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action would cause damage to that industry that would be difficult to repair; and to provide provisional relief with respect to imports that are subject to an affirmative determination of critical circumstances that is necessary to remedy or prevent the serious damage.

(7) All provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 22, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 23.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 21, 2004

Laura and I have just come from a remarkable place called the Fisher House, a facility where wounded soldiers and their families are provided comfort during their trials. And we just want to thank the people who have supported the Fisher House, thank the folks here at Walter Reed for providing such incredibly good health care.

Today we had a rocket attack that took a lot of lives. Any time of the year it's a time of sorrow and sadness when we lose a loss of life. This time of year is particularly sorrowful for the families as we head into the Christmas season. We pray for them. We send our heartfelt condolences to the loved ones who suffer today. Just want them to know that the mission is a vital mission for peace. The idea of a democracy taking hold in what was a place of tyranny and hatred and destruction is such a hopeful moment in the history of the world.

And I want to thank the soldiers who are there and thank those who have sacrificed and the families who are worried about them during this Christmas season for their sacrifices. This is a very important and vital mission. I'm confident democracy will prevail in Iraq. I know a free Iraq will lead to a more peaceful world. So we ask for God's blessings on all who are involved in that vital mission.

Thank you very much. Have a good holiday.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m.

Statement on Signing the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004

December 21, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 3242, the "Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004" (the "Act"). The Act is designed to increase the competitiveness of fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops grown in the United States.

Section 1408A of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended by section 303 of the Act, purports to require the Secretary of Agriculture to take into consideration certain advisory board-approved findings and recommendations in preparing the Secretary's annual departmental budget proposal to the President and to disclose to the Congress how the Secretary addressed each such recommendation. The executive branch shall construe section 1408A in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch, to require the opinions of principal officers of the executive departments, to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President shall judge necessary and expedient, and to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 21, 2004.

NOTE: At the time of publication, H.R. 3242, approved December 21, had not been received by the Office of the Federal Register for assignment of a Public Law number.

Proclamation 7858—To Take Certain Actions Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act

December 21, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. In Proclamation 7561 of May 16, 2002, I designated the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country pursuant to section 506A(a)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, (the "1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2466a(a)(1)), as added by section 111(a) of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (title I of Public Law 106–200) (AGOA)). I also provided that Cote d'Ivoire would be considered a lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 112(b)(3)(B) of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3721(b)(3)(B)).

2. In Proclamation 7350 of October 2, 2000, President Clinton delegated to the United States Trade Representative (USTR) the authority to perform the function specified in section 113(b)(1)(B) of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3722(b)(1)(B)). In a *Federal Register* notice dated December 17, 2003, the USTR determined that Cote d'Ivoire had adopted an effective visa system and related procedures to prevent unlawful transshipment and the use of counterfeit documents and that Cote d'Ivoire had implemented and followed, or was making substantial progress toward implementing and following, certain customs procedures that assist the United States Customs Service in verifying the origin of the products.

3. Section 506A(a)(3) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2466a(a)(3)) authorizes the President to terminate the designation of a country as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A if he determines that the country is not making continual progress in meeting the requirements described in section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act, effective on January 1 of the year following the year in which such determination is made.

4. Pursuant to section 506A(a)(3) of the 1974 Act, I have determined that Cote d'Ivoire is not making continual progress in meeting the requirements described in section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act. Accordingly, I have decided to terminate the designation of Cote d'Ivoire as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A of the 1974 Act, effective on January 1, 2005.

5. Section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2483) authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) the substance of the relevant provisions of that Act, and of other acts affecting import treatment, and actions thereunder, including the removal, modification, continuance, or imposition of any rate of duty or other import restriction.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 506A and 604 of the 1974 Act and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, do proclaim that:

(1) The designation of Cote d'Ivoire as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A of the 1974 Act is terminated, effective on January 1, 2005.

(2) In order to reflect in the HTS that beginning January 1, 2005, Cote d'Ivoire shall no longer be designated as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country, general note 16(a) to the HTS is modified by deleting "Republic of Cote d'Ivoire" from the list of beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries. Further, U.S. note 2(d) to subchapter XIX of chapter 98 is modified by removing "Cote d'Ivoire" from the list of lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries, and U.S. note 7(a) to subchapter II and U.S. note 1 to subchapter XIX of chapter 98 of the HTS are modified by deleting "Cote d'Ivoire" from the list of beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries eligible for certain textile and apparel benefits.

(3) The modification to the HTS made by this proclamation shall be effective with respect to articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after January 1, 2005.

(4) Any provisions of previous proclamations and executive orders that are inconsistent with this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.