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final bill that meets the goal I just outlined. You need to speak up for prescription drug coverage. You need to speak up for health care choices. You need to speak up for a modern Medicare system that puts patients and doctors in charge. For years, our seniors have been calling for a prescription drug benefit. For years, American seniors have been calling for more choices in their health care coverage, and now we'll see who is really listening in Washington, DC.

The choice is simple: Either we will have more debate, more delay, and more deadlock, or we'll make real progress. I made my choice. I want real progress, and I urge the Congress to take the path of progress and give our seniors a modern Medicare system. We've come far. Let's finish the job.

Thank you for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Surgeon General Richard Carmona; Josefina Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging, Department of Health and Human Services; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Rich T. Crotty, chairman, Orange County Governing Board. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi of Italy and an Exchange With Reporters

November 14, 2003

President Bush. Thank you all for coming. Mr. President, it is my honor to welcome you to the Oval Office. You come at a difficult period for your country. You come at a time when your nation grieves for the brave sons who lost their life. I send our Nation's gratitude and prayers to the loved ones who are grieving today in Italy.

I want to thank you for the friendship between our two nations. I want to thank you for your strong leadership in standing up to the terrorists who are trying to create fear and chaos. And I want to thank you for your understanding that a free and peaceful Iraq will help make the entire world more peaceful.

And so it is my privilege and honor to welcome a close friend to the Oval Office. Welcome.

President Ciampi. Today I come to the United States as President of the Italian Republic and as a staunch advocate of European integration. I will go to Arlington Cemetery this afternoon. No Italian, no European can ever forget how much democratic Europe owes to the young Americans who gave their lives for our freedom. On Sunday I will go to Ground Zero to honor the victims of terrorism.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Ciampi. I want to thank President Bush for his words, for expressing solidarity in connection with the horrible attack against Italian forces in Iraq. Italy went to Iraq not to take part in a war but to contribute to rebuild a country. This is the identity of the Italian Republic, to build peace, to solve post-conflict situations. We have done it in the past, and we do it in many parts of the world today.

With President Bush, we agreed on the goal to accelerate full implementation of United Nations Resolution 1511. We support the idea of drawing a roadmap for the Iraqi political process in order to establish a full-fledged Government.

The ideals of democracy and freedom have their roots and their strongest foundation in Europe and North America. As it happens, even among friends, there have been problems between us on specific aspects of transatlantic cooperation. We are committed, especially us Italians, to put them fully behind us, for they do not dent and cannot dent the—[*inaudible*]—solidarity between Europe and the United States. Upholding Atlantic cohesion is a duty and a necessity.

I already mentioned to President Bush, and we will continue to do so during the working lunch, about the rationale of what the European Union wants to do to become more united and speak with a single voice. We are progressing in bringing about and completing a constitutional treaty which will enable the European Union to function better and, again, to speak with a single voice.

A united, stronger—with a new configuration of Europe, it will be a stronger Europe with 25 member states and over 450 million

citizens and will reinforce and extend a vast area of security and peace. And they will become a better partner also for the United States.

I intend to continue my conversation with President Bush so that we can work together, United States, Italy, Europe, to reinforce pressures to bring about a solution to the conflict of Israel and Palestinian problems, so that we can arrive to a right and just solution. And this will help us to fight, better, terrorism. And we have to fight terrorists—terrorism in a better way so that the Islamic world will know that we view them as a civilization both near and friendly to ours.

In conclusion, I think that we should reinforce our action to increase the actions also within the international institutions, such as the United Nations, to whose establishment the United States has made a fundamental contribution. Italy will continue to fight, with determination, terrorists.

President Bush. Thank you. Listen, we'll have a couple of questions here. We'll alternate between the American press and the Italian press. We expect there to be some order here during the question-and-answer period. In order to set the example, Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press], would you like to begin in a calm and rational way?

Coalition Goals and Tactics in Iraq

Q. I would. With the speeding up of the transfer of power in Iraq, do you envision that meaning a quicker reduction of U.S. forces there?

President Bush. Well, we are—I instructed Ambassador Bremer to take—to go back to Iraq with the instructions that we will work with the Governing Council to speed up the political process in a rational way. That's what he's going to do, on the belief that we've made a lot of progress on the ground, that the Governing Council is better prepared to take more responsibility.

In terms of security, we will do whatever it takes to help Iraq develop into a free and peaceful country. That is our goal. And we will stay there until the job is done, and then we'll leave. And the enemy has changed tactics on the ground, and so we're changing our response, and that's what you're beginning to see now. The discussions with General Abizaid and the discussions with Bremer and all the different pieces of evidence to that effect are really saying that as the enemy changes, so will we. And we'll bring them to justice, and Iraq will be more secure, and Iraq is going to be free. And that's in the Nation's interest that it be so.

Would you like to call on an Italian member of the press? There is traveling press from Italy, isn't there? Would anybody care to ask a question?

It's the old double-question trick.

Q. It's a question to both you, President Bush, and President Ciampi. Italy is going through very difficult times, as it is the case for other countries who are present in Iraq. And so the question is, will the presence of U.S. and Italian troops in Iraq change their strategy in order to respond to the deterioration of the situation?

President Bush. That's a very good question. I'll go first, if you don't mind. The answer to your question is yes. It's very important that our commanders on the ground be given flexibility to be able to adjust tactics to an enemy that is changing its tactics. First of all, the enemy wants to create the condition of fear. They want people to fear them. They will lose that aspect of the battle because our will will remain strong.

And secondly, we must use more Iraqis to gather intelligence and to be on the frontline of securing their own country. And that's exactly what we're doing.

And third, when we find actionable intelligence, we will strike fast to bring killers to justice. And that's what we're doing as well.

President Ciampi. I only want to add a few words, and this concerns exclusively tactical maneuvers that have to be decided by the commanders who are on the field, onsite. Our military forces received specific and very clear instructions when they went to Iraq. The implementation of these instructions stem from the assessment of their commanders on the field.

President Bush. Yes, very good. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters]. Yes, sorry.

Q. Can you envision pulling U.S. troops out of Iraq before Saddam Hussein is found?

President Bush. Look, we will stay until the job is done, and the job is for Iraq to

be free and peaceful. A free and peaceful Iraq will have historic consequences. And we'll find Saddam Hussein. The goal is for a free and peaceful Iraq, and by being strong and determined, we will achieve that objective.

Final question here. I promised the President I would buy him lunch, and if we keep answering questions, we won't be able to eat lunch.

President Ciampi. I have nothing else to add.

President Bush. Okay.

Sir, please.

Humanitarian Aid Workers in Iraq

Q. I have a question to President Bush. Given the difficult security situation in the country and given the fact that the Red Cross left the country, what can be done to ensure and guarantee the protection of the return of the Red Cross and also of other humanitarian organizations?

President Bush. Yes, that's an excellent question. Thank you for asking that. First, there are Red Cross workers still there. The headquarters left Baghdad, but many workers are still there. Secondly, there are—besides the Red Cross, there are other organizations still in place that are delivering the humanitarian help that is needed to help Iraq rebuild herself.

It is very important for the leaders of the NGOs to recognize that if they don't go into Baghdad, they're doing exactly what the terrorists want them to do. The situation on the ground for the Iraqi citizens, the humanitarian situation, is improving, and the main reason why is because there are ministries up and running, staffed by very capable Iraqi citizens.

We will stay the course, and as more and more Iraqis realize freedom is precious and freedom is a beautiful way of life, they will assume more and more responsibilities, not only for security but for humanitarian reasons as well.

Finally, I want to thank the Italian people once again for working toward a world that is more humane and more decent and more peaceful. The Iraqi people deserve to live a life of freedom. The Iraqi people deserve to have their children go to schools. The Iraqi people deserve to be free of torture chambers and mass graves. And the work we are doing together is humane and compassionate and necessary for peace, and I thank the people of Italy.

Thank you all.

President Ciampi. I just want to add that the Italian Red Cross is still in Iraq, and they're still carrying out their duties, and they're giving assistance to the people who is really in need of assistance.

President Bush. All right. We've got to go eat. I hope you do too.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; and Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command. President Ciampi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Interview With British Journalists

November 14, 2003

The Oval Office

The President. I wanted to show you this shrine to democracy here, kind of give you a sense of who I am.

Laura designed that—that would be my wife. I wanted people to, when they walk in here, to have a sense of optimism. I wanted people to say, "The person whose office is in here, or who works in here, is an optimistic person." And I thought she did a fabulous job capturing my sense about our future.

Well, as you can see, it's got sun rays.

Q. Has it worked? Have people coming in——

The President. See, that's what you're supposed to tell me. [*Laughter*]

Q. Can we—[*inaudible*]—the enemy to you? [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't ask everybody that comes in to work. I just want you to know why we do what we do with the rug. This looks like Texas; it's a Texas star. These are paintings of Texas. This is a guy named Onderdonk, a great Texas painter. That's what our ranch looks like. That's west Texas, where—far west Texas. Where I was raised, it's flatter than that. Laura's mother was