

## The President's Radio Address *September 21, 2002*

Good morning. In the past week, U.S. officials in Pakistan took custody of five Al Qaida members, including a key strategist for the September the 11th attacks. And here in America, Federal agents arrested six men suspected of having trained at Al Qaida terrorist camps in Afghanistan.

These arrests remind us that we are engaged in a new kind of war, fought on many fronts, including the homefront. The arrests also remind us that the enemy is still at large, threatening our safety and security. Defeating terrorism requires constant vigilance and preparation by our citizens and by our Government.

One way for the Congress to protect the American people is to pass legislation creating a new Department of Homeland Security. This new Department must have a single, overriding responsibility to coordinate our homeland defense efforts, which are now scattered across the Government.

After less than a week of debate, the House of Representatives passed a good bill, a bill that gives me the flexibility to confront emerging threats quickly and effectively. Yet after 3 weeks of debate, the Senate has still not passed a bill I can sign. The legislation the Senate is debating is deeply flawed. The Senate bill would force the new Department to fight against terror threats with one hand tied behind its back. The Department of Homeland Security must be able to move people and resources quickly, to respond to threats immediately without being forced to comply with a thick book of bureaucratic rules.

Yet the current Senate approach keeps in place a cumbersome process that can take 5 months to hire a needed employee and 18 months to fire someone who is not doing his job. In the war on terror, this is time we do not have.

Even worse, the Senate bill would weaken my existing authority to prohibit collec-

tive bargaining when national security is at stake. Every President since Jimmy Carter has had this very narrow authority throughout the Government, and I need this authority in the war on terror. As Democrat Senator Zell Miller said, "The daunting task of securing this country is almost incomprehensible. Let's not make it more difficult by tying this President's hands and the hands of every President who comes after him."

In an effort to break the logjam in the Senate, Senator Miller and Republican Senator Phil Gramm have taken the lead in crafting a bipartisan alternative to the current flawed Senate bill. I commend them and support their approach. Their proposal would provide the new Secretary of Homeland Security much of the flexibility he needs to move people and resources to meet new threats. It will protect every employee of the new Department against illegal discrimination and build a culture in which Federal employees know they are keeping their fellow citizens safe through their service to America.

I ask you to call your Senators and to urge them to vote for this bipartisan alternative. Senators Miller and Gramm, along with Senator Fred Thompson, have made great progress in putting the national interest ahead of partisan interest. I'm confident that every Senator, Republican and Democrat, wants to do what is best for America. Creating a new Department of Homeland Security will make America stronger and safer. It is time for the Senate to act.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:15 p.m. on September 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary

on September 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan; suspected terrorists Sahim A. Alwan, Yahya A. Goba, Yasein A. Taher, and Shafal A.

Mosed, arrested on September 13, and Faysal Galab, arrested on September 14 in Lackawanna, NY; and suspected terrorist Mukhtar Ali Albakri, who had also been living in Lackawanna and whose arrest was announced on September 16. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks to the Community in Trenton, New Jersey *September 23, 2002*

Thanks a lot for coming out this morning. It is my honor to be back in New Jersey. I want to thank you all for coming out. I want to thank the people of the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard for your hospitality. I'm here to talk about how best to make America a stronger country, a safer country, and a better country for all of us.

There is a old bridge over the Delaware River that says, "Trenton makes; the world takes." It talks about the work ethic of the people of this part of our country. It talks about the creativity. It talks about the true strength of America. The true strength of America are our fellow citizens. The strength of our country is the people of America. And I'm honored to be with such hard-working people.

Congress can help. Congress needs to work hard before they go home. Congress needs to get some things done, which means a Homeland Security Department, a budget that reflects our priorities. They've got to make sure they don't overspend your money. They've got to remember, everything they do must go to make sure America is a stronger and safer and better place.

I want to thank Brigadier General Glenn Rieth for opening up this hangar and for inviting me to this base. I want to thank all the Guard personnel who serve the United States of America. I want to thank

you for your service. I want to thank you for your sacrifice.

I want to thank your Governor for being here today. I appreciate Governor McGreevey being at the steps of Air Force One. I'm thankful for his hospitality. I appreciate him coming to say hello, and I'm honored he's here today to hear this speech. Governor, thank you for coming.

I appreciate Members of the congressional delegation. Congressmen Ferguson, Saxton, and Smith from New Jersey, thank you all for being here. I want to thank Bob Prunetti, who is the Mercer County executive, for greeting me here as well. And I want to thank you all for coming.

Here's what's on my mind: I want our people to work here in America. Anytime somebody who wants to work can't find a job, it means we've got a problem in this country. And we will not rest until people can find work. A stronger America means a strong economy. A stronger country means that our good, hard-working Americans are able to put food on the table for their families.

Now, we're making progress. Listen, interest rates are low. Inflation is low. We've got the best workers in the world. We've got the best, hardest workers and smartest workers in the world. We've got the ingredients for growth. But what has taken place so far is not good enough for me, and I hope it's not good enough for the Congress.