

Statement on the 40th Anniversary of the Death of Martin Luther King, Jr.
April 4, 2008

Forty years ago today, America was robbed of one of history's most consequential advocates for equality and civil rights. On this day, we mourn the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and we celebrate his powerful and eloquent message of justice and hope.

Dr. King was a man of courage and vision. He understood that love and compassion will always triumph over bitterness and hatred. His words and deeds inspired Americans of all races to confront prejudice

and to work to ensure that our country is a land of opportunity for all its men and women.

We have made progress on Dr. King's dream, yet the struggle is not over. Ensuring freedom and equality for all Americans remains one of our most important responsibilities. As we reflect upon Dr. King's life and legacy, we must recommit ourselves to following his lasting example of service to others.

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by President Stjepan Mesic of Croatia in Zagreb, Croatia
April 4, 2008

Mr. President and Madam, thank you very much. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. Also good to meet your wife.

Laura and I are thrilled to be in your beautiful country, Mr. President. We appreciate your gracious hospitality, and we celebrate your invitation to become one of America's closest allies. I—you said you're from a small country. I'm impressed by the big hearts and the big basketball team. *[Laughter]*

We are so proud of our relationship, Mr. President. We share common values. We believe in human rights and human dignity. We believe there's a Creator that has given every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth the great gift of freedom. We believe markets are capable of unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit of our peoples. We understand that freedom requires sacrifice.

I salute the people of your country for your courage and willingness to help a young democracy in Afghanistan not only thrive but succeed. I appreciate the friends who have stared evil in the face and understand there's a better tomorrow.

And so, Mr. President, I bring the greetings of my country to your beautiful land. With the honor due to a trusted ally, I offer a toast to you and to the valiant people of Croatia.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:04 p.m. at the Pucka Dvorana. In his remarks, he referred to Milka Mesic, wife of President Mesic; and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia and his wife Mirjana. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Mesic.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia in Zagreb

April 5, 2008

[*Prime Minister Sanader spoke in Croatian, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. It's really good to be with you again. I remember very fondly our visit to the Oval Office.

[*The interpreter began to translate President Bush's remarks.*]

Prime Minister Sanader. No, there is no need.

President Bush. Even though you did a brilliant job. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Sanader. They understand; they understand.

President Bush. I understand. But anyway, I—you suggested I come to your country then, and I'm really glad we came. Thanks. It's good news. And the fact that Croatia has been invited to join NATO is a historic moment. And I hope the people of your country are as proud as I am to be here to welcome you into NATO.

The—my only regret is I didn't get to see the coast. But I suspect when more Americans learn of the beauty of your coast, they'll want to come. And that's why the Open Skies agreement that we negotiated is going to be important to open up travel and trade. We will take you up on your request to have a trade mission come. I appreciate the fact that you have an open government, an honest government, a transparent government, which will help attract foreign capital—well-educated, hard-working people that will help attract foreign capital as well.

We talked about the neighborhood, and I appreciate the Prime Minister's advice and counsel on how the United States can help continue to promote stability and freedom. And I want to thank you very much for that.

We talked about an issue that I know is on the minds of the people of Croatia, and that is the visa waiver policy. I fully understand, Mr. Prime Minister, that some in your country wonder why our visa waiver policy is for you—different for you than it is for other people, perhaps, in Europe. After all, you've—you're sacrificing in Afghanistan alongside U.S. troops. And they wonder why they can't go see their relatives in America in an easier way.

I think they should be able to. Congress has passed a law that we now must live with. And we'll work with your Government to facilitate the new law in such a way, hopefully, that people will be able to realize their dreams of going to America to see relatives and loved ones. There's a lot of people in America that have fond memories in—of their homeland, and they want to be able to see their relatives in an easier fashion.

So we'll work government to government to meet our laws and, at the same time, hopefully, facilitate travel. I don't want to create false expectations. On the other hand, people should know that we have committed to working to see to it that the policy is implemented in a way that, hopefully, will ease travel quickly.

All in all, it's been an honor to be with you. I'm so grateful for your Government and for the people of your country for welcoming me and Laura. And I look forward to future visits.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Sanader. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. at the Banski Dvori.