

Message on the Observance of Independence Day, 2007
June 29, 2007

I send greetings to Americans everywhere celebrating Independence Day.

Two hundred thirty-one years ago, 56 brave men signed their names to a bold creed of freedom that set the course of our Nation and changed the history of the world. On this anniversary, we remember the great courage and conviction of our Founders, and we celebrate the enduring principles of our Declaration of Independence.

Through selfless sacrifice and unrelenting determination, the patriots of the American Revolution ensured that our Nation's claim to liberty and equality would not be dismissed or forgotten. The ideals they fought for and the country they helped establish are lasting symbols of hope to the entire world.

Our commitment to America's founding truths remains steadfast. We believe that

freedom is a blessing from the Almighty and the birthright of every man and woman. As our Nation faces new challenges, we are answering history's call with confidence that our legacy of freedom will always prevail. On Independence Day, we express our gratitude to the generations of courageous Americans who have defended us and those who continue to serve in our country's hour of need, and we celebrate the liberty that makes America a light to the nations.

Laura and I wish you a Happy Fourth of July. May God bless you, and may He bless our wonderful country.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this message. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address
June 30, 2007

Good morning. Next week, Americans will gather with friends and family to celebrate the Fourth of July. I look forward to spending this Independence Day in Martinsburg, West Virginia, with the men and women of the West Virginia Air National Guard.

On the Fourth of July, we celebrate the courage and convictions of America's founders. We remember the spirit of liberty that led men from 13 different colonies to gather in Philadelphia and pen the Declaration of Independence. In that revolutionary document, they proclaimed our independence based on the belief that freedom was God's gift to all mankind.

To defend that freedom, the 56 signers of the Declaration pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. Their sacrifices built a new nation and created a future of freedom for millions yet to be born.

Today, a new generation of Americans has stepped forward and volunteered to defend the ideals of our Nation's founding. Around the world, our brave men and women in uniform are facing danger to protect their fellow citizens from harm. In Afghanistan, our military and NATO forces are hunting down the Taliban and Al Qaida and helping the Afghan people defend their young democracy. And in Iraq, American

and Iraqi forces are standing with the nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a future of peace and opposing ruthless enemies who want to bring down Iraq's democracy and turn that nation into a terrorist safe haven.

This week, I traveled to the Naval War College in Rhode Island to give an update on the strategy we're pursuing in Iraq. This strategy is being led by a new commander, General David Petraeus, and a new Ambassador, Ryan Crocker. It recognizes that our top priority must be to help the Iraqi Government and its security forces protect their population, especially in Baghdad. And its goal is to help the Iraqis make progress toward reconciliation and build a free nation that respects the rights of its people, upholds the rule of law, and is an ally in the war on terror.

So America has sent reinforcements to help the Iraqis secure their population; go after the terrorists, insurgents, and militias that are inciting sectarian violence; and get the capital under control. The last of these reinforcements arrived in Iraq earlier this month, and the full surge has begun. One of our top commanders in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, put it this way: "We are beyond a surge of forces. We're now into a surge of operations."

Recently, we launched Operation Phantom Thunder, which has taken the fight to the enemy in Baghdad as well as the surrounding regions. We're still at the beginning of this offensive, but we're seeing some hopeful signs. We're engaging the enemy and killing or capturing hundreds. Just this week, our commanders reported the killing of two senior Al Qaida leaders north of Baghdad. Within Baghdad, our military reports that despite an upward trend in May, sectarian murders in the capital are significantly down from what they were in January. We're also finding arms caches at more than three times the rate of a year ago. The enemy continues to carry out sensational attacks, but the number of car bombings and suicide attacks has been

down in May and June. And because of our new strategy, U.S. and Iraqi forces are living among the people they secure, with the result that many Iraqis are now coming forward with information on where the terrorists are hiding.

The fight in Iraq has been tough, and it will remain difficult. We've lost good men and women in this fight. One of those lost was a marine lance corporal named Luke Yepsen. In the spring of 2005, Luke withdrew from his classes at Texas A&M to join the United States Marines. And in October 2006, he deployed to Iraq, where he manned a 50-caliber machine gun on a Humvee. Six months ago, Luke was killed by a sniper while on patrol in Anbar Province. Luke's father describes his son's sacrifice this way: "Luke died bringing freedom to an oppressed people. My urgent request is, finish the mission. Bring freedom to the Iraqi people."

On this Fourth of July, we remember Luke Yepsen and all the men and women in uniform who have given their lives in this struggle. They've helped bring freedom to the Iraqi people. They've helped make Americans more secure. We will not forget their sacrifice. We remember their loved ones in our prayers. And we give thanks for all those from every generation who have defended our Nation and our freedoms.

Laura and I wish you a safe and happy Fourth of July. Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on June 29 in Kennebunkport, ME, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 29, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In the address, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Corps—Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also

released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Modifications to the Visa Waiver Program *June 30, 2007*

Last November, I announced my intention to seek modifications to our Visa Waiver Program that would offer our closest partners in Central and Eastern Europe as well as others, such as the Republic of Korea, an accelerated process for admission to the program as we strengthen the program's security components. I am com-

mitted to continuing to work with Congress to produce legislation that would strengthen our country's security by implementing this initiative. It is in our Nation's interest to facilitate travel to the United States and, at the same time, to prevent terrorists from being able to exploit that travel.

Statement on the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement *June 30, 2007*

I am pleased that United States Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab and Republic of Korea Trade Minister Kim Hyun-chong today signed the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement. This agreement will generate export opportunities for U.S. farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and service suppliers, promote economic growth and the creation of better paying jobs in

the United States, and help American consumers save money while offering them greater choices. The agreement will also further enhance the strong United States-Korea partnership, which has served as a force for stability and prosperity in Asia. I call on Congress to ratify this landmark agreement, to the considerable benefit of the American people.