign of murder against Lebanon's most ardent patriots. We must work together to support and strengthen an independent and democratic Lebanon.

This attack comes as Lebanon is seeking to choose a new President. The United States supports the efforts of the democratically elected Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to maintain the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon before the Presidential elections. As Lebanon seeks to select a President democratically and in accordance with its Constitution, interference by the Syrian regime and its allies, aimed at intimidating the Lebanese people, must end. The people of Lebanon deserve the opportunity to choose their leaders in freedom and without fear.

### **Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters**

December 14, 2007

**The President.** Good morning. I just finished meeting with members of my Cabinet. I am proud of this team. I appreciate their service to the country. We discussed the priorities that we're working on to meet the needs of the American people. We're talking about the business that remains on Capitol Hill.