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Secretary of State Colin L. Powell

Q. Mr. President, today you met with your Secretary of State. Do you want him to stick around to lead your efforts to revive the Middle East peace talks?

President Bush. I'm proud of my Secretary of State. He's done a heck of a good job.

Heidi [Heidi Pryzbyla, Bloomberg News].

Troop Levels in Iraq

Q. Yes, sir. Can elections in Iraq be free and fair without the participation of Sunnis? And you've also said you'll give the commanders in Iraq what they need. Does this mean that you're open to substantially increasing the level of troops?

President Bush. That is a loaded question, and I don't blame you for asking it. The commanders on the ground will have that which they need, and they have yet to say, "We need a substantial number of troops." As a matter of fact, I met with the commanders on the ground today—General Casey, and he—a commander on the ground, General Casey, the commander on the ground. And he said that things are going well in Fallujah and they're making very good progress in securing that country.

But I haven't changed—the job of the Commander in Chief is to set the strategy and to set the direction of policy and say to those who are in charge of implementing the policy, "You'll have that which you need." And I have said that ever since we've begun operations in Iraq. I said it when we began operations in Afghanistan, and it's still true. And if the commanders were to bring forth a request, I would look at it—I would listen to it very seriously and implement the request. They have yet to do so.

Sunni Participation in Iraqi Elections

Q. Do you need Sunni participation to make the elections free and fair?

President Bush. Well, I'm confident when people realize that there's a chance to vote on a President, they will participate. People want to be free. This is tough right now in Iraq because there are people that are willing to commit violent acts to stop elections. But as I reminded our citizens prior to the Afghanistan elections, there's a deep desire in every soul to vote and to be free and to participate in the Presidential elections, which is precisely what happened in Afghanistan in spite of the doubt of some and in spite of the violence that took place in Afghanistan prior to the vote. I believe that a lot of citizens in Iraq will want to vote for their leaders. And I believe that because I believe deep in everybody's soul is a desire to be free.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. George W. Casey, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. A reporter referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks on the Nomination of Alberto R. Gonzales To Be Attorney General

November 10, 2004

Good afternoon. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Judge Al Gonzales to be the Attorney General of the United States. This is the fifth time I have asked Judge Gonzales to serve his fellow citizens, and I am very grateful he keeps saying "yes."

A decade ago, when I was elected Governor of Texas, I asked Al to be my general counsel. He went on to distinguished service as Texas's secretary of State and as a justice of the Texas Supreme Court.

Since I arrived in Washington 4 years ago, he has served with skill and integrity in the White House as Counsel to the President. I have counted on Al Gonzales to help select the best nominees for the Federal courts, one of the President's most important responsibilities.

His sharp intellect and sound judgment have helped shape our policies in the war on terror, policies designed to protect the security of all Americans, while protecting the rights of all Americans. As the top legal official on the White House staff, he has led a superb team of lawyers and has upheld the highest standards of Government ethics. My confidence in Al was high to begin with; it has only grown with time.

Over the past decade, I've also come to know the character of this man. He always gives me his frank opinion. He is a calm and steady voice in times of crisis. He has an unwavering principle, a respect for the law, and he and Becky are dear friends of Laura and my—of me, and I'm also very friendly with Graham and Gabriel Gonzales.

My newest Cabinet nominee grew up in a two-bedroom house in Texas with his parents and seven siblings. Al's mother and dad, Pablo and Maria, were migrant workers who never finished elementary school, but they worked hard to educate their children and to instill the values of reverence and integrity and personal responsibility. These good people lived to see their son, Al, study at Rice University and Harvard Law School. Maria still lives in humble Texas in the house her husband built, and I can only imagine how proud she is today of her son, Al.

Serving as Attorney General is one of the most challenging duties in our Government. As the Nation's chief law enforcement officer, Al will continue our administration's great progress in fighting crime, in strengthening the FBI, in improving our domestic efforts in the war on terror. As a steward of civil rights laws, he will ensure that Americans are protected from discrimination so that each person has the opportunity to live the American Dream, as Al himself has done.

With the Senate's approval, Judge Gonzales will succeed another superb public servant, Attorney General John Ashcroft. Attorney General Ashcroft has served with excellence during a demanding time. In 4 years, he's reorganized the Department of Justice to meet the new threat of terrorism. He's fairly and forcefully applied the PATRIOT Act and helped to dismantle terror cells inside the United States. During his watch, violent crime has dropped to a 30-year low and prosecutions of crimes committed with guns have reached an alltime high. Drug use amongst our students is down. Confidence in the financial markets has been restored because the Attorney General aggressively prosecuted corporate fraud. And thanks to John Ashcroft's leadership, America has stepped up its efforts to prosecute the cruel exploitation of children by Internet pornographers. The Nation is safer and more just today because John Ashcroft has served our country so well.

I'm committed to strong, principled leadership at the Department of Justice, and Judge Al Gonzales will be that kind of leader as America's 80th Attorney General. I urge the Senate to act promptly on this important nomination. I look forward to welcoming my great friend to the Cabinet.

Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rebecca Gonzales, wife of Attorney General-Designate Alberto R. Gonzales. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General-Designate Gonzales. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the Iftaar Dinner

November 10, 2004

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you all for coming, and welcome to the White House, and *Ramadan Mubarak.* I'm honored to be with so many friends and distinguished guests.

As we gather during this holy month, America is stronger and more hopeful because of the generosity and compassion of our Muslim citizens. Our Nation is safer and more prosperous because we have a close relationship with our Islamic friends around the world. And tonight we honor the traditions of a great faith by hosting the Iftaar dinner here at the White House.

I want to acknowledge our Secretary of State, Colin Powell. I appreciate his great service. I want to thank our Secretary of Energy, Spence Abraham, who is with us today. I want to thank Dr. Elias Zerhouni for his great work at the National Institutes of Health. Thank you. I want to thank all the distinguished Ambassadors who are with us today.

I want to thank the American Muslim leaders who've joined us. I appreciate you coming from all around the country. I want to thank Imam Faizul Khan of the Islamic Center of Washington, who will lead the blessing tonight. And tonight we also remember the late