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[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:38 a.m., January 16, 2004]

NOTE: This Executive order was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on January 20.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Termination of Emergency With Respect to Sierra Leone and Liberia

January 15, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 202(a) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622, I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order on January 15, 2004, that terminates the national emergency described and declared with respect to Sierra Leone in Executive Order 13194 of January 18, 2001, and expanded in scope with respect to Liberia by Executive Order 13213 of May 22, 2001.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order. This order becomes effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time on January 16, 2004.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16.

Proclamation 7753—Religious Freedom Day, 2004

January 16, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America is a land of many faiths, and the right to religious freedom is a foundation of our Nation. On Religious Freedom Day, Americans acknowledge the centrality of their faith and reaffirm that the great strength of our country is the heart and soul of our citizens.

Religious Freedom Day celebrates the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom on January 16, 1786. Thomas Jefferson, drafter of the legislation, considered it one of his three greatest accomplishments, along with writing the Declaration of Independence and founding the University of Virginia. Recognizing the importance of faith to our people, our Founding Fathers guaranteed religious freedom in the Constitution.

Protecting our religious freedom requires the vigilance of the American people and of government at all levels. Within my Administration, the Department of Justice is acting to protect religious freedom, including prosecuting those who attack people or places of worship because of religious affiliation. The Department of Education has issued new guidelines that allow students to engage in constitutionally protected religious activity in public schools. These guidelines protect, for example, students' rights to say a prayer before meals in the cafeteria, to gather with other students before school to pray, and to engage in other expressions of personal faith.

Through my Faith-Based and Community Initiative, my Administration continues to encourage the essential work of faith-based and community organizations. Governments can and should support effective social services, including those provided by religious people and organizations. When government gives that support, it is important that faith-based institutions not be forced to change their religious character. In December 2002, I signed an Executive Order to end discrimination against faith-based organizations in the Federal grants process. In September 2003, in implementing this order, my Administration eliminated many of the barriers that have kept faith-based charities from partnering with the Federal Government to help Americans in need. Six Federal agencies have proposed or finalized new regulations to ensure that no organization or beneficiary will be discriminated against in a Federally funded social service program on the basis of religion.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 16, 2004,

as Religious Freedom Day. I urge all Americans to reflect on the blessings of our religious freedom and to observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:57 a.m., January 20, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on January 21.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

January 10

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Monterrey, Mexico, to attend the Special Summit of the Americas. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a briefing on the summit.

In the afternoon, at the InterContinental Hotel in Monterrey, the President met briefly with Caribbean leaders. Later, he and Mrs. Bush participated in a greeting with U.S. Mission employees.

Later in the afternoon, at the Parque Fundidora, the President participated in summit meetings.

In the evening, the President met with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil at the Parque Fundidora. Later, he and Mrs. Bush attended a dinner hosted by President Vicente Fox of Mexico at the Palacio de Gobierno.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the inauguration of Oscar Berger Perdomo as President of Guatemala on January 14: Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida (head of delegation); John R. Hamilton, U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala; Columba Bush; Hamilton E. James; Bob Martinez; and Alberto M. Piedra.

January 13

In the morning, at the InterContinental Hotel, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the Parque Fundidora, he participated in summit meetings and then met with President Nestor Kirchner of Argentina.

In the afternoon, at the Parque Fundidora, the President participated in summit meetings and then met with President Carlos Diego Mesa Gisbert of Bolivia. Later, he participated in an official photograph followed by a lunch retreat with heads of state.

During the day, the President had a brief discussion with President Mireya Elisa Moscoso of Panama.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to appoint William Henry Campbell, Jr., as a member of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by an earthquake on December 22, 2003, and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in American Samoa and ordered Federal aid to supplement Territory and local recovery efforts in the area struck by high winds, high surf, and heavy rainfall associated with Tropical Cyclone Heta on January 2–6, 2004.

January 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate meetings with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.