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Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia in Zagreb, Croatia

April 5, 2008

[*Prime Minister Sanader spoke in Croatian, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. It's really good to be with you again. I remember very fondly our visit to the Oval Office.

[*The interpreter began to translate President Bush's remarks.*]

Prime Minister Sanader. No, there is no need.

President Bush. Even though you did a brilliant job. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Sanader. They understand; they understand.

President Bush. I understand. But, anyway, I—you suggested I come to your country then, and I'm really glad we came. Thanks. It's good news. And the fact that Croatia has been invited to join NATO is a historic moment. And I hope the people of your country are as proud as I am to be here to welcome you into NATO.

The—my only regret is I didn't get to see the coast. But I suspect when more Americans learn of the beauty of your coast, they'll want to come. And that's why the Open Skies agreement that we negotiated is going to be important to open up travel and trade. We will take you up on your request to have a trade mission come. I appreciate the fact that you have an open government, an honest government, a transparent government, which will help attract foreign capital—well-educated, hard-working people that will help attract foreign capital as well.

We talked about the neighborhood, and I appreciate the Prime Minister's advice and counsel on how the United States can help continue to promote stability and freedom. And I want to thank you very much for that.

We talked about an issue that I know is on the minds of the people of Croatia, and that is the visa waiver policy. I fully understand, Mr. Prime Minister, that some in your country wonder why our visa waiver policy is for you—different for you than it is for other people, perhaps, in Europe. After all, you've—you're sacrificing in Afghanistan alongside U.S. troops. And they wonder why they can't go see their relatives in America in an easier way.

I think they should be able to. Congress has passed a law that we now must live with. And we'll work with your Government to facilitate the new law in such a way, hopefully, that people will be able to realize their dreams of going to America to see relatives and loved ones. There's a lot of people in America that have fond memories of their homeland, and they want to be able to see their relatives in an easier fashion.

So we'll work government-to-government to meet our laws and, at the same time, hopefully facilitate travel. I don't want to create false expectations. On the other hand, people should know that we have committed to working to see to it that the policy is implemented in a way that hopefully will ease travel quickly.

All in all, it's been an honor to be with you. I'm so grateful for your Government and for the people of your country for welcoming me and Laura. And I look forward to future visits.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Sanader. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. at the Banski Dvori.

Remarks in Zagreb

April 5, 2008

The President. *Dobro jutro*. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. I'm honored