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the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation extending the Agreement Between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Russian Federation on Mutual Fisheries Relations of May 31, 1999, with annex, as extended (the "Mutual Fisheries Agreement"). The present Agreement, which was affected by an exchange of notes in Moscow on March 3, 2003, and January 30, 2004, extends the Mutual Fisheries Agreement to December 31, 2008.

In light of the importance of our fisheries relationship with the Russian Federation, I urge the Congress to give favorable consideration to this Agreement at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
January 6, 2005.

Remarks on the Appointment of Connie Mack as Chairman and John B. Breaux as Vice Chairman of the President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform and an Exchange With Reporters

January 7, 2005

The President. I want to thank the Secretary of the Treasury, John Snow, for being here today. I also want to thank my friend Senator—Senators Connie Mack and John Breaux for agreeing to head a group of citizens who will be exploring ways to simplify the Tax Code. I believe this is an essential task for our country. It's a task that will treat our taxpayers more fairly. A simple code will make it easier on the taxpayers. But it's an important task in order to make sure the economic growth we are seeing in the United States continues forward.

Today we had a very positive set of numbers to—come out to show that more and more Americans are finding work; 159,000 new jobs were added in December, and that doesn't include the revisions from previous months. And that's positive news. And the fundamental question is how can the administration and the Congress continue to make changes so—to keep this economy growing, to make sure we're the best place in the world to do business.

Today I'm going to Detroit to talk about legal reform. These fine, distinguished citizens will be taking a good, hard look at the Tax Code and coming up with recommendations as to how to make sure the Tax Code encourages economic vitality and growth. It seems like to me the Tax Code today discourages economic vitality and growth when you spend billions of hours filling out the forms. And so I want to thank you all for taking on this important job.

I told the members—the former Senators and members of this committee that I am firm in my desire to get something done. We're going to take their work, and we'll go to the Congress and say, "Let's work together to achieve something very constructive for the American people." And so thanks for taking this on.

Senator Breaux. Glad to do it.

The President. These are distinguished citizens of our country, and I'm proud you're here.

Senator Breaux. Thank you.

Senator Mack. Look forward to doing it.

The President. Yes, you're doing a good job.

Let me answer some questions. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iraqi Elections

Q. Mr. President, former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft had a gloomy assessment about Iraq's elections. He said that they would probably deepen the conflict, increase divisions between the Shiite and Sunni Muslims, and that Iraq would slip into an incipient civil war. Do you share those concerns?

The President. Quite the opposite. I think elections will be such an incredibly hopeful experience for the Iraqi people. Remember, these are people that lived in a society where, if they didn't toe the line of the leadership, they'd be tortured or killed or maimed. And all of a sudden, a new way of life is being introduced into Iraq, a chance for people to express their beliefs and their opinions. I believe democracies can take hold in parts of the world that have been condemned to tyranny. And I believe when democracies take

hold, it leads to peace. That's been the proven example around the world. Democracies equal peace, and that's what we're trying to achieve in this administration.

Steve Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes, there you are.

Q. General Metz says he can't guarantee that every Iraqi who wants to vote will be able to because of security. Can there be a legitimate election if not everybody is able to vote?

The President. Fourteen of the eighteen provinces appear to be relatively calm. Four of the eighteen provinces are places where the terrorists are trying to stop people from voting. And the reason they're trying to stop people from voting is because they understand that democracies stand in the exact opposite to what they believe. These are people who want to try to impose their will on people. These are people—just like the Taliban, just like Usama bin Laden—who have this dim vision of the world that says, "If you do not agree with us, then you're of no count." And they're trying to stop people from voting. And the job of the United States military is to do the best job we can to give every citizen the best chance they can to vote and to participate. Democracy is hard. Our own country has had a history of kind of a bumpy road toward democracy. And we'll do the very best we can, but what is important is that the Iraqi people for the first time have a chance to vote.

And it was hard leading up the Afghan elections, as you remember. There was a lot of talk about how the—somebody was going to get killed, and they couldn't vote. And sure enough, when people were given a chance, millions of people showed up, and the first voter was a woman in a country where women had been savaged by the former government run by the Taliban. So, look, I know it's hard, but it's hard for a reason. And the reason it's hard is because there are a handful of folks who fear freedom. And the job of the world that—that those of us in the world who desire for there to be peace is to be aggressive in the spread of freedom, is to stand with those brave citizens in Iraq who want to vote. And that's exactly what we will do.

Go ahead. Followup?

Q. Are you worried about Sunni participation? You were talking to President Mubarak and King Abdullah earlier in the week.

The President. Well, I want everybody to vote. And I understand that parts of the Sunni area are being targeted by these killers. And their message is, "If you vote, we'll kill you." But their real message is, is that, "We can't stand democracy." And if the free world steps back and lets these people have their way, it will be, "We can't stand democracy here," and then "We can't democracy there." And we'll never address the root causes of terror and hatred, which is frustration caused by tyranny.

This administration firmly believes that if people are given a right to express themselves in a ballot—in the ballot box and in the public square and through a free and open press, it will lead to peace. If we step back and allow for tyrannies to exist and people not to be free, the world our children will grow up in will be a hostile world. And this is a big moment for the Iraqi people.

It wasn't all that long ago that a lot of people said, "Iraqi people will never vote at all." I think it's constructive now we're beginning to worry about the size of the turnout. It's something I was worried about right here two months ago, the size of the turnout. But the positive, incredibly amazing development, when you take a step back and look at history, is that Iraqi citizens will actually be allowed to go vote. And they will elect an assembly. And I think one of the things, Steve, you ought to be looking at is the nature of the assembly, who gets elected. And that's what we're certainly going to be looking at because this assembly will then be deciding the constitution of the country of Iraq. And I look at the elections as a historical marker for our Iraq policy. It is an interesting point.

And we look forward to working with the new Government that comes out of that—out of these elections.

Yes, John [John Cochran, ABC News].

Q. If I could follow that up, sir, a couple of things. You said, "Look at the assembly." Are you concerned that maybe the Sunnis won't vote enough and that the Sunnis will not be well represented in the assembly? And are you concerned, as Secretary Rumsfeld

is—he's sending this retired four-star general over—are you concerned about our military policy in Iraq that it's not doing enough to control the insurgents?

The President. Look, I think what you're beginning to see is a—an assessment of how to make sure our policy dovetails with the elections and the post-election period. You see, our policy all along has been: We'll help these people get to the elections, and there will be elections. And then once the elections take place, we look forward to working with the newly constituted Government to help train Iraqis as fast as possible so they can defend themselves. See, part of a successful strategy is one that says there'll be elections and the political process will be going forward but one in which the Iraqis assume more and more responsibility for their own security. And that's precisely why the assessment team is going to Iraq, to make sure that at this historic moment in the history of Iraq, there is a focused, determined strategy to help the new Government and the new and the—the new Government to stand up the forces necessary to defend themselves because ultimately the success in Iraq is going to be the willingness of the Iraqi citizens to fight for their own freedom.

Q. So you're not dissatisfied?

The President. I think we're making great progress. We're having elections on January the 30th. It's going to be an historic moment. I suspect if you were asking me questions 18 months ago and I said there was going to be elections in Iraq, you would have had trouble containing yourself from laughing out loud at the President. But here we are at this moment, and it's exciting times for the Iraqi people. And it's so exciting, there are some who are trying to intimidate people from going to the polls.

And I appreciate—listen, our military is doing great work over there.

Q. And the Sunnis?

The President. Well, I talked to President Yawr the other day. He's a Sunni. I said, "How's your campaign going?" He said, "It's going fine." He's out there trying to convince people to vote for him. There are Sunnis throughout the different tickets and slates, and we, of course, hope everybody votes. And our job is to try to provide as much security along with the Iraqis to give people a chance to express their will. And no doubt about it, there are people trying to kill people who want to vote. That's—and they make it clear, "If you vote, we'll kill you." But it's very important to understand why they're doing that, John. They're doing that because the thought of a democracy in that part of the world is the most frightening thing to the terrorists. They cannot stand the thought of freedom in their midst. And there's a reason, because free societies are societies that actually listen to the will of the people. The people get to decide the course of their—of the history of their country, not a few tyrants who are willing to use brutality in order to set the direction of the country. And we're going to stand with those who love freedom. And we'll stand with those who want to vote.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr of the Iraqi Interim Government. Reporters referred to Lt. Gen. Thomas F. Metz, USA, commander, Multi-National Corps—Iraq; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; and Gen. Gary E. Luck, USA (Ret.).

Executive Order 13369—President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform

January 7, 2005

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to assist in reforming the Federal Internal Revenue Code to benefit all Americans, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment.* There is established the President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform (Advisory Panel).

Sec. 2. *Membership.* (a) The Advisory Panel shall be composed of up to nine members appointed by the President.

(b) The President shall designate one member of the Advisory Panel to serve as Chair and one member to serve as Vice Chair.

Sec. 3. *Purpose.* The purpose of the Advisory Panel shall be to submit to the Secretary