AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

we will do so with the compassion and generosity that have always defined the United States.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:43 a.m. on January 31 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 31 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Address to the Nation on the Loss of Space Shuttle *Columbia*

February 1, 2003

My fellow Americans, this day has brought terrible news and great sadness to our country. At 9 o'clock this morning, Mission Control in Houston lost contact with our Space Shuttle *Columbia*. A short time later, debris was seen falling from the skies above Texas. The *Columbia* is lost. There are no survivors.

On board was a crew of seven: Col. Rick Husband; Lt. Col. Michael Anderson; Comdr. Laurel Clark; Capt. David Brown; Comdr. William McCool; Dr. Kalpana Chawla; and Ilan Ramon, a colonel in the Israeli Air Force. These men and women assumed great risk in the service to all humanity.

In an age when space flight has come to seem almost routine, it is easy to overlook the dangers of travel by rocket and the difficulties of navigating the fierce outer atmosphere of the Earth. These astronauts knew the dangers, and they faced them willingly, knowing they had a high and noble purpose in life. Because of their courage and daring and idealism, we will miss them all the more.

All Americans today are thinking as well of the families of these men and women who have been given this sudden shock and grief. You're not alone. Our entire Nation grieves with you. And those you loved will always have the respect and gratitude of this country.

The cause in which they died will continue. Mankind is led into the darkness beyond our world by the inspiration of discovery and the longing to understand. Our journey into space will go on.

In the skies today we saw destruction and tragedy. Yet farther than we can see, there is comfort and hope. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who created all these? He who brings out the starry hosts one by one and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."

The same Creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today. The crew of the shuttle *Columbia* did not return safely to Earth. Yet we can pray that all are safely home.

May God bless the grieving families, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Proclamation 7646—Honoring the Memory of the Astronauts Aboard Space Shuttle *Columbia*

February 1, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As a mark of respect for Rick Douglas Husband, William C. McCool, Laurel Blair Salton Clark, Kalpana Chawla, Michael P. Anderson, David M. Brown, and Ilan Ramon who gave their lives during the mission of STS–107 aboard the Space Shuttle *Columbia* on February 1, 2003, I hereby order, by the authority vested in me as President of the United States of America by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff at the White House and upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions through Wednesday, February 5, 2003. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same length of time at all