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Jones, former California secretary of state; Gerald L. Parsky, chairman, Team California, California Republican Party Board of Directors; former U.S. Treasurer Rosario Marin; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on Japan's Announcement of Reconstruction Aid to Iraq

October 15, 2003

I welcome Japan's announcement that it will provide $1.5 billion toward immediate reconstruction needs in Iraq. I applaud this bold step, which will help mobilize international support for efforts to build a stable, peaceful, and democratic Iraq. Japan recognizes that this effort is critical to security and peace not only in Iraq and the Middle East but also for Japan and throughout the world. Japan's own history shows the power of international cooperation to help a great people build democracy and prosperity and become a beacon of freedom that inspires all nations.

I also commend Japan's announcement that it is working on a larger aid package in preparation for the October 23–24 Madrid Donor's Conference. We look forward to working with Japan and other countries to make the Madrid Conference a success for the people of Iraq.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack on Americans in the Gaza Strip

October 15, 2003

I condemn in the strongest terms the vicious act of terrorism directed against Americans in Gaza today. We are working closely with the appropriate officials to bring the terrorists to justice.

Palestinian authorities should have acted long ago to fight terror in all its forms. The failure to create effective Palestinian security forces dedicated to fighting terror continues to cost lives. There must be an empowered Prime Minister who controls all Palestinian security forces, reforms that continue to be blocked by Yasser Arafat. The failure to undertake these reforms and dismantle the terrorist organizations constitutes the greatest obstacle to achieving the Palestinian people's dream of statehood.

The Americans who were attacked today were pursuing a vision for a better future for the Palestinian people. The U.S. Embassy officials traveling in Gaza were there to interview young Palestinian candidates seeking Fulbright scholarships to study in the United States. This is another example of how the terrorists are enemies of progress and opportunity for the Palestinian people.

On behalf of the American people, I send my heartfelt condolences to the families of the brave Americans who were killed and injured serving our country and its ideals.

Proclamation 7722—White Cane Safety Day, 2003

October 15, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Every day, millions of Americans who are blind or visually impaired use the white cane as they travel, attend school, or work. The white cane remains one of the most important and reliable tools for people who are blind or visually impaired. It increases the mobility of these citizens, facilitating their inclusion in all aspects of American life. Since 1964 on White Cane Safety Day, America has reaffirmed our commitment to achieving equal opportunity and full independence for those who are blind or visually impaired.

Today, more people with disabilities are attending school and working than ever before. However, much work remains to fully open the doors of opportunity for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. To meet these challenges, I have created the New Freedom Initiative, a comprehensive plan to assist Americans with disabilities by increasing access to educational and employment opportunities. This initiative is lowering barriers more so that Americans can participate fully in their communities, and live and work in dignity and freedom.

My Administration also continues to promote implementation of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This important