

Statement on Terrorist Attacks in Israel and Kenya November 28, 2002

I condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the terrorist attacks today at the Likud Party polling place in northern Israel and the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, as well as the attempted attack on a civilian airliner shortly after it took off from Mombasa's international airport. I want to extend my condolences to the victims and their families, and to the governments and peoples of Israel and Kenya. Today's attacks underscore the continuing willingness of those opposed to peace to

commit horrible crimes. Those who seek peace must do everything in their power to dismantle the infrastructure of terror that makes such actions possible. The United States remains firmly committed, with its partners around the world, to the fight against terror and those who commit these heinous acts.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Locality Pay Increases for Civilian Federal Employees November 27, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases payable to civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) pay system in January 2003.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS pay system would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2003: (1) a 3.1 percent across-the-board increase in scheduled GS rates of basic pay linked to the part of the Employment Cost Index (ECI) that deals with changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) a locality pay increase based on Bureau of Labor Statistics' salary surveys. For Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 18.6 percent.

For each part of the two-part pay increase, title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative pay plan if I view the adjustment that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic

conditions affecting the general welfare." For the reasons described below, I have determined that it would be appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority to limit the locality pay portion of the January 2003 GS pay increase.

A national emergency has existed since September 11, 2001. Full statutory civilian pay increases in 2003 would interfere with our Nation's ability to pursue the war on terrorism. They would cost about \$13.6 billion in 2003 alone—\$11.2 billion more than the 2.6 percent overall Federal civilian pay increase I proposed in my 2003 Budget—and would build in later years. Such cost increases would threaten our efforts against terrorism or force deep cuts in discretionary spending or Federal employment to stay within budget. Neither outcome is acceptable. Therefore, I have determined that a total pay increase of 3.1 percent would be appropriate for GS employees in January 2003.

Because 5 U.S.C. 5303 already mandates an across-the-board GS pay increase of 3.1

percent in January 2003, GS locality-based comparability payments under 5 U.S.C. 5304 must remain at current levels. While my Administration remains committed to the principle of adjusting civilian Federal pay rates in keeping with changes in local labor market rates, our national situation precludes granting larger pay increases to GS employees at this time.

Accordingly, I have determined that:

(1) Under the authority of section 5303(a) of title 5, United States Code, the pay rates for each statutory pay system will be increased by 3.1 percent, effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2003; and

(2) Under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments in the percentages set forth in the attached table will remain in effect in 2003.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employ-

ees. I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, is at 2.1 percent, well below the 3.1 percent across-the-board pay increase already mandated by current law, and Federal quit rates are at an all-time low of 2.1 percent per year, well below the overall average quit rate in private enterprise. Should the need arise, the Government has many compensation tools, such as recruitment bonuses, retention allowances, and special salary rates, to maintain the high-quality workforce that serves our Nation so very well.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 29.

The President's Radio Address *November 30, 2002*

Good morning. This week, all across America, we gather with the people we love to give thanks for the blessings in our lives. Each family has its own traditions, yet we are united as a nation in setting aside a day of gratitude. We are grateful for the freedoms we enjoy, grateful for the loved ones who give meaning to our lives, and grateful for the many gifts of this prosperous land. On Thanksgiving we acknowledge that all of these things, and life itself, come not from the hand of man but from Almighty God.

The blessings we have received take on special meaning in this time of challenge for our country. Over the last year, millions

of Americans have found renewed appreciation for our liberty and for the men and women who serve in its defense. We have held our family and our friends closer, spending more time together, and letting them know we love them.

Taking time to count our own blessings reminds us that many people struggle every day—men, women, and children facing hunger, homelessness, illness, addiction, or despair. These are not strangers. They are fellow Americans needing comfort, love, and compassion. I ask all Americans to consider how you can give someone in need a reason to be thankful in this holiday season and throughout the year.