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Statement on Japan's Announcement of Reconstruction Aid to Iraq
October 15, 2003

I welcome Japan's announcement that it will provide $1.5 billion toward immediate reconstruction needs in Iraq. I applaud this bold step, which will help mobilize international support for efforts to build a stable, peaceful, and democratic Iraq. Japan recognizes that this effort is critical to security and peace not only in Iraq and the Middle East but also for Japan and throughout the world. Japan's own history shows the power of international cooperation to help a great people build democracy and prosperity and become a beacon of freedom that inspires all nations.

I also commend Japan's announcement that it is working on a larger aid package in preparation for the October 23–24 Madrid Donor's Conference. We look forward to working with Japan and other countries to make the Madrid Conference a success for the people of Iraq.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack on Americans in the Gaza Strip
October 15, 2003

I condemn in the strongest terms the vicious act of terrorism directed against Americans in Gaza today. We are working closely with the appropriate officials to bring the terrorists to justice.

Palestinian authorities should have acted long ago to fight terror in all its forms. The failure to create effective Palestinian security forces dedicated to fighting terror continues to cost lives. There must be an empowered Prime Minister who controls all Palestinian security forces, reforms that continue to be blocked by Yasser Arafat. The failure to undertake these reforms and dismantle the terrorist organizations constitutes the greatest obstacle to achieving the Palestinian people's dream of statehood.

The Americans who were attacked today were pursuing a vision for a better future for the Palestinian people. The U.S. Embassy officials traveling in Gaza were there to interview young Palestinian candidates seeking Fulbright scholarships to study in the United States. This is another example of how the terrorists are enemies of progress and opportunity for the Palestinian people.

On behalf of the American people, I send my heartfelt condolences to the families of the brave Americans who were killed and injured serving our country and its ideals.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Riverside, California
October 15, 2003

Thanks for the warm welcome. It's nice to be back in Riverside, California. I appreciate your hospitality. I appreciate your friendship, and thank you for your strong support. I'm proud to have it.

I understand there's been a couple of changes here in California since I was last

time here. And tomorrow at the Mission Inn, I have the opportunity to congratulate the Governor-elect of the great State of California, and I'm looking forward to it.

I'll tell you what we're doing here tonight. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in 2004. And I appreciate you being on the team and want to tell you that I'm going to continue to count on your support when you go to your houses of worship or your community centers or your coffee shops, and you tell the people who haven't made up their mind yet that this administration will continue to work for what's right and best for every single American.

The political season is going to come in its own time. I am kind of loosening up—[*laughter*]—and getting ready. But I've got a job to do. I'm focused on the people's business, and there's a lot on the agenda in Washington, DC. I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation strong and secure and prosperous and free.

My one regret is that Laura isn't with me tonight. That's your regret too, I know. [*Laughter*] You kind of got the short straw. [*Laughter*] She was in the Dominican Republic today and is flying out. Tomorrow we'll meet at March Air Force Base, and then we're on a very exciting journey to Asia. I'm proud that she's going to be on my side. I'm going to get a few pointers from her about diplomacy. [*Laughter*] You might remember that she recently took a trip to France. [*Laughter*] You probably saw the picture of her visit there. [*Laughter*] I went to France. [*Laughter*] The people were nice to me, but I certainly wasn't treated that well by Jacques Chirac. [*Laughter*] Laura is great. I'm really lucky that she's my wife. She's a great First Lady for our country.

I appreciate very much two Members of the United States Congress coming today. I know they flew out for this event. They're leaving in the morning for votes tomorrow, and that's Congressman Ken Calvert from this district—I appreciate you, Ken—and Congresswoman Mary Bono from the great State of California. Thank you, Mary.

I want to thank my friend Jim Brulte for being here today. I told him if he gets any skinnier, he's going to end up in a Subway ad. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate his leadership. He's a great minority leader of the State senate, the cochairman of this event. I also thank State Senator Dennis Hollingsworth who is here. I appreciate you coming, Senator. Jim Battin is here, another State senator. I appreciate you coming, Jim. Thank you. Ray Haynes, another State senator, is here. Pretty soon we're going to get the whole State senate here. [*Laughter*] Bonnie Garcia is a State assemblywoman. Russ Bogh is here with us. Thank you, Russ, for coming. I'm honored you're here. Bob Dutton, John Benoit, members of the statehouse. I want to thank all the local officials who are here, the supervisors and the mayors and—so honored you all are here. I appreciate the folks who have worked so hard to make this such a successful event.

I particularly want to thank my friend Brad Freeman and Gerry Parsky—my friends Brad Freeman and Gerry Parsky, who have been the leaders in this State for my campaign. As well I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the Bush-Cheney national finance chairman. He's taken a lot of time out of his life to make sure this campaign of ours is well-funded. It seems like he's doing a pretty darn good job.

But most of all, thanks to you all again for being here.

You know, in the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. This administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they

got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. And so we increased the defense budget to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we inherited an economy in recession. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America, and our Nation marched to war, all of which affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

Here is what we believe and what I know, that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. We also know whose money we spend in Washington. It is not the Government's money; it is the people's money.

With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across our country, so that every single person in America has a chance to realize the American Dream. We're returning more money to people. We're helping them raise their families. We've reduced capital gains taxes and dividends. We're helping small businesses. When I hear that someone is looking for a job who wants to work and can't find that job, we will continue to work to create an environment that is strong for the entrepreneur. We want the people of America working.

Two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. See, we're bringing high standards to public schools all across America. And we're going to have strong accountability measures to make sure that those standards are met. In return for Federal money, we're now saying to the public schools, "Show us whether our children can read and write and add and subtract. We believe they can. You show us if you're teaching them how to do so." You see, we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn. We expect every school to teach so that not one single child is left behind.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and better safeguard the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up markets for California's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle. We have kept our word, and we have made progress for the American people.

And the Congress deserves a lot of credit for the success we've had. It's a great pleasure to work with Speaker Denny Hastert and majority leader Bill Frist. We're working hard to try to change the tone in Washington, DC, by focusing on results, not politics. We want to do what's right for the American people. By the way, those are the kind of people I've called to service in my administration. I have put together a superb team of Americans from all walks of life to serve in the administration. Our Nation has had no finer Vice President than

Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 2½ years, we have done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion, so that every citizen has a chance to work and succeed and realize the great promise of our country.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. Our war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; and we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces and aid workers and innocent Iraqis. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States of America. We will not be intimidated.

We are aggressively striking at terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own cities. We're calling other nations to help Iraq to build a free country, which will make all of us more secure. And we're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every heart. And I believe that freedom is the right of every person. And I believe that freedom is the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS. This great Nation is taking the lead. We're leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home as well. I talked about our need to make sure we continue to create the conditions for economic growth and vitality, so people can find work. As well we have a duty to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. Congress took historic action. For the first time since the creation of Medicare, the House and the Senate passed reforms to increase choices for our seniors and to provide coverage of prescription drugs. The next step is for both Houses to iron out their differences and to get the bill to my desk. The sooner that Congress finishes the job, the sooner American seniors will get the health care they deserve.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. The House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the Senate. The Senate must

act, and those Senators holding up the bill must understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America.

I have a duty as President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for our Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the floor of the Senate. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs a comprehensive energy plan, and the Congress needs to act. This Nation must promote energy efficiency and conservation. We must use technologies to help us find energy in an environmentally sensitive way. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism by applying the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act," so more Americans can serve their communities and their countries.

Both Houses should reach agreement on the Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted. This Nation is a great nation because we believe in worshiping freely. This Nation should not fear faith and providing the compassionate help to people who hurt. We should welcome help from the Christian community and the Jewish community and the Muslim community, the Hindu community, to help people find help they need. Love comes from houses of worship. This Government ought to welcome the Faith-Based Initiative.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people to own their homes. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, and today in Fresno, I discussed ways to narrow that gap.

We want people to own and manage their own health care plan. We want more people to own and manage their own retirement accounts. We want more people to own their own small business. You see, this administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another and take responsibility for the decisions they make. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your employees and your shareholders. And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us here in our country. I started what we call the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been strong, just like the response has been strong for charities all across our country and just like the response has been strong in our faith-

based institutions. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. at the Riverside Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; President Jacques Chirac of France; Ray Haynes and Russ Bogh, California State assemblymen; Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gerald L. Parsky, chairman, Team California, California Republican Party Board of Directors; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Interview With Asian Print Journalists
October 14, 2003

The President. I'll make an opening statement. We'll go around and see how many times we can make it around.

First, I'm really looking forward to this trip. It is a long trip, and it is an important trip. It is a chance for me to say thanks to a lot of nations for cooperating with America, for being friends with America, for working with America to achieve common objectives. It's a chance to strengthen alliances, longstanding alliances. Alliances are important, an important part of our foreign policy. Together we can accomplish a lot of important objectives—no more important objective than continuing to fight terror.

It's going to be an important part of my discussions with each leader, to renew our efforts to find those who would kill innocent people and bring them to justice, disrupt cells, cut off financing, prevent the catastrophes that have taken place, that have taken innocent life, from happening again. That's really our call. And I go with a strong determination to continue to work with the leaders and to fight terror. And it's very important for them to look at me and listen to me, because my determination is just as strong today as it was on September the 12th, 2001.

Secondly, I'm looking forward to talking about economic matters. I will tell our friends that things are looking up for the U.S. economy but that there's more work to be done. And one of the key components of economic growth in America and job creation here, as well as job creation with our friends, is a trade policy that opens markets and at the same time recognizes that what we call a level playing field is prevalent, that trade must be free and it must, at the same time, be a fair policy, that people on both sides of any trade equation ought to be treated fairly.