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Week Ending Friday, September 19, 2008

Remarks on Hurricane Ike Recovery Efforts

September 13, 2008

Good morning. I just finished a video conference with Secretary Chertoff, Director Paulison, and other people about Hurricane Ike.

Obviously, this is a huge storm that is causing a lot of damage not only in Texas but also in parts of Louisiana. The storm has yet to pass, and I know there are people concerned about their lives. Some people didn't evacuate when asked, and I've been briefed on the rescue teams there in the area. They're prepared to move as soon as weather conditions permit. Obviously, people on the ground there are sensitive to helping people and are fully prepared to do so.

Secondly, I've asked Secretary Chertoff to go down as soon as weather conditions permit. I suspect he'll be able to get down to Texas this afternoon and will be in the gulf coast region, hopefully, within a reasonable period of time to help the State of Texas officials, as well as local officials, begin the recovery effort. There's going to be a need for Federal, State, and local coordination as this storm moves through east Texas.

Obviously, there will be concerns about electricity. We've got generators in place, generators moving into the area to help. They'll be concerned about water and ice. They'll be concerned about energy, and I'm concerned about energy.

This administration has moved quickly. Last night, we suspended EPA waivers on certain reformulated gasolines, which will make it easier for imports from abroad to make it into our markets. In the meantime, the Department of Energy, the Federal Trade Commission, and I know State authorities will be monitoring gasoline prices to make sure consumers are not being gouged; make sure consumers are being treated fairly.

As this massive storm moves through the gulf coast, people of that area can be rest assured that the American people will be praying for them and will be ready to help once the storm moves on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:39 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address

September 13, 2008

Good morning. This week, Americans marked 7 years since the terrorist attacks that shook our Nation on September the 11th, 2001. On that day, we witnessed unspeakable destruction perpetrated by evil men, but we also witnessed selfless acts of valor and compassion performed by courageous citizens. And we saw the strength of the American people as they rallied in defense of the Nation.

On Thursday, I dedicated a new 9/11 memorial at the Pentagon. In the years to come, parents will visit this site to remember children who boarded Flight 77 for a field trip and never emerged from the wreckage. Husbands and wives will visit the memorial to remember spouses who left for work one morning and never returned home. And people from across our Nation will visit to remember the heroism of rescue workers who rushed into the burning Pentagon to save the lives of their fellow citizens.

Seven years after the attacks of 9/11, this spirit of heroism lives on. We see it in the courageous members of the United States Armed Forces. These brave men and women have volunteered to defend our Nation during a time of war. Every day, they are confronting our enemies abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. And because of their efforts, our Nation is safer today than it was 7 years ago.

In Afghanistan, where the 9/11 attacks were planned, our men and women in uniform toppled the Taliban regime, destroyed Al Qaida camps, and liberated more than 25 million Afghans. In the years since, members of the Taliban and Al Qaida have sought to regain power through acts of terror. The United States and our allies are meeting this challenge head on. We will not allow Afghanistan to once again become a safe haven for terror.

Earlier this week, I announced additional American troop deployments to Afghanistan. In November, a Marine battalion that was scheduled to deploy to Iraq will deploy to Afghanistan instead. It will be followed in January by an Army combat brigade. This continuing commitment to the Afghan people illustrates a stark contrast: While the terrorists and extremists deliberately target and murder the innocent, coalition and Afghan forces risk their lives to protect the innocent.

America is also on the offense against terrorists and extremists in Iraq. Since we launched the surge last year, violence has fallen to its lowest point since the spring of 2004. While the enemy in Iraq is still dangerous, we seized the offensive, and Iraqi forces are becoming increasingly capable of leading and winning the fight. As a result, we've been able to carry out a policy of return on success, reducing the number of American combat forces in Iraq as conditions on the ground there continue to improve.

After reviewing conditions in Iraq, General Petraeus and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended additional force reductions. By February, about 8,000 additional American troops will have returned home without replacement. And if this progress in Iraq continues to hold, General Petraeus and our military leaders believe additional reductions will be possible in the first half of 2009.

In the 7 years since the attacks of September the 11th, the men and women of our Armed Forces and their wonderful families have been a source of pride for the Nation. Those who do not wear the uniform also have a responsibility to serve our country. After 9/11, I called on Americans to devote at least 4,000 hours—or 2 years over the course of a lifetime—to volunteering in their communities. This morning, I renew that call. Serving others is more than just a generous act, it is essential to the health of our society. And as any volunteer can tell you, when you bring hope to the lives of others, the life you enrich most is usually your own.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on September 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Hurricane Ike Recovery Efforts

September 14, 2008

I want to thank senior members of the administration for coming in this Sunday morning to discuss Hurricane Ike. I was on the phone to—with Secretary Chertoff before coming into this meeting. The Secretary went down yesterday; he gave me a briefing from Austin. He'll be heading into Houston. This is all part of our efforts to help Texas and Louisiana with a focused, effective recovery effort.

Administrator Paulison briefed us on how we're doing on our priorities. First priority is search and rescue, and I want to thank the people at the Federal and State levels for working so hard to rescue our fellow citizens from harm's way. Rescue efforts continue on as we speak.

I do urge people in the affected areas to listen closely to local authorities before they attempt to get back home. There are people now surveying damage; people reporting in to the State as to the conditions there in the different communities. And it's very important for citizens, who I know are anxious to get home, to take your time and listen; take the advice of the local folks.

Our priorities, along with the State and local folks, is to make sure electricity gets up as quickly as possible. Secretary Bodman