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will continue to resist any protectionist tendencies here. In order for us to be free traders, however, we've got to enforce the rules of free trade, and I was doing so through the International Trade Commission's report.

Sorry I cut you off.

Mr. Kavanagh. Not at all.

The President. First Lady Bush is standing out there. We're getting ready to award the National Humanities Award here.

Mr. Kavanagh. Many thanks.

The President. See you over there.

NOTE: The interview began at 9:31 a.m. on November 14 in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 14 but was embargoed for release until 8 a.m., November 17. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; and David Kay, CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Following Discussions With Members of the Governing Council of Iraq and Members of the Baghdad Advisory Council and an Exchange With Reporters

November 17, 2003

The President. It's been my honor to host one of the most extraordinary meetings I've had as the President of the United States. I'm seated here with five courageous, brave Iraqi women who believe in the people of Iraq, believe in the future of Iraq, who love their freedoms, who look forward to working to see that their nation is a free and peaceful country.

The stories of these five courageous leaders is a story of human tragedy on the one hand and human hope on the other. And I am so honored that they're here. Two members of the Governing Council are with us. I'll ask each member to say a couple of words, and then I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions.

Would you like to start? The leader of the delegation. And by the way, there is an extensive group of Iraqi women in the room next door that I will go talk to here in a minute with these—along with these other five leaders here.

Raja Habib al-Khuzai. I lead the delegation of the 17 women, Iraqi women, and we represent Iraq. And all of us are different ethnic and religious groups, but we are from Iraq. And we are all Iraqis, and Iraq is just one nation. And we are looking forward to see the new, democratic Iraq, and everyone will live in peace. We don't like wars anymore, and we suffered a lot.

Songul Chapouk. Yes. I'm also from the Governing Council. I'm also leading these women. And I am from the Turkoman community, and it's a pleasure for me to be in America. And I work for my people. I'd like to see Iraq have a new Government, and I'd like to see my people—more security. And I'd like to say that my people in Iraq, all of them, Kurdish, Turkoman, Arab, they're all working together. And the Sunni Triangle, there is no Sunni Triangle; they're all Iraqi.

We all like Iraq. We all like America, and we don't want them let—we don't want them to leave us. We need them because

we have open borders and we don't have army and we don't have trained policemen, so we need them at this time. And we ask them to not leave us, please, at this time, because this is a very, very difficult condition for us. Our children like you, our children want you to stay, and all Iraqi people like your forces.

Thank you very much.

The President. I assured these five women that America wasn't leaving. When they hear me say, "We're staying," that means we're staying. And that's precisely what the terrorists want to do, is to try to drive us out of Iraq before these leaders and other leaders are able to put their Government together and live in peace. And we will succeed—we will succeed.

Let me answer a couple of questions. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iraqi Transition/U.S. Cooperation

Q. Sir, I'd like to pick up there on what you just said about "America isn't leaving" and what this woman said about they want us to stay. Is it fair to think of this provisional Government that's going to be established as any part of an exit strategy? Or——

The President. No. The politics will go forward. The political process is moving on. The Iraqi people are plenty capable of governing themselves. We're in the process now of working with the Governing Council to put in place the necessary laws so that people feel comfortable about the evolution of the Government. The Governing Council itself is going to be making these decisions, and it's full of capable people.

On the other hand, we will continue to work with the Iraqi people to secure its country. We fully recognize that Iraq has become a new front on the war on terror and that there are disgruntled Ba'athists as well as Fedayeen fighters and mujahideen types and Al Qaida types that want to test the will of the civilized world there. And we will work with Iraqis to bring people to justice. We talked about the high price the Iraqi citizens are paying. There's a lot of brave and courageous Iraqi soldiers and police who are chasing down these terrorists, and they're paying a price for it.

And the reason I bring that up is, the Iraqi people want to be free. And we will continue to work with them to develop a free society. And a free Iraq is not only in the interests of these five courageous women; a free Iraq is in our interests. A free Iraq in a part of the world that is troublesome and dangerous will set such a good example. We're talking about an historic opportunity to change parts of the world, and Iraq will be the leader of that change.

It's important for American citizens to know that what is taking place in Iraq will be in the long-term security interests for their children and their grandchildren. And I want to thank these five pioneers for freedom who are sitting here with me today.

Last question, Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Al Qaida and Terrorist Attacks

Q. Al Qaida appears to be taking responsibility for bombings in Istanbul, Riyadh, Baghdad. Are we seeing a reconstitution of Al Qaida?

The President. We're seeing the nature of Al Qaida. They'll kill innocent people anywhere, anytime. That's just the way they are. They have no regard for human life. They claim they're religious people, but they're not. Religious people do not murder innocent citizens. Religious people don't just indiscriminately bomb.

The bombing in Istanbul, I was told today, may have taken more Muslim lives than any other religion. They just kill, and they're trying to create fear and chaos.

I had a good talk with Prime Minister Erdogan, who assured me that, one, he understood his responsibilities to protect people from all religions within his country and, two, that he would chase these killers down and bring them to justice. There's only one way to deal with Al Qaida: find

them and bring them to justice. And that's exactly what the United States and a lot of other nations, including a free Iraq, will do. We do this in the name of humanity. We do this in the name of freedom, and we do it in the name of peace.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

Remarks Honoring NCAA Spring Championship Teams
November 17, 2003

Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Let's see, I forgot who said, "This is the people's house, and we're just letting you live here." You're right. Welcome to the people's house. I'm glad to be just living here for a while.

I'm also really glad to honor some of our country's really fine individuals to the White House, all of whom worked to make their team successful. It is—we call this championship day, where champions come, people who put their talents to good use, and people who have got a lot of talents to continue to put to use to make sure our country is as hopeful and compassionate as possible. So welcome to the White House. We're really thrilled you're here.

We've got some pretty interesting characters with us today. [*Laughter*] Every person has got to have a good lawyer, particularly in America. And I got a good one, and that's Judge Al Gonzales, who is the White House legal counsel, who graduated from Rice University. Judge, thank you for coming.

We have got Members from the United States Congress with us today. From the great State of Texas, Chris Bell and John Culberson. Thank you all for coming, Chris and John. I'm glad you're here. I suspect I know why you're here. Rush Holt from the State of New Jersey is with us. Rush, thank you for coming. Mark Kennedy is with us. Mark, good to see you, sir, glad you're back. Cliff Stearns—hi, Cliff, how are you?

We've got the university leaders with us. Chancellor Nancy Cantor from the University of Illinois is with us. Chancellor, we're honored you are here. Jim Barker, the president of Clemson University; Malcolm Gillis, from Houston, Texas, Rice University. Thank you all for coming, and thank you for bringing the people from your universities here to the White House. We're glad you're here.

First, I want to honor an individual. I said this, that we're going to honor teams, but we're going to first start off with an individual here on Champions Day. The man I'm about to introduce has been winning college football games since Harry Truman was in the White House. [*Laughter*] His teams have picked up 409 victories in the course of his career, and that's John Gagliardi. The reason why his teams play so well is because not only is he a good coach, he's first and foremost a very decent person who honors values, who believes in the potential of every individual, who leads through example.

Coach Gagliardi, we're honored that you're here. We appreciate so very much Peggy and Jim being with you. Coach Gagliardi told me Jim—or Jim told me he's the offensive coordinator. He said, "I kind of like"—I said, "I kind of like a guy who follows in his father's footsteps." [*Laughter*] But it's such an honor to welcome this fine human being with us today. Coach