

NOW is working, but we've got more to do.

Yesterday we learned that the foreclosure rates continued to rise in the first quarter. So Steve will work with Democrats and Republicans in Congress to address this challenge. We need to pass legislation to reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. We need to pass legislation to modernize the Federal Housing Administration and allow State housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to help homeowners refinance their mortgages. By taking these steps, we'll help more responsible homeowners weather this rough patch and, at the same time, strengthen the dream of homeownership for generations to come.

I've got confidence that we're going to meet these challenges, and I got confidence in the people who work in this Department. I appreciate what you do every day to expand the dream of homeownership. I thank you for your efforts to provide low-income Americans with access to affordable housing. You work hard to make sure our

communities are more vibrant and hopeful. The United States is fortunate to have such devoted public servants in this Department, and I'm grateful for your service.

You're going to have a worthy leader in Steve Preston. I thank the Senate for confirming Steve as your new Secretary. I now ask the Senate to confirm the three remaining HUD nominees to help him lead this Department.

Steve, I appreciate your stepping forward to serve your country once again. I congratulate you. And now I ask my Chief of Staff, Josh Bolten, to administer the oath of office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In his remarks, he referred to Marcia Jackson, wife of former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Preston.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus

June 6, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of

certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Belarus are to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2008.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. These actions include undermining democratic processes or institutions; committing human rights abuses related to political repression, including detentions and disappearances; and engaging in public corruption, including by diverting or misusing

Belarusian public assets or by misusing public authority. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Belarus.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

June 6, 2008.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Interview With Gianni Riotta of Italy's Rai TV June 6, 2008

Iraq/Afghanistan/Iran

Mr. Riotta. Mr. President, the world has known tremendous change during your tenure, and three areas of concern remain: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan. What's your assessment of those three theaters? And looking back in those perspective, would you do anything different?

The President. Well, that's an interesting question on doing anything different. Of course, history is going to be the judge of that. But the decision, for example, on Iraq, to remove Saddam Hussein, was the right decision then, and it's the right decision now.

The progress in Iraq has been substantial. For a period of time, it—the democracy was in doubt, primarily because sectarian violence was really unacceptable. I decided to put more troops in, rather than pull back, and now the violence is the lowest it's been since March of 2004. And politics is beginning to happen. So I'm encouraged about Iraq.

Afghanistan is also difficult because of new democracy emerging from the shadows of a brutal regime. Last year, of course, the Taliban announced they were going to go on the offense. In fact, our coalition went on the offense and, from a security perspective, made some progress against the Taliban. The best progress, though, is the advance of better trained police

forces—and I thank the Italian Government for helping—as well as a better Afghan Army, which over time needs to provide the security for the country. Iraq will probably—progresses quicker cause it's got wealth. Afghanistan is broke.

Iran—the free world must continue to send a clear message to the Iranians that their ability to enrich, which could be transferred to a program to develop a nuclear weapon, is unacceptable. And so I will continue to work on this trip to talk about the dangers of a nuclear Iran—not civilian nuclear power, but a program that would be aimed at blackmail or destruction—and that we've got to work to stop them from learning how to enrich. And there's other ways to approach it.

Iran

Mr. Riotta. Should Iran resist the international pressure, military option remains open?

The President. Yes, it does.

Iran/Italy

Mr. Riotta. Italy wants to join the 5-plus-1 group of contacts negotiating with Iran. Germany is skeptical; they don't want us. What do you say?

The President. I say that whatever is effective in terms of sending a clear message to Iran. I will be spending time talking to this with the Prime Minister, Silvio