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of many months before beginning their service to our country. It introduces pay-for-performance bonuses and streamlines the promotion process, making a career at the Defense Department more attractive to talented workers.

These are landmark reforms, the most ambitious of their kind in a quarter-century and similar in scope and purpose to those enacted for the Department of Homeland Security. To win the war on terror, America must fully utilize the skills and talents of everyone who serves our country, and this bill will help us achieve that goal.

Every member of the United States military is now involved in a great and historic task, and the stakes for our country could not be higher. We face enemies that measure their progress by the chaos they inflict, the fear they spread, and the innocent lives they destroy.

America's military is standing between our country and grave danger. You're standing for order and hope and democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. You're standing up for the security of all free nations and for the advance of freedom. The American people and your Commander in Chief are grateful, and we will support you in all your essential missions.

And now it is my honor to sign the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. at the Pentagon. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, USMC, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry D. Scott, USN. H.R. 1588, approved November 24, was assigned Public Law No. 108–136.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004

November 24, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 1588, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. The Act authorizes funding to defend the United States and its interests abroad and provides much-needed flexibility to manage effectively the personnel and taxpayer resources devoted to the national defense.

Section 541(a) of the Act amends section 991 of title 10 of the United States Code to purport to place limits on the number of days on which a member of the Armed Forces may be deployed, unless the Secretary of Defense or a senior civilian or military officer to whom the Secretary has delegated authority under section 541(a) approves the continued deployment. Section 1023 purports to place restrictions on use of the U.S. Armed Forces in certain operations. The executive branch shall construe the restrictions on deployment and use of the Armed Forces in sections 541(a) and 1023 as advisory in nature, so that the provisions are consistent with the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief and to supervise the unitary executive branch.

Section 903 amends section 153 of title 10 to require the Secretary of Defense to provide for a report to the Congress by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of a plan for mitigating risks identified by the Chairman. The executive branch shall construe this provision in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief.

Section 924 places restrictions upon the exercise of certain acquisition authority by the Director of the National Security Agency (NSA). The reference in section 924(b) to section 2430 of title 10, United States Code, authorizes the Secretary of Defense to exclude from the scope of section 924(b) highly sensitive classified programs as determined by the Secretary of Defense. Moreover, the exercise by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics of authority described in section 924 remains subject to the statutory authority of the Secretary of Defense to exercise authority, direction, and control of the Department of Defense under section 113(b) of title 10. The executive branch shall construe and execute section 924 in a manner consistent with these

statutory authorities of the Secretary of Defense, the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence under section 103(c)(7) of the National Security Act to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, and the constitutional authority of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief.

Section 1442(b)(2)(C) requires executive agency heads to furnish certain reports to the chairman and ranking minority member of "[e]ach committee that the head of the executive agency determines has legislative jurisdiction for the operations of such department or agency to which the information relates." The executive branch shall, as a matter of comity and for the very narrow purpose of determining to whom a department or agency will submit a report under this provision, determine the legislative jurisdiction of congressional committees.

Section 3622 purports to establish an interparliamentary working group involving up to 40 Members of Congress and the legislature of the Russian Federation on nuclear nonproliferation and security. Consistent with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign relations and as Commander in Chief, the executive branch shall construe section 3622 as authorizing neither representation of the United States nor disclosure of national security information protected by law or Executive Order.

Several provisions of the Act, including sections 320(b)(5) and (e), 335, 528, 647(c)(2), 923(d)(1)(F), and 1051, call for executive branch officials to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation. These provisions shall be implemented in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

A number of provisions of the Act, including sections 111(c), 903, 924, 1202, 1204, 1442(b)(2)(C), 1504(b), and 2808, require the executive branch to furnish information to the Congress or other entities on various subjects. The executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

George W. Bush

The White House,
November 24, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1588, approved November 24, was assigned Public Law No. 108–136.

Remarks to the Troops in Fort Carson, Colorado

November 24, 2003

The President. Thank you all.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm honored to be in the Rocky Mountain State. I'm honored to be in Fort Carson. More importantly, I'm honored to be in the presence of so many fine Americans, so many great citizens who proudly wear our Nation's uniform.

The soldiers of Fort Carson are now engaged in the largest deployment from this post since World War II. You reflect tremendous credit to the United States Army. You bring great pride to the people of the United States of America.

The people of our Armed Forces are serving at a crucial period for America and for all free nations. We're at war with terrorists who hate what we stand for, liberty, democracy, tolerance, and the rights and dignity of every person. We're a peaceful nation, yet we are prepared to confront any danger. We are fighting the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other parts of the world so we do not have to fight them on the streets of our own cities. And we will win.

In this war, America depends on our people in uniform to protect our freedom and to keep our country safe, and all who serve depend every day on the support of your families. These are challenging times for military families. You in the Pikes Peak community know that very well. Military life makes many demands on wives and husbands and sons and daughters. You have faced