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proud you're here, Commander. Thank you for coming.

Somebody said, don't introduce him, because there's supposed to be, like, a special announcement tomorrow. [*Laughter*] Something along those lines. [*Laughter*] Well, keep it off the record. [*Laughter*] Appreciate your service. Congratulations. It's a proud day for the Mexican American culture to know that you're—[*applause*].

The great triumph of Mexican forces on May the 5th, 1862, has inspired liberty-loving people everywhere, and it's helped shape the character of modern Mexico. Against great odds, a small and underequipped army defeated the skilled army of a European power. We've had that experience in America too. [*Laughter*]

Our two nations have very different histories, but our journeys have led us in the same direction. We believe in the rights and dignity of everyone. We believe that liberty is always worth defending. The ideals we share are among the many ties between our nations. Twenty-four million people of Mexican ancestry live in the United States today. It's almost 10 percent of our population, and America is better off for it.

Mexican Americans have brought many strengths to our Nation, a culture built around faith in God, a deep love for family, a belief that hard work leads to a better life. Every immigrant who lives by these values makes our country better and makes our future brighter.

Many Mexican and Hispanic Americans have shown their belief in this country by defending it. More than 600,000 of our veterans are of Mexican descent. Hispanic Americans have fought bravely in all our wars, including our own fight for independence. And for their valor, over three dozen have received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

On Cinco de Mayo, 2004, more than 130,000 Hispanic Americans are serving in the United States Armed Forces. Several of these fine men and women are with us today. Please rise so we can thank you for your service to our country.

Hispanic Americans serve our country in all kinds of ways. With us today are also firefighters from communities close by. They're part of the brave brotherhood of firefighters who answered the alarms and come to the aid of their neighbors against all hazards. We want to thank you for your service. We want to thank you for your sense of duty. We want to thank you for your contributions to our country. Welcome to the White House, and thanks for being here.

On this holiday, we also look with pride to the vital and enduring friendship between the United States and Mexico. We share the busiest border in the world. We share a growing trade relationship that amounts to more than $230 billion per year. We share a commitment to freedom and prosperity throughout our neighborhood.

In March, I hosted Vincente Fox—or we hosted Vincente Fox—[*laughter*]—at our ranch in Crawford, Texas. Our years of working together and our mutual respect are a reflection of the strong partnership between our two nations. Mexico and America have come a long way in 142 years, and we face the future as trusted partners, strong allies, and close friends.

Across Mexico and America today, there will be a great many celebrations of Cinco de Mayo, none of them quite like here in the White House—[*laughter*]—none of them with the fantastic entertainers we had here today. And I know we're starting a little early here, and I'm honored you could join us.

Happy Cinco de Mayo. May God bless Mexico, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Marco Antonio Solis, Jimena, and Emilio Estefan; Hector M. Flores, national president, League of United Latin American Citizens; Manual Lujan, Jr., former Secretary of the Interior; and President Vicente Fox of Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of Cinco de Mayo, 2004

May 5, 2004

I send greetings to those celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

On May 5, 1862, Mexican soldiers held back an invading army at the Battle of Puebla. This victory played a decisive role in the eventual expulsion of foreign forces from Mexico in 1867. Led by Texas-born Mexican General Ignacio Zaragoza, a small outnumbered militia of freedom-loving soldiers halted the invasion of their country. One hundred forty-two years after this victory, Cinco de Mayo pays tribute to the bravery and victory of General Zaragoza's soldiers and the strong, independent spirit of the Mexican people.

This observance is also a time to celebrate the strong friendship between the United States and Mexico. More than neighbors, we are partners in building a safer, more democratic, and more prosperous hemisphere. The United States continues to share close ties of family, culture, and history with Mexico and the Mexican people, and we recognize the vital role Mexican Americans play in shaping our Nation. We look forward to a future of continued friendship and collaboration with Mexico as we work to advance peace and democracy in the world.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous celebration.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Statement Announcing a Request to Congress for the Establishment of a Contingency Reserve Fund

May 5, 2004

This morning, Secretary Rumsfeld and I discussed recommendations from our commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan about additional resources that they may require.

While we do not know the precise costs for operations next year, recent developments on the ground and increased demands on our troops indicate the need to plan for contingencies. We must make sure there is no disruption in funding and resources for our troops.

I am requesting that Congress establish a $25 billion contingency reserve fund for the coming fiscal year to meet all commitments to our troops and to make sure we succeed in these critical fronts in the war on terror. As my administration has previously said, we will pursue a full FY 2005 supplemental request when we can better estimate precise costs.

Our troops in Iraq are performing superbly in their efforts to help the Iraqi people realize a free and peaceful future. I have pledged to our troops that they will have all the resources they need to get the job done, and I look forward to working with Congress on this high priority.

Remarks at a Republican National Committee Dinner

May 5, 2004

The President. I'm ready. I'm here to tell you I appreciate your support, and I want your vote. I stand ready and eager to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

I've recently come off a bus tour in Michigan and Ohio. The crowds were big. The enthusiasm was high. Our support is strong. We're rolling on our way to victory in November of 2004.

There's going to be many turns in this campaign, but this will remain constant: I will offer a positive, optimistic, and hopeful vision to the American people. I have a plan to win the war on terror and to spread peace and freedom throughout the world. I have a plan to help create an environment so more jobs are created and every single citizen of this country can realize the great promise of our country. I have a plan to promote the compassion and spirit of this country, so all citizens—all citizens—can realize their dreams.

I will leave no doubt where I stand. I will leave no doubt that after 4 more years, this country will be safer and stronger and better. And with this message and with your help, I am confident that Vice President Cheney and I will be reelected.

A good reason to put me back in office is to make sure Laura has 4 more years as the First Lady.

Audience member. We love Laura!

The President. Yes, you love Laura, and I love Laura. [*Laughter*]