

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting
Requests for Supplemental and Emergency Appropriations
May 21, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed request for an FY 2002 supplemental appropriation for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This request is for an increase in the mandatory cost of disability compensation and pension benefits for veterans.

During the current year, VA has made dramatic improvements processing claims, significantly accelerating the rate of payments. This supplemental request for \$1.1 billion is needed to help pay the benefits associated with reducing the backlog of claims from previous years.

Absent this adjustment, there would be insufficient funds in September to pay the 2.5 million veterans who are entitled to benefits.

This transmittal also contains requests for FY 2002 supplemental appropriations for the legislative branch. As a matter of comity, appropriations requests of the legislative branch are transmitted without change.

Furthermore, in accordance with provisions of Public Law 107-63, the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002, I hereby request and make available \$54.0 million in emergency appropriations for the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management. These emergency funds will be used to undertake necessary rehabilitation projects on lands damaged by wildland fires and to support fire suppression activities. I hereby designate this amount as an emergency requirement in accordance with section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended.

The details of these requests 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

Interview With European Journalists
May 21, 2002

The President. I have a couple comments, and I'll answer some questions, obviously.

This is a trip that I've been looking forward to. I've never been to Germany; I'm looking forward to it. I've prepared a speech to the Bundestag, which is going to be a very interesting opportunity for me to talk about a very important relationship.

In my speech I'm going to refer to my trip to Russia as well, about how I view this as an opportunity—my trip to Russia and Germany and France and eventually

Italy—as a way to confirm the importance of our relationship bilaterally as well as institutions like NATO but as a way to talk about how welcoming Russia, Russia's vision into the West is important for all of us.

I look forward to my bilaterals with Gerhard Schroeder. We've got a good relationship. I look forward to my bilaterals with Jacques and Prime Minister Berlusconi, who is—three friends. As you know, I rely upon personal diplomacy a lot. I think it's easy, when people find areas

of mutual respect, to work together. I've got good relationships with all three and, of course, we've got good relationships with President Putin as well.

Q. He's also a friend?

The President. He is a friend; yes, he is, very much.

I will talk in the bilaterals as well, of course, in my public addresses, about our need to continue to fight terrorism. You've seen our newspapers. You've seen members of my administration, high-ranking members of my administration clearly talking about the potential threats and attacks on America. I will remind our friends that this war is far from over. I will praise the cooperation, because I believe it. I will talk to them about what we need to do to continue fighting for liberty and freedom.

In my speeches—in discussions privately and in my public speeches, I will also remind us that we want the world to be not only more secure but a better world. I'll explain the Millennium Challenge Fund that I laid out in Monterrey, and I'll talk about some of it publicly in the Bundestag as well.

I think this is an opportunity—I view this as a great opportunity for those of us who are in positions of responsibility to defend our freedoms and to work collaboratively to make the world a better place, improve the human condition. So I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be an interesting experience.

I'm looking forward to going to Normandy on Memorial Day. It's going to be a very dramatic moment for the son of a World War II veteran. And I look forward to going to a church and a synagogue in Russia, Sunday. I look forward, as I said, going to the Bundestag. It's going to be a—it'll be a memorable event, to talk in front of the vast chamber with democratically elected members, some of whom who agree with what I believe in, some of whom don't—but all of them are free to express their minds.

And then, of course, go to Paris—it's going to be a magnificent moment—then Rome, and then as well the “at 20,” the NATO confirmation of a new relationship with Russia.

But anyway, this is going to be a good trip. I sent the best advance team I can send, and that is the First Lady—[laughter]—preparing my way.

So why don't we go around and answer some questions? Who would like to start?

Europe-U.S. Relationship

Q. Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. You are by now an experienced European traveler, so I would like to ask you, is there something wrong with the U.S.-European relationship in terms of a growing psychological, military, technological gap? Is there something that is worrying you and that you hear from your friends that is worrying them?

The President. Well, first, I recognize that there are more ties that bind us than don't. You see, when you love freedom, that's a powerful tie. The German people, the French, Russians, and the Italians, like Americans, love freedom. And so do I, a lot. And that's what binds us. We've got values that bind us: rule of law, constitutions, marketplace, the rule of the marketplace. These are common values that make us bound together.

We've got common problems that we must solve that are also greater than any dispute that may arise. I mean, listen, fighting for terror is a common cause that is a powerful force that unites us.

So I think the relationship is a strong relationship, and it's a healthy relationship. And of course there are disagreements at times. We have trade disagreements, but that's because we've got a lot of trade; we've got \$2 trillion of trade a year. If we didn't have any trade, there would be no disagreements. But that's normal; that's in the normal course of business. And I certainly do not let that affect my way of

how I view this incredibly important alliance and relationships.

So I'm—I go to Europe feeling optimistic about our relationships and feeling optimistic about our capacities to work together to solve problems.

Russia

Q. Mr. President, some American political scientists would prefer to see Russia in the future as undeveloped.

The President. Yes.

Q. As a strong developer—

The President. Pay attention to him.

Q. —they became a significant competitor for the U.S.A. However, a poor and a bitter country would be even more dangerous.

The President. Yes.

Q. How do you, Mr. President, see Russia in the near future?

The President. Well, first of all, it's the same issue that relates to the European Union and America as well as Russia and America. We want healthy competition. We want our friends to be strong and competitive. We want the economies to grow. I think it's essential for American policymakers to recognize that a healthy Europe and a healthy Russia is in our Nation's interests. It makes it easier; for example, a healthy economy makes it more likely that a friendship will develop in a more significant way.

And so my message to the Russian people, as well as to here at home, is that it is important that Russia be viewed as a friend, not as an enemy. I said that right off the bat; that was my stated goal as a President, is to work with Russia as a friend, not as an enemy. I was able in Slovenia to realize that was possible when I visited with President Putin. And this head of his bureau there, or whatever you want to call the guy, asked me the question, first question: Do you trust Putin?

Yes. I answered that several months ago when—what's the boy's name? Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press] is his

name—please, please, scratch that from the—[laughter]—scratch that from the notes.

They said, “How do you know?” I said, “I looked into his eyes and was able to glimpse into his soul.” See, and I've been proven right. I do trust him because I believe he cares deeply about moving forward. There's so much that can be done in the spirit of friendship, together. And that's how I view—that's—and we've got a lot of problems.

We've got AIDS ravishing an entire continent. Well, imagine, here we are, we're all representative of relatively wealthy nations—hopefully, Russia's wealth will increase—and yet, we're confronted with a society that's being wiped out. And so one of the fundamental questions is how—what do we do? We've got nations, responsible nations—how do we respond to that?

And I've got some ideas. As you know, we put a—anyway, my point to you is that we want Russia to succeed. We want Russia to be healthy. We want Russia, our partner now in fighting terrorism, to have the means to continue the fight. And I hope this trip will help, you know, assuage the doubts of some in Russia who—and in America—who like the old way of resentment and bitterness and hatred. Vladimir Putin and I are putting that behind us for the good of both peoples.

Yes, sir.

NATO

Q. Mr. President, one of the main vehicles of the relationship between the U.S. and Europe is, of course, NATO.

The President. Yes.

Q. And we have many in Europe, and not only Europe, are wondering, is NATO doomed? Will it disappear at some point? And if not, what is the purpose of NATO in the coming years?

The President. Well, that's a great question. NATO is more needed than ever in many ways. And let me explain it to you this way. The nature of the threats to us—

and I say “us” collectively—has changed. And what we’re learning is, it’s the ability for nations to share information and to cut off finances, the ability for nations to deny safe haven, the ability for nations to keep these killers on the run that’s going to make this war successful. And therefore, it’s a collective effort in order to beat a terrorist network. And NATO is a collection of freedom-loving countries. Therefore, NATO must change its mission—not its mission, its focus and its capabilities in order to meet the threats that now face us.

So I think NATO is very relevant. That is why in Prague, next fall, I will—depending upon the actions of applicant states—will follow through my speech I gave in Warsaw and will reiterate somewhat in Germany, that I see a Europe whole, free, at peace with itself. And NATO expansion is one way to achieve that.

Now, I caution those who would read your articles to not take anything for granted when it comes to the NATO expansion. But I have been on record as one that has talked aggressively about expansion. The reason I do is because I understand the importance of NATO and the relevance of NATO.

And we need to work within NATO to make sure that NATO has got the capacities to—to better use capabilities, define capabilities and strategies, make sure an expanded NATO is flawless and seamless in its capacity to advance against a new threat. So I think it’s a very relevant part of the future, and I will say that in Germany, and to Jacques.

Q. If I may have a followup on this—
The President. Sure.

Q. Are you worried by the gap in military capabilities, which is widening—and even, with your budget, will be widening more—between Europe and the U.S.?

The President. I think that’s an issue. I do think it’s an issue. On the other hand, it’s an issue that can be overcome with time.

We’re transforming our military or trying to transform our military rapidly. There’s a few weapons systems that seem to keep popping up, even though they may have been doomed at one point. But that’s part of the process. And—but we are transforming. And NATO must transform as well in order to meet the true threats. Russia is not a threat. Russia is not a threat to the West. And therefore, NATO must align its capabilities and its budgets to the new threat. And that’s going to take awhile. I understand that.

So I’m not in a—you know, I’m optimistic about NATO changing. I’ve talked to Lord Robertson about this issue. I will address it in my speech in Germany as well, about how to make sure NATO stays relevant as we head into the 21st century.

But gaps can be closed, and gaps can be changed, particularly technological gaps, particularly among friends. And I’ll repeat, I go to Europe as a friend, and someone with whom—someone who wants to work with Europe to achieve common objectives.

And I will say this again: The war on terror requires significant cooperation. We’re not fighting a nation that has got the capacity to move tanks. We’re fighting a group of killers, international killers who hide in caves, who burrow in free societies, who are patient and tough and mean, and who want to destroy. And therefore, we must cooperate with each other; we must share intelligence; we must run down leads; we must interdict; we must arrest. And a great place to start is with a collection of freedom-loving countries, and that is NATO.

Yes, sir?

Russia

Q. What is the Russia-NATO Council about? Does it give a say to Russia on NATO issues? And if not, what?

The President. The “at 20” certainly does not give Russia any veto power over military actions. And that’s important to know.

However, it recognizes that Russia can be an important partner in a peaceful Europe by working, initially working with Russia on counterproliferation measures, terrorism measures, ways to address the new threats facing all of us.

Russia faces the same threat that Italy, France, Germany, and America faces, and that is the threat of terrorism. It is important for your readers to know you face the threat, just like we face the threat. It may not seem so—it may not seem so. But I'm telling you the threat is real. President Putin understands that. Therefore, it makes—as do Europe leaders as well, I want you to know. And it, therefore, makes eminent sense to include Russia in a new relationship with NATO, and that's what we're going to confirm on the outskirts of Rome.

Iraq and State-Supported Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, would you say that Iraq, for the time being, is basically contained? Or do you think that there are urgent steps required to undertake against Saddam's plans with weapons of mass destruction?

The President. Sure. I'm a patient man. And I am a deliberate man. But the word "contain" doesn't work if someone's got the capacity to deliver a weapon of mass destruction. How can you contain somebody when they've got the ability to blackmail or launch a weapon? And that is my deep concern.

And I feel passionate about this concern, because I know the nature of the regime. And I know the potential threat that could come if this terrorist organization that we're hunting down teams up with—I'm not sure how you translate into German, but—

Q. We'll find a way.

The President. —coordinate, allies with, coordinates with—uses these weapons of mass destruction to further their means as well. And I'm concerned about it.

I know there's a lot of angst about my statements about these nations, but I have

the responsibility to speak as clearly as I possibly can about how I view the nature of these regimes. And I will continue doing that.

Q. Is that why the Vice President said that inspections are not really enough?

The President. Well, we certainly hope that the Iraq Government will allow there to be full and open and unfettered inspections. We want to know. This is a man who's denied inspections for years. I wonder why. I think the world ought to ask, why won't you allow for inspections?

Every time they talk about inspections, he's got a certain kind of caveats and strings, and won't let them—"You can't go here. You can't go there." So I think the Vice President was expressing some skepticism about the nature of the regime itself. And we'd like to see inspections, unfettered, whole, free inspections. We'd like these inspectors to go look where they want to look, just like Saddam Hussein agreed to do over a decade ago.

Mr. Volk?

Putin-Bush Relationship

Q. Mr. President, can you please describe your relationship—I'm excited, therefore I'm reading. [Laughter] Can you please describe your relationship with President Vladimir Putin?

The President. Yes.

Q. How do you call each other during the informal session? What are the subjects of your conversation after official state session?

The President. Well, I would call my relationship warm. I enjoy his company. He has got a good sense of humor, and I appreciate that. And he has kindly invited me to his house, and I'm looking forward to going.

Our conversations will be about—here's a man who loves Russia, and he loves the Russian people. And he's deeply concerned about problems facing Russia. And a lot of times, even in the most informal gathering, he shares with me his deep concerns.

He is a—he also is a man who worries about the threats that Russia faces. We share a common interest in this war on terror because Russia, herself, has been attacked; innocent people have lost life. And he's passionate on the subject, about protecting his homeland. And we share information about how best to do that. I mean, we ask questions as friends would ask questions: "How are you doing this? Where are you doing that?"

Q. How do you call him? Vladimir?

The President. Oh, I call him Vladimir, yes.

Q. Vladimir?

The President. Yes. And he calls me George.

Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. Jorzh.

The President. But he's a—one of the interesting things we're going to do is go to St. Petersburg together and go on the barges and see the White Nights.

Q. Do you know a couple of words in Russian?

The President. No.

Q. No?

The President. *Nyet.* [Laughter] One. But I've got a Russian speaker with me, *Senorita Arroz.* "Arroz" means "Rice."

Terrorist Alerts

Q. Mr. President, the warnings which have been issued in the last days about terrorist threat, including what the Vice President said on Sunday—is it a kind of general notice to the American people that they must stay vigilant in the demands on the U.S. front? Or does it point out to any specific and imminent threat?

The President. The FBI Director yesterday, I talked to him—he comes in every morning, by the way. So this subject—he came up this morning. He was talking about—he was speculating based upon a lot of intelligence that indicates that the Al Qaida is active, plotting, planning, you know, trying to hit us. So he was speculating. He basically said, "Look, I wouldn't be surprised if there is another attack, and

it's going to be difficult to stop them," is what he said. The Vice President also reflected that attitude.

Now, if and when we have a specific threat, you know, we—in other words, if I were to tell you that I know that there's a—thinking about an attack on a certain moment at a certain place, we would deal with that in a way that would obviously harden that site. We would put our assets in place to prevent that from happening. I doubt there'd be a lot of publicity. The people, obviously, whose lives could be affected would be informed, directly informed, as the country, as the Government deployed assets to react.

These are very clever killers. And I refer to them as killers because that's what they are. They're out to kill, no other way to put it. And they—their communications are adept. And we're learning more about them. But they're—they're a heck of a lot more sophisticated than people assume, I guess is the best way to put it. They think, and they plan, and they plot. They burrow into free societies.

And so what the Vice President and the FBI Director were reflecting was a general understanding of the desires and attitudes and methodology or potential methodology—obviously, if we knew the exact methodology, they wouldn't be around; we would have taken care of—well, protect our homeland, I'll put it to you that way, within the Constitution of the United States, of course. They would be off the streets.

It's a concern. This is—I mean, every morning I read threats—some, by the way, directed not toward U.S. assets, but to the assets of our friends. As a matter of fact, I am confident that I've read threats that were directed to the countries represented here. All the time, we share information immediately. As a matter of fact, before I see it, I'm confident that the information has gone to the intelligence-gathering networks of the respected countries. And that's very important; that's very important. I don't mean to be an alarmist. And again,

there are no—I didn't have a—there's not a moment.

But there is an attitude of these people. And they're relentless, they just are. And therefore, when you hear me say that the best strategy, the best defense is an offense, I mean it. And the best way to protect our respective people is to hunt these people down.

One of my jobs is to continually educate the American people and, for that matter, anybody who is interested in the world who wants to listen, as to the true nature of what we face. I've got a better handle on it than most. I pay attention to it every day. My most important job—we'll debate all the debates and all the issues, but my most important job is to protect America and our friends and allies and work with our friends and allies to protect the innocent people in your countries.

You know, it's a unique war we're fighting. The old wars, there would be battle-lines and movements, and you could measure progress here and territory taken here. A lot of people steeped in history kind of still think that way. But it's a different kind of war. And we're recognizing how different it is as we get more intelligence. And it takes a different effort to fight it.

But it's real; it's absolutely real. I know some in the world don't particularly want to hear that. It's much easier not to be confronted with the truth, because it means that there's going to be sacrifice and worry and concern. But it's a real threat, and I'm going to—I'll battle with all my—and I've got a great country behind me doing—

Q. On this point, were you disappointed by the questions raised by the Democrats about the way you were informed? Did the conclusions you draw, you drew from this information—

The President. As I said, this is the—the thing about Washington. I suspect capitals elsewhere—democracy, there's nothing like a little second-guessing. As I said, in Washington, the second-guessing is second

nature. I'm used to it. I think there was a lot of—most of the elected officials here are very responsible citizens. They understand the nature of the intelligence; they understand how it works.

We're a united country—may flare up a little, politics flares up. But we're a united country. And this country is—both Republicans and Democrats are united to win this war on terror, and I appreciate that spirit from Washington.

Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority

Q. On Middle East—

The President. Make it a good one.

Q. Yes.

The President. Be sure it's a good one.

[*Laughter*] I'm sure everybody here is interested in that subject.

Q. Is peace possible with Arafat?

The President. It's a very interesting question. First of all, I meant what I said on April the 4th, when I said Mr. Arafat has let the Palestinian people down. He's had a chance to lead. He had a chance to get a peace agreement with my predecessor. He's had chance after chance. And by failing to lead, he has really let the Palestinians down.

I say that with a lot of angst in my heart because I am concerned about the plight of the Palestinian citizenry, poor and isolated and frustrated. Many live in refugee camps and have for years. And there's obviously—I realize in many of their hearts, there's little hope, and that's frustrating.

And so I am clearly disappointed. Somebody said, "Has he earned your respect?" I said, he never had my respect, because he has—he let his people down. The role of a leader is to lead.

Having said that, I do think peace is possible, and I think it's important. I think it's very important that we work toward a vision of two states living side by side in peace. There's work for all of us involved

in this process, to have that vision so necessary for a secure Israel and so necessary for a hopeful Palestine.

The process to get there is going to require a commitment by all parties: a commitment for the United States to continue to lead on the issue, and we will; a commitment by the Israelis to make the tough choices necessary for the Palestinian state to exist; the commitment by the Palestinians to renounce and fight terror; the commitment by the Arab world to become engaged not only in the humanitarian aspects of the region but to be a part of the building of the institutions necessary for a Palestinian state to exist.

That starts with a security apparatus that actually functions for the benefit of the Palestinian people by fighting off terror, by rejecting extremism. There is—and at the same time, shows the world, not only just Israel but shows American and Arab nations and everybody, the EU, that there is a concerted effort to fight terror, a security force in which authority and responsibility are properly aligned. That's step one.

A while ago I announced that Tenet was going to reengage in the process of developing this security force. There also needs to be the institutions necessary for the growth of a state, such as the ability to disburse money in a noncorrupt way, the capacity to provide help for citizens—actual help for citizens who suffer—in a way that will lead to the rebuilding of community; they have the civil institutions necessary for growth. That will come when there are—when there is the reforms necessary to make sure there is accountability in the Palestinian Authority.

There needs to be the conditions necessary for economic vitality; that's trade. There's money willing to be spent. The EU—I've talked to President Aznar on the subject; I've talked to your respective leaders on the subject. I've committed to it.

But I'm not committed to spending—sending money in a place until I'm convinced it's going to be spent to help the

Palestinian people. And so I—yes, I think peace is possible. It's going to take awhile; it's going to take a lot of work. And the first steps necessary are for people to assume their responsibilities, to assume a responsible role.

I am—I will tell you that you've read the press accounting of what's taking place. There is a sense that—amongst some in the region, a lot in the region, that there needs to be a reform process in the Palestinians that will boost the confidence of, first, the people, second, the neighborhood, and third, the community of the world, of which the EU and America are an integral part.

So I will continue to work for peace, and I just—to renounce terror, insist that people fight off terrorist attacks, demand that there be accountability for people who are involved in the process, cut off money wherever we can, to deny terrorists the capacity to derail peace by death. And we have to do that in order to achieve peace. You've got to deny people—killers the ability to destroy hope through death. And I'm optimistic we can do that. I believe we can. Thanks for asking.

Okay, thanks for your time.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:20 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, and the transcript was embargoed for release by the Office of the Press Secretary until 10 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; President Jacques Chirac of France; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia; Secretary General Lord Robertson of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain in his capacity as President of the European Council. He also referred to "NATO at 20," a proposed NATO-Russia cooperation mechanism in which NATO member states and Russia will work as equal partners in areas of common interest. Journalists participating in the interview

were: Leo Wieland, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung; Patrick Jarreau, Le Monde; Gabriel Volk, Argumenti i Fakti; and Alberto Flores-

D'Arcais, La Repubblica. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Christian Malar of TF-3 French Television May 21, 2002

Terrorist Alerts

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, thank you very much. Could you be more specific on the prospects of new attack against the United States? It's a source of concern for all of us, of course. And do you think it's a—concerns also, for instance, the French, who have been severely targeted—struck recently by the terrorist networks in Pakistan?

The President. Yes, it's a good question. First, I'm concerned about all people who love freedom. The French love freedom; Americans love freedom. And Al Qaida hates freedom, and they can't stand people who embrace freedom.

I have no specific threat to America and Americans or to the French. If I had a specific threat, something that would hurt the French, I can assure you we would have shared that information immediately with our friends in the French Government. If I have a specific threat relating to America, we would deal with that specific threat. We would use our assets to harden whatever the target might be. You probably wouldn't know about it.

What you're hearing is—you're hearing—the people of my administration are concerned about a group of people who continue to plot and plan on ways to hurt us. And the best way to prevent further attacks is to find them and hunt them down, to chase them one by one, and to bring them to justice. And that's what my country and our coalition will continue to do.

Iran and Iraq

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, you spoke a lot about the evil axis. Are you still planning to attack Iraq? And what about Iran, which, according to our understanding of various sources, might have been harboring bin Laden for the last few months?

The President. Oh, really? Well, I certainly hope that's not the case, for Iran's sake, that they be harboring bin Laden. We don't know about Mr. bin Laden. He might be dead; he might be alive. All I can tell you is, I heard—I haven't heard much from him in a long period of time.

I do believe there is an axis of evil. These are countries that are not transparent; they're dictatorial; they've got designs for weapons of mass destruction, if they don't have them already. They hate—they preach a gospel of hate. And we'll deal with each of them differently. Obviously, the military is an option. I have no plans on my desk right now, but whatever I decide and whatever we decide, of course, we'll consult closely with the French, our allies, and our friends.

But we must deal with this threat, the threat of countries such as Iraq using a weapons of mass destruction to affect a balance of power or to affect our willingness and ability to go defend ourselves. And this is a dangerous problem that we've got to deal with.

Situation in the Middle East

Mr. Malar. Mr. President, concerning the peace process in the Middle East, it seems there is no peace solution in sight right now. Arafat doesn't want—cannot control