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Remarks at an Iftaar Dinner

November 7, 2002

Good evening. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored to welcome such a distinguished group of Ambassadors and American citizens to the White House to help usher in the holy month of Ramadan.

Islam is a religion that brings hope and comfort to more than a billion people around the world. It has made brothers and sisters of every race. It has given birth to a rich culture of learning and literature and science. Tonight we honor the traditions of a great faith by hosting this Iftaar at the White House.

I'm honored that our great Secretary of State is with us today. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. I appreciate Your Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Zayid of the United Arab Emirates for coming. I want to thank members of my administration who are here, in particular, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, who's the Director of the National Institute of Health. I want to thank all the Ambassadors who are here. It's good to see you all again—the other representatives from the Organization of Islamic Conference. I appreciate so very much my fellow Americans here, many from the Muslim community.

Ramadan is a special time of prayer and fasting, contemplation of God's greatness, and service to those in need. According to Muslim teachings, this season commemorates the revelation of God's word in the Holy Koran to the prophet Muhammad. Today, this word inspires faithful Muslims to lead lives of honesty and integrity and compassion.

In hosting tonight's Iftaar, I send a message to all the nations represented by their Ambassadors here tonight: America treasures your friendship; America honors your faith. We see in Islam a religion that traces its origins back to God's call on Abraham. We share your belief in God's justice and your insistence on man's moral responsibility. We thank the many Muslim nations who stand with us against terror, nations that are often victims of terror, themselves.

Tonight's Iftaar also sends a message to all Americans: Our Nation is waging a war on a radical network of terrorists, not on a religion and not on a civilization. If we wage this war to defend our principles, we must live up to those principles, ourselves. And one of the deepest commitments of America is tolerance. No one should be treated unkindly because of the color of their skin or the content of their creed. No one should be unfairly judged by appearance or ethnic background or religious faith. We must uphold these values of progress and pluralism and tolerance.

George Washington said that America gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance. This was our policy at our Nation's founding; this is our policy today. America rejects all forms of religious intolerance. America grieves with all the victims of religious bigotry. And America opposes all who commit evil in God's name.

Ramadan and the upcoming holiday seasons are a good time to remember the ties of friendship and respect that bind us together. Learning from each other, we can build bridges of mutual trust and understanding. Working together, we can create a better future for people of all faiths.

I thank you for coming to the White House this evening. I wish you all a blessed Ramadan. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hamdan bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan of the United Arab Emirates.

Remarks on the Passage of a United Nations Security Council Resolution on Iraq

November 8, 2002

Good morning. With the resolution just passed, the United Nations Security Council has met important responsibilities, upheld its principles, and given clear and fair notice that Saddam Hussein must fully disclose and destroy his weapons of mass destruction. He must submit to any and all methods to verify his compliance. His cooperation must be prompt and unconditional, or he will face the severest consequences.

The world has now come together to say that the outlaw regime in Iraq will not be