

This is the first ball. Ready? You want to put it on the tee? Play ball.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. at the Ghana International School. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Ghana Pamela E. Bridgewater; and Jimmie Lee Solomon, executive vice president, baseball operations, Major League Baseball.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana in Accra

February 20, 2008

Mr. President, Mrs. Kufuor, and all the distinguished guests here: Thank you for your warm welcome. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Ghana for the wonderful welcome Laura and I received. I don't think I have been to a country where the people have been more friendly, more open. We appreciate so very much your hospitality, and I really appreciate the George Bush Motorway. [*Laughter*] The next time I come and ride on the George Bush Motorway, I promise that we will not shut the highway down. [*Laughter*]

President Kufuor is a close friend. He has earned my respect, and he's earned the respect of leaders all across the world. He is an accomplished man with a good mind and a good heart.

We first met in 2001; we were new Presidents. And here we are, nearly 7 years later, and we're fixing to leave office. [*Laughter*] But we both vow, we will finish strong with our heads held high.

In the remaining months, we will work to strengthen the partnership between our two nations. The ties that bind the United States and Ghana are as long as they are deep. Last year, Ghana commemorated the 50th anniversary of its independence. And when you claimed your liberty in 1957, the United States of America was by your side. Richard Nixon and Martin Luther King, Jr., were among the notable Americans who were here when the Union Jack was replaced by the red, yellow, and green of the Republic of Ghana. Four years later, 51 idealistic young Americans arrived in your beautiful country

as Ghana became the first nation to host volunteers from the Peace Corps.

This long tradition of friendship and cooperation continues today. Today, Ghana and the United States are working to strengthen democracy and good government. Together we're harnessing the power of global trade to alleviate poverty. And, Mr. President, rest assured, I will work to complete the Doha round. Together we're working to preserve peace, combat disease, and help ensure that all of Ghana's citizens can give their children what we all want for our children, a more hopeful future.

And so, Mr. President, I want to thank you for your friendship. I thank you for your leadership. I thank you for your kindness. And I offer a toast to you, your gracious wife, and to the noble people of Ghana. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:58 p.m. in the State Banquet Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Theresa Kufuor, wife of President Kufuor. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Kufuor.

Remarks on Arrival in Monrovia, Liberia

February 21, 2008

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. Let me say how pleased we are to welcome President Bush, Mrs. Bush, Secretary Rice, and all the members of this delegation. It is a great honor for Liberia to receive them. And they've received a very warm welcome from the Liberian people, from our young people, from our students, who lined the route and waved and showed flags. We're just so pleased and honored. Thank you, President Bush, for making this trip.

President Bush. Madam President, thanks. I've been looking forward to coming here ever since you extended the kind invitation to me. I do want to thank the people of Liberia for the warm welcome that we have received. I loved all the smiles and the enthusiasm along the route.

Most importantly, I want the people of Liberia to know, Madam President, the United States stands with you. We want to help you recover from a terrible period. We want you

to build lives of hope and peace. And under your leadership, that's exactly what's happening. It is my honor to have presented you with the National Medal of Freedom. It's the highest civilian award a President can give, and I did so because of your courage and your leadership. And we are so excited to be with you.

Thank you.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Remarks at a Lunch Hosted by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia in Monrovia

February 21, 2008

Madam President, I want to make sure I've got the following correctly: Here they call you the "Iron Lady," and here they call you "Ma." And I call you friend.

We are honored to be here. Laura and I are thrilled to be here with our delegation to end what has been a very productive trip to the continent of Africa. I can't think of a better place to finish than in—with our dear friend, Liberia.

It is easy to destroy a country; it is hard to rebuild a country. And I—Madam President, I want you to know that the United States of America supports you as you rebuild your country. We share a special history with Liberia. It's a history that is deep, and I want the people of your beautiful country to know that our help is just beginning.

And so, Madam President, I propose a toast to you and the strength of your leadership and the quality of your character and to the good people of Liberia. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:54 p.m. in the Executive Mansion. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Johnson Sirleaf.

Remarks During a Visit to the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia *February 21, 2008*

Madam President, you're right; we have met four times, and every time, I'm the better for it. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the warm welcome we've received from the people of your beautiful country.

We bring with us the greetings and best wishes of the American people. I'm proud to be traveling today not only with a strong delegation, headed by my wife, but also the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice.

I'm so honored to be with your troops. I'm looking forward to the display of talent and professionalism we're about to see. I thank those who've worked hard to help them become professional soldiers, all in the cause of bringing peace and security to the people of Liberia.

Though we're over 4,500 miles from the United States, I feel pretty much at home here. In Liberia, you fly the "lone star" flag. [*Laughter*] Of course, I was the former Governor of Texas. [*Laughter*] We call ourselves the Lone Star State. [*Laughter*] Your capital is named for an American President, and of course, I am an American President. [*Laughter*] The name of your country, Liberia, means "land of the free," and there is no place I feel more welcome than a land where liberty is love and the hope of freedom reigns.

This country was founded by former American slaves who came here seeking the freedom they had been denied in my country. Through hard work and determination, they established the first independent republic on the continent of Africa. The free country they built became a source of pride for her people and a strong ally in the cause of freedom. As the President said, Franklin Roosevelt came here in 1943 to confer with your great President, Edwin Barclay. Together our two nations helped defeat the forces of fascism. Together our two nations helped saved millions from lives of tyranny and despair.

In the intervening years, Liberia saw days of challenge and sorrow. You suffered the descent into dictatorship and chaos. Civil wars took the lives of hundreds of thousands