

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Emergency Appropriations and Allocation of Emergency Response Funds
March 20, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with the requirement included in Public Law 107-63, the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2002, I hereby request \$346.0 million in emergency appropriations previously provided under title II for the Department of Agriculture for rehabilitation and wildfire suppression activities of the Forest Service.

I hereby designate these funds as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. The entire amount is being designated as an emergency requirement to make \$200.0 million available immediately to repay funds previously borrowed for emergency wildland fire suppression activities.

Furthermore, in accordance with provisions of Public Law 107-38, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Re-

covery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, FY 2001, I hereby authorize a transfer from the Emergency Response Fund totaling \$27.2 million to the General Services Administration.

I have previously authorized the transfer of over \$19.9 billion in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With this action today, all the funds that were made available to me from the Emergency Response Fund have been transferred for urgent needs.

The details of these actions are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. I concur with his comments and observations.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 21.

Remarks Following a Breakfast Meeting With the Vice President and an Exchange With Reporters
March 21, 2002

The President. Good morning. Thank you all for coming. I just had a breakfast with Vice President Cheney, and as you all know, he's returned from a lengthy and successful trip to the Middle East, the first trip I asked him to go on. I sent him to the region because this is an incredibly important part of the world, and it's a turbulent part of the world. And the Vice President took a lot of messages on behalf of our administration and made some really good progress. I'm really proud of how he

handled himself and how he delivered the message.

As a result of this trip, and as a result of working with General Zinni, there is some progress being made in the Middle East. And I want to thank the Vice President for being very firm and deliberate and convincing both parties that the Tenet plan and ultimately the Mitchell plan is a way to achieve what we all want in the world, which is a peaceful resolution to this long-standing conflict.

But Mr. Vice President, welcome back. Thanks, you did a great job.

The Vice President. Well thank you, Mr. President. It was a good trip. And as you say, there are a lot of issues on the agenda right now that are important in that part of the world.

I talked extensively with our friends about the ongoing campaign in Afghanistan and the war against terror that affects all of us. And everybody in the region spent a lot of time on the Israeli peace problems and propositions, the conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians; obviously, a lot of time on the Iraqi situation and Saddam Hussein's development of weapons of mass destruction. But I found at virtually every stop that the United States has great friends and allies in that part of the world. I also had the opportunity to visit with a number of our military personnel conducting active operations or supporting those operations in Afghanistan and the region. So all in all, it was a great trip. I'm ready to go back there.

The President. Questions? Yes, John [John King, CNN].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, interested in your own calculations when the Vice President called to discuss the possibility of the Arafat meeting, your calculations in making the decision to change slightly the administration's standard for opening the door to a meeting with him. And Mr. Vice President, do you believe now that meeting will happen? Is Mr. Arafat keeping his end of the bargain?

The President. Well, first of all, I've always been one that trusts the judgment of the people I send on a mission. And the Vice President called me, with General Zinni by his side, and said, "There's a chance that we can get into the Tenet security agreement. And if that were to happen, in my judgment, I think it would be best if I would then go see Mr. Arafat."

And I trust the Vice President's judgment. He's a man of enormous experience

who's got a good feel for things, and we both trust General Zinni. And so the definition of whether or not he is going to see Mr. Arafat depends upon the feel for our negotiator, General Zinni. But I think it was the right thing to do, obviously.

We've set some strong conditions, and we expect Mr. Arafat to meet those conditions. I, frankly, have been disappointed in his performance. I'm hopeful, however, that he listens to what the Vice President told him and said that in order for us to have influence in terms of achieving any kind of peaceful resolution, he must—he, Mr. Arafat—must do everything in his power to stop the violence.

The Vice President. Well, as I've said before, John, the key here will be General Zinni. And he'll make his judgment based on whether or not Arafat is in fact implementing Tenet, not just promising to implement but implementing Tenet. If he's doing that, if he's living up to those requirements, and General Zinni signs off on it, then I'm prepared to go back almost immediately for a meeting. But it will depend on whether or not Arafat is complying.

Iraq

Q. Mr. Vice President, on Iraq, the other main item on your agenda, you said we have a lot of allies out there. But I haven't noticed any of the Arab states—maybe they say things privately that they don't publicly; we've long been told that—supporting strong action against Iraq. They seem to want diplomacy to be given a chance—Annan's efforts, sanctions, changes, et cetera. What kind of response did you get?

The Vice President. Well, I think—I guess the way I would characterize it is, they are uniformly concerned about the situation in Iraq, in particular about Saddam Hussein's failure to live up to the U.N. Security Council resolutions, especially number 687, that he pledged to at the end of the war, that said he'd get rid of all of his weapons of mass destruction.

And they are as concerned as we are when they see the work that he has done to develop chemical and biological weapons and his pursuit of nuclear weapons, the past history that we all know about, in terms of his having used chemicals. If you haven't seen it, there's a devastating piece in this week's New Yorker magazine on the 1988 use by Saddam Hussein of chemical weapons against the Kurds. If the article is accurate—and I've asked for verification, if we can find it—he ran a campaign against the Kurds for 17 months and bombed literally 200 villages and killed thousands and thousands of Iraqis with chemical weapons.

That's not the kind of man we want to see develop even more deadly capacity, for example nuclear weapons. And my experience is that our friends in the region are just as concerned about those developments as we are. And I went out there to consult with them, seek their advice and counsel, to be able to report back to the President on how we might best proceed to deal with that mutual problem, and that's exactly what I've done.

The President. I think one other point that the Vice President made, which is a good point, is that this is an administration that when we say we're going to do something, we mean it; that we are resolved to fight the war on terror—this isn't a short-term strategy for us; that we understand history has called us into action, and we're not going to miss this opportunity to make the world more peaceful and more free.

And the Vice President delivered that message. I was grateful that he was able to do so. It's very important for these leaders to understand the nature of this administration so there's no doubt in their mind that when we speak, we mean what we say, that we're not posturing. We don't take

a bunch of polls and focus groups to tell us what—how to—to what we ought to do in the world. When we say we want to defend freedom, we mean it. And the Vice President did a fine job of delivering that message.

Part of any foreign policy—good foreign policy—is to consult with our friends and allies. We've told our friends and allies we'll do so on all kinds of issues. And the Vice President did that in a really good way.

Terrorist Attack in Lima, Peru

Q. Mr. President, different part of the world, a car bomb exploded in Lima last night, killing nine people. Are you concerned about your safety?

The President. No, I'm still going. I'm sure President Toledo will do everything he can to make Lima safe for our trip. Two-bit terrorists aren't going to prevent me from doing what we need to do, and that is to promote our friendship in the hemisphere. Our neighborhood is important to us; Peru is an important country. President Toledo has been a reformist, obviously worked within the democratic system. And you bet I'm going.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:16 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.); Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and President Alejandro Toledo of Peru. The Vice President referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The President also referred to the Tenet plan, the Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire and security plan of June 13, 2001, negotiated by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet, and the Mitchell report, the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30, 2001.

Remarks in El Paso, Texas
March 21, 2002

Thank you all. Thank you all very much. So, Laura and I were heading down to Mexico, and we decided to stop to see a lot of our friends. And there's no better place to see a lot of our friends than El Paso, Texas.

I want to thank you all for coming out. I want to thank you for being here. As you know, I had a change of address, but my home is still Texas. I love to be with my fellow Texans, and I'm really happy that Laura came with me today. As you know, she's doing a great job as First Lady.

I'm a lucky man to have Laura as a wife. Some people are wondering how lucky she is to have me as a husband. [Laughter] But I attribute the fact that she has done such a fabulous job to this: Every summer when she was a kid, she came to El Paso, Texas.

I'm also honored to be traveling today with a fantastic Secretary of State, Colin Powell. Colin Powell has cobbled together one of the great coalitions ever, a coalition determined to fight terror wherever we find it. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your love for America; thank you for your love for freedom; and thank you for your service to this country.

You know, when the enemy hit us, I knew we needed a strategy to protect our homeland. We needed a strategy to—something to put in place to do the very best we can to protect our citizens. And I turned to a friend of mine to lead the strategy, the former Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, a strong leader, a capable man, a Vietnam vet, Tom Ridge.

I'm proud to be on the stage with a man who's doing a fabulous job for the people of Texas, the Governor of the State of Texas, Rick Perry. And I was proud to travel from Washington, DC, back to his home territory with a fine Congressman,

a man who understands the border, a man who loves Texas, Henry Bonilla.

We've really come for more than just to see our friends. We've come down to highlight the importance of our border and the importance of our relationship and friendship with Mexico. First, I want to make this clear—somebody asked me the other day—they asked this question. They said, "Because of the war on terror, have you—is your interest in Mexico diminished?" I said, "Not at all." A strong and prosperous Mexico is good for America. And the best foreign policy is a foreign policy that insists that our own neighborhood be prosperous and peaceful and democratic.

Mexico is an incredibly important part of the *futuro de los Estados Unidos*. And the border, *la frontera*, is a very important part of our relationship. It is essential that Americans understand the nature of this border. And that's why I'm going to be going to a border crossing point to make this point: On the one hand, we want the legal commerce, the people who travel back and forth on a daily basis, the brothers and sisters on both sides of the border, the relatives that have been coming back and forth for years, to be able to do so in an efficient and easy way. We want that kind of traffic, that kind of border crossing to be done in an expeditious way. It's good for Juarez, and it's good for El Paso, Texas.

Rick mentioned the amount of commerce that takes place. The commerce that takes place between Mexico and Texas and the United States is good for both countries. It's good for the United States; it's good for Mexico. And therefore, we must work to make sure our border is modernized so that the commerce that takes place can move more freely, can be expedited so as it makes it easier for people to have jobs and find work.