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15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for William Donaldson as Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission and an Exchange With Reporters

February 18, 2003

The President. Darn right. Bill, welcome, and Jane, thanks for coming. It's my honor to welcome your family here to the Roosevelt Room. And I'm proud to welcome Bill Donaldson as the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Bill will be a strong leader of the SEC and a forceful advocate for the interests of investors. He's the right man at the right time. We're so honored you've agreed to accept this challenge, really appreciate it.

Bill Donaldson spent a career preparing for this challenge. He has served as a founder of a leading investment banking firm, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, the founding dean of the Yale School of Management. He has set high standards throughout his entire career. He will lead an active and energetic agency.

This agency has been working hard. They've last year filed a record number of actions for financial reporting and disclosure violations, sought the removal of more than 100 corporate officers and directors on the grounds of misconduct, and ordered corporations and executives to return to investors hundreds of million dollars in improper gains.

This administration is committed to the enforcement of the security laws. We're committed to creating a climate of confidence in our markets. There's no better person to help achieve that commitment than Bill Donaldson. In the 2004 budget, I'm asking Congress to increase SEC funding by 73 percent over the year 2002. We want to make sure the SEC has the tools necessary to pursue its important mission.

This Nation is increasingly a nation of stockholders, who invest for their families and for their futures. Americans should be confident in the information they use in order to make investment decisions. All investors deserve to be treated fairly in the Tax Code as well. Investors should not be punished for saving and investing in America's future. Investors should not be—should be rewarded for taking risk in the marketplace. The Tax Code ought to treat these people fairly, and so that's why I've proposed that Congress end the unfair and unwise double taxation of dividends. This measure could improve corporate governance in America as well.

Companies across America attract investors in a number of ways. One such way is to promise rapid growth, is to say, "Even though we may not have cashflow, the future of our company is magnificent. Therefore, invest with us." Another way, of course, is to promise a steady source of income in the form of dividends. Eliminating double taxation of dividends would give more companies a reason to distribute their profits through direct cash to investors in the form of dividends. With dividends serving as a stronger foundation for long-term value, companies that pay them will have less motive to artificially inflate profits just to cause temporary increases in stocks.

Our law should not discriminate against those companies that focus on stable, long-term growth. Eliminating the double taxation of dividends is good for American investors; it's good for American seniors; it's good for corporate reform.

I'm glad Bill Donaldson has agreed to take charge of an agency with the vital purpose of showing the American investor that they're—can rely upon the data on which they use to evaluate investments, to really say to the markets loud and clear that we expect there to be corporate integrity throughout our system. This is a man who has not only set high standards but has achieved them. He's got a lot of talent and a lot of drive, a lot of wisdom, and a lot of integrity.

Mr. Chairman.

[*At this point, Chairman Donaldson made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good job.

Chairman Donaldson. Thanks.

The President. Thank you. Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]. I'll answer a couple of questions here.

Protests and Action Against Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What do you make of the fact that millions of people across the globe have taken to the streets to protest your approach to Iraq? And if you decide to go to war, how do you wage a campaign in the face of such stiff opposition?

The President. Two points: One is that democracy is a beautiful thing and that people are allowed to express their opinion. I welcome people's right to say what they believe.

Secondly, evidently some of the world don't view Saddam Hussein as a risk to peace. I respectfully disagree. Saddam Hussein has gassed his own people. Saddam Hussein has got weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein has made—has defied the United Nations. Saddam Hussein is providing links to terrorists. Saddam Hussein is a threat to America, and we will deal with him.

You know, I—war is my last choice. But the risk of doing nothing is even a worst option as far as I'm concerned. I owe it to the American people to secure this country. I will do so.

Q. Have you decided how to do so yet?

The President. Pardon me?

Q. Have you decided how you're going to deal with him yet?

The President. Hopefully, Saddam Hussein will disarm.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. If he chooses not to disarm, as I have been saying for a long time, Ron, we'll lead a coalition of the willing to disarm him.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

U.N. Security Council Resolution

Q. Should a second resolution on Iraq include a deadline? And how are you going to get around the opposition from France, Russia, and China?

The President. We're working with our friends. As I said, a second resolution would be useful. We don't need a second resolution. It's clear this guy could even care less about the first resolution. He's in total defiance of 1441. But we want to work with our friends and allies to see if we can get a second resolution. That's what we're doing right now.

Q. With a deadline?

The President. We're working with our friends and allies right now to—how best to get a resolution out of the United Nations. As I say, it would be helpful to get one out. It's not necessary, as far as I'm concerned.

Turkey

Q. Mr. President, are you any closer to an aid package for Turkey, particularly given the continued problems with NATO regarding any defense of Turkey?

The President. Well, first of all, as you know, NATO did express their desire to help Turkey, and I appreciate the NATO Allies. I also appreciate the EU statement yesterday that Saddam Hussein needs to fully disarm. I thought those were positive developments. We're working closely with the Turks. And you know, we've got great respect for the Turkish Government. They've got—had no better friend than the American Government. And hopefully we can come up with an agreement that's satisfactory to both parties. We're still working it.

Yes, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News].

Iraq/United Nations

Q. Mr. President, would it be easier to win the peace after the war in Iraq—if there is one—if you had the allies with you going in? And what about the idea of an ultimatum for Saddam, another last chance?

The President. Well, you mean another, another, another last chance? Well, he knows my feelings, and that is he needs to disarm—completely, totally disarm. Listen, he's a fellow that likes to buy time through deception and delay. He believes time is on his side. After all, he was quoted in an Egyptian newspaper as saying all he's got to do is stall and defy the world, and you know, coalitions will fall apart.

I am determined to keep the peace. I'm determined to hold this man to account. And

there's two reasons why: One, we have the obligation, I have the obligation, this administration has the obligation to do everything we can to protect the American people; secondly, I think it's very important for the United Nations to be useful as we go out into the future. And there's nothing less useful than issuing a resolution and then not upholding the resolution. And, after all, I want to remind the people that this man has been in defiance of resolution after resolution after resolution after resolution for 12 long years. And I think unless the United Nations shows some backbone and courage, it will render the—it could render the Security Council irrelevant. And that's a danger, in dealing with the new threats that the civilized world faces.

We face terrorism. We face the idea of people having nuclear arms. We face people who have got weapons of mass destruction. We face these deadly terrorist networks teaming up with countries with weapons of mass destruction who could attack anytime. Those are the threats of the 21st century. The best way to deal with those threats is to have international organizations which are effective. And if the United Nations can't enforce its own resolutions—a resolution which, by the way, has been around for 12 years—it says something about its utility as we head into the future.

I want the United Nations to be effective body. I think it's in our country's interest that it be effective. And we'll see whether or not it's got the capacity to be effective.

Yes, Anne [Anne Kornblut, Boston Globe].

Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

Q. Given the size of the protests in England over the weekend, do you have any concerns that Tony Blair might pay a serious political price for supporting you on Iraq?

The President. I think anytime somebody shows courage, when it comes to peace, that the people will eventually understand that.

First of all, you know, size of protest, it's like deciding, well, I'm going to decide policy based upon a focus group. The role of a leader is to decide policy based upon the security—in this case, the security of the people. Tony Blair understands that Saddam Hussein is a risk. Tony Blair sees that, you know, a weakened United Nations is not good for world peace. And he is a courageous leader, and I'm proud to call him friend.

Another courageous leader is coming to the ranch this weekend, Jose Maria Aznar. I'm looking forward to having a good meeting with him. These are men of vision. They see the task at hand. And I'm proud to call them allies. We'll work together for the sake of peace.

Listen, thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jane Donaldson, wife of Chairman Donaldson; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chairman Donaldson. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Secretary General Lord Robertson of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

February 19, 2003

President Bush. Today we'll have a statement. I'm going to make a statement. George will make a statement. No questions.

George, welcome. I'm honored to have you here. You represent our Nation's most important Alliance, NATO. Today, this Alliance is providing equipment to Turkey to help protect our Turkish ally from a potential attack from Iraq.

I want to thank you for your leadership. You've done a fantastic job of keeping this Alliance together, moving it forward by not only addressing the current threats that we face but preparing NATO to address threats into the future. And I congratulate on a great leadership and welcome you back to the Oval Office.

Lord Robertson. Thanks, Mr. President. On the 12th of September, NATO passed a declaration of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. We came to the aid of an Ally, the United States, under threat, under attack.

And today we've sent AWACS aircraft and Patriot missiles and chem, bio, and defensive