AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to memoranda on the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 and the State of California request for waiver under 42 U.S.C. 7543(b), the Clean Air Act.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
January 26, 2009

So I'm pleased to have a chance to confer with Senator Mitchell, as well as Secretary Clinton, on this initiative around the Arab-Israeli peace process. And we're fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated public servant who is willing to take on what I think everybody understands is going to be a very tough job.

The cause of peace in the Middle East is important to the United States and our national interests; it's important to me personally; it is important to Arabs and Jews; it is important to Christians and Muslims and Jews all around the world. And the charge that Senator Mitchell has is to engage vigorously and consistently in order for us to achieve genuine progress.

And when I say "progress"—not just photo ops, but progress that is concretely felt by people on the ground, so that people feel more secure in their lives, so that they feel that the hopes and dreams and aspirations of their children can be met. That is going to be our task. It is not something that we're going to be able to do overnight, but I'm absolutely confident that if the United States is engaged in a consistent way and an early—in early fashion, that we can make genuine progress.

Now, understand that Senator Mitchell is going to be fully empowered by me and fully empowered by Secretary Clinton. So when he speaks, he will be speaking for us. And I'm hopeful that during this initial trip—one of the earliest initiatives that we have taken diplomatically—that not only is he able to communicate effectively how urgent we consider the issue, but that we're also going to be able to listen and to learn and to find out what various players in the region are thinking.

And more immediately, we hope that Senator Mitchell will be able to give us some ideas in terms of how we can solidify the cease-fire, ensure Israel's security, also ensure that Palestinians in Gaza are able to get the basic necessities they need and that they can see a pathway towards long-term development that will be so critical in order for us to achieve a lasting peace.

So I'm very grateful for Senator Mitchell for doing this. I'm grateful to Secretary Clinton for her leadership in making sure this happened early. And what we're now going to do is to discuss some of the details of the trip. So unfortunately, I'm going to be kicking you out. [*Laughter*]

All right, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on India's Republic Day
January 26, 2009

As the people of India and people of Indian origin in America and around the world celebrate Republic Day on January 26, I send the warmest greetings of the American people to the people of India. Together, we celebrate our shared belief in democracy, liberty, pluralism, and religious tolerance.

Our nations have built broad and vibrant partnerships in every field of human endeavor. Our rapidly growing and deepening friendship with India offers benefits to all the world's citizens as our scientists solve environmental challenges together, our doctors discover new medicines, our engineers advance our societies, our