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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

gave us a briefing on the outages. Interestingly enough, some electricity is already being restored in Houston, I'm told. And I do want to thank the utility companies for working hard to get electricity up. And to the extent that you need help on stringing lines, I'm confident other utility companies from around the country will help provide manpower.

Secretary Chertoff and David Paulison tell me that the Federal Government will be providing 1½ million liters of water a day and 1 million meals a day to help the people who have been displaced. That'll of course be coordinated with Governor Perry's office and the State of Texas, as well as the mayors.

One of the things that's very important for the city of Houston and the other cities is to get the water up and running, the sewage plants running. And that'll be a priority of ours to help them. And finally, debris removal; it's very important that our Corps of Engineer, working with local officials, implements a coordinated debris removal plan.

And so that's what we discussed this morning. This is a tough storm, and it's one that is going to be—it's going to require time for people to recover.

As well, the Secretary of Energy briefed us on, you know, preliminary reports on gasoline production, pipeline distribution. And it's a little early to fully assess where we stand, although I can say that, you know, one of the plant—one of the pipelines coming out of the gulf coast area is running—the Plantation Pipeline. And we are watching very carefully as to when the Colonial Pipeline can get up and running.

In the meantime, as I mentioned yesterday, in coordination with the Department of Energy, we suspended—and the EPA—we suspended reformulated gasoline rules so it would make it easier to import gasoline from abroad so as to take pressure off of our consumers.

And I repeat what I said yesterday: That the Federal Government, along with State governments, will be monitoring very carefully as to whether or not consumers are being mistreated at the pump—in other words, gouged. It's very important for our fellow citizens, during the period of temporary disruption, to be treated fairly.

And so I'm considering—have considered my plans over the weekend, and I will be going down to Texas on Tuesday to express the Federal Government's support—sympathy on the one hand and support on the other to—for this recovery effort and rebuilding effort.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Rick Perry of Texas.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana

September 15, 2008

President Bush. Good morning. President Kufuor and Mrs. Kufuor, it is a pleasure to welcome you back to the White House. The American people are honored to receive Ghana's official delegation. And Laura and I are happy to host two good friends.

The ties of friendship between the United States and Ghana are strong, and they are enduring. Many Americans—citizens trace their ancestry to Ghana; for example, the great jazz legend Louis Armstrong, traced his ancestry back to Ghana. Centuries ago, Armstrong's forebears came to America as slaves. In 1956, Armstrong returned to Ghana and played a concert for more than 100,000 people who turned out to celebrate their country's march toward freedom.

And when Ghana's independence was secure, President Eisenhower sent a message to Ghanaians from the people of the United States. He said, "We revere in common with you the great and eternal principles which characterize the free democratic way of life. I am confident that our two countries will stand as one in safeguarding this greatest of all bonds between us."

Half a century later, we see that President Eisenhower's confidence was well placed. Today, Ghana and America are still bound by our love for liberty, and we stand as one in our efforts to safeguard freedom.

Ghana and America stand as one as we work to secure freedom from poverty. Ghana's leaders are governing justly, fighting corruption, and investing in their people. And