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Remarks on Implementation of the "Smart Border" Declaration and Action Plan in Detroit, Michigan

September 9, 2002

Thank you all very much. Thanks. Thank you all. Thank you for joining us today. It's a pleasure to be back in Detroit—just across the river from Windsor—to reaffirm a special relationship, an important relationship, and to address a common challenge. America and Canada face new threats to our security. It's the new reality of the 21st century, and we can't forget that.

And some of those threats must be stopped at our borders. This great and peaceful border must be open to business, must be open to people, and it's got to be closed to terrorists and criminals. And so today we're taking two steps to turn this vision into reality.

I appreciate so very much the Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, for joining us here. He has been a steadfast friend. I really enjoy dealing with him on a personal basis. He's a plain-spoken fellow with a good sense of humor—probably won't go too good up here in Canada, but he'd be a great Texan. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Tom Ridge joining us. Tom is my adviser for Homeland Security, former Governor of Pennsylvania. I want to thank Tom for working hard with the Deputy Prime Minister John Manley from Canada, who—both these two men work hard to—[*applause*]. The Prime Minister and I, of course, get the credit if it goes well. [*Laughter*] They get the blame if it doesn't. [*Laughter*] The truth of the matter is, they did a lot of the work, and I want to thank both of you men for working hard for what's best for our countries.

I appreciate so very much the members of our congressional delegation who have shown up here, Congressman Joe Knollenberg, Carolyn Kilpatrick. I had a chance to say hello to Congresswoman Kilpatrick's little boy at the airport. [*Laughter*] He's doing a fine job as the mayor of Detroit. I know she's proud of what a fine job he is doing. I want to appreciate very much Congressman John Conyers as well and Sandy Levin and Nick Smith from the—both Republicans and Democrats who share deep concern about our border and what transpires here. So I thank the Members of Congress for coming today.

I also appreciate so very much our Ambassador from Canada, Paul Cellucci, my close friend, for being here as well. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for coming.

I want to thank Robert Bonner of the Customs, U.S. Customs, for being here, and Rob Wright, who's the Commissioner of Canadian Customs. Thank you both for coming.

I appreciate Jim Ziglar so very much, the head of our INS, for being here. He's got a tough job, and he's handling his job in fine fashion. Jim, I want to thank you for your service to the country.

I appreciate very much our friend the Governor from Michigan, John Engler, for introducing me. Lieutenant Governor Dick Posthumus is with us today. Lieutenant Governor, thanks for coming. And Candice Miller, the Michigan secretary of state, is here as well. And I want to appreciate all the officials for coming.

This bridge right here is a symbol of the close and unique relationship—close and unique relationship—between our two nations. This single bridge carries more trade than any other border crossing on this continent. And that's saying a lot. This is a—this is an active bridge. Thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement, more than 500,000 people and over a billion dollars worth of goods cross the U.S.-Canadian border every day. The ties of trade and travel and family between America and Canada are closer than ever. And our countries are better for it.

Yet, nearly a year ago, we saw the terrorists, coldblooded killers, using our openness, the openness of our societies against us. We were awakened to threats that can arrive across our borders. We realized, at least in our country, that we had become a battlefield. And we've got to confront those threats. We have no choice but to confront the threats head-on, while we preserve the freedom and the openness of our societies.

We have hard-working inspectors at this border, and I want to thank all the folks who work hard to expedite the traffic here.

I believe my job is to—at least on the American side—is to make sure that you're able to do your jobs more effectively and to figure out how to use technologies and the systems necessary so that you can do your job in a better fashion. You see, we want our inspectors to be able to focus on the greatest risks, not on legitimate trade and travel. We want their time focused on stopping terror, criminality. We've got to recognize that inspections create bottlenecks on both sides of this bridge. That's one of the realities. When you start looking closer, you're going to start creating bottlenecks, and that's not good. It's not good for families that want to be together. It's not good for trade and traffic. And so we've got to reduce the backups, and at the same time strengthen our mutual security.

So today Canada and the United States are launching what we call the FAST, which stands for Free and Secure Trade. The Prime Minister and I got to see the FAST system in operation. It says that American and Canadian companies can register their goods and their trucks and their drivers with their Governments and then border inspectors can review this information up to an hour prior to arrival. Once the agents have determined the safety of each shipment, the trucks can cross in special lanes, using tested technology, technology that the Prime Minister and I just saw. Border inspectors will be able to instantly verify the contents and identify each truck as it pulls up. Stop times will be reduced from a few minutes to seconds, and that's important.

We're also announcing a second initiative for safer and smarter borders that will benefit individual travelers. We're dramatically expanding a program to issue special photo identifications to people who are screened to ensure they are not security threats to either country. These cards entitle people to travel across the border in dedicated lanes, where there will be little or no delay for inspections. We're trying to help people cross the borders as quickly as possible.

This kind of program for simplifying travel for thousands of people who regularly cross the border is now in place in Washington—Washington State and British Columbia. And so, starting today, we're launching the program here in Detroit, accepting applications from Americans and Canadians who want to travel across the border in faster fashion.

With these two initiatives, we'll ensure faster movement of legal, low-risk goods and faster travel for people across our borders. And we'll be able to better enhance security. Our inspectors will spend less time inspecting law-abiding citizens and more time inspecting those who may harm us.

We're doing everything we can here in America to protect our homeland. Along with Canada, we've got some of the finest troops in the world hunting down the Al Qaida killers in Afghanistan, hunting them down one at a time, to make sure we can better secure our respective countries.

And at home I've asked our Congress to join with me to set up a Department of Homeland Security so that we can do a better job on our borders, a better job with our first-responders. I do not need a bunch of rules and regulations trying to micromanage the process. I want the ability to be able to look the American people in the eye and say, "I'm doing everything," or "we're doing everything we can to protect you." And so the Senate, the United States Senate must not focus on narrow, special interests, but must focus on the security of the American people.

And so I'm—Mr. Prime Minister, this country is doing everything we can to address a common problem, and you need to know, sir, that we're determined, and we're patient, and we're resolved to win this war against these terrorists, because, like you, we love freedom. We value our freedoms. We want to leave a legacy of freedom behind for our children and our grandchildren.

It's now my honor to welcome to the podium a friend, a strong leader, the Prime Minister of our important neighbor, Jean Chretien.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. outside the U.S. Customs cargo inspection facility next to the Ambassador Bridge. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick of Detroit. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Chretien.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Jean Chretien on Implementation of the "Smart Border" Declaration and Action Plan

September 9, 2002

Nearly one year ago, terrorists launched an attack on our common commitment to freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and an open world economy. The United States and Canada have responded together with the shared determination that has always characterized the partnership between our two great nations.

American and Canadian troops have fought side-by-side to free the Afghan people from Taliban rule, and to destroy the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. Our governments are sharing intelligence and coordinating law enforcement action to address threats to our societies. We have partnered diplomatically, working together at the G-8 Summit in June to secure the commitment of the world's largest economies to increase the security of the global transportation and trading system. Officials from dozens of American and Canadian agencies have worked together with determination and dedication and our citizens have found countless ways to support each other.

When we met on September 24th last year, we resolved to prevent terrorists from undermining the national and economic security of our citizens. We charged Homeland Security Advisor Tom Ridge and Deputy Prime Minister John Manley with coordinating our governments' cooperation along the longest, non-militarized border in the world. They recognized the urgent need to enhance security in a way that strengthened the extraordinary trading relationship between our countries and the prosperity that it provides our citizens.

On December 12, 2001 Governor Ridge and Deputy Prime Minister Manley signed "The Smart Border Declaration," and immediately began implementing an aggressive and sweeping 30-point action plan to build a smart border for the 21st century—a border that is secure and efficient; a border open for business but closed to terrorists.

On June 28, 2002, they reported on the tremendous progress that has already been made in implementing the Smart Border Action Plan. We are on-track to implement many action plan elements over the coming months and years, bringing continuous and steady improvement to the efficiency and security of our shared border. Today, we mark important milestones in two of the programs that are central to building a smart border.

The United States and Canada have the largest trading relationship of any two countries in the world, and more trade flows between Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario than through any other border crossing. Today we announce a major step forward in ensuring the secure and efficient flow of goods across the border with the opening of registration for the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program. This revolutionary program partners the United States and Canadian governments with the private sector to ensure a secure supply chain for low-risk goods. FAST will make many cross-border commercial shipments simpler, cheaper, and subject to fewer delays—all while enhancing security. FAST will be open by December 2002 at the following crossings: Blaine/Douglas, Detroit/Windsor, Port Huron/Sarnia, Buffalo/Fort Erie, Lewiston/Queenston, and Champlain/Lacolle.

The closeness of our two societies is evidenced by the fact that over 200 million people cross our shared border every year. In order to allow known travelers to cross the border quickly and easily, the United States and Canada have begun fielding a new program called NEXUS that provides dedicated "fast lanes" for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. NEXUS is already running at four border crossings. Today we are opening the joint NEXUS application center in Detroit. NEXUS will be operational at both Detroit/Windsor and Buffalo/Fort Erie beginning in January of 2003 and will be expanded to all other high-volume crossings between the two countries by the end of 2003. We have also developed a NEXUS-Air program, which we will begin piloting in airports in early 2003.

A secure and efficient border is key to our economic security. We must continue our efforts to involve the private sector as we proceed with modernizing our shared border. To