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forward—don't we—to wave the championship banner above the Crawford High School.

All right, happy holidays.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:32 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; professional baseball player Johnny Damon; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Joyce Rumsfeld, wife of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. He also referred to the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security (Moynihan Commission). The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 21, 2004

Laura and I have just come from a remarkable place called the Fisher House, a facility where wounded soldiers and their families are provided comfort during their trials. And we just want to thank the people who have supported the Fisher House, thank the folks here at Walter Reed for providing such incredibly good health care.

Today we had a rocket attack that took a lot of lives. Any time of the year it's a time of sorrow and sadness when we lose a loss of life. This time of year is particularly sorrowful for the families as we head into the Christmas season. We pray for them. We send our heartfelt condolences to the loved ones who suffer today. Just want them to know that the mission is a vital mission for peace. The idea of a democracy taking hold in what was a place of tyranny and hatred and destruction is such a hopeful moment in the history of the world.

And I want to thank the soldiers who are there and thank those who have sacrificed and the families who are worried about them during this Christmas season for their sacrifices. This is a very important and vital mission. I'm confident democracy will prevail in Iraq. I know a free Iraq will lead to a more peaceful world. So we ask for God's blessings on all who are involved in that vital mission.

Thank you very much. Have a good holiday.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m.

Statement on Signing the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004

December 21, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 3242, the "Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004" (the "Act"). The Act is designed to increase the competitiveness of fruits,

vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops grown in the United States.

Section 1408A of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended by section 303 of the Act, purports to require the Secretary of Agriculture to take into consideration certain advisory board-approved findings and recommendations in preparing the Secretary's annual departmental budget proposal to the President and to disclose to the Congress how the Secretary addressed each such recommendation. The executive branch shall construe section 1408A in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch, to require the opinions of principal officers of the executive departments, to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President shall judge necessary and expedient, and to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
December 21, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 3242, approved December 21, was assigned Public Law No. 108–465.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Implementation of Debt Reduction Authority
December 21, 2004

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

Consistent with section 1321 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–228), I transmit herewith a report prepared by my Administration on implementation of the debt reduction authority conferred by Title XIII, Subtitle B of Public Law 107–228.

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.

Statement on Signing the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005
December 23, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 4548, the "Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005." The Act authorizes appropriations to fund United States intelligence activities, including activities essential to success in the war on terror.

The executive branch shall construe provisions in the Act, including sections 105, 107, and 305, that mandate submission of information to the Congress, in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to withhold information that could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the