Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

Monday, December 11, 2006
Volume 42—Number 49
Pages 2119–2146

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Meetings With Foreign Leaders; Resignations and Retirements
Children's holiday reception—2121
Congress, meeting with Members—2128
Congressional leaders, meeting—2141
Defense Department, meeting with Secretary of Defense-designate Gates—2124
Iraq Study Group, meeting—2126
National Christmas Tree, lighting—2140
Radio address—2120

Communications to Federal Agencies

Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2007, memorandum—2129

Executive Orders

Establishing an Emergency Board To Investigate Disputes Between Metro-North Railroad and Certain of Its Employees Represented by Certain Labor Organizations—2128
Strengthening Surface Transportation Security—2124

Interviews With the News Media

News conference with Prime Minister Blair of the United Kingdom, December 7—2129

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Costa Rica, President Arias Sanchez—2127
Iraq, Chairman Hakim of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution—2122
South Africa, President Mbeki—2141
United Kingdom, Prime Minister Blair—2129

Proclamations

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month—2119
National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day—2119

Resignations and Retirements

United Nations, U.S. Permanent Representative, resignation
Remarks—2123
Statement—2123

Statements by the President

See also Resignations and Retirements
Death of Jeane J. Kirkpatrick—2142
National economy—2143
Robert M. Gates to be the Secretary of Defense, Senate confirmation—2128

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—2146
Checklist of White House press releases—2145
Digest of other White House announcements—2143
Nominations submitted to the Senate—2144

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 8088—National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, 2006

December 1, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year, thousands of Americans lose their lives in accidents involving drunk and drugged driving. During National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, we continue our efforts to promote awareness of the dangers of impaired driving and encourage fellow citizens to never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

All Americans can play an important role in preventing drunk and drugged driving. Family members can discuss the dangers of impaired driving; businesses, schools, and organizations in our communities can help spread the message of awareness; and individuals can help protect family and friends by identifying a designated driver. During the holiday season, it is especially important to encourage responsible driving and to help ensure the safety of friends and loved ones.

My Administration is committed to saving lives by stopping drunk and drugged drivers before they put themselves and others at risk. We continue to work with communities across our Nation to increase public awareness and prevention of this serious offense. The Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has partnered with State and local law enforcement agencies to carry out the campaign, "Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest." This program aims to keep impaired drivers off our Nation's roads by creating new public education programs and toughening enforcement. The Office of National Drug Control Policy works to warn young drivers and their parents about the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs. My Administration is also supporting community and faith-based programs that encourage others to avoid the devastating consequences of impaired driving.

Every person has a responsibility to drive free of alcohol and drugs and to insist that friends and family do the same. By helping fight drunk and drugged driving, Americans everywhere can save lives and send a strong message that driving under the influence is not acceptable.

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 December 2006 as National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month. I encourage all Americans to make responsible decisions and to help prevent drunk and drugged driving.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of December, 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., December 6, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 7. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 8089—National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2006

December 1, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Sixty-five years ago, more than 2,400 Americans lost their lives in a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. On National Pearl Harbor

Remembrance Day, we think of those who died on December 7, 1941, and honor all those who sacrificed for our liberty during World War II.

On that peaceful Sunday morning, our country suffered a vicious, unprovoked attack that changed the course of history. Though our Pacific Fleet was nearly destroyed, our citizens were inspired by the great acts of heroism from those who survived and from those who did not. In the days that followed, our grief turned to resolution, and America embarked on a mission to defeat two of the most ruthless regimes the world has ever known. We pledge to always remember the character and sacrifice of the brave individuals at Pearl Harbor. Their selfless service helped deliver a great victory for the cause of freedom and, ultimately, transformed adversaries into the closest of friends.

After the devastating attacks on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared, "We are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows." In the 21st century, freedom is again under attack, and young Americans have stepped forward to serve in a global war on terror that will secure our liberty and determine the destiny of millions around the world. Like generations before, we will answer history's call with confidence, confront threats to our way of life, and build a more peaceful world for our children and grandchildren.

The Congress, by Public Law 103–308, as amended, has designated December 7 of each year as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 2006, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I encourage all Americans to observe this solemn occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I urge all Federal agencies, interested organizations, groups, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff this December 7 in honor of those who died as a result of their service at Pearl Harbor.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of December, 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., December 6, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 7. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 2, 2006

Good morning. I returned home this week from a visit to the Middle East. On my trip, I met with Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq to discuss how we can improve the situation on the ground in his country and help the Iraqis build a lasting democracy.

My meeting with Prime Minister Maliki was our third since he took office 6 months ago. With each meeting, I'm coming to know him better, and I'm becoming more impressed by his desire to make the difficult choices that will put his country on a better path. During our meeting, I told the Prime Minister that America is ready to make changes to better support the unity Government of Iraq, and that several key principles will guide our efforts.

First, the success of Prime Minister Maliki's Government is critical to success in Iraq. His unity Government was chosen through free elections in which nearly 12 million Iraqis cast their ballots in support of democracy. Our goal in Iraq is to strengthen his democratic Government and help Iraq's leaders build a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself—and is an ally in the war on terror.

Second, the success of the Iraqi Government depends on the success of the Iraqi security forces. The training of Iraqi security forces has been steady, yet we both agreed that we need to do more, and we need to do it faster. The Prime Minister wants to show the people who elected him that he's willing to make the hard decisions necessary to provide security.

To do that, he needs larger and more capable Iraqi forces under his control, and he

needs them quickly. By helping Iraq's elected leaders get the Iraqi forces they need, we will help Iraq's democratic Government become more effective in fighting the terrorists and other violent extremists, and in providing security and stability, particularly in Baghdad.

Third, success in Iraq requires strong institutions that will stand the test of time and hardship. Our goal in Iraq is to help Prime Minister Maliki build a country that is united, where the rule of law prevails and the rights of minorities are respected. The Prime Minister made clear that splitting his country into parts is not what the Iraqi people want and that any partition of Iraq would lead to an increase in sectarian violence.

Security in Iraq requires sustained action by the Iraqi security forces, yet in the long term, security in Iraq hinges on reconciliation among Iraq's different ethnic and religious communities. And the Prime Minister has committed his Government to achieving that goal.

The Prime Minister and I also discussed the review of America's strategy in Iraq that is now nearing completion. As part of this review, I've asked our military leaders in the Pentagon and those on the ground in Iraq to provide their recommendations on the best way forward.

A bipartisan panel, led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, is also conducting a review. And I look forward to receiving their report next week. I want to hear all advice before I make any decisions about adjustments to our strategy in Iraq.

I recognize that the recent violence in Iraq has been unsettling. Many people in our country are wondering about the way forward. The work ahead will not be easy, yet by helping Prime Minister Maliki strengthen Iraq's democratic institutions and promote national reconciliation, our military leaders and diplomats can help put Iraq on a solid path to liberty and democracy. The decisions we make in Iraq will be felt across the broader Middle East.

Failure in Iraq would embolden the extremists who hate America and want nothing more than to see our demise. It would strengthen the hand of those who are seeking to undermine young democracies across the region and give the extremists an open field to overthrow moderate governments, take control of countries, impose their rule on millions, and threaten the American people. Our Nation must not allow this to happen.

Success in Iraq will require leaders in Washington—Republicans and Democrats alike—to come together and find greater consensus on the best path forward. So I will work with leaders in both parties to achieve this goal. Together we can help Iraqis build a free and democratic nation in the heart of the Middle East, strengthen moderates and reformers across the region who are working for peace, and leave our children and grandchildren a more secure and hopeful world.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 7:50 a.m. on December 1 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 1 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Children's Holiday Reception

December 4, 2006

Thanks for coming. Laura and I want to welcome you all to the White House. We're really happy you're here. I think you're going to really enjoy this special occasion. My job is to introduce my wife, Laura Bush. [*Laughter*] Before I do so, though, I want to say something about your moms and dads. I thank you very much for supporting your mom and dad as they're on a very important mission for our country. I want you to know that they love you dearly and the American people love and respect those who wear our uniform a lot.

I know it's tough to have your mom or dad overseas, and we wish you all the best. But it's really important work. And so we wanted to welcome you here to the White House to, first of all, thank you for your strength, and so that you would do me a favor and e-mail your mom or dad who is overseas

how much the Commander in Chief respects them, admires them, and supports them.

So welcome to the White House. We're glad you're here. And now I'm going to introduce my wife, Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following Discussions With Chairman Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq

December 4, 2006

President Bush. Your Eminence, welcome back to the Oval Office. This is the second opportunity I've had to meet with one of the distinguished leaders of a free Iraq. This is a man whose family suffered unbelievable violence at the hands of the dictator, Saddam Hussein. He lost nearly 60 family members, and yet rather than being bitter, he's involved with helping the new Government succeed.

We talked about a lot of important issues. I appreciate so very much His Eminence's commitment to a unity government. I assured him the United States supports his work and the work of the Prime Minister to unify the country. Part of unifying Iraq is for the elected leaders and society leaders to reject the extremists that are trying to stop the advance of this young democracy. I appreciated very much His Eminence's strong position against the murder of innocent life.

We talked about the need to give the Government of Iraq more capability as quickly as possible, so that the elected Government of Iraq can do that which the Iraqi people want, which is to secure their country from the extremists and murderers. I told His Eminence that I was proud of the courage of the Iraqi people. I told him that we're not satisfied with the pace of progress in Iraq, and that we want to continue to work with the sovereign Government of Iraq to accomplish our mutual objectives, which is a free country that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself—a free country which will serve as an ally in the war against the extremists and radicals and terrorists.

So, Your Eminence, welcome back. Thank you for the very constructive conversation we had.

Chairman Hakim. In the name of God, the merciful, the passionate, and blessing upon Prophet Mohammed and his purified family and his loyal companions. My meeting with President Bush today emerges from our shared commitment towards continued dialog and consultation among us and also on the basis of our conviction that the Iraqi issue is a mutual interest. It's an issue that requires coordination between the two sides in a way that concerns both of us politically and from a security point of view and economic point of view as well.

Therefore, our conversation today focused on ways to advance the work of the Iraqi Government, the elected Government, as well as to advance the whole situation in Iraq and move it forward. Also, we have discussed ways in order to provide all the necessities that the Iraqi Armed Forces will need, in terms of armament, in terms of trainings, in order to be in a position to assume the security file.

The Iraqi situation is being subjected to a great deal of defamation, and the true picture is not being presented in order to show a dark side of what's happening in Iraq. We see the attempts to defame and distort the situation in Iraq, not taking into consideration the democratic steps that that country has taken, writing the Constitution and establishing a state that depends heavily on the Constitution, that it is unified and that it is strong. There are attempts to show the sectarian strife in an attempt to weaken the position in Iraq.

The U.S. interests, the Iraqi interests, the regional interests, they are all linked. Therefore, it is very important when we deal with this issue, we look at the interests of the Iraqi people. If we don't, this whole issue could backfire and could harm the interests of the region, the United States, and Iraq as well.

Therefore, we believe that the Iraqi issue should be solved by the Iraqis with the help of friends everywhere. But we reject any attempts to have a regional or international

role in solving the Iraqi issue. We cannot bypass the political process. Iraq should be in a position to solve Iraqi problems. We welcome any effort that could enhance the democratic reality in Iraq and protect the constitutional role of that state.

We have gone a long way to establish a democratic and pluralistic society in Iraq. We have given a great deal of sacrifice toward achieving that objective. We cherish all the sacrifices that took place for the liberation and the freedom of Iraq, sacrifices by the Iraqi people, as well as friendly nations, and on top of that list, sacrifices by the Americans. We have now an elected government in Iraq, a government that it is so determined to combat both violence and terror, a government that it is—strongly believes in the unity of that government and of that country and the society, a government that deals and will deal with all the sources of terrorism regardless where they come from.

We will work very hard and seek all forms of cooperation at the international level and the regional level in order to defeat terrorism, that it is trying to use Iraq as a base in order to sabotage the future of that nation.

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for allowing me this opportunity to meet with you. I would like to take this opportunity also to thank the American people and their sympathy toward Iraq, those who helped Iraq to get rid of a brutal dictatorship and to enjoy freedom and liberties.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Chairman Hakim spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Resignation of John R. Bolton as United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations

December 4, 2006

The President. I received the resignation of Ambassador John Bolton. I accepted; I'm not happy about it. I think he deserved to be confirmed. And the reason why I think he deserved to be confirmed is because I know he did a fabulous job for the country.

And I want to thank you and Gretchen for serving in a very important position, and doing so in a way that a lot of Americans really appreciate, John. We're going to miss you in this administration. You've been a stalwart defender of freedom and peace. You've been strong in your advocacy for human rights and human dignity. You've done everything that can be expected for an Ambassador.

And I accept your letter, and I wish you and Gretchen all the very best.

Ambassador Bolton. Many thanks.

The President. Thank you. Thanks for serving.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gretchen Bolton, wife of Ambassador Bolton. The Office of the Press Secretary also made available Ambassador Bolton's letter of resignation.

Statement on the Resignation of John R. Bolton as United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations

December 4, 2006

It is with deep regret that I accept John Bolton's decision to end his service in the administration as Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations when his commission expires.

Over a year ago, I appointed Ambassador Bolton because I knew he would represent America's values and effectively confront difficult problems at the United Nations. He served his country with extraordinary dedication and skill, assembling coalitions that addressed some of the most consequential issues facing the international community. During his tenure, he articulately advocated the positions and values of the United States and advanced the expansion of democracy and liberty.

Ambassador Bolton led the successful negotiations that resulted in unanimous Security Council resolutions regarding North Korea's military and nuclear activities. He built consensus among our allies on the need for

Iran to suspend the enrichment and reprocessing of uranium. His efforts to promote the cause of peace in Darfur resulted in a peacekeeping commitment by the United Nations. He made the case for United Nations reform because he cares about the institution and wants it to become more credible and effective.

I am deeply disappointed that a handful of United States Senators prevented Ambassador Bolton from receiving the up-or-down vote he deserved in the Senate. They chose to obstruct his confirmation, even though he enjoys majority support in the Senate and even though their tactics will disrupt our diplomatic work at a sensitive and important time. This stubborn obstructionism ill serves our country and discourages men and women of talent from serving their Nation.

I thank John Bolton for the dedication and skill with which he performed his duties, and his wife, Gretchen, and daughter, Jennifer Sarah, for their support as Ambassador Bolton served his country. All Americans owe John Bolton their gratitude for a job well done.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also made available Ambassador Bolton's letter of resignation.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Defense-Designate Robert M. Gates

December 5, 2006

The President. Good morning. I just had a breakfast with my nominee to be the Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates. Bob Gates will be a fine Secretary of Defense. I appreciate the fact that he's getting a hearing today in the United States Senate. I hope for a speedy confirmation so he can get sworn in and get to work.

Those who wear the uniform know they'll have a friend in Bob Gates in the Defense Department. He admires our military; he respects those who have volunteered to serve our country. He's going to do an excellent job for us.

Again, Bob, I thank you for agreeing to serve.

Robert M. Gates. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

The President. Best of luck up there on Capitol Hill. Good luck to you.

Mr. Gates. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Executive Order 13416—Strengthening Surface Transportation Security

December 5, 2006

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to strengthen the security of the Nation's surface transportation systems and thereby enhance the protection of the people, property, and territory of the United States of America against terrorist attacks, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Policy.* The security of our Nation's surface transportation systems is a national priority, vital to our economy, and essential to the security of our Nation. Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and the public share responsibility for the security of surface transportation. It is the policy of the United States to protect the people, property, and territory of the United States by facilitating the implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, and efficient security program to protect surface transportation systems within and adjacent to the United States against terrorist attacks.

Sec. 2. *Definitions.* For purposes of this order:

(a) "agencies" means those executive departments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1), government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1), and the United States Postal Service;

(b) "Secretary" means the Secretary of Homeland Security;

(c) "security guideline" means any security-related guidance that the Secretary recommends, for implementation on a voluntary basis, to enhance the security of surface transportation;

(d) "security requirement" means any "regulatory action" as defined in section 3 of Executive Order 12866 of September 30, 1993, as amended (Regulatory Planning and Review), including security directives when appropriate, to implement measures to enhance the security of surface transportation;

(e) "surface transportation modes" means mass transit, commuter and long-distance passenger rail, freight rail, commercial vehicles (including intercity buses), and pipelines, and related infrastructure (including roads and highways), that are within the territory of the United States, but does not include electric grids; and

(f) "surface transportation" means any conveyance of people, goods, or commodities using one or more surface transportation modes.

Sec. 3. *Functions of the Secretary of Homeland Security.* The Secretary is the principal Federal official responsible for infrastructure protection activities for surface transportation. To implement the policy set forth in section 1 of this order, the Secretary shall, consistent with the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP), in coordination with the Secretary of Transportation, and in consultation with the heads of other relevant agencies:

(a) assess the security of each surface transportation mode and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of current Federal Government surface transportation security initiatives;

(b) building upon current security initiatives, not later than December 31, 2006, develop a comprehensive transportation systems sector specific plan, as defined in the NIPP;

(c) not later than 90 days after the comprehensive transportation systems sector specific plan is completed, develop an annex to such plan that addresses each surface transportation mode, which shall also include, at a minimum—

(i) an identification of existing security guidelines and security requirements and any security gaps, a description of how the transportation systems sector specific plan will be implemented for such mode, and the respective roles, responsibilities, and authorities of Federal, State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector;

(ii) schedules and protocols for annual reviews of the effectiveness of surface transportation security-related information sharing mechanisms in bringing about the timely exchange of surface transportation security information among Federal, State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector, as appropriate; and

(iii) a process for assessing (A) compliance with any security guidelines and security requirements issued by the Secretary for surface transportation, and (B) the need for revision of such guidelines and requirements to ensure their continuing effectiveness;

(d) in consultation with State, local, and tribal government officials and the private sector, not later than 180 days after the date of this order, identify surface transportation modes, or components thereof, that are subject to high risk of terrorist attack, draft appropriate security guidelines or security requirements to mitigate such risks, and ensure that, prior to their issuance, draft security requirements are transmitted to the Office of Management and Budget for review in accordance with Executive Order 12866 and draft security guidelines receive appropriate interagency review;

(e) develop, implement, and lead a process, in collaboration with other agencies, State, local, and tribal governments, and the private sector, as appropriate, to coordinate research, development, testing, and evaluation of technologies (including alternative uses for commercial off-the-shelf technologies and products) relating to the protection of surface transportation, including—

(i) determining product and technology needs to inform the requirements for and prioritization of research, development, testing, and evaluation, based on the security guidelines and security requirements developed pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and evolving terrorist threats to the security of surface transportation;

(ii) collecting information on existing and planned research, development, testing, and evaluation efforts; and

(iii) not later than 180 days after the date of this order, consistent with section 313 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended (6 U.S.C. 193), establishing and making available to Federal, State, local, and tribal government entities, and private sector owners and operators of surface transportation systems, lists of available technologies and products relating to the protection of surface transportation; and

(f) use security grants authorized by law to assist in implementing security requirements and security guidelines issued pursuant to law and consistent with subsection (c) of this section.

Sec. 4. *Duties of Heads of Other Agencies.* Heads of agencies, as appropriate, shall provide such assistance and information as the Secretary may request to implement this order.

Sec. 5. *General Provisions.* This order:

(a) shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and the authorities of agencies, or heads of agencies, vested by law, and subject to the availability of appropriations;

(b) shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals; and

(c) is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 5, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:43 a.m., December 6, 2006]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on December 7.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Iraq Study Group

December 6, 2006

I just received the Iraq Study Group report, prepared by a distinguished panel of our fellow citizens. I want to thank James Baker and Lee Hamilton and the panel members for spending a lot of time on this really difficult issue. And I thank you for coming into the White House today to give me a copy of this report.

I've told the members that this report, called "The Way Forward," will be taken very seriously by this administration. This report gives a very tough assessment of the situation in Iraq. It is a report that brings some really very interesting proposals, and we will take every proposal seriously, and we will act in a timely fashion.

The commission is headed up to Congress, and I urge the Members of Congress to take this report seriously. While they won't agree with every proposal—and we probably won't agree with every proposal—it, nevertheless, is an opportunity to come together and to work together on this important issue.

The country, in my judgment, is tired of pure political bickering that happens in Washington, and they understand that on this important issue of war and peace, it is best for our country to work together. And I understand how difficult that is, but this report will give us all an opportunity to find common ground, for the good of the country—not for the good of the Republican Party or the Democrat Party, but for the good of the country.

We can achieve long-lasting peace for this country, and it requires tough work. It also requires a strategy that will be effective. And we've got men and women of both political parties around this table who spent a lot of time thinking about the way forward in Iraq and the way forward in the Middle East, and I can't thank them enough for your time. You could be doing a lot of other things. You could have had a lot more simple life than to allow your government to call you back into service, but you did allow us to call you back into service, and you've made a vital contribution to the country. Our fellow citizens have got to know that it is possible for

people of good will to come together to help make recommendations on how to deal with a very serious situation.

And we applaud your work. I will take it very seriously, and we'll act on it in a timely fashion. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:58 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton, cochairs, Iraq Study Group. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica

December 6, 2006

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome. I'm glad to welcome you back to the White House. I appreciate the very important discussions we had. Our discussions started with the bilateral relationship between the United States and Costa Rica. It is an important relationship. It's an important relationship when it comes to trade; it's an important relationship when it comes to interchanges between our governments and our peoples.

Mr. President, you spent a lot of time talking about the importance of education, and I respect you for that, and I appreciate your emphasis on education. And we will investigate ways to determine whether or not the United States can help, if you so desire, on matters of education. And I congratulate you on being very successful in educating the younger children of your country. And I, again, admire your focus on extending the education through all grades in Costa Rica.

Secondly, we spent time on CAFTA. It's an important initiative for this administration. I appreciate your dedication to the issue of trade. The President understands full well that trade is the best way to help reduce poverty around the world, and so he made it clear to me his deep desire for the United States to take the lead on the Doha round of the trade discussions, which I assured him we would.

I appreciated very much your advice, Mr. President, on the neighborhood in which we live. I thank you for your clear vision when it comes to forms of government. And I appreciate you sharing with me your insights as to the different countries and different leaders and how best that we can work together to achieve peace and stability.

It's an honor to have you here, sir. You represent a fine country that a lot of Americans have had firsthand knowledge with. And I'm proud to welcome you.

President Arias Sanchez. Well, thank you, Mr. President, for your time. This room is familiar to me. I visited the Oval Office in the past, during the Reagan years and when President Bush was President. I was telling President Bush that in the past, every time I came to the White House, it was not to talk about Costa Rica, but about Nicaragua, and I'm very happy that we had a chance to talk about Costa Rica this time.

And as he just mentioned, my country is a small country—we produce what we do not consume, and we consume what we do not produce. This is why trade is so important to us. Costa Rica is a very open economy, is the second-largest open economy in this hemisphere, after Chile. And this is why CAFTA is important to us and this is why we're so determined to approve CAFTA, ratify CAFTA in our Congress as soon as possible. And we are in the process of initiating negotiations with the European Union about free trade agreement with the whole of Europe, the European Union.

Concerning education, this is my priority. Peace was my priority 20 years ago; now it's education. I was asking President Bush that his program, No Child Left Behind, could be applied in many Latin American countries. You are all aware that what explains our failures, among other things, is the fact that average schooling in Latin American countries is only 6½ years, and that explains the social inequality and the poverty of our people.

So at the beginning of the 21st century, we're going to spend more on education, which is my dream and my determination to spend as much as 8 percent of GDP on education. We are simply condemning our children to remain poor as their grandfathers—and this is something that certainly the people of Latin America don't deserve.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Glad you're here. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of Congress

December 6, 2006

I've just met with Members of Congress from both political parties. My message is this: I want to work with the Congress; I want to work with people in both parties, so that we can send a message to the American people that the struggle for freedom, the struggle for our security is not the purview of one party over the other. The American people want us to work together, and my intention is to do just that.

Today the Baker-Hamilton Commission, the Iraq Study Group put out what I thought was a very interesting report. There's some very good ideas in there. Not all of us around the table agree with every idea, but we do agree that it shows that bipartisan consensus on important issues is possible—really important for the American people to know that there are people of good will here in town willing to set aside politics and focus on the security of this country and the peace of the world.

And I want to thank you all for taking time out of your schedules to come. It means a lot to me, and I think it means a lot to the American people, to recognize that there are people in this town who are concerned more about the security of this country than they are about the security of their own political positions. And I'm proud to be with you. And I want to thank you for your thoughts. I take your comments very seriously. I take your ideas very seriously. And it's important to me that we continue to hear from the Congress as we fashion a way—a new way forward in Iraq, a new look, to achieve our objective of a country which can sustain itself, govern itself, defend itself, and be an ally in this war against extremism and terrorism.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Robert M. Gates To Be the Secretary of Defense

December 6, 2006

I am pleased the Senate has overwhelmingly voted to confirm Dr. Robert Gates as the next Secretary of Defense. In his confirmation hearing, Dr. Gates demonstrated he is an experienced, qualified, and thoughtful man who is well respected by members of both parties and is committed to winning the war on terror. Throughout his career, Dr. Gates has transformed the organizations he has led and empowered them to successfully address complex issues. I am confident that his leadership and capabilities will help our country meet its current military challenges and prepare for emerging threats of the 21st century.

I thank Chairman Warner and Ranking Member Levin for leading dignified and constructive hearings, and I thank the Senate for moving quickly on this nomination.

Executive Order 13417—Establishing an Emergency Board To Investigate Disputes Between Metro-North Railroad and Certain of Its Employees Represented by Certain Labor Organizations

December 6, 2006

Disputes exist between Metro-North Railroad (Metro-North) and certain of its employees represented by certain labor organizations. The labor organizations involved in these disputes are designated on the attached list, which is made a part of this order.

The disputes have not heretofore been adjusted under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act, as amended, 45 U.S.C. 151 *et. seq*. (RLA).

A party empowered by the RLA has requested that the President establish an emergency board pursuant to section 9A of the RLA (45 U.S.C. 159a).

Section 9A(c) of the RLA provides that the President, upon such request, shall appoint an emergency board to investigate and report on the disputes.

Now, Therefore, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 9A of the RLA, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment of Emergency Board (Board).* There is established, effective 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time on December 7, 2006, a Board of three members to be appointed by the President to investigate and report on these disputes. No member shall be pecuniarily or otherwise interested in any organization of railroad employees or any carrier. The Board shall perform its functions subject to the availability of funds.

Sec. 2. *Report.* The Board shall report to the President with respect to the disputes within 30 days of its creation.

Sec. 3. *Maintaining Conditions.* As provided by section 9A(c) of the RLA, from the date of the creation of the Board and for 120 days thereafter, no change in the conditions out of which the disputes arose shall be made by the parties to the controversy, except by agreement of the parties.

Sec. 4. *Records Maintenance.* The records and files of the Board are records of the Office of the President and upon the Board's termination shall be maintained in the physical custody of the National Mediation Board.

Sec. 5. *Expiration.* The Board shall terminate upon the submission of the report provided for in section 2 of this order.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 6, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:50 a.m., December 7, 2006]

NOTE: This Executive order and its attached list were published in the *Federal Register* on December 8.

Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2007

December 6, 2006

Presidential Determination No. 2007–06

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2007

Consistent with the authority vested in me by section 1303 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108–375) (the "Act"), I hereby certify that waiving the conditions described in section 1305 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106–65), as amended, is important to the national security interests of the United States, and include herein, for submission to the Congress, the statement, justification, and plan described in section 1303 of the Act. This waiver shall apply for calendar year 2007.

You are authorized and directed to transmit this certification, including the statement, justification, and plan, to the Congress and to arrange for the publication of this certification in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 7.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

December 7, 2006

President Bush. Thank you all. Please be seated. I just had a good visit with Prime Minister Tony Blair. I appreciate you coming back, Mr. Prime Minister. I always enjoy our

discussions. And I appreciate your clear view that we are confronted with a struggle between moderation and extremism, and this is particularly evident in the broader Middle East.

I talked about my recent trip to Jordan, where I talked to Prime Minister Maliki. I briefed the Prime Minister on my visit with His Eminence, Mr. Hakim, one of the major political players in Iraq. We discussed the report I received yesterday from the Iraq Study Group, a report chaired by Secretary of State—former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. I told the Prime Minister I thought this was a very constructive report. I appreciated the fact that they laid out a series of recommendations, and they're worthy of serious study. I also updated the Prime Minister on the reviews that are being conducted by the Pentagon and the State Department and our National Security Council. I talked to him about the consultations I'm having with the United States Congress.

We agree that victory in Iraq is important; it's important for the Iraqi people; it's important for the security of the United States and Great Britain; and it's important for the civilized world. We agree that an Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself as an ally on the war on terror is a noble goal. The Prime Minister and I seek a wide range of opinions about how to go forward in Iraq, and I appreciate your opinions and your advice.

The increase in sectarian attacks we're seeing in and around Baghdad are unsettling. It has led to much debate in both our countries about the nature of the war that is taking place in Iraq. And it is true that Sunni and Shi'a extremists are targeting each other's innocent civilians and engaging in brutal reprisals. It's also true that forces beyond Iraq's borders contribute to this violence. And the Prime Minister put it this way: He said, "The violence is not an accident or a result of faulty planning. It is a deliberate strategy. It is the direct result of outside extremists teaming up with internal extremists—Al Qaida with the Sunni insurgents and Iran with the Shi'a militia—to foment hatred and to throttle, at birth, the possibility of a nonsectarian democracy." You were right, and I appreciate your comments.

The primary victims of the sectarian violence are the moderate majority of Iraqis—Sunni and Shi'a alike—who want a future of peace. The primary beneficiaries are Sunni and Shi'a extremists, inside and outside of Iraq, who want chaos in that country so they can take control and further their ambitions to dominate the region.

These Sunni and Shi'a extremists have important differences, yet they agree on one thing: The rise of free and democratic societies in the Middle East, where people can practice their faith, choose their leaders, and live together in peace would be a decisive blow to their cause.

And so they're supporting extremists across the region who are working to undermine young democracies. Just think about the Middle East. In Iraq, they support terrorists and death squads who are fomenting sectarian violence in an effort to bring down the elected Government of Prime Minister Maliki. In Lebanon, they're supporting Hizballah, which recently declared its intention to force the collapse of Prime Minister Siniora's democratically elected Parliament and Government. In Afghanistan, they're supporting remnants of the Taliban that are seeking to destabilize President Karzai's Government and regain power. In the Palestinian Territories, they are working to stop moderate leaders like President Abbas from making progress toward the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

In each of these places, radicals and extremists are using terror to stop the spread of freedom. And they do so because they want to spread their ideologies, their ideologies of hate and impose their rule on this vital part of the world. And should they succeed, history will look back on our time with unforgiving clarity and demand to know, what happened? How come free nations did not act to preserve the peace?

Prime Minister Blair and I understand that we have a responsibility to lead and to support moderates and reformers who work for change across the broader Middle East. We also recognize that meeting this responsibility requires action. We will take concerted

efforts to advance the cause of peace in the Middle East. Prime Minister Blair informed me that he will be heading to the Middle East soon to talk to both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and I support that mission. I support the mission because it's important for us to advance the cause of two states living side by side in peace, and helping both parties eliminate the obstacles that prevent an agreement from being reached. And your strong leadership on this issue matters a lot.

We'll support the democratic Government of Prime Minister Maliki as he makes difficult decisions and confronts the forces of terror and extremism that are working hard to tear his country apart.

Britain and America are old allies, and the Prime Minister and I are strong friends. But Britain and America aren't standing together in this war because of friendship. We're standing together because our two nations face an unprecedented threat to civilization. We're standing together to prevent terrorists and extremists from dominating the Middle East. We stand together to prevent extremists from regaining the safe haven they lost in Afghanistan, a safe haven from which they launched attacks that killed thousands of our citizens. We stand together because we understand the only way to secure a lasting peace for our children and grandchildren is to defeat the extremist ideologies and help the ideology of hope, democracy prevail. We know the only way to secure peace for ourselves is to help millions of moms and dads across the Middle East build what our citizens already have: societies based on liberty that will allow their children to grow up in peace and opportunity.

It's a tough time, and it's a difficult moment for America and Great Britain. And the task before us is daunting. Yet our nations have stood together before in difficult moments. Sixty-five years ago this day, America was jolted out of our isolationism and plunged into a global war that Britain had been fighting for 2 years. In that war, our Nation stood firm. And there were difficult moments during that war, yet the leaders of our two nations never lost faith in the capacity to prevail.

We will stand firm again, in this first war of the 21st century. We will defeat the extremists and the radicals. We will help a young democracy prevail in Iraq. And in so doing, we will secure freedom and peace for millions, including our own citizens.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And thank you, firstly, for stressing again the strength of the relationship between our two countries, which is important for us, but I think it's important for the wider global community as well. Thank you also for the clarity of your vision about the mission that we're engaged in at the moment, which is a struggle between freedom and democracy on the one hand and terrorism and sectarianism on the other. And it's a noble mission, and it's the right mission, and it's important for our world that it succeeds.

And so the question is, how do we make sure that it does, indeed, succeed? And in respect of Iraq, I, like you, welcome the Baker-Hamilton study group. It offers a strong way forward. I think it is important now we concentrate on the elements that are necessary to make sure that we succeed, because the consequences of failure are severe. And I believe this is a mission we have to succeed in and we can succeed in.

And I think there are three elements that we can take forward. The first is to make sure that we are supporting the Maliki Government in making sure that that Government's nonsectarian nature is reflected in the policies of that Government and the way that it conducts itself. I think in respect of governance and security and capability—particularly economic capability—there is much that we are doing, but can do even more in order to make sure that they are supported in the vital work that they do and in the work of reconciliation, in bringing the different parts of Iraq together in order to give effect to the will of the Iraqi people, expressed in their democratic election.

I think, secondly, it's important that all of us who are engaged in this, but particularly those in the region, live up to their responsibilities in supporting the Maliki Government, in ensuring that Iraq is able to proceed in a democratic and nonsectarian way.

And I think that, finally, as you rightly emphasize, it is important that we do everything

we can in the wider Middle East to bring about peace between Israel and the Palestinians. This is something that I know you feel deeply and passionately about. You are the first President who committed yourself to the two-state solution, and I believe that by moving this forward, we send a very strong signal not just to the region but to the whole of the world that we are evenhanded and just in the application of our values, that we want to see an Israel confident of its security and a Palestinian people able to live in peace and justice and democracy.

And that brings me back, finally, to the point that I began with, because I think it is the central point—yes, it is immensely tough at the moment and very challenging, and everybody knows that. But there are only two ways that the Middle East can go. Its people can either be presented with a choice between a secular or a religious dictatorship, which is not a choice that any free people would ever choose, or alternatively, they can enjoy the same possibilities of democracy that we hold dear in our countries. And this is not a view that we hold—I hold because of idealism alone; it is because I also believe that the only realistic path to security is by ensuring the spread of liberty.

So, Mr. President, thank you again for welcoming me here, and we will work closely with you in the time to come in order to achieve the mission we have set ourselves.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you. We'll answer a couple of questions.

Iraq Study Group Report/Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, neither of you has shown much doubt about your Iraq policies. Do you acknowledge that your approach has failed, as Baker-Hamilton suggests? And are you willing to engage directly with Syria and Iran and pull out most combat forces by early 2008, unless there's unexpected circumstances?

President Bush. The thing I liked about the Baker-Hamilton report is, it discussed the way forward in Iraq. And I believe we need a new approach. And that's why I've tasked the Pentagon to analyze the way forward. That's why Prime Minister Blair is here to talk about the way forward, so we can achieve the objective, which is an Iraq which can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself and be an ally in the war on terror.

And the Baker-Hamilton report did some very interesting things. First, it shows that Republicans and Democrats can work together to achieve an—to come up with a strategy to achieve an objective, something the American people don't think is possible to happen. In other words, they've seen elections, and they saw all the bitterness and finger-pointing and name-calling and wonder whether or not we can work together on this important cause. And I believe we can, and the Baker-Hamilton commission showed it's possible for people of good will to sit down at the table and design a way forward.

And so that's why I'm sitting down with the Members of Congress, to say to both Republicans and Democrats, "This is an important cause. It's important for our security. It's important to help lay the foundations for peace, and I want to hear your ideas." And I thought the report did a good job of showing what is possible. The Congress isn't going to accept every recommendation in the report, and neither will the administration, but there's a lot of very important things in the report that we ought to seriously consider.

And as the Prime Minister talked about, there's three aspects to the report. One is, how do we empower the Maliki Government so that the Maliki Government—the elected Government of the Iraqis—can help with the economy, can help secure peace, can do hard work necessary to achieve stability and to achieve the objective?

It talked about the regional—the countries in the region and the responsibilities of the region to help this Iraqi Government. And the idea of having an international group is an interesting idea. We've already got the Compact, and I think the Baker-Hamilton report suggests that we broaden the Compact beyond just economic measures.

But one thing is for certain: When people—if people come to the table to discuss Iraq, they need to come understanding their responsibilities to not fund terrorists, to help this young democracy survive, to help with the economics of the country. And if people are not committed, if Syria and Iran is not

committed to that concept, then they shouldn't bother to show up.

Thirdly, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is important to have—is important to be solved. I'm committed to a two-state solution. I believe it is in Israel's interest and the Palestinian people's interest to have two states living side by side for peace. And the Prime Minister shares that goal, and he is willing to take time to go over and help remove obstacles toward achieving that goal.

And there are two notable obstacles: One is the prisoner; and secondly, is for there to be a unity government that recognizes the principles of the Quartet, with which Israel can negotiate. And we want to help.

And so I view this as a very important way forward, with important concepts. And the American people expect us to come up with a new strategy to achieve the objective which I've been talking about and which is laid out in the Baker-Hamilton report.

Prime Minister Blair. Look, I think the analysis of the situation is not really in dispute. The question is, how do we find the right way forward? And what we've got at the moment is something that is at one level very simple to describe but at another level very profound and difficult to deal with, and that is that the outside extremists are linking up with internal extremists, basically to create the circumstances of sectarianism, where it's very, very difficult then for democracy and ordinary institutions to function.

And I think the Baker-Hamilton report allows us to—as the situation has evolved in Iraq—to evolve our strategy in order to meet it in the ways that I've just described. But I think we've got to be very, very clear about this: It will require everybody to face up to their responsibilities—us, of course, because we are principal actors in this, but also the Iraqi Government. They've got to be prepared to make the moves necessary—full governance, full capability, reconciliation, and full help and security—and we will be there to support them.

But then there's responsibilities, as the President was saying a moment or two ago, on the region and the neighbors. And let me come directly to the Iran and Syria point. The issue for me is not a question of being unwilling to sit down with people or not, but the basis upon which we discuss Iraq has got to be clear, and it's got to be a basis where we are all standing up for the right principles, which are now endorsed in the United Nations resolutions, in respect of Iraq. In other words, you support the democratic elected Government; you do not support sectarians; and you do not support, arm, or finance terrorists.

Now, the very reason we have problems in parts of Iraq—and we know this very well down in the south of Iraq—is that Iran, for example, has been doing that. It's been basically arming, financing, supporting terrorism. So we've got to be clear the basis upon which we take this forward. And as I say, it's got to be on the basis of people accepting their responsibilities.

And finally, in relation to what the President was just saying a moment or two ago on Israel and Palestine, I mean, I think that one thing that is very clear is that the old Middle East had within it the origins of all the problems we see. I mean, this terrorist problem that we faced in the last few years, it didn't originate, I'm afraid, a few years ago. It's been building up over decades. It's come out of a series of states of oppression, of warped ideology based on a perverted view of the faith of Islam. This has been building up for a long period of time, and it has basically come out of the Middle East.

Now my view in the end is that you go back to the origins of this and say, well, how do we resolve it? And the only way we resolve it is by having the right vision and then the practical measures to achieve it.

Now I think the vision is absolutely correct. What we've got to do now—and this is exactly why the President is talking about the way forward—is that we've got to get the right way forward—this is where Baker-Hamilton helped—in order that we have the practical policy that bolsters and gives effect to the vision, because the vision is the right vision. You leave a Middle East in which the Israel-Palestine issue is not solved, in which there's no moves towards democracy, in which Iraq goes back in its old state, in which the Iranian people have no chance to express themselves, maybe not in the months or one year, 2 years, but you'll have the same problem. You know, the reason we are faced with

this issue is because in the end, everything that happened in that region erupted, in fact, on the streets of New York. But it—the origins of this went way, way back before that.

And so it is—there's a tendency, I think, sometimes, to see this as a battle between the idealists on the one hand and the realists on the other. In my view, the only modern form of realism is one that has ideals at the center of it.

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, the Iraq Study Group described the situation in Iraq as grave and deteriorating. You said that the increase in attacks is unsettling. That won't convince many people that you're still in denial about how bad things are in Iraq, and question your sincerity about changing course.

President Bush. It's bad in Iraq. Does that help? [*Laughter*]

Q. Why did it take others to say it before you've been willing to acknowledge it to the world?

President Bush. In all due respect, I've been saying it a lot. I understand how tough it is, and I've been telling the American people how tough it is, and they know how tough it is. And the fundamental question is, do we have a plan to achieve our objective? Are we willing to change as the enemy has changed? And what Baker-Hamilton study has done is, it shows good ideas as to how to go forward. What our Pentagon is doing is figuring out ways to go forward, all aiming to achieve our objective.

Make no mistake about it, I understand how tough it is, sir. I talk to the families who die. I understand there's sectarian violence. I also understand that we're hunting down Al Qaida on a regular basis and we're bringing them to justice. I understand how hard our troops are working. I know how brave the men and women who wear the uniform are, and therefore, they'll have the full support of this government. I understand what long deployments mean to wives and husbands, and mothers and fathers, particularly as we come into a holiday season. I understand. And I have made it abundantly clear how tough it is.

I also believe we're going to succeed. I believe we'll prevail. Not only do I know how important it is to prevail, I believe we will prevail. I understand how hard it is to prevail. But I also want the American people to understand that if we were to fail—and one way to assure failure is just to quit, is not to adjust, and say, it's just not worth it—if we were to fail, that failed policy will come to hurt generations of Americans in the future.

And as I said in my opening statement, I believe we're in an ideological struggle between forces that are reasonable and want to live in peace and radicals and extremists. And when you throw into the mix radical Shi'a and radical Sunni trying to gain power and topple moderate governments, with energy which they could use to blackmail Great Britain or America or anybody else who doesn't kowtow to them, and a nuclear weapon in the hands of a government that is—would be using that nuclear weapon to blackmail to achieve political objectives, historians will look back and say, how come Bush and Blair couldn't see the threat? That's what they'll be asking. And I want to tell you, I see the threat, and I believe it is up to our governments to help lead the forces of moderation to prevail. It's in our interests.

And one of the things that has changed for American foreign policy is, a threat overseas can now come home to hurt us. And September the 11th should be a wake-up call for the American people to understand what happens if there is violence and safe havens in a part of the world. And what happens is, people can die here at home.

And so, no, I appreciate your question. I appreciate—as you can tell, I feel strongly about making sure you understand that I understand it's tough. But I want you to know, sir, that I believe we'll prevail. I know we have to adjust to prevail, but I wouldn't have our troops in harm's way if I didn't believe that, one, it was important, and two, we'll succeed. Thank you.

Diplomatic Efforts To Achieve Peace in the Middle East

Q. Prime Minister, if I may, briefly—isn't what the——

Prime Minister Blair. You're not going to do a followup, are you? [*Laughter*]

Q. No, no, forgive me. I just wanted to ask you about your Middle East mission, if

I may. Given your trip to the Middle East, isn't the truth of what the Arab-Israeli solution—sorry, isn't the truth of what the Arab-Israeli problem requires is not, however hard you try, another visit by a British Prime Minister, but the genuine commitment—and not merely in words—of an American administration that's serious about doing something about it?

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I believe that we have that commitment. And I mean, you're right in this sense, there would be no point in me going unless it was part of a mission that was supported fully by our American allies. But it is—we agree—the vision—I mean, the one thing that I find very frustrating about the situation, Israel-Palestine, is that there is actually an agreement as to the solution we want to see, which is a two-state solution. And really, everybody is agreed to that. So the question is, how do you get there?

And there are critical obstacles that stand in the way of that that require detailed attention and management, and it's not merely myself who's going to be engaged in this, of course, but as you know, the Secretary of State has been very closely involved in this. She's been visiting the region recently, and I know is, again, fully committed to it.

I think what is interesting from what you have from this today is an acceptance and, indeed, a clear belief that you look at these issues together. There is a kind of whole vision about how we need to proceed that links what happens inside Iraq with what happens outside Iraq. And again, I think that the Baker-Hamilton report put this very simply and very clearly.

And you know, there is no way that you ever succeed in these things unless you just carry on trying, and that's what we will do. And one of the things I learned in all the long years that you followed me in relation to Northern Ireland is that you just—you don't accept that you ever give up. You just carry on doing it. And I am sure that it is possible to resolve this, and I also do believe that if we do, then it would send a signal of massive symbolic power across the world.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

War on Terror Strategy

Q. Thank you, sir. You mentioned Iran and Syria as part of this regional effort. Are you willing to engage with them directly as the report recommends? And back to the issue of the troops, is it possible to get them out of Iraq by early 2008, as the report talks about? And when do you hope to have this report? Sorry to——

President Bush. How many questions do you got, Steve?

Q. Sorry about that. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. You mean, when do I hope to announce the strategy, is that what you're talking about?

Q. Yes, sir.

President Bush. After I get the reports. And Baker-Hamilton is a really important part of our considerations. But we want to make sure the military gets their point of view in. After all, a lot of what we're doing is a military operation. I want to make sure the State Department is able to help us analyze the strategy to make sure that we've got the right political emphasis, not only inside Iraq but outside Iraq.

I appreciated the Prime Minister's answer to this lad—we call them lads, in Great Britain—lad's question, is that—[*laughter*].

Prime Minister Blair. You've made a friend, I think, there. [*Laughter*] It's a long time since anyone's called him that, yes. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. You got to understand—well——

Q. He calls me a number of other things.

President Bush. Our Secretary of State is very much engaged in this issue. She works hard on the issue. And as much as we'd like to impose the settlement, it's important for you to understand, sir, that the Israelis and the Palestinians must accept responsibility and must sign off on an agreement. It's kind of easy to sit back and say, okay, we're going to impose this on them. We can help, and we will help.

So, Steve, that's—we're spending a lot—I know, I'm heading back. We're spending a lot of time considering the new course, because the decisions that we make affect lives. They affect the lives of our soldiers; they affect the lives of the Iraqi people. But one thing is central to this new course, and that

is, the Iraqi Government must be given more responsibility so they can prove to their people and to their allies that they're capable of making hard decisions necessary for their young democracy to move forward.

Second part of your long question?

Iran/Syria

Q. Well, are you willing to engage direct talks with——

President Bush. Oh, Iran and Syria.

Q. ——just a regional effort——

President Bush. No, no, I understand. Steve, let me talk about engaging Iran. We have made it clear to the Iranians that there is a possible change in U.S. policy, a policy that's been in place for 27 years, and that is that if they would like to engage the United States that they've got to verifiably suspend their enrichment program. We've made our choice. Iran now has an opportunity to make its choice. I would hope they would make the choice that most of the free world wants them to make, which is, there is no need to have a weapons program; there is no need to isolate your people; there's no need to continue this obstinance when it comes to your stated desires to have a nuclear weapon. It's not in your interest to do so.

And should they agree to verifiably suspend their enrichment, the United States will be at the table with our partners.

It's really interesting to talk about conversations with countries—which is fine; I can understand why people speculate about it—but there should be no mistake in anybody's mind, these countries understand our position. They know what's expected of them.

There is—if we were to have a conversation, it would be this one, to Syria: Stop destabilizing the Siniora Government. We believe that the Siniora Government should be supported, not weakened. Stop allowing money and arms to cross your border into Iraq. Don't provide safe haven for terrorist groups. We've made that position very clear.

And the truth of the matter is, is that these countries have now got the choice to make. If they want to sit down at the table with the United States, it's easy—just make some decisions that will lead to peace, not to conflict.

Is that the third part of your question? You've got to stop these long questions, Steven. Steven.

U.S. Troop Levels in Iraq/War on Terror

Q. Combat troops out by early 2008, is that possible——

President Bush. One of the things the report did mention, and I think you've said it in your comment, that if conditions so allow—and we want our combat troops out as quick as possible. We want the Iraqis taking the fight. But it's very important to be—as we design programs, to be flexible and realistic. And as the report said—I don't got the exact words, but it was along the lines that, you know, "depending upon conditions," I believe is what the qualifier was. And I thought that made a lot of sense. I've always said we'd like our troops out as fast as possible. I think that's an important goal.

On the other hand, our commanders will be making recommendations based upon whether or not we're achieving our stated objective. And the objective, I repeat, is a government which can sustain, govern, and defend itself—free Government of Iraq that can do that—and will be an ally in this movement—against this movement that is threatening peace and stability. And it's real.

I like to remind people, it's akin to the cold war in many ways. There's an ideological clash going on. And the question is, will we have the resolve and the confidence in liberty to prevail? That's really the fundamental question facing—it's not going to face this government or this government, because we made up our mind. We've made that part clear. But it will face future governments. There will be future opportunities for people to say, "Well, it's not worth it; let's just retreat." I would strongly advise a government not to accept that position because of the dangers inherent with isolationism and retreat.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. I'll try to be succinct. Mr. President, 2 years ago you said that you were ready to expend political capital on the Israel-Palestinian situation. With hindsight, do you think you've fulfilled that intention? How closely do you see a linkage between what happens

in Israel-Palestine and a settlement in Iraq, achieving your goals?

And Prime Minister, given that you were so recently in the Middle East and the situation hasn't exactly improved since then, is there anything specific you're hoping to achieve next week when you go back?

President Bush. Want me to start? I'm getting older, so you're going to have to repeat the second part of your question. [*Laughter*] Let me answer the first part. What's important is for people to accept the goal of two states living side by side for peace. And what has changed in the Middle East is that Israel and Palestine—at least the current leadership of both countries, or both—one entity and one country—accept that goal. That's important.

To that end, the previous Prime Minister made a decision to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza, which I felt was a good decision, which would expedite the potential arrival of a state. And so to answer your question, yes, we're spending a lot of capital getting people headed in the same direction, which if you look at the history of the Middle East, is a change.

Secondly, one of the reasons why there hasn't been instant success is because radicals and extremists are trying to stop the advance of a Palestinian state. Why? Because democracy is a defeat for them. That's what I strongly believe. I find it interesting that when Prime Minister Olmert reaches out to Palestinians to discuss a way forward on the two-state solution, Hizballah attacks Israel. Why? Because radicals and extremists can't stand the thought of a democracy. And one of the great ironies is that people in the Middle East are working hard to prevent people in the Middle East from realizing the blessings of a free society in a democracy.

And so, no question, progress has been spotty. But it's important for people to understand, one of the reasons why is, is because radicals are trying to prevent it, and they're willing to kill innocent people to prevent progress. Now, our goal is to help the Abbas Government strengthen its security forces, and we're doing that. Our goal is to help the Abbas Government form a government that adheres to the principles of the Quartet. We can't abandon the principles of the Quartet just because it may sound easy. We can't do that. When nations lay out principles, you've got to adhere to those principles—just like when we laid out a vision, you adhere to that vision.

And so the Prime Minister's visit, like Condi's visit recently to the Middle East, are all aiming to help countries remove obstacles necessary to achieve the vision. And it's hard work, but it's necessary work. And so I do believe there is a—I know there's a change of attitude. And now the fundamental question is, can we help the moderates prevail? And make no mistake about it, radicals and extremists will kill in order to stop the progress. And that's what's difficult. But it should be a signal to those of us who have got the comfort of liberty to understand the consequences of this ideological struggle we're fighting. One of the consequences is the denial of a Palestinian state.

This is ironic, isn't it—I think it is, and it's sad.

Prime Minister Blair. I mean, I think, first of all, it's important to understand how much has begun—how much work there's been. I mean, I know I've had many, many meetings on this issue over the past few months. I know Secretary Rice has been immensely active on it over these past months as well. Now, some of that is visible and out there at press conferences and meetings, and a lot of it is behind the scenes.

But in essence, what we've got to do is to try to resolve two issues. First of all, we need to get the release of Corporal Shalit, which, as Prime Minister Olmert made clear the other day, would then allow the release of many Palestinian prisoners as well. And this is obviously a very important issue.

But then, secondly, and this is, I think, really—one of the core questions is, we are prepared to release the money to the Palestinian Authority. We are prepared to take the peace process forward and get into a process of negotiation. But we need a government on both sides that is committed to the basic principles of that negotiation. And at the present time, we are not able to achieve a national unity government on the Palestinian side. And the reason for that is that we are saying, not as a matter of dogma at all, but you can't have a government that everyone

can deal with and you can then negotiate a peace between Israel and Palestine, unless it's on the basis that everyone accepts the other's right to exist. So that's the difficulty. It's not a kind of technical point; it's absolutely at the heart of it.

Now, what we have got to do is to find either a way of unlocking the problem of forming that national unity government, on the principles laid down by the United Nations as well as the rest of the Quartet, or alternatively, a different way forward, but whatever way forward will have to be on the basis you get an empowered Palestinian Government with whom everyone can negotiate and deal with.

Now, you know, again, it's a very, very obvious thing. It's not just for the Israelis and the Palestinians but also for the whole of the region. You know, you can't negotiate this unless everyone accepts the basic principles of the negotiation. But if people were to do that—and after all, we're only asking people to accept the position that the United Nations and, really, the whole of the international community—you could move this forward quickly. I mean, I don't think there's any doubt at all that if you could get an empowered Palestinian Government able to negotiate, Israel has made it clear it is prepared to negotiate.

I'm not saying there aren't very tricky issues. There are—things like Jerusalem, the right of return, which are very, very difficult. But actually, it's not beyond our wit to put it together. We could put it together. But you need to get these initial steps taken.

Now, what I'm wont to do when I go out there is just explore what is the way that we get that ability to get the negotiation underway, trying to work round these obstacles. And it's something—we were talking about Iran and Syria moments ago; it's something all of those countries could help with if they wanted to help with it. So I kind of feel one thing that is important is that everyone understands that there's no shortage of willingness, energy, commitment on our side.

And believe me, I've talked about this with the President many, many times, and I don't believe there's any shortage of those qualities on his part at all. But we need to get this—we need to get the door unlocked because it's kind of barred at the moment. It needs to be opened. And that's the task, I think, for the next period.

President Bush. Thank you. L.A. Times Man, Jim [Jim Gerstenzang, Los Angeles Times].

Iraq Study Group Report

Q. Mr. President, you have said that you have the Baker-Hamilton report; you also have the—you're waiting to hear from the Pentagon; you're waiting to hear from the State Department. This report was prepared by a bipartisan group, the only one you'll get. Secretary Baker has a special relationship with the family. Should this report not get extra consideration? Does it not carry more weight than any of the others?

President Bush. That's an interesting question. It's certainly an important part of our deliberations, and it was certainly an important part of our discussions this morning. Some reports are issued and just gather dust. And truth of the matter is, a lot of reports in Washington are never read by anybody.

To show you how important this one is, I read it, and our guest read it. The Prime Minister read—read a report prepared by a commission. And this is important. And there are some—I don't think Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton expect us to accept every recommendation. I expect them—I think—I know they expect us to consider every recommendation, Jim, that we ought to pay close attention to what they advise. And I told them yesterday at our meeting that we would pay close attention and would seriously consider every recommendation. We've discussed some of their recommendations here at this press conference. And we are—we will spend a lot of time on it.

And I—and so you ask its relative importance. I'd call it a very important report and a very important part of our working to a new approach, a new way forward in Iraq.

And I can't—I really do thank those citizens for taking time out of busy lives to spend time helping us look at different options. These are distinguished souls. They got plenty to do. They're busy people, and yet they took 9 months out. And they talked to a lot of people; they went to Iraq; they thought about it a lot. And it was a very considerate,

important report. And I will take their recommendations very seriously.

War on Terror Strategy

Q. Mr. President, the Iraq Study Group said that leaders must be candid and forthright with people. So let me test that. Are you capable of admitting your failures in the past, and perhaps much more importantly, are you capable of changing course, perhaps in the next few weeks?

President Bush. I think you're probably going to have to pay attention to my speech coming up here when I get all the recommendations in, and you can answer that question yourself. I do know that we have not succeeded as fast as we wanted to succeed. I do understand that progress is not as rapid as I had hoped. And therefore, it makes sense to analyze the situation and to devise a set of tactics and strategies to achieve the objective that I have stated.

And so if the present situation needs to be changed, it follows that we'll change it if we want to succeed. What's really interesting is, the battle has changed in Iraq from the rejectionists and former Ba'athists and definitely foreign fighters who have entered the country that were trying to destabilize the new government to one that Mr. Zarqawi stated clearly—he said, "Look, let's kill Shi'a in order to create enough chaos and confusion and doubt of the government, and set off a sectarian battle." And he succeeded in that extent. He didn't succeed at avoiding us, but he did succeed at starting off sectarian strife. And now the fundamental question is, what strategy is necessary to deal with this type of violence?

We'll continue after Al Qaida. Al Qaida will not have safe haven in Iraq. And that's important for the American people to know. We've got special operators. We've got better intelligence. And there is—Al Qaida is effective at these spectacular bombings, and we'll chase them down, and we are, along with the Iraqis. The strategy now is how to make sure that we've got the security situation in place such that the Iraqi Government is capable of dealing with the sectarian violence, as well as the political and economic strategies as well.

So, yes, I think you'll see something differently, because it's a practical answer to a situation on the ground that's not the way we'd like it. You wanted frankness—I thought we would succeed quicker than we did, and I am disappointed by the pace of success.

Prime Minister Blair. I mean, look, there isn't any—as I said a moment or two ago, there isn't any doubt about how tough this is. It's hugely challenging. But what the report did not say is that we should just get out and leave it. What it did say is that it's immensely important that we succeed.

Now, the question is, therefore, how do we do it? And in that regard, I think the report is practical; it's clear; and it offers also the way of bringing people together.

The other thing that we want to do, because this is part of succeeding in this mission, is actually to make people understand that this is something where you've got to try and bring people together around a set of common objectives and a practical set of methods to achieve those objectives.

And, you know, the issues that the report raises—I mean, these aren't issues that, obviously, no one has ever thought of; these aren't issues that haven't been part of the continual discussion and debate and iteration within the coalition and, indeed, between us and the Iraqi Government. But those essential elements—we want to make sure, in the light of the changing situation that there is there, that, one, we have the Iraqi Government able to operate effectively, but in a nonsectarian way, because that's what we began with. Secondly, that we make sure that everyone in the region is supporting that. And thirdly, that we set this within the context of a broader vision for the Middle East, not least in respect of Israel and Palestine.

Now, in respect of the elements of that strategy, this report gives us a basis on which we can move forward—but we've obviously then got to look at the practical measures that are necessary in order to give effect to those elements. And that's what we'll do. And I think that, you know, the one thing that no one who is dealing with this on a day-to-day basis has any doubt about is how tough it is. But the question is how we make sure that we overcome those tough conditions and

succeed, because the need to succeed is so huge.

British Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan

Q. Prime Minister, just a brief supplementary—sorry, I didn't get to ask you the question. You promised some time—I'm sorry.

President Bush. Look, I agree; this is a total violation of—[*laughter*]. Our press corps is calling you down, man. I mean, there you are—no, go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. You're encouraging it.

President Bush. I'm not encouraging it. He's not a member of the American press—it's the Prime Minister. [*Laughter*]

Q. He's my guy. [*Laughter*]

Q. Only because you cut me off, Mr. President——

President Bush. Okay. [*Laughter*]

Press. Ohhhhh! [*Laughter*]

Q. Prime Minister, you promised the British military whatever it takes to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the former head of the British Army says the British military is not being funded properly for the job it's being asked to do. Do you accept that?

Prime Minister Blair. We get from our military advice as to what they need, and we do our level best to meet it. I mean, we'll—I haven't actually read Mike Jackson's comments. I think it's Mike's speech you're talking about. And let me tell you, he's someone I have enormous amount of respect for and did a fantastic job when he was chief of our staff.

But in relation to this, we've worked closely with the military the whole time. It's important we carry on doing it. And I simply make the point that in the last few years, and not least yesterday in the pre-budget report of the chancellor, we gave another significant increase in funding. But it's important we do this. I mean this is a mission in which it is—because it's important that we succeed, it's important that we equip our armed forces properly. But I've got nothing—if you'll forgive me, I've not got anything to comment on in detail until I've actually read the speech that he made. Not that—I'm not saying you wouldn't give me a fair resume of it. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you, buddy.

Prime Minister Blair. Okay.

President Bush. Good job. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:05 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, chairman, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution of Iraq; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Cpl. Gilad Shalit, Israel Defense Forces, who was captured during a terrorist attack in Israel on June 25; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. Prime Minister Blair referred to former Chief of the General Staff Michael Jackson of the United Kingdom.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 7, 2006

Thank you all very much. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you to the Christmas Pageant of Peace. Christmas is a season of glad tidings and a time when our thoughts turn to the source of joy and hope born in a humble manger 2000 years ago. And tonight we gather to observe one of the great traditions of our Nation's Capital, the lighting of the National Christmas Tree.

I'm really glad Santa made it. [*Laughter*] I'm glad he could find a place to park. [*Laughter*] And I'm glad you all joined us tonight.

I want to thank Vin for his leadership of the National Park Foundation. I thank Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett for joining us. I am pleased to be here with members of my Cabinet; Members of the Congress; Mary Bomar, who is the Director of the National Park Service; Joe Lawler, Regional Director of the National Capital Region, National Park Service. I want to thank all the National Park Service employees for their hard work.

I appreciate Dr. Robert Schuller for leading the invocation. I want to thank our fabulous entertainers for entertaining us tonight.

We have gathered for this ceremony for more than 80 years. We come together to

celebrate a simple and inspiring story. It's a story of a miraculous birth in a humble place. It is a story of a single life that changed the world and continues to change hearts. And for two millennia, this story has carried the message that God is with us and He offers His love to every man, woman, and child.

During the Christmas season, we seek to reflect that love in our lives. Millions of Americans will celebrate at home in fellowship with friends and family. Millions will reach out with a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. And all will give thanks to the bonds of love and affection that bring fulfillment to our lives and the hope of peace around the world.

At this time of year, we give thanks for the brave men and women in uniform who are serving our Nation. Many of those who have answered the call of duty will spend this Christmas season far from home and separated from family. We honor their sacrifice. We are proud of their service and that of their families. We will keep them close to our hearts and in our prayers.

And now, as an expression of our own hope for peace in this Christmas season, we will light the National Tree. We've asked three representatives from the National Park Service's Junior Ranger Program to help. The Junior Ranger Program teaches children and families about science, nature, and stewardship of our national parks.

And so, Attiyah Jenkins, Stephen Scott, and Dana Bederson will help me light the National Christmas Tree.

Come on up, guys.

I ask all of you to join us in the countdown—five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vin Cipolla, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Robert H. Schuller, minister, Reformed Church in America.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

December 8, 2006

I want to thank the Members of Congress—both Houses, both political parties—for joining me and the Vice President and members of my team. We just had a very constructive conversation. We talked about Iraq. We talked about the need for a new way forward in Iraq, and we talked about the need to work together on this important subject. We also talked about other key issues.

I assured the leaders that the White House door will be open when the new Congress shows up. And I think we ought to meet on a regular basis; I believe there's consensus toward that. And the reason you meet on a regular basis is so that the American people can know that we're working hard to find common ground. That's what they expect us to do; they expect us to work on big problems and solve them.

I want to say something about my two friends here. Senator Frist, we appreciate your service to the United States of America. You brought a lot of dignity to the office. And I appreciate the Speaker being, as well—Mr. Speaker, you've done a fine job as Speaker.

I look forward to working with Senator Reid and Congresswoman Pelosi for doing what's right for the country. And again, I want to thank you all for coming down. I appreciate your interest, appreciate your advice, appreciate the input that you've given.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa

December 8, 2006

President Bush. It's been my honor to welcome a man for whom I have a great deal of respect, and that is the President of South Africa, President Mbeki, here back to the Oval Office. I so very much appreciate the time you've given and the great discussion we just had.

We talked about a wide range of subjects. We talked about Darfur and the need for South Africa and the United States and other nations to work with the Sudanese Government to enable a peacekeeping force into that country to facilitate aid and save lives.

And I expressed my concerns about the situation with the President. He shares my concerns that the situation is dire. And now is the time for action. And I appreciate your thoughts, Mr. President.

We talked about, interestingly enough, the Darfur [Doha] * round. The President is concerned about whether or not the World Trade Organization round will go forward. He recognizes, like I recognize, that trade will lift more people out of poverty than any other mechanism. And I told the President, I am committed to the Darfur [Doha] * round. I believe in trade, and I believe in the necessity of trade. And so we'll work to see if we can't get that issue solved.

We talked about a lot of issues. We talked about Iran; we talked about the Middle East; we talked about our bilateral relations and his Government's commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS and our willingness to provide over $600 million to the folks in South Africa to help deal with this terrible pandemic.

I would call our relations strong and good and necessary. And Mr. President, welcome back, and the floor is yours.

President Mbeki. Thank you very much, President. Well, I was very glad, indeed, that we had this opportunity to meet with the President to discuss precisely these matters that he has indicated. Of course of immediate importance to us is the support we get from the President and the U.S. Government with regard to the resolution of these African conflicts.

And indeed, we are, all of us, keenly interested that we must increase the troops deployed in Darfur, to address these issues that the President mentioned, and hopefully the Security Council will move quickly on that to do that larger deployment of troops. It's very urgent, very necessary, and we will absolutely do everything to make sure that, from the African side, we remove any obstacles that might be to such bigger deployment in Darfur. It's very necessary.

Because also I mentioned, I discussed with the President the impact of the situation in Darfur on the neighboring countries, particularly Chad and the Central African Republic. But also the difficult situation in Somalia——

President Bush. Yes, sir.

President Mbeki. ——and the President, together, we are very keen that, indeed, something must move there. This was a failed state. It's necessary to support transitional government, to restoring a government, and to reunify the country and so on. It's an important thing because the problem—one of the big problems is that as it is, it provides a base for terrorists—find safe haven there and then can spread out to the rest of the continent. It's something that is of shared concern.

But again, of course, I was very, very reassured when the President said he is committed to the success of the WTO negotiations. It's a very important part, in terms of addressing the agenda of the poor of the world. They need these market-access issues addressed, and so on. I was very, very pleased, indeed, that President said indeed we must work to make sure that WTO negotiating process succeeds.

We—finally, President, I'd like to say I was very pleased that, indeed, you said we shall need to work even—together even more intensely than we have in the past, because with effect from the 1st of January, South Africa, of course, joins the Security Council as a nonpermanent member. As I'm saying, I was very glad that the President said that's going to mean we'll need better interaction so that we could work together, indeed, to help to find solutions to all these wide range of issues that are on the agenda of the Security Council.

But thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Bush. Proud you're back. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

* White House correction.

Statement on the Death of Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

December 8, 2006

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the death of Jeane Kirkpatrick. As a professor, author, ambassador, and adviser to Presidents, she influenced the thinking of generations of Americans on the importance of

American leadership in advancing the cause of freedom and democracy around the globe. She defended the cause of freedom at a pivotal time in world history, and her courageous service as our United Nations Ambassador inspired her fellow Americans and lovers of liberty around the world. Jeane's powerful intellect helped America win the cold war. Her insights and teachings will continue to illuminate the path ahead for the United States in the world. We send our condolences to Jeane's family and friends, and on behalf of all Americans, we give thanks for her extraordinary life.

Statement on the National Economy

December 8, 2006

Today we received a new report that confirms the continued strength of the American economy. The November jobs report showed that 132,000 more Americans found work last month and that job creation in previous months was stronger than first estimated, adding 42,000 jobs to the numbers released last month. The unemployment rate remained low at 4.5 percent. This is good news for American workers, and they are also seeing good news in their paychecks. As we look forward, our goal is to maintain the progrowth policies that have strengthened our economy and will stimulate the creation of good jobs and higher wages.

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.

December 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 3

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a reception for Kennedy Center honorees.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush went to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts where they attended the Kennedy Center Honors ceremony. Later, they returned to the White House.

December 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with Brit Hume of FOX News.

The White House announced that the President will host Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom at the White House on December 7.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the inauguration of Joseph Kabila as President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on December 6: Elaine L. Chao (head of delegation); Roger Meece; Thelma J. Askey; Jendayi E. Frazier; Edward Brehm; Michael E. Hess; and John Fenn.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gregory B. Cade to be Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sam Fox to be Ambassador to Belgium.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stanley Davis "Dave" Phillips to be Ambassador to Estonia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jill E. Sommers to be Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Maria Cino as a member of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission.

The President announced his intention to designate Robert M. Couch as Acting General Counsel of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

December 5

In the morning, the President had breakfast with Secretary of Defense-designate Robert M. Gates. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with James A. Baker III, cochair, Iraq Study Group.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a dinner for Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations and his wife, Nane Maria Annan.

December 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael J. Burns to be Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rosemary E. Rodriguez to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission.

December 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin to the White House on December 14.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the 60th anniversary of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's accession to the throne, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, December 11: George H.W. Bush (head of delegation); Barbara Bush; and Ralph Boyce.

December 8

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, in the Yellow Oval Room, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with People magazine. Then, in the Oval Office, he had a meeting with Democrat Members of the House of Representatives.

In the evening, on the State Floor, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a holiday reception.

The President declared a major disaster in Alaska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides on October 8–13.

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 December 4

Robert M. Gates,
of Texas, to be Secretary of Defense, vice Donald Henry Rumsfeld, resigned.

Submitted December 5

Jeffrey Robert Brown,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Social Security Advisory Board for a term expiring September 30, 2008, vice Bradley D. Belt, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Gregory B. Cade,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration, Department of Homeland Security, vice R. David Paulison, resigned.

Sam Fox,
of Missouri, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belgium.

Frederick J. Kapala,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice Philip G. Reinhard, retiring.

Heidi M. Pasichow,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, elevated.

Stanley Davis Phillips,
of North Carolina, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Estonia.

Jill E. Sommers,
of Kansas, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for the remainder of the term expiring April 13, 2009, vice Sharon Brown-Hruska, resigned.

Michael W. Tankersley,
of Texas, to be Inspector General, Export-Import Bank (new position).

Submitted December 6

Michael J. Burns,
of New Mexico, to be Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs, vice Dale Klein, resigned.

Beryl A. Howell,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2011 (reappointment).

Rosemary E. Rodriguez,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for the remainder of the term expiring December 12, 2007, vice Raymundo Martinez III, resigned.

John R. Steer,
of Virginia, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2011 (reappointment).

Withdrawn December 6

Tracy A. Henke,
of Missouri, to be Executive Director of the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, Department of Homeland Security, vice C. Suzanne Mencer, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on September 5, 2006.

David H. Laufman,
of Texas, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense, vice Joseph E. Schmitz, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on June 5, 2006.

Submitted December 7

Thomas Alvin Farr,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina, vice Malcolm J. Howard, retired.

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 December 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of British Prime Minister Tony Blair

Released December 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released December 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released December 7

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome President Thomas Yayi Boni of the Republic of Benin to the White House

Text of citations for the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Released December 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alaska

Fact sheet: Job Creation Continues—More Than 7 Million Jobs Created Since August 2003

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.