

young people to be active contributors, not spectators.

I created the USA Freedom Corps and the Students in Service to America initiatives to mobilize our citizens and provide opportunities for young people to give back to their communities. As part of these initiatives, I asked all Americans to dedicate at least 4,000 hours over the rest of their lives to serving our Nation through volunteering. Since then, our citizens, and particularly our young people, have responded to my call with an outpouring of kindness that is transforming our Nation one heart and one soul at a time.

National Youth Service Day is a great example of what can happen when dedicated individuals come together to serve a cause greater than self. Across our Nation, millions of young people are participating in projects that help their neighbors

in need. By using their time, talents, and compassion to make a difference in the lives of others, these young people are learning to become responsible and engaged citizens in our democratic society.

I commend participants for your energy, idealism, and willingness to serve. I also applaud the more than 60 national partner organizations working with schools, houses of worship, local governments, and community and civic organizations in all 50 states to make this day a success. Your efforts strengthen our Nation and contribute to a future of hope and promise for all.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a productive and memorable day.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Message to the Senate Transmitting North Atlantic Treaty Protocols on the Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia

April 10, 2003

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. These protocols were opened for signature at Brussels on March 26, 2003, and signed that day on behalf of the United States and the other parties to the North Atlantic Treaty. I request the advice and consent of the Senate to the ratification of these documents. I also transmit for the information of the Senate a report submitted to me by the Secretary of State regarding this matter.

The end of communism and the consolidation of freedom and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe have been among the great developments of human history.

NATO played a vital role in defending freedom and promoting this peaceful change for over 50 years. I am pleased that, with the advice and consent of the Senate, these new democracies can soon join us as members of this great Alliance.

As the threats to the Alliance have changed, NATO itself has adapted to face them. At the Prague Summit in November 2002, I joined the leaders of NATO not only in inviting these nations to join us as members, but also in calling for a transformation of NATO's military capabilities and structures to meet the threats of the 21st century. NATO is proceeding with that agenda. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia are already making real contributions to the

common security of the NATO Allies, including the United States, and I am firmly convinced that their full membership in NATO will strengthen our Alliance further.

I ask the Senate to join me in advancing the cause of freedom and strengthening NATO by providing its prompt advice and consent to these Protocols of Accession. My

Administration stands ready to assist you as best we can in your deliberations.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
April 10, 2003.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 11.

Remarks Following a Visit With Troops Wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom and an Exchange With Reporters in Bethesda, Maryland *April 11, 2003*

The President. Laura and I just had an extraordinary experience here at Bethesda and at—initially at Walter Reed, to thank our troops who've been overseas in Iraq for their dedication and courage and their service to the country. Because of troops like them, because of coalition troops, we've had an historic week.

I don't think I'll ever forget—I'm sure a lot of other people will never forget—the statue of Saddam Hussein falling in Baghdad, and then seeing the jubilation on the faces of ordinary Iraqis as they realized that the grip of fear that had them by the throat had been released—the first signs of freedom.

I came today to thank the troops and their families and their loved ones for their sacrifice. I also want to thank the staffs of these hospitals, the leadership, the doctors and the nurses, the people who care for those who have been hurt, for their extraordinary service to their fellow Americans.

Ours is an amazing country where a young soldier can be wounded on the battlefield and 4 days later be receiving the best health care possible. This country is dedicated to our military. We try to provide the very best we can. And here at Be-

thesda, at Walter Reed, our troops get the very best there is.

So Laura and I were here not only to thank our soldiers but also to thank those in the medical profession who dedicate their lives to healing the hurt and to helping the families. And that's exactly what's happening for our soldiers here in these two fine facilities.

I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Yes.

POWs and MIAs/Saddam Hussein

Q. Mr. President, what progress are we making in determining the whereabouts and well-being of American POWs and MIAs in Iraq? And the same goes for Saddam Hussein. And which do you see as the greater priority right now?

The President. The priority of this campaign is to rid the Iraqi people of any vestiges of Saddam Hussein and his regime so we can not only free the people but clear that country of weapons of mass destruction. I don't know the whereabouts of Saddam Hussein. I don't know if he's dead or alive. I do know he's no longer in power.

In terms of POWs, we will use every resource we have to find any POWs that are alive. And we pray that they are alive, because if they are, we'll find them.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].