

For nearly 80 years, in times of calm and in times of challenge, Americans have gathered for this ceremony. The simple story we remember during this season speaks to every generation. It is the story of a quiet birth in a little town on the margins of an indifferent empire, yet that single event set the direction of history and still changes millions of lives. For over two millennia, Christmas has carried the message that God is with us, and because He's with us, we can always live in hope.

In this season, we celebrate with our families—and deeply miss family members no longer with us. Thousands of families in our Nation are still grieving over the terrible losses that came to them last year on September the 11th. We pray for their comfort. We pray for the comfort for everyone who has lost a life this year.

Our entire Nation is also thinking at this time of year of the men and women in the military, many of whom will spend this Christmas at posts far from home. They stand between Americans and grave danger. They serve in the cause of peace and free-

dom. They wear the uniform proudly, and we are proud of them.

Laura and I wish every American family the blessings of this season, happy holidays, and a merry Christmas. And now we have the honor of lighting the National Christmas Tree. And joining us we've got two new friends, Samara Banks and Ben Schneller, to help us light this tree.

Now, if everybody—you all step up here. [*Laughter*] Get ready. Please join us in the countdown: Five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:57 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to actress Barbara Eden, hostess, and Peter F. Nostrand, chairman, Christmas Pageant of Peace; entertainer Roy Clark, who played Santa Claus; and Samara Banks and Ben Schneller, children who assisted the President in lighting the National Christmas Tree. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignations of Treasury Secretary Paul H. O'Neill and National Economic Council Director Larry Lindsey

December 6, 2002

My economic team has worked with me to craft and implement an economic agenda that helped to lead the Nation out of recession and back into a period of growth. I appreciate Paul O'Neill's and Larry

Lindsey's important contributions to making this happen. Both are highly talented and dedicated, and they have served my administration and our Nation well. I thank them for their excellent service.

The President's Radio Address

December 7, 2002

Good morning. This weekend is the deadline for the Iraqi regime to fully disclose to the U.N. Security Council all of

its weapons of mass destruction. Disarming that regime is a central commitment of the war on terror. We must and we will prevent