Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

Monday, September 18, 2006
Volume 42—Number 37
Pages 1595–1623

Contents

Addresses to the Nation

War on terror—1597

Addresses and Remarks

See also Addresses to the Nation; Meetings With Foreign Leaders
House Republican Conference, meeting—1602
New York City, tour of the Tribute WTC Visitor Center—1597
Radio address—1595

Communications to Federal Agencies

2006 Combined Federal Campaign, memorandum—1601
Continuation of the Exercise of Certain Authorities Under the Trading With the Enemy Act, memorandum—1601

Interviews With the News Media

Exchange with reporters in the Oval Office—1602
News conference, September 15—1607

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

South Korea, President Roh—1602

Proclamations

Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, Constitution Week—1606
National Hispanic Heritage Month—1605
National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week—1595
National POW/MIA Recognition Day—1607

Statements by the President

Death of Ann Richards—1605
House of Representatives action
Earmarking rules, reform—1605
"Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006"—1601
Senate action on the "Port Security Improvement Act of 2006"—1605
Visit of Prime Minister Blair of the United Kingdom to the Middle East—1597

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—1623
Checklist of White House press releases—1622
Digest of other White House announcements—1620
Nominations submitted to the Senate—1622

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for $80.00 per year ($137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for $93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is $3.00 ($3.75 for foreign mailing).

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is also available on the Internet on the *GPO Access* service at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/wcomp/index.html.

There are no restrictions on the republication of material appearing in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents.*

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
Washington DC 20402

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for private use, $300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
GPO
PERMIT NO. G-26

Proclamation 8048—National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 2006

September 8, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education is the cornerstone of a prosperous and hopeful Nation. By providing a quality education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) help students achieve their dreams and realize the promise of America. During National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, we recognize the significant contributions of HBCUs and underscore our commitment to helping these distinguished institutions in the pursuit of educational excellence.

Our Nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities are places of higher learning and achievement that prepare new generations of Americans to become responsible leaders in their communities and around the world. HBCUs enable students to gain the skills necessary to compete for the jobs of the 21st century.

My Administration is dedicated to ensuring the continued success of HBCUs and securing the constitutional guarantees of liberty and equality to all Americans. The President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities has worked to help these institutions benefit from Federal programs, obtain private-sector support for their endowments, and build partnerships to strengthen faculty development and cooperative research. In addition, the HBCU Capital Financing Program provides HBCUs with access to funds for the repair, renovation, and construction of educational resources and facilities.

During National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, we celebrate the enduring importance of HBCUs, and resolve to continue to support their critical mission.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 10 through September 16, 2006, as National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in recognition of the vital contributions of HBCUs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 12, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on September 13. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

September 9, 2006

Good morning. This Monday our Nation will mark the fifth anniversary of the attacks of September the 11th, 2001. On this solemn occasion, Americans will observe a day of prayer and remembrance, and Laura and I will travel to New York City, Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon to take part in memorial ceremonies. Our Nation honors the memory of every person we lost on that day of terror, and we pray that the Almighty will continue to comfort the families who had so much taken away from them.

On this anniversary, we also remember the brutality of the enemy who struck our country and renew our resolve to defeat this enemy and secure a future of peace and freedom.

So this week I've given a series of speeches about the nature of our enemy, the stakes of the struggle, and the progress we have made during the past 5 years. On Tuesday in Washington, I described in the terrorists' own words what they believe, what they hope to accomplish, and how they intend to accomplish it. We know what the terrorists intend because they have told us. They hope to establish a totalitarian Islamic empire across the Middle East, which they call a caliphate, where all would be ruled according to their hateful ideology.

Usama bin Laden has called the 9/11 attacks "a great step towards the unity of Muslims and establishing the righteous caliphate." Al Qaida and its allies reject any possibility of coexistence with those they call "infidels." Hear the words of Usama bin Laden: "Death is better than living on this Earth with the unbelievers amongst us." We must take the words of these extremists seriously, and we must act decisively to stop them from achieving their evil aims.

On Wednesday at the White House, I described for the first time a CIA program we established after 9/11 to detain and question key terrorist leaders and operatives, so we can prevent new terrorist attacks. This program has been invaluable to the security of America and its allies and helped us identify and capture men who our intelligence community believes were key architects of the September the 11th attacks.

Information from terrorists held by the CIA also helped us uncover an Al Qaida cell's efforts to obtain biological weapons, identify individuals sent by Al Qaida to case targets for attacks in the United States, stop the planned strike on a U.S. Marine base in Djibouti, prevent an attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi, and help break up a plot to hijack passenger planes and fly them into Heathrow Airport or the Canary Wharf in London.

Information from the terrorists in CIA custody has also played a role in the capture or questioning of nearly every senior Al Qaida member or associate detained by the U.S. and its allies since this program began. Were it not for this program, our intelligence community believes that Al Qaida and its allies would have succeeded in launching another attack against the American homeland. We have largely completed our questioning of these men, and now it is time that they are tried for their crimes.

So this week I announced that the men we believe orchestrated the 9/11 attacks had been transferred to Guantanamo Bay. And I called on Congress to pass legislation creating military commissions to try suspected terrorists for war crimes. As soon as Congress acts to authorize these military commissions, we will prosecute these men and send a clear message to those who kill Americans: No matter how long it takes, we will find you and bring you to justice.

As we bring terrorists to justice, we're acting to secure the homeland. On Thursday in Atlanta, I delivered a progress report on the steps we have taken since 9/11 to protect the American people and win the war on terror. We are safer today because we've acted to address the gaps in security, intelligence, and information sharing that the terrorists exploited in the 9/11 attacks. No one can say for sure that we would have prevented the attacks had these reforms been in place in 2001—yet we can say that terrorists would have found it harder to plan and finance their operations, harder to slip into our country undetected, and harder to board the planes, take control of the cockpits, and succeed in striking their targets.

America still faces determined enemies. And in the long run, defeating these enemies requires more than improved security at home and military action abroad. We must also offer a hopeful alternative to the terrorists' hateful ideology. So America is taking the side of democratic leaders and reformers and supporting the voices of tolerance and moderation across the Middle East. By advancing freedom and democracy as the great alternative to repression and radicalism and by supporting young democracies like Iraq, we are helping to bring a brighter future to this region, and that will make America and the world more secure.

The war on terror will be long and difficult, and more tough days lie ahead. Yet we can have confidence in the final outcome because we know what America can achieve when our Nation acts with resolve and clear purpose. With vigilance, determination, and courage, we will defeat the enemies of freedom, and we will leave behind a more peaceful world for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on September 8 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 8 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Visit of Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom to the Middle East

September 9, 2006

I am pleased that Prime Minister Blair will be visiting Lebanon, Israel, and the Palestinian territories. The deployment of increasing numbers of international forces in an enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which enabled the lifting of the air and sea blockade of Lebanon, makes this a timely visit. The Prime Minister will be discussing ways to facilitate the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701, including enforcing the ban on unauthorized arms shipments to Hizballah from Iran and Syria. I understand the Prime Minister will also be exploring ways to advance the dialog between Israelis and Palestinians and the two-state solution—a democratic Israel and democratic Palestine living side by side in peace and security. I wish him well in his efforts to promote peace and stability in the region.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Tribute WTC Visitor Center in New York City

September 10, 2006

Laura and I approach tomorrow with a heavy heart. It's hard not to think about the people who lost their lives on September the 11th, 2001. You know, you see the relatives of those who still grieve—I just wish there were some way we could make them whole. So tomorrow is going to be a day of sadness for a lot of people.

It's also a day of remembrance. And I vowed that I'm never going to forget the lessons of that day. And we spent time in there looking at some of the horrific scenes, inside this fantastic place of healing, and it just reminded me that there's still an enemy out there that would like to inflict the same kind of damage again.

So tomorrow is also a day of renewing resolve. I asked—today at the church service I asked for God's blessings on—of those who continue to hurt.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:04 p.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Address to the Nation on the War on Terror

September 11, 2006

Good evening. Five years ago, this date—September the 11th—was seared into America's memory. Nineteen men attacked us with a barbarity unequaled in our history. They murdered people of all colors, creeds, and nationalities and made war upon the entire free world. Since that day, America and her allies have taken the offensive in a war unlike any we have fought before. Today, we are safer, but we are not yet safe. On this solemn night, I've asked for some of your time to discuss the nature of the threat still before us, what we are doing to protect our Nation, and the building of a more hopeful Middle East that holds the key to peace for America and the world.

On 9/11, our Nation saw the face of evil. Yet on that awful day, we also witnessed something distinctly American: ordinary citizens rising to the occasion and responding with extraordinary acts of courage. We saw courage in office workers who were trapped on the high floors of burning skyscrapers and called home so that their last words to their families would be of comfort and love. We saw courage in passengers aboard Flight 93, who recited the 23d Psalm and then charged the cockpit. And we saw courage in the Pentagon staff who made it out of the flames and smoke and ran back in to answer cries for help. On this day, we remember the innocent who lost their lives, and we pay tribute to those who gave their lives so that others might live.

For many of our citizens, the wounds of that morning are still fresh. I've met firefighters and police officers who choke up at the memory of fallen comrades. I've stood with families gathered on a grassy field in Pennsylvania who take bittersweet pride in loved ones who refused to be victims and gave America our first victory in the war on terror. I've sat beside young mothers with children who are now 5 years old and still long for the daddies who will never cradle them in their arms. Out of this suffering, we resolve to honor every man and woman lost, and we seek their lasting memorial in a safer and more hopeful world.

Since the horror of 9/11, we've learned a great deal about the enemy. We have learned that they are evil and kill without mercy but not without purpose. We have learned that they form a global network of extremists who are driven by a perverted vision of Islam—a totalitarian ideology that hates freedom, rejects tolerance, and despises all dissent. And we have learned that their goal is to build a radical Islamic empire where women are prisoners in their homes, men are beaten for missing prayer meetings, and terrorists have a safe haven to plan and launch attacks on America and other civilized nations. The war against this enemy is more than a military conflict. It is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century and the calling of our generation.

Our Nation is being tested in a way that we have not been since the start of the cold war. We saw what a handful of our enemies can do with box cutters and plane tickets. We hear their threats to launch even more terrible attacks on our people. And we know that if they were able to get their hands on weapons of mass destruction, they would use them against us. We face an enemy determined to bring death and suffering into our homes. America did not ask for this war, and every American wishes it were over. So do I. But the war is not over, and it will not be over until either we or the extremists emerge victorious. If we do not defeat these enemies now, we will leave our children to face a Middle East overrun by terrorist states and radical dictators armed with nuclear weapons. We are in a war that will set the course for this new century and determine the destiny of millions across the world.

For America, 9/11 was more than a tragedy. It changed the way we look at the world. On September the 11th, we resolved that we would go on the offense against our enemies, and we would not distinguish between the terrorists and those who harbor or support them. So we helped drive the Taliban from power in Afghanistan. We put Al Qaida on the run and killed or captured most of those who planned the 9/11 attacks, including the man believed to be the mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. He and other suspected terrorists have been questioned by the Central Intelligence Agency, and they provided valuable information that has helped stop attacks in America and across the world. Now these men have been transferred to Guantanamo Bay so they can be held to account for their actions. Usama bin Laden and other terrorists are still in hiding. Our message to them is clear: No matter how long it takes, America will find you, and we will bring you to justice.

On September the 11th, we learned that America must confront threats before they reach our shores, whether those threats come from terrorist networks or terrorist states. I'm often asked why we're in Iraq when Saddam Hussein was not responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The answer is that the regime of Saddam Hussein was a clear threat. My administration, the Congress, and the United Nations saw the threat. And after 9/11, Saddam's regime posed a risk that the world

could not afford to take. The world is safer because Saddam Hussein is no longer in power. And now the challenge is to help the Iraqi people build a democracy that fulfills the dreams of the nearly 12 million Iraqis who came out to vote in free elections last December.

Al Qaida and other extremists from across the world have come to Iraq to stop the rise of a free society in the heart of the Middle East. They have joined the remnants of Saddam's regime and other armed groups to foment sectarian violence and drive us out. Our enemies in Iraq are tough, and they are committed, but so are Iraqi and coalition forces. We're adapting to stay ahead of the enemy, and we are carrying out a clear plan to ensure that a democratic Iraq succeeds.

We're training Iraqi troops so they can defend their nation. We're helping Iraq's unity Government grow in strength and serve its people. We will not leave until this work is done. Whatever mistakes have been made in Iraq, the worst mistake would be to think that if we pulled out, the terrorists would leave us alone. They will not leave us alone. They will follow us. The safety of America depends on the outcome of the battle in the streets of Baghdad. Usama bin Laden calls this fight "the third world war"—and he says that victory for the terrorists in Iraq will mean America's "defeat and disgrace forever." If we yield Iraq to men like bin Laden, our enemies will be emboldened; they will gain a new safe haven; they will use Iraq's resources to fuel their extremist movement. We will not allow this to happen. America will stay in the fight. Iraq will be a free nation and a strong ally in the war on terror.

We can be confident that our coalition will succeed because the Iraqi people have been steadfast in the face of unspeakable violence. And we can be confident in victory because of the skill and resolve of America's Armed Forces. Every one of our troops is a volunteer, and since the attacks of September the 11th, more than 1.6 million Americans have stepped forward to put on our Nation's uniform. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and other fronts in the war on terror, the men and women of our military are making great sacrifices to keep us safe. Some have suffered terrible injuries, and nearly 3,000 have given their lives. America cherishes their memory. We pray for their families. And we will never back down from the work they have begun.

We also honor those who toil day and night to keep our homeland safe, and we are giving them the tools they need to protect our people. We've created the Department of Homeland Security. We have torn down the wall that kept law enforcement and intelligence from sharing information. We've tightened security at our airports and seaports and borders, and we've created new programs to monitor enemy bank records and phone calls. Thanks to the hard work of our law enforcement and intelligence professionals, we have broken up terrorist cells in our midst and saved American lives.

Five years after 9/11, our enemies have not succeeded in launching another attack on our soil, but they've not been idle. Al Qaida and those inspired by its hateful ideology have carried out terrorist attacks in more than two dozen nations. And just last month, they were foiled in a plot to blow up passenger planes headed for the United States. They remain determined to attack America and kill our citizens, and we are determined to stop them. We will continue to give the men and women who protect us every resource and legal authority they need to do their jobs.

In the first days after the 9/11 attacks, I promised to use every element of national power to fight the terrorists, wherever we find them. One of the strongest weapons in our arsenal is the power of freedom. The terrorists fear freedom as much as they do our firepower. They are thrown into panic at the sight of an old man pulling the election lever, girls enrolling in schools, or families worshiping God in their own traditions. They know that given a choice, people will choose freedom over their extremist ideology. So their answer is to deny people this choice by raging against the forces of freedom and moderation. This struggle has been called a clash of civilizations. In truth, it is a struggle for civilization. We are fighting to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations. And we're fighting for the possibility that good and decent people across the Middle East can raise up societies based on freedom and tolerance and personal dignity.

We are now in the early hours of this struggle between tyranny and freedom. Amid the violence, some question whether the people of the Middle East want their freedom and whether the forces of moderation can prevail. For 60 years, these doubts guided our policies in the Middle East. And then on a bright September morning, it became clear that the calm we saw in the Middle East was only a mirage. Years of pursuing stability to promote peace had left us with neither. So we changed our policies and committed America's influence in the world to advancing freedom and democracy as the great alternatives to repression and radicalism.

With our help, the people of the Middle East are now stepping forward to claim their freedom. From Kabul to Baghdad to Beirut, there are brave men and women risking their lives each day for the same freedoms that we enjoy. And they have one question for us: Do we have the confidence to do in the Middle East what our fathers and grandfathers accomplished in Europe and Asia? By standing with democratic leaders and reformers, by giving voice to the hopes of decent men and women, we're offering a path away from radicalism. And we are enlisting the most powerful force for peace and moderation in the Middle East: the desire of millions to be free.

Across the broader Middle East, the extremists are fighting to prevent such a future. Yet America has confronted evil before, and we have defeated it—sometimes at the cost of thousands of good men in a single battle. When Franklin Roosevelt vowed to defeat two enemies across two oceans, he could not have foreseen D-day and Iwo Jima, but he would not have been surprised at the outcome. When Harry Truman promised American support for free peoples resisting Soviet aggression, he could not have foreseen the rise of the Berlin Wall, but he would not have been surprised to see it brought down. Throughout our history, America has seen liberty challenged, and every time, we have seen liberty triumph with sacrifice and determination.

At the start of this young century, America looks to the day when the people of the Middle East leave the desert of despotism for the fertile gardens of liberty and resume their rightful place in a world of peace and prosperity. We look to the day when the nations of that region recognize their greatest resource is not the oil in the ground but the talent and creativity of their people. We look to the day when moms and dads throughout the Middle East see a future of hope and opportunity for their children. And when that good day comes, the clouds of war will part, the appeal of radicalism will decline, and we will leave our children with a better and safer world.

On this solemn anniversary, we rededicate ourselves to this cause. Our Nation has endured trials, and we face a difficult road ahead. Winning this war will require the determined efforts of a unified country, and we must put aside our differences and work together to meet the test that history has given us. We will defeat our enemies. We will protect our people. And we will lead the 21st century into a shining age of human liberty.

Earlier this year, I traveled to the United States Military Academy. I was there to deliver the commencement address to the first class to arrive at West Point after the attacks of September the 11th. That day I met a proud mom named RoseEllen Dowdell. She was there to watch her son, Patrick, accept his commission in the finest Army the world has ever known. A few weeks earlier, RoseEllen had watched her other son, James, graduate from the Fire Academy in New York City. On both these days, her thoughts turned to someone who was not there to share the moment, her husband, Kevin Dowdell. Kevin was one of the 343 firefighters who rushed to the burning towers of the World Trade Center on September the 11th and never came home. His sons lost their father that day but not the passion for service he instilled in them. Here is what RoseEllen says about her boys: "As a mother, I cross my fingers and pray all the time for their safety. But as worried as I am, I'm also proud, and I know their dad would be too."

Our Nation is blessed to have young Americans like these, and we will need them. Dangerous enemies have declared their intention to destroy our way of life. They're not the first to try, and their fate will be the same as those who tried before. Nine-Eleven showed us why. The attacks were meant to

bring us to our knees, and they did, but not in the way the terrorists intended. Americans united in prayer, came to the aid of neighbors in need, and resolved that our enemies would not have the last word. The spirit of our people is the source of America's strength. And we go forward with trust in that spirit, confidence in our purpose, and faith in a loving God who made us to be free.

Thank you, and may God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the "Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006"

September 13, 2006

I applaud the House for today's passage of S. 2590, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, and look forward to final passage by the Senate soon. This legislation demonstrates Congress's commitment to giving the American people access to timely and accurate information about how their tax dollars are spent.

This bill builds on existing administration initiatives to help ensure Federal agencies clearly reflect how they spend the taxpayers' money. Expectmore.gov is one such resource, allowing Americans to see which Federal programs are successful and which ones fall short.

In addition to these reforms, I urge the Senate to follow the House in passing the line item veto, a critical tool that will help rein in wasteful spending and bring greater transparency to the budget process. I call on the Senate to pass this important legislation this month.

Memorandum on the 2006 Combined Federal Campaign

September 13, 2006

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: 2006 Combined Federal Campaign

Admiral Thad W. Allen, Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, has agreed to serve as the Chair of the 2006 Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area. I ask you to enthusiastically support the CFC by personally chairing the campaign in your agency and by encouraging top agency officials around the country to do the same.

The Combined Federal Campaign is an important way for Federal employees to support thousands of worthy charities. Public servants not only contribute to the campaign but also assume leadership roles to ensure its success.

Your personal support and enthusiasm will help positively influence thousands of employees and will guarantee another successful campaign.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Memorandum on Continuation of the Exercise of Certain Authorities Under the Trading With the Enemy Act

September 13, 2006

Presidential Determination No. 2006–23

Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury

Subject: Continuation of the Exercise of Certain Authorities under the Trading with the Enemy Act

Under section 101(b) of Public Law 95–223 (91 Stat. 1625; 50 U.S.C. App. 5(b) note), and a previous determination on September 12, 2005 (70 Fed. Reg. 54607), the exercise of certain authorities under the Trading with the Enemy Act is scheduled to terminate on September 14, 2006.

I hereby determine that the continuation for 1 year of the exercise of those authorities with respect to the applicable countries is in the national interest of the United States.

Therefore, consistent with the authority vested in me by section 101(b) of Public Law 95–223, I continue for 1 year, until September 14, 2007, the exercise of those authorities with respect to countries affected by:

(1) the Foreign Assets Control Regulations, 31 C.F.R. part 500;

(2) the Transaction Control Regulations, 31 C.F.R. part 505; and

(3) the Cuban Assets Control Regulations, 31 C.F.R. part 515.

The Secretary of the Treasury is authorized and directed to publish this determination in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 14, 2006]

NOTE: This memorandum was published in the *Federal Register* on September 15.

Remarks to Reporters Following a Meeting With the House Republican Conference

September 14, 2006

Thank you very much. It's an honor to meet with the Capitol press corps, and a few White House—a few White House folks scattered in. Just had a great visit with House Members—House Republican Members. I talked about a lot of issues and answered questions. I thanked them for the House Armed Services Committee passing a very important piece of legislation in a bipartisan fashion that will give us the tools and wherewithal to protect this country. I reminded them that the most important job of Government is to protect the homeland, and yesterday they advanced an important piece of legislation to do just that. I'll continue to work with Members of the Congress to get good legislation so we can do our duty.

It's nice seeing you all. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. at the United States Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 6054, the "Military Commissions Act of 2006." A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea and an Exchange With Reporters

September 14, 2006

President Bush. Welcome to the White House. I will give an opening statement; the President will give an opening statement; we will answer two questions a side.

Mr. President, thank you for coming. The relationship between the United States and South Korea is a strong and vital relationship. Today we talked about how to strengthen our commitment to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. All our discussions began with the notion that our alliance is important to security and peace in the Far East. I thank the President, the South Korean Government, and the people of South Korea for sending troops into Iraq to help that young democracy realize the benefits of liberty.

We reaffirmed our commitment to the six-party talks so that we can peacefully deal with the North Korean issue. We talked about our economic relations and the importance of a free trade agreement to benefit our respective peoples.

And finally, the President talked to me about a visa waiver policy. He strongly advocated the need for there to be a visa waiver for the people of South Korea. I assured him we will work together to see if we can't get this issue resolved as quickly as possible.

We've had a very friendly and very meaningful dialog, and I'm glad you came, Mr. President. Please.

President Roh. First of all, I would like to offer my sincere condolences and sympathies, and those of the Korean people, for the tragedy of 9/11, which struck 5 years ago.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

President Roh. I would like to also reiterate our support for the war against terror and of President Bush, the people of the

United States. And we stand with you, President Bush and the people of America, in your fight against terror.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

President Roh. Prior to our summit meeting, we have closely coordinated the agenda and issues of interest. And on this basis, we had very sufficient and very satisfactory talks.

And President Bush spoke about the three issues that we discussed. If I may add to one of them, of the wartime operational control, I was very happy that the President reassured me of the continued commitment of the United States for the defense of the Korean Peninsula.

As for the remaining issue of timing of the transfer of OPCON, we agreed that this is not a political issue; this is an issue that will be discussed through the working-level talks. And we will continue to work together on this issue.

And also, the President and I agreed to work together for the restart of the six-party talks. And as for specific steps that we can take before the resumption of the six-party process, our ministers and staff will be consulting closely.

And, Mr. President, I would like to thank you again for the open and understanding that you have shown in these difficult issues.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters]—I mean, Nedra [Nedra Pickler, Associated Press].

"Military Commissions Act of 2006"

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Your former Secretary of State endorsed the plan to block the terror suspect interrogation legislation that you have proposed. He says it would raise doubts about the moral basis for the U.S. fight against terrorists and would put U.S. troops at risk. Does this hurt your efforts?

President Bush. We have proposed legislation that will enable the Central Intelligence Agency to be able to conduct a program to get information from high-value detainees in a lawful way. And that idea was approved yesterday by a House committee in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion. It is very important for the American people to understand that in order to protect this country, we must be able to interrogate people who have information about future attacks.

So the question I ask about any piece of legislation is, will the program provide legal clarity so that our professionals will feel comfortable about going forward with the program? That's what I'm going to ask. And I will resist any bill that does not enable this program to go forward with legal clarity. And there's all kinds of letters coming out—and today, by the way, active duty personnel in the Pentagon, the JAG, supported the concept that I have just outlined to you. This is an important program for the security of this country. And we want to work with Congress to make sure that the program can go forward. If there's not clarity, if there's ambiguity, if there's any doubt in our professionals' minds that they can conduct their operations in a legal way, with support of the Congress, the program won't go forward and the American people will be in danger.

President Bush. Mr. President.

U.S. Armed Forces in South Korea/North Korea

[*At this point, a question was asked in Korean, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Okay, I'll interpret the question for you. [*Laughter*] "How come you look so beautiful in your blue tie, Mr. President?" [*Laughter*]

No, he asked about operational control and the date—the appropriate date of operational control. My message to the Korean people is that the United States is committed to the security of the Korean Peninsula. Decisions about the placement of our troops and the size of our troops will be made in consultation with the South Korean Government. We will work in a consultative way at the appropriate level of government to come up with an appropriate date.

I agree with the President that the issue should not become a political issue. I have talked to our Secretary of Defense about making sure that the issue is done in a consultative way and at the appropriate level of government, and that's how we will end up deciding the appropriate transfer of operational authority.

Did he ask you a question?

President Roh. Yes, that was a very good answer. Thank you, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Hope everybody else agrees with it.

President Roh. As for the question about the common and broad approach being talked about between our two countries for the restart of the six-party talks, I must tell you that we are at the working level of consulting very closely on this issue, but we have not yet reached a conclusion. And this issue is very complex, so I would be hesitant—and it would be difficult for me to answer the question at the moment.

The important thing to remember, that South Korea now faces the issue of North Korean nuclear issue. And this, I would say, is one important issue that we're facing. On the other hand, the United States has a host of other issues to deal with: the Iran/Lebanon crisis, the war in Iraq. So what is important to remember is that—the fact that we are consulting closely on the North Korean nuclear issue, and we are consulting on ways to restart the six-party process. And I believe this is the important point, that this is, in fact, very meaningful that the United States is devoting much of its efforts to resolving the North Korean issue. This is very significant for the Korean Government.

President Bush. Thank you. Caren.

North Korea's Participation in the Six-Party Talks

Q. Mr. President, North Korea has refused to engage in the six-party talks for nearly a year. What's the incentive to get them back to the table?

President Bush. No, I appreciate that. First and foremost, the incentive is for Kim Jong Il to understand there is a better way to improve the lives of his people than being isolated; that stability in the region is in his interest, the ultimate interests for the people of North Korea to be able to benefit and for families to be able to have food on the table.

His refusal to come back to the six-party talks has really strengthened an alliance of five nations that—who are determined to solve this issue peacefully, but recognize a threat posed by a country in the region armed with a nuclear weapon. If he were to verifiably get rid of his weapons programs, there is clearly a better way forward. And that is the message we've been sending to the North Korean Government through the six-party talks.

Final question. Do you want to call on somebody?

South Korea-North Korea Relations

[*A question was asked in Korean, and no translation was provided.*]

President Roh. As for your question, that there is a concern in Korea that the United States will take further sanctions against North Korea and whether this will jeopardize the chance of a successful six-party process, my answer is that we are working very hard on restarting the six-party talks. That is what the President and I have discussed this morning, and this is not the appropriate time to think about the possibility of a failure of the six-party process. So this is my answer.

And my Government has taken certain measures, and although—because we do not want to hurt the inter-Korean relations, we do not label this—these measures as sanctions, we are, in fact, taking measures tantamount to sanctions after the North Korean missile launches. This is—we have suspended rice and fertilizer aid to North Korea, and this is, in fact, similar to sanctions in its effect.

And we are, in fact—this measure of suspension of aid to North Korea, I believe, is in line with the implementation of the U.N. security resolution on North Korea. And as for other sanctions you have mentioned by the United States, these are being done in line with the U.S. law enforcement. And so we would be—we would not delve into this at this time.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. A reporter referred to former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

Statement on the Death of Ann Richards

September 14, 2006

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the passing of Governor Ann Richards of Texas. Ann loved Texas, and Texans loved her. As a public servant, she earned respect and admiration. Ann became a national role model, and her charm, wit, and candor brought a refreshing vitality to public life. We extend our sympathies to Ann's family and friends. Texas has lost one of its great daughters.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Reform of Earmarking Rules

September 14, 2006

I applaud the House of Representatives for voting again this week in support of greater transparency and accountability in Government. H.R. 1000 [H. Res. 1000] * would shine a brighter light on earmarks by requiring disclosure of the sponsors of each provision. This reform would help improve the legislative process by making sure both lawmakers and the public are better informed before Congress votes to spend the taxpayers' money.

Statement on Senate Action on the "Port Security Improvement Act of 2006"

September 14, 2006

Today the Senate passed legislation to strengthen my administration's efforts to secure our ports and detect dangers before they reach America's shores.

By furthering our coordination with responsible countries throughout the world, the Port Security Improvement Act of 2006 will help secure the global supply chain and help ensure the smooth flow of commerce into and out of the United States. I am pleased this bill codifies several administration efforts that have already substantially improved security at our ports, including the Container Security Initiative, which identifies and inspects cargo at foreign ports before they are placed on vessels destined for the United States, and the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, which helps our international trading partners secure their supply chains before shipping goods into our country.

I look forward to the House and Senate resolving their differences in conference and sending this legislation to me for my signature.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 4954.

Proclamation 8049—National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2006

September 14, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans are a diverse people, yet we are bound by common principles that teach us what it means to be American citizens. During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize the many contributions of Hispanic Americans to our country.

Through hard work, faith in God, and a deep love of family, Hispanic Americans have pursued their dreams and contributed to the strength and vitality of our Nation. They have enriched the American experience and excelled in business, law, politics, education, community service, the arts, science, and many other fields. Hispanic entrepreneurs are also helping build a better, more hopeful future for all by creating jobs across our country. The number of Hispanic-owned businesses is growing at three times the national rate, and increasing numbers of Hispanic Americans own their own homes. We continue to benefit from a rich Hispanic culture and we are a stronger country because of the talent and creativity of the many Hispanic Americans who have shaped our society.

Throughout our history, Hispanic Americans have also shown their devotion to our country in their military service. Citizens of Hispanic descent have fought in every war since our founding and have taken their

* White House correction.

rightful place as heroes in our Nation's history. Today, Americans of Hispanic descent are serving in our Armed Forces with courage and honor, and their efforts are helping make America more secure and bringing freedom to people around the world.

As we celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month, we applaud the accomplishments of Hispanic Americans and recognize the contributions they make to our great land. To honor the achievements of Hispanic Americans, the Congress, by Public Law 100–402, as amended, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 2006, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 18, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on September 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Proclamation 8050—Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, Constitution Week, 2006

September 14, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans are united by the principles embodied in the United States Constitution. On Constitution Day and Citizenship Day and during Constitution Week, we celebrate the establishment of the United States Constitution and honor the Framers of this groundbreaking document.

In 1787, the Framers of the Constitution met in Philadelphia and drafted a document that continues to be the foundation of our Nation's identity. The Constitution established the enduring governmental framework in which our free society has flourished for more than two centuries, and it is a testament to the wisdom and foresight of our Founders.

America is grateful to those who have worked to defend the Constitution and promote its ideals. During this observance, we also recognize the profound impact our Constitution has on the everyday lives of our citizens, and we call upon all Americans to help uphold its values of a free and just society.

In celebration of the signing of the Constitution and in recognition of the Americans who strive to uphold the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 106, as amended), designated September 17 as "Constitution Day and Citizenship Day," and by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 108, as amended), requested that the President proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 2006, as Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, and September 17 through September 23, 2006, as Constitution Week. I encourage Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic, social, and educational organizations, to conduct ceremonies and programs that celebrate our Constitution and reaffirm our

rights and responsibilities as citizens of our great Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 18, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on September 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Proclamation 8051—National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 2006

September 14, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As a Nation, we look to our service men and women as examples of courage and sacrifice. When our country and the world have needed brave Americans to advance the cause of freedom, our men and women in uniform have proudly stepped forward and selflessly endured hardships to defend liberty. We are grateful to all who have served, and on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we give special honor to the extraordinary patriots who have been prisoners of war and to those who are still missing in action. We take inspiration from their valor and loyalty and will not rest until we have accounted for them all.

On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, the National League of Families POW/MIA flag is flown over the White House, the Capitol, the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, World War II Memorial, U.S. military installations, national cemeteries, and other locations across our country. The POW/MIA flag is a symbol of our Nation's resolve never to forget the service and great sacrifice of the heroes who have carried out liberty's urgent and noble mission, even at the cost of their own freedom. On this day, we express our deep appreciation to each of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines and our enduring commitment to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all of our men and women in uniform who have been prisoners of war or are missing in action.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States do hereby proclaim Friday, September 15, 2006, as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. I call upon the people of the United States to join me in paying solemn tribute to all former American prisoners of war and those missing in action who valiantly served our great country. I call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 18, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on September 19.

The President's News Conference

September 15, 2006

The President. It's always a pleasure to be introduced into the Rose Garden. Thank you, Wendell [Wendell Goler, Fox News Channel]. Thank you for coming. I'm looking forward to answering some of your questions.

This week our Nation paused to mark the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. It was a tough day for a lot of our citizens. I was so honored to meet with family members and first-responders, workers at the Pentagon, all who still had heaviness in their heart. But they asked me a question, you know, they kept asking me, "What do you think the level of determination for this country is in order

to protect ourselves?" That's what they want to know.

You know, for me, it was a reminder about how I felt right after 9/11. I felt a sense of determination and conviction about doing everything that is necessary to protect the people. I'm going to go back to New York to address the United Nations General Assembly. I'm going to talk to world leaders gathered there about our obligation to defend civilization and liberty, to support the forces of freedom and moderation throughout the Middle East. As we work with the international community to defeat the terrorists and extremists, to provide an alternative to their hateful ideology, we must also provide our military and intelligence professionals with the tools they need to protect our country from another attack. And the reason they need those tools is because the enemy wants to attack us again.

Right here in the Oval Office, I get briefed nearly every morning about the nature of this world, and I get briefed about the desire of an enemy to hurt America. And it's a sobering experience, as I'm sure you can imagine. I wish that weren't the case, you know. But it is the case. And therefore, I believe it is vital that our folks on the frontline have the tools necessary to protect the American people.

There are two vital pieces of legislation in Congress now that I think are necessary to help us win the war on terror. We will work with members of both parties to get legislation that works out of the Congress. The first bill will allow us to use military commissions to try suspected terrorists for war crimes. We need the legislation because the Supreme Court recently ruled that military commissions must be explicitly authorized by Congress. So we're working with Congress. The Supreme Court said, "You must work with Congress." We are working with Congress to get a good piece of legislation out.

The bill I have proposed will ensure that suspected terrorists will receive full and fair trials without revealing to them our Nation's sensitive intelligence secrets. As soon as Congress acts on this bill, the man our intelligence agencies believe helped orchestrate the 9/11 attacks can face justice.

The bill would also provide clear rules for our personnel involved in detaining and questioning captured terrorists. The information that the Central Intelligence Agency has obtained by questioning men like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has provided valuable information and has helped disrupt terrorist plots, including strikes within the United States.

For example, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed described the design of planned attacks of buildings inside the U.S. and how operatives were directed to carry them out. That is valuable information for those of us who have the responsibility to protect the American people. He told us the operatives had been instructed to ensure that the explosives went off at a high—a point that was high enough to prevent people trapped above from escaping. He gave us information that helped uncover Al Qaida cells' efforts to obtain biological weapons.

We've also learned information from the CIA program that has helped stop other plots, including attacks on the U.S. Marine base in East Africa or American consulate in Pakistan or Britain's Heathrow Airport. This program has been one of the most vital tools in our efforts to protect this country. It's been invaluable to our country, and it's invaluable to our allies.

Were it not for this program, our intelligence community believes that Al Qaida and its allies would have succeeded in launching another attack against the American homeland. Making us—giving us information about terrorist plans we couldn't get anywhere else, this program has saved innocent lives. In other words, it's vital. That's why I asked Congress to pass legislation so that our professionals can go forward, doing the duty we expect them to do. Unfortunately, the recent Supreme Court decision put the future of this program in question. That's another reason I went to Congress. We need this legislation to save it.

I am asking Congress to pass a clear law with clear guidelines based on the Detainee Treatment Act that was strongly supported by Senator John McCain. There is a debate about the specific provisions in my bill, and we'll work with Congress to continue to try to find common ground. I have one test for

this legislation; I'm going to answer one question as this legislation proceeds, and it's this: The intelligence community must be able to tell me that the bill Congress sends to my desk will allow this vital program to continue. That's what I'm going to ask.

The second bill before Congress would modernize our electronic surveillance laws and provide additional authority for the terrorist surveillance program. I authorized the National Security Agency to operate this vital program in response to the 9/11 attacks. It allows us to quickly monitor terrorist communications between someone overseas and someone in the United States, and it's helped detect and prevent attacks on our country. The principle behind this program is clear: When an Al Qaida operative is calling into the United States or out of the country, we need to know who they're calling, why they're calling, and what they're planning.

Both these bills are essential to winning the war on terror. We will work with Congress to get good bills out. We have a duty, we have a duty to work together to give our folks on the frontline the tools necessary to protect America. Time is running out. Congress is set to adjourn in just a few weeks. Congress needs to act wisely and promptly so I can sign good legislation.

And now I'll be glad to answer some questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

War on Terror/Preventing Further Attacks

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, former Secretary of State Colin Powell says the world is beginning to doubt the moral basis of our fight against terrorism. If a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Secretary of State feels this way, don't you think that Americans and the rest of the world are beginning to wonder whether you're following a flawed strategy?

The President. If there's any comparison between the compassion and decency of the American people and the terrorist tactics of extremists, it's flawed logic. I simply can't accept that. It's unacceptable to think that there's any kind of comparison between the behavior of the United States of America and the action of Islamic extremists who kill innocent women and children to achieve an objective, Terry.

My job, and the job of people here in Washington, DC, is to protect this country. We didn't ask for this war. You might remember the 2000 campaign. I don't remember spending much time talking about what it might be like to be a Commander in Chief in a different kind of war. But this enemy has struck us, and they want to strike us again. And we will give our folks the tools necessary to protect the country; that's our job.

It's a dangerous world. I wish it wasn't that way. I wish I could tell the American people, "Don't worry about it; they're not coming again." But they are coming again. And that's why I've sent this legislation up to Congress, and that's why we'll continue to work with allies in building a vast coalition to protect not only ourselves but them. The facts are, is that after 9/11, this enemy continued to attack and kill innocent people.

I happen to believe that they're bound by a common ideology. Matter of fact, I don't believe that—I know they are. And they want to impose that ideology throughout the broader Middle East. That's what they have said. It makes sense for the Commander in Chief and all of us involved in protecting this country to listen to the words of the enemy. And I take their words seriously. And that's what's going to be necessary to protect this country, is to listen carefully to what they say and stay ahead of them as they try to attack us.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Can I just follow up?

The President. No, you can't. Steve. If we follow up, we're not going to get—I want Hillman [G. Robert Hillman, Dallas Morning News] to be able to ask a question. It's his last press conference—not yet, Hillman. [*Laughter*] Soon. You and Wendell seem——

"Military Commissions Act of 2006"

Q. Thank you very much, sir. What do you say to the argument that your proposal is basically seeking support for torture, coerced evidence, and secret hearings? And Senator McCain says your plan will put U.S. troops at risk. What do you think about that?

The President. This debate is occurring because of the Supreme Court's ruling that said that we must conduct ourselves under the Common Article Three of the Geneva Convention. And that Common Article Three says that there will be no outrages upon human dignity. It's very vague. What does that mean, "outrages upon human dignity"? That's a statement that is wide open to interpretation. And what I'm proposing is that there be clarity in the law so that our professionals will have no doubt that that which they are doing is legal. You know, it's—and so the piece of legislation I sent up there provides our professionals that which is needed to go forward.

The first question that we've got to ask is, do we need the program? I believe we do need the program. And I detailed in a speech in the East Room what the program has yield—in other words, the kind of information we get when we interrogate people within the law. You see, sometimes you can pick up information on the battlefield; sometimes you can pick it up through letters; but sometimes you actually have to question the people who know the strategy and plans of the enemy. And in this case, we questioned people like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who we believe ordered the attacks on 9/11, or Ramzi bin al-Shibh or Abu Zubaydah—coldblooded killers who were part of planning the attack that killed 3,000 people. And we need to be able to question them, because it helps yield information, information necessary for us to be able to do our job.

Now, the Court said that you've got to live under Article Three of the Geneva Convention, and the standards are so vague that our professionals won't be able to carry forward the program, because they don't want to be tried as war criminals. They don't want to break the law. These are decent, honorable citizens who are on the frontline of protecting the American people, and they expect our Government to give them clarity about what is right and what is wrong in the law. And that's what we have asked to do.

And we believe a good way to go is to use the amendment that we worked with John McCain on, called the Detainee Treatment Act, as the basis for clarity for people we would ask to question the enemy. In other words, it is a way to bring U.S. law into play. It provides more clarity for our professionals, and that's what these people expect. These are decent citizens who don't want to break the law.

Now, this idea that somehow we've got to live under international treaties, you know—and that's fine, we do, but oftentimes the United States Government passes law to clarify obligations under international treaty. And what I'm concerned about is, if we don't do that, then it's very conceivable our professionals could be held to account based upon court decisions in other countries. And I don't believe Americans want that. I believe Americans want us to protect the country, to have clear standards for our law enforcement, intelligence officers, and give them the tools necessary to protect us within the law.

It's an important debate, Steve. It really is. It's a debate that really is going to define whether or not we can protect ourselves. I will tell you this: I've spent a lot of time on this issue, as you can imagine, and I've talked to professionals, people I count on for advice—these are people that are going to represent those on the frontline of protecting this country. They're not going forward with the program. They're not going—the professionals will not step up unless there's clarity in the law. So Congress has got a decision to make: Do you want the program to go forward or not?

I strongly recommend that this program go forward in order for us to be able to protect America.

Hillman. This is Hillman's last press conference, so—sorry, sorry, about that.

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On another of your top priorities, immigration, leaders of both parties have indicated that any chance of comprehensive immigration reform is dead before the election. Is this an issue you would like to revisit in a lame-duck session after the election? Or would it be put off until the new Congress?

The President. Bob, I strongly believe that in order to protect this border, Congress has got to pass a comprehensive plan that on the one hand provides additional money to secure the border, and on the other hand

recognizes that people are sneaking in here to do jobs Americans aren't doing. It would be better that they not sneak in, that they would come on a temporary basis, in an orderly way, to do work Americans aren't doing and then go home. And I will continue to urge Congress to think comprehensively about this vital piece of legislation.

I went up to the Hill yesterday, and of course this topic came up. It's exactly what I told the Members of Congress. They wanted to know whether or not we were implementing border security measures that they had funded last January, and the answer is, we are. One of the key things I told them was we had ended what's called catch-and-release. That was a—you know, a Border Patrol agent would find somebody, particularly from—not from Mexico, and would say, "Well, we don't have enough detention space, so why don't you come back and check in with the local person you're supposed to check in with," and then they'd never show back up. And that, of course, frustrated the Border Patrol agents; it frustrates American citizens; it frustrates me. And we ended it because Congress appropriated money that increased the number of beds available to detain people when we get them sneaking into our country illegally.

The border has become modernized. And Secretary Chertoff here, later on this month, will be announcing further modernizations, as he has led a contract that will use all kinds of different technologies to make the border more secure. But in the long run, to secure this border, we've got to have a rational work plan.

And finally, we're going to have to treat people with dignity in this country. Ours is a nation of immigrants, and when Congress gets down to a comprehensive bill, I would just remind them, it's virtually impossible to try to find 11 million folks who have been here, working hard and, in some cases, raising families—and kick them out. It's just not going to work. But granting automatic citizenship won't work either. To me, that would just provide an additional incentive for people to try to sneak in, and so therefore, there is a rational way forward. I'll continue working—I don't know the timetable. My answer is, as soon as possible; that's what I'd like to see done.

Thank you. Let's see, Wendell. Coming your way. Everybody is going to get one.

United Nations/Iran

Q. My apologies, Mr. President, for talking too long at the start.

The President. Don't worry. I'm not going to apologize for talking too long to your answer. [*Laughter*]

Q. Talk as long as you'd like, sir. [*Laughter*]

When you go to New York next week, it's our thinking that one of the things you'll be trying to do is to get more international support for taking a tough stance against Iran. I wonder how much that is frustrated by two things: one, the war in Iraq and world criticism of that; and the other, the Iraqi Prime Minister going to Iran and basically challenging your administration's claim that Iran is meddling in Iraqi affairs.

The President. First, Wendell, my decision, along with other countries, to remove Saddam Hussein, has obviously created some concern amongst allies, but it certainly hasn't diminished the coalitions we put together to deal with radicalism. For example, there's 70 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative, and that's an initiative to help prevent weapons of mass destruction and/or component parts from being delivered to countries that could use them to hurt us; or the broad war on terror, the intelligence sharing or financial—sharing of financial information; or Afghanistan, where NATO troops are there now, along with ours.

In other words, there's a broad coalition. Most nations recognize the threat of Iran having a nuclear weapon in the middle of the Middle East. And there's common consensus that we need to work together to prevent the Iranian regime from developing that nuclear weapons program.

I am pleased that there is strong consensus. And now the objective is to continue reminding the Iranian regime that there is unanimity in the world and that we will move forward together. And we expect them to come to the table and negotiate with the EU in good faith. And should they choose to

verifiably suspend their program, their enrichment program, we'll come to the table. That's what we have said; offer still stands.

During the Hizballah attacks on Israel, the United Nations did pass a resolution with our European friends and ourselves, and of course, Russia and China voting for the resolution. I think it passed 14 to 1; one nation voted against the resolution toward Iran. So there is common consensus. And you've heard me lament oftentimes, it takes a while to get diplomacy working. There's one nation of Iran and a bunch of nations like us trying to kind of head in the same direction. And my concern is that they'll stall; they'll try to wait us out.

So part of my objective in New York is to remind people that stalling shouldn't be allowed. In other words, we need to move the process, and they need to understand we're firm in our commitment, and if they try to drag their feet or get us to look the other way, that we won't do that—that we're firmly committed in our desire to send a common signal to the Iranian regime.

It is important for the Iranian people to also understand we respect them; we respect their history; we respect their traditions; we respect the right for people to worship freely; we would hope that people would be able to express themselves in the public square; and that our intention is to make the world safer. And we'll continue to do so.

Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network] and then Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News].

Iran's Nuclear Enrichment Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If I could follow up on that question.

The President. Yes.

Q. Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad, the Iranian President, will actually be in the same building as you next week, in Manhattan for the United Nations General Assembly. You say that you want to give the message to the Iranian people that you respect them. Is this not an opportunity, perhaps, to show that you also respect their leader? Would you be willing to, perhaps, meet face to face with Ahmadi-nejad, and would this possibly be a breakthrough, some sort of opportunity for a breakthrough on a personal level?

The President. No, I'm not going to meet with him. I have made it clear to the Iranian regime that we will sit down with the Iranians once they verifiably suspend their enrichment program. And I meant what I said.

Martha.

Saddam Hussein's Link to Al Qaida

Q. Mr. President, you have said throughout the war in Iraq and building up to the war in Iraq that there was a relationship between Saddam Hussein and Zarqawi and Al Qaida. A Senate Intelligence Committee report a few weeks ago said there was no link, no relationship, and that the CIA knew this and issued a report last fall. And yet a month ago, you were still saying there was a relationship. Why did you keep saying that? Why do you continue to say that? And do you still believe that?

The President. The point I was making to Ken Herman's [Austin American-Statesman] question was that Saddam Hussein was a state sponsor of terror and that Mr. Zarqawi was in Iraq. He had been wounded in Afghanistan, had come to Iraq for treatment. He had ordered the killing of a U.S. citizen in Jordan. I never said there was an operational relationship. I was making the point that Saddam Hussein had been declared a state sponsor of terror for a reason, and therefore, he was dangerous.

The broader point I was saying—I was reminding people was why we removed Saddam Hussein from power. He was dangerous. I would hope people aren't trying to rewrite the history of Saddam Hussein—all of a sudden, he becomes kind of a benevolent fellow. He's a dangerous man. And one of the reasons he was declared a state sponsor of terror was because that's what he was. He harbored terrorists; he paid for families of suicide bombers. Never have I said that Saddam Hussein gave orders to attack 9/11. What I did say was, after 9/11, when you see a threat, you've got to take it seriously. And I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein—as did Congress, as did the United Nations. I firmly believe the world is better off without Saddam in power, Martha.

Dave [David Gregory, NBC News]. He's back.

"Military Commissions Act of 2006"

Q. Sorry, I've got to get disentangled——

The President. Would you like me to go to somebody else here, until you—[*laughter*].

Q. Sorry.

The President. But take your time, please. [*Laughter*]

Q. I really apologize for that. Anyway——

The President. I must say, having gone through those gyrations, you're looking beautiful today, Dave. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, critics of your proposed bill on interrogation rules say there's another important test—these critics include John McCain, who you've mentioned several times this morning—and that test is this: If a CIA officer, paramilitary or special operations soldier from the United States were captured in Iran or North Korea, and they were roughed up, and those Governments said, "Well, they were interrogated in accordance with our interpretation of the Geneva Conventions," and then they were put on trial and they were convicted based on secret evidence that they were not able to see, how would you react to that, as Commander in Chief?

The President. David, my reaction is, is that if the nations such as those you named, adopted the standards within the Detainee Detention Act, the world would be better. That's my reaction. We're trying to clarify law. We're trying to set high standards, not ambiguous standards.

And let me just repeat, Dave, we can debate this issue all we want, but the practical matter is, if our professionals don't have clear standards in the law, the program is not going to go forward. You cannot ask a young intelligence officer to violate the law. And they're not going to. They—let me finish, please—they will not violate the law. You can ask this question all you want, but the bottom line is—and the American people have got to understand this—that this program won't go forward; if there is vague standards applied, like those in Common Article Three from the Geneva Convention, it's just not going to go forward. You can't ask a young professional on the frontline of protecting this country to violate law.

Now, I know they said they're not going to prosecute them. Think about that: Go ahead and violate it; we won't prosecute you. These people aren't going to do that, Dave. Now, we can justify anything you want and bring up this example or that example; I'm just telling you the bottom line, and that's why this debate is important, and it's a vital debate.

Now, perhaps some in Congress don't think the program is important. That's fine. I don't know if they do or don't. I think it's vital, and I have the obligation to make sure that our professionals who I would ask to go conduct interrogations to find out what might be happening or who might be coming to this country—I got to give them the tools they need. And that is clear law.

Q. But sir, this is an important point, and I think it depends——

The President. The point I just made is the most important point.

Q. Okay.

The President. And that is, the program is not going forward. David, you can give a hypothetical about North Korea or any other country; the point is that the program is not going to go forward if our professionals do not have clarity in the law. And the best way to provide clarity in the law is to make sure the Detainee Treatment Act is the crux of the law. That's how we define Common Article Three, and it sets a good standard for the countries that you just talked about.

Next man.

Q. No, but wait a second, I think this is an important point——

The President. I know you think it's an important point.

Q. Sir, with respect, if other countries interpret the Geneva Conventions as they see fit—as they see fit—you're saying that you'd be okay with that?

The President. I am saying that I would hope that they would adopt the same standards we adopt and that by clarifying Article Three, we make it stronger; we make it clearer; we make it definite.

And I will tell you again, David, you can ask every hypothetical you want, but the American people have got to know the facts. And the bottom line is simple: If Congress passes a law that does not clarify the rules—if they do not do that, the program is not going forward.

Q. This will not endanger U.S. troops, in your——

The President. Next man.

Q. This will not endanger U.S. troops——

The President. David, next man, please. Thank you. It took you a long time to unravel, and it took you a long time to ask your question.

Democracy Efforts in Iraq/Insurgency and Terrorist Attacks

Q. Morning, sir. I'd like to ask you another question about Iraq. It's been another bloody day there. The last several weeks have been 40, 50, 60 bodies a day. We've been talking for the last several months about Iraq being on the brink of a civil war. I'd like to ask you if it's not time to start talking about Iraq as being in a civil war, and if it's not, what's the threshold?

The President. Well, it seems like it's pretty easy to speculate from over here about the conditions on the ground. And so what I do is, I talk to people like our Ambassador and General Casey, which I just did this morning. And they and the Iraqi Government just don't agree with the hypothesis it is a civil war. They believe that there's, no question, violence; they believe that Al Qaida is still creating havoc; they know there's people taking reprisal; they're confident there are still Saddamists who are threatening people and carrying out attacks.

But they also believe that the Baghdad security plan is making progress. There was a lot of discussion about Al Anbar province recently, and I spent some time talking with our commanders. No question, it's a dangerous place. It's a place where Al Qaida is really trying to root themselves; it's a place from which they'd like to operate. You know, this business about Al Qaida—Al Anbar's loss is just not the case; it's not what our commanders think.

So to answer your question, there's no question, it's tough. What I look for is whether or not the unity Government is moving forward, whether or not they have a political plan to resolve issues such as oil and federalism, whether or not they're willing to reconcile, and whether or not Iraqi troops and Iraqi police are doing their jobs.

Q. But how do you measure progress with a body count like that?

The President. Well, one way you do it is, you measure progress based upon the resilience of the Iraqi people—do they want there to be a unity government, or are they splitting up into factions of people warring with the head leaders, with different alternatives of governing styles and different philosophies. The unity Government is intact. It's working forward. They're making tough decisions, and we'll stay with them. We'll stay with them because success in Iraq is important for this country. We're constantly changing our tactics. We're constantly adapting to the enemy. We're constantly saying, "Here's the way forward; we want to work with you." But this is really the big challenge of the 21st century, whether or not this country and allies are willing to stand with moderate people in order to fight off extremists. It is the challenge.

I said the other night in a speech, this is like the ideological war of the 21st century, and I believe it. And I believe that if we leave that region, if we don't help democracy prevail, then our children and grandchildren will be faced with an unbelievable chaotic and dangerous situation in the Middle East. Imagine an enemy that can't stand what we believe in getting a hold of oil resources and taking a bunch of oil off the market in order to have an economic punishment. In other words, they say, "You go ahead and do this, and if you don't, we'll punish you economically." Or imagine a Middle East with an Iran with a nuclear weapon threatening free nations and trying to promote their vision of extremism through Hizballah.

I find it interesting that young democracies are being challenged by extremists. I also take great hope in the fact that, by far, the vast majority of people want normalcy and want peace, including in Iraq; that there is a deep desire for people to raise their children in a peaceful world; the desire for mothers to have the best for their child. And it's not—this isn't—you know, Americans—you've got to understand, this is universal. And the idea of just saying, well, that's not important for us—to me—or the future of the country, it's just not acceptable.

And I know it's tough in Iraq. Of course it's tough in Iraq, because an enemy is trying to stop this new democracy, just like people are trying to stop the development of a Palestinian state, which I strongly support, or people trying to undermine the Lebanese democracy. And the reason why is because the ideologs understand that liberty will trump their dark vision of the world every time. And that's why I call it an ideological struggle. And it's a necessary struggle, and it's a vital struggle.

Richard [Richard Bennadetto, USA Today].

United Nations

Q. Mr. President, as you prepare to go up to the United Nations next week to address the General Assembly, Secretary Kofi Annan has been critical of some of U.S. policies, particularly in Afghanistan, lately. How would you characterize the relationship between the United States and the United Nations at this point?

The President. Yes. First of all, my personal relationship with Kofi Annan is good. I like him. And we've got a good relationship, personal relationship. I think a lot of Americans are frustrated with the United Nations, to be frank with you. Take, for example, Darfur—I'm frustrated with the United Nations in regards to Darfur. I have said and this Government has said, there's genocide taking place in the Sudan. And it breaks our collective hearts to know that.

We believe that the best way to solve the problem is there be a political track as well as a security track. And part of the security track was for there initially to be African Union forces supported by the international community, hopefully to protect innocent lives from militia. And the AU force is there, but it needs—it's not robust enough. It needs to be bigger. It needs to be more viable.

And so the strategy was then to go to the United Nations and pass a resolution enabling the AU force to become blue-helmeted—that means, become a United Nations peacekeeping force—with additional support from around the world. And I suggested that there also be help from NATO nations in logistics and support in order to make the security effective enough so that a political process could go forward to save lives.

The problem is, is that the United Nations hasn't acted. And so I can understand why those who are concerned about Darfur are frustrated; I am. I'd like to see more robust United Nations action. What you'll hear is, "Well, the Government of Sudan must invite the United Nations in for us to act." Well, there are other alternatives, like passing a resolution saying, "We're coming in with a U.N. force in order to save lives."

I'm proud of our country's support for those who suffer. We've provided, by far, the vast majority of food and aid. I'm troubled by reports I hear about escalating violence. I can understand the desperation people feel for women being pulled out of these refugee centers and raped. And now is the time for the U.N. to act.

So you asked if there are levels of frustration—there's a particular level of frustration. I also believe that the United Nations can do a better job spending the taxpayer—our taxpayers' money. I think there needs to be better management structures in place, better accountability in the organization. I hope the United Nations still strongly stands for liberty. I hope they would support my call to end tyranny in the 21st century.

So I'm looking forward to going up there to—it's always an interesting experience, Richard, for a west Texas fellow to speak to the United Nations. And I'm going to have a strong message, one that's—hope, based upon hope, and my belief that the civilized world must stand with moderate reformist-minded people and help them realize their dreams. I believe that's the call of the 21st century.

Let's see; who else? The front row people have all asked. Hutch [Ron Hutcheson, Knight Ridder].

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. Good morning.

The President. Good morning. Thank you.

Q. On both the eavesdropping program and the detainee issues——

The President. We call it the terrorist surveillance program, Hutch.

Q. That's the one.

The President. Yes.

Q. You're working with Congress sort of after the fact, after you established these programs on your own authority. And Federal courts have ruled in both cases, you overstepped your authority. Is your willingness to work with Congress now an acknowledgment that that is a fact?

The President. First of all, I strongly believe that the district court ruling on the terrorist surveillance program was flawed. And there's a court process to determine whether or not my belief is true. That's why it's on appeal. We're working with Congress to add certainty to the program.

In terms of the Hamdan decision, I obviously believed that I could move forward with military commissions. Other Presidents had. The Supreme Court didn't agree, and they said, "Work with Congress." And that's why we're working with Congress.

McKinnon [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

National Economy/2006 Elections

Q. Thank you, sir. Polls show that many people are still more focused on domestic issues like the economy than on the international issues in deciding how to vote in November. And I'd just like to ask you if you could contrast what you think will happen on the economy if Republicans retain control of Congress versus what happens on the economy if Democrats take over?

The President. If I weren't here—first of all, I don't believe the Democrats are going to take over, because our record on the economy is strong. If the American people would take a step back and realize how effective our policies have been, given the circumstances, they will continue to embrace our philosophy of government. We've overcome recession, attacks, hurricanes, scandals, and the economy is growing—4.7 percent unemployment rate. It's been a strong economy. And I've strongly believed the reason it is because we cut taxes and, at the same time, showed fiscal responsibility here in Washington, with the people's money. That's why the deficit could be cut in half by 2009 or before.

And so I shouldn't answer your hypothetical, but I will. I believe if the Democrats had the capacity to, they would raise taxes on the working people. That's what I believe. They'll call it tax on the rich, but that's not the way it works in Washington, see. For example, running up the top income tax bracket would tax small businesses. A lot of small businesses are subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships that pay tax at the individual level. And if you raise income taxes on them, you hurt job creation. Our answer to economic growth is to make the tax cuts permanent so there's certainty in the Tax Code and people have got money to spend in their pockets.

And so yes, I've always felt the economy is a determinate issue, if not the determinate issue in campaigns. We've had a little history of that in our family and—[*laughter*]—you might remember. But it's a—I certainly hope this election is based upon economic performance.

Let's see here, kind of working my way—yes, Mark [Mark Silva, Chicago Tribune].

PATRIOT Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd also like to ask an election-related question. The Republican leader in the House this week said that Democrats—he wonders if they are more interested in protecting the terrorists than protecting the American people. Do you agree with him, sir? And do you think that's the right tone to set for this upcoming campaign, or do you think he owes somebody an apology?

The President. I wouldn't have exactly put it that way. But I do believe there's a difference of attitude. I mean, take the PATRIOT Act, for example—an interesting debate that took place, not once, but twice, and the second time around there was a lot of concern about whether or not the PATRIOT Act was necessary to protect the country. There's no doubt in my mind, we needed to make sure the PATRIOT Act was renewed to tear down walls that exist so that intelligence people could serve—could share information with criminal people. It wasn't the case, Mark, before 9/11.

In other words, if somebody had some intelligence that they thought was necessary to protect the people, they couldn't share that

with somebody who's job it was to rout people out of society to prevent them from attacking. It just made no sense. And so there was a healthy debate, and we finally got the PATRIOT Act extended after it was passed right after 9/11. To me, it was an indication of just a difference of approach.

No one should ever question the patriotism of somebody who—let me just start over. I don't question the patriotism of somebody who doesn't agree with me—I just don't. And I think it's unwise to do that. I don't think that's what leaders do. I do think that—I think that there is a difference of opinion here in Washington about tools necessary to protect the country—the terrorist surveillance program—or what did you call it, Hutcheson, yes, the illegal eavesdropping program is what you wanted to call it—[*laughter*]—IEP as opposed to TSP. [*Laughter*] There's just a difference of opinion about what we need to do to protect our country, Mark. I'm confident the leader, you know, meant nothing personal. I know that he shares my concern that we pass good legislation to get something done.

Ken.

Former Governor Ann Richards of Texas

Q. Thank you, sir. I'd be interested in your thoughts and remembrances about Ann Richards, and particularly what you learned in running against her 12 years ago.

The President. Yes. Obviously, Laura and I pray for her family. I know this is a tough time for her children. She loved her children, and they loved her a lot.

Running against Ann Richards taught me a lot. She was a really, really good candidate. She was a hard worker. She had the capacity to be humorous and yet make a profound point. I think she made a positive impact on the State of Texas. One thing is for certain: She empowered a lot of people to be—to want to participate in the political process that might not have felt that they were welcome in the process.

I'll miss her. She was a—she really kind of helped define Texas politics in its best way. And one of the things we have done is, we've—in our history, we've had characters, people larger than life, people that could fill the stage; when the spotlight was on them, wouldn't shirk from the spotlight but would talk Texan and explain our State. And she was really good at that.

And so I'm sad she passed away, and I wish her family all the best—and all her friends. She had a lot of friends in Texas. A lot of people loved Ann Richards.

And anyway, as I understand, they're working on the deal and how to honor her, and she'll be lying in state in the capitol, and——

Q. Will you be sending anybody to——

The President. Yes, I will send somebody to represent me. I don't know who it is going to be yet. Well, we're trying to get the details. Before I ask somebody, I've got to find out the full details.

Thanks for asking the question. Let's see, New York Times, Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg].

"Military Commissions Act of 2006"

Q. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. Fine. How are you doing?

Q. I'm well today. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Did you start with, "Hi, Mr. President"?

Q. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Okay, that's fine. Either way, that's always a friendly greeting. Thank you.

Q. We're a friendly newspaper.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*] Let me just say, I'd hate to see unfriendly. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Want me to go on to somebody else and you collect your—[*laughter*]. Sorry, go ahead, Sheryl.

Q. Mr. President, your administration had all summer to negotiate with lawmakers on the detainee legislation. How is it that you now find yourself in a situation where you have, essentially, an open rebellion on Capitol Hill led by some of the leading members of your own party, very respected voices in military affairs? And secondly, would you veto the bill if it passes in the form that the Armed Services Committee approved yesterday?

The President. First, we have been working throughout the summer, talking to key players about getting a bill that will enable

the program to go forward, and was pleased that the House of Representatives passed a good bill with an overwhelming bipartisan majority out of their committee, the Armed Services Committee. And I felt that was good progress. And, obviously, we've got a little work to do in the Senate, and we'll continue making our case. But, no, we've been involved—ever since the Supreme Court decision came down, Sheryl, we've been talking about both the military tribunals and this Article Three of the Geneva Convention.

The Article Three of the Geneva Convention is hard for a lot of citizens to understand. But let's see if I can put it this way for people to understand. There is a very vague standard that the Court said must kind of be the guide for our conduct in the war on terror and the detainee policy. It's so vague that it's impossible to ask anybody to participate in the program for fear—for that person having the fear of breaking the law. That's the problem.

And so we worked with members of both bodies and both parties to try to help bring some definition to Common Article Three. I really don't think most Americans want international courts being able to determine how we protect ourselves. And my assurance to people is that we can pass law here in the United States that helps define our treaty—international treaty obligations. We have done that in the past. It is not the first time that we have done this. And I believe it's necessary to do it this time in order for the program to go forward.

Peter [Peter Baker, Washington Post].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sheryl's second question was whether you would veto the bill as it passed yesterday.

The President. Oh, I don't—that's like saying, can you work with a Democrat Congress, when I don't think the Democrat Congress is going to get elected. I believe we can get a good bill. And there is—as you know, there's several steps in this process. The House will be working on a bill next week—the Senate will be. Hopefully we can reconcile differences. Hopefully we can come together and find a way forward without ruining the program.

So your question was Sheryl's question?

Q. No, sir.

The President. Oh, you were following up on Sheryl's question?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. That's a first. [*Laughter*]

Iraqi Military and Security Forces/U.S. Armed Forces

Q. We're a friendly paper too. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, you've often used the phrase "stand up/stand down," to describe your policy when it comes to troop withdrawals from Iraq—as Iraqi troops are trained and take over the fight, American troops will come home. The Pentagon now says they've trained 294,000 Iraqi troops and expect to complete their program of training 325,000 by the end of the year. But American troops aren't coming home, and there are more there now than there were previously. Is the goalpost moving, sir?

The President. No, no. The enemy is changing tactics, and we're adapting. That's what's happening. And I asked General Casey today, "Have you got what you need?" He said, "Yes, I've got what I need."

We all want the troops to come home as quickly as possible. But they'll be coming home when our commanders say the Iraqi Government is capable of defending itself and sustaining itself and is governing itself. And, you know, I was hoping we would have—be able to—hopefully, Casey would come and say, you know, "Mr. President, there's a chance to have fewer troops there." It looked like that might be the case—until the violence started rising in Baghdad, and it spiked in June and July, as you know—or increased in June and July.

And so they've got a plan now. They've adapted. The enemy moved; we'll help the Iraqis move. And so they're building a berm around the city to make it harder for people to come in with explosive devices, for example. They're working different neighborhoods inside of Baghdad to collect guns and bring people to detention. They've got a "clear, build, and hold" strategy.

The reason why there are not fewer troops there, but are more—you're right; it's gone from 135,000 to about 147,000, I think, or 140-something thousand troops—is because George Casey felt he needed them to help the Iraqis achieve their objective.

And that's the way I will continue to conduct the war. I'll listen to generals. Maybe it's not the politically expedient thing to do, is to increase troops coming into an election, but we just can't—you can't make decisions based upon politics about how to win a war. And the fundamental question you have to ask—and Martha knows what I'm about to say—is, can the President trust his commanders on the ground to tell him what is necessary? That's really one of the questions.

In other words, if you say, "I'm going to rely upon their judgment," the next question is, how good is their judgment, or is my judgment good enough to figure out whether or not they know what they're doing? And I'm going to tell you, I've got great confidence in General John Abizaid and General George Casey. These are extraordinary men who understand the difficulties of the task and understand there is a delicate relationship between self-sufficiency on the Iraqis' part and U.S. presence.

And this is not a science but an art form in a way, to try to make sure that a unity government is able to defend itself and, at the same time, not be totally reliant upon coalition forces to do the job for them. And the issue is complicated by the fact that there are still Al Qaida or Saddam remnants or militias that are still violent. And so to answer your question, the policy still holds. The "stand up/stand down" still holds, and so does the policy of me listening to our commanders to give me the judgment necessary for troop levels.

Richard [Richard Wolffe, Newsweek] and then Allen [Mike Allen, Time].

Usama bin Laden/Pakistan's Role in the War on Terror

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Earlier this week, you told a group of journalists that you thought the idea of sending Special Forces to Pakistan to hunt down bin Laden was a strategy that would not work.

The President. Yes.

Q. Now recently you've also——

The President. It's because, first of all, Pakistan is a sovereign nation.

Q. Well, recently you've also described bin Laden as a sort of modern day Hitler or Mussolini. And I'm wondering why—if you can explain why you think it's a bad idea to send more resources to hunt down bin Laden, wherever he is?

The President. We are, Richard. Thank you. Thanks for asking the question. They were asking me about somebody's report, well, Special Forces here—Pakistan—if he is in Pakistan, which this person thought he might be, who is asking the question—Pakistan is a sovereign nation. In order for us to send thousands of troops into a sovereign nation, we've got to be invited by the Government of Pakistan.

Secondly, the best way to find somebody who is hiding is to enhance your intelligence and to spend the resources necessary to do that. Then when you find him, you bring him to justice. And there is a kind of an urban myth here in Washington about how this administration hasn't stayed focused on Usama bin Laden. Forget it. It's convenient throwaway lines when people say that. We have been on the hunt, and we'll stay on the hunt until we bring him to justice. And we're doing it in a smart fashion, Richard; we are.

And I look forward to talking to President Musharraf. Look, he doesn't like Al Qaida. They tried to kill him. And we've had a good record of bringing people to justice inside of Pakistan, because the Paks are in the lead. They know the stakes about dealing with a violent form of ideological extremists.

And so we will continue on the hunt. And we've been effective about bringing to justice most of those who planned and plotted the 9/11 attacks, and we've still got a lot of pressure on them. The best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense and keep pressure on them.

Last question. Allen.

American Culture

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. It was reported earlier this week that in a meeting with conservative journalists, you said you'd seen changes in the culture. You referred to it as a Third Awakening. I wonder if you could tell us about—what you meant by that, what led you to that conclusion? And do you see any contradictory evidence in the culture?

The President. No, I said—Mike, thanks. I was just speculating that the culture might

be changing, and I was talking about when you're involved with making decisions of historic nature, you won't be around to see the effects of your decisions. And I said that when I work the ropelines, a lot of people come and say, "Mr. President, I'm praying for you"—a lot. As a matter of fact, it seems like a lot more now than when I was working ropelines in 1994. And I asked them—I was asking their opinion about whether or not there was a Third Awakening, I called it.

I'd just read a book on Abraham Lincoln, and his Presidency was right around the time of what they called the Second Awakening, and I was curious to know whether or not these smart people felt like there was any historical parallels. I also said that I had run for office the first time to change a culture—Herman and Hutch remember me saying, you know, the culture that said, "If it feels good, do it, and if you've got a problem, blame somebody else"—to helping to work change a culture in which each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life. In other words, ushering in a responsibility era. And I reminded people that responsibility means, if you're a father, love your child; or if you're corporate America, be honest with the taxpayers; if you're a citizen of this country, love your neighbor.

And so I was wondering out loud with them. It seems like to me that something is happening in the religious life of America. But I'm not a very good focus group either. I'm encapsulated here. I'm able to see a lot of people, and from my perspective, people are coming to say, "I'm praying for you." And it's an uplifting part of being the President; it inspires me. And I'm grateful that a fellow citizen would say a prayer for me and Laura.

Anyway, thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:15 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan, on September 11, 2002; Abu Zubaydah, a leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization, who was captured in Faisalabad, Pakistan, on March 28, 2002; U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. The President also referred to H.R. 6054, the "Military Commissions Act of 2006," and S. 2455 and S. 3874, both concerning the terrorist surveillance program. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

September 9

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

September 10

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to New York City, where, at the site of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, they participated in a wreath-laying ceremony commemorating the fifth anniversary of the attacks. Later, at St. Paul's Chapel, they participated in a service of prayer and remembrance.

Also in the afternoon, the President toured the Tribute WTC Visitor Center commemorating the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

September 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at Fort Pitt Firehouse, the President and Mrs. Bush had breakfast with New York City first-responders. Then, at 8:46 a.m., they participated in a moment of silence followed by a ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Shanksville, PA,

where, at the site of the crash of United Flight 93, they participated in a wreath-laying ceremony for victims of the September 11, 2001, plane crash.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at the Pentagon, they participated in a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. They then returned to Washington, DC.

September 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. He then met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

Later in the morning, the President participated in an interview with print journalists.

During the day, the President dropped by a meeting between National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley and Minister of the Interior and Regional Development Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan to the White House on September 29.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to the White House on October 2.

The President announced his intention to nominate Frank Baxter to be Ambassador to Uruguay.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joseph B. Gildenhorn and Susan Hutchison as members of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

September 13

In the morning, the President had breakfast with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the historic Evermay house, the President attended a Republican National Committee reception.

During the day, the President dropped by a meeting between Vice President Dick Cheney and Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski of Poland and a meeting between National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni of Israel.

September 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the U.S. Capitol, the President made remarks to the House Republican Conference.

In the afternoon, the President had a working lunch with President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea. Later, he met with the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents.

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social dinner in honor of the Thelonius Monk Institute of Jazz followed by entertainment in the East Room.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New York City to participate in the 61st United Nations General Assembly on September 18–20.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan to the White House on September 22.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to the White House on September 26.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michele Davis to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Public Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate Caroline C. Hunter to be Commissioner of the Election Assistance Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Palmer to be a Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael J. Astrue to be Commissioner of Social Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ned L. Siegel, Norman B. Coleman, and Barbara Boxer to be U.S. Representatives to the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara McConnell Barrett and Cecil E. Floyd to be Alternate U.S. Representatives to the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The President announced his intention to appoint Frank D. Stella as a member of the Board of Governors of the United Service Organizations, Inc.

The President announced his intention to appoint Duane R. Roberts, Jean Kennedy Smith, and Wilma E. Bernstein as members of the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The President announced that he has named Jeremy Katz and Myriah Jordan as Special Assistants to the President for Policy.

September 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted September 13

Frank Baxter,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

Thomas M. Hardiman,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Richard L. Nygaard, retired.

Submitted September 15

Michael J. Astrue,
of Massachusetts, to be Commissioner of Social Security for a term expiring January 19, 2013, vice Jo Anne Barnhart.

Caroline C. Hunter,
of Florida, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for a term expiring December 12, 2009, vice Paul S. DeGregorio, term expired.

David Palmer,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2011, vice Cari M. Dominguez, term expired.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released September 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released September 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Fact sheet: The Fifth Anniversary of September 11, 2001

Excerpts of the President's address to the Nation on the war on terror

Advance text of the President's address to the Nation on the war on terror

Released September 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey to Washington

Released September 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released September 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush's Participation in the 61st U.N. General Assembly

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Pakistani President Musharraf

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome President Karzai of Afghanistan

Released September 15

Transcript of a press briefing on the President's Participation in the 61st United Nations General Assembly

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary announcing that Donald L. Evans will attend the funeral of former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas to be held on September 18

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.