AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

complacent. He understands that as we adapt our defenses, the terrorists will adapt their tactics in response. He understands they continue to pose a great threat to the American people.

Recently, we learned that Usama bin Laden has urged the terrorist Zarqawi to form a group to conduct attacks outside Iraq, including here in the United States. We're on a constant hunt for bin Laden. We're keeping the pressure on him, keeping him in hiding. And today, Zarqawi understands that coalition and Iraqi troops are on a constant hunt for him as well. Coalition and Iraqi forces have caught and killed several of his key lieutenants. We're working every day and night to dismantle his network and to bring him to justice.

Bin Laden's message is a telling reminder that Al Qaida still hopes to attack us on our own soil. Stopping them is the greatest challenge of our day. And under Mike's leadership, we will do everything in our power to meet that challenge. Mike is wise, and he is tough—in a good way. [*Laughter*] And he knows the nature of the enemy. As head of the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice, Mike helped trace the September 11th attacks to the Al Qaida network. And it didn't take him very long to do so. He understands that the terrorists are brutal and determined and that to stop them, all our agencies must work more closely together using every resource and technological advantage we have.

I have given Mike an ambitious agenda to carry out. We will continue to work to fully integrate the agencies within the Homeland Security Department. We will build on the progress that has been made. We will continue working to reduce our Nation's vulnerabilities and prepare effective responses for any future attack. We will speed the development of new 21st century vaccines and treatments to protect Americans against biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological attacks. We will continue our historic investments in homeland security to match the threats facing our country. We will protect the American people from new dangers while protecting their civil liberties.

Mike understands that we need to work closely with State and local officials because he has shared their vantage point. Like men and women who wear our Nation's uniform on distant battlefields, those who wear the uniform here at home risk their lives every day to protect our people. By their service and sacrifice, our police, our firefighters, and emergency rescue personnel are making the homeland safer. And our Nation must constantly thank them for their work.

Mike is the right person to lead this Department in this vital work. He knows that to win the war on terror abroad, we always must remember where it began, here in the homeland. He will be an outstanding Secretary of Homeland Security. Mike, thank you for willing—for your willingness to serve our Nation once again. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Meryl Chertoff, wife of Secretary Chertoff; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. He also referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Chertoff.

Remarks at the Central Intelligence Agency and an Exchange With Reporters in Langley, Virginia

March 3, 2005

The President. I want to thank Director Goss for his hospitality. It was such a pleasure to come out and see hundreds of folks who work here at the Central Intelligence Agency.

I came for a couple of reasons. One, I wanted to assure the people here that their contribution was incredibly vital to the security of the United States and that, together, we've achieved a lot in securing this country. There's a lot of really incredibly bright, capable, hard-working, dedicated Americans who work in this building. So my first mission was to thank them.

And the second thing was to explain that the reforms that we'll be implementing through the good graces of Ambassador

Negroponte, if confirmed by the Senate, will actually help the CIA do its job better.

And I got a great reception. I want to thank you, again, Director, for your hospitality. We're making progress in the war on terror. The world is changing. And this country of ours will continue to do our duty, which is to find terrorists, bring them to justice through good intelligence and hard work and some brave souls, and at the same time, work to spread freedom and liberty around the world.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Implementing Intelligence Reform

Q. Mr. President, your CIA Director, Mr. Goss, said yesterday that he has to wear five hats now and that he was concerned there were some ambiguities in the new arrangement about his relationship with Mr. Negroponte and Secretary Rumsfeld. Do you feel there are such ambiguities, and will you move to—if there are, will you move to clear them up? And will this prevent—will this present a problem for the flow of intelligence in this time, this transition period?

The President. That's an excellent question. Porter and I have discussed this, of course, because I don't want there to be any interruption of intelligence coming to the White House, and there won't be. As a matter of fact, Porter Goss comes every morning with the CIA briefer to deliver the briefing. And that, of course, will go on. And it's—secondly, we don't even have Ambassador Negroponte confirmed yet. In other words, it's hard to implement reforms without somebody to be the reformer. And so the process is ongoing. Obviously, when his name gets up to the Senate, we hope there's a speedy confirmation.

But one of the purposes of the whole process, Tom, is to make sure that information flows are smooth and that efforts are coordinated. The CIA is the Central Intelligence Agency; it's the center of the intelligence community. But there's a lot of other intelligence-gathering operations around Government. And the job of Ambassador Negroponte is to be—to take the information and make sure it is coordinated in its distribution to not only the White House but to key players in my administration. And so I'm confident that the process will work.

Obviously, one of the reasons I came here is because I know there's some uncertainty about what this reform means to the people of the CIA, and I wanted to assure them that the reforms will strengthen their efforts and make it easier for them to do their job, not harder. I'm glad I came out.

Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Social Security Reform

Q. Mr. President, on Social Security reform, what's your judgment about where this process stands right now, with polls showing the public skeptical; some Republicans, like Senator Grassley, are seeming to back away from your proposal; and Democrats wanting to declare it dead.

The President. I would say this: I am—know we're at the early stages of the process. I've only had nine trips around the country so far—or nine States on my trips. I've got a lot more work to do. Now, I do believe we're making progress on the first stage of getting anything complicated and difficult done in Washington, and that is to explain the problem. And the surveys I have seen, at least, say that the American people understand we have a problem. And I'm going to continue going out to explain that to people, the nature of the problem. And the problem is, in 2018, the system starts losing money. In 2027, it's 200 billion in the hole, and it gets bigger every year thereafter. In other words, we can't pay for the promises we've made. That's the problem.

And my second phase of this explanation to the American people is to say to seniors who have retired or people near retirement, you don't have anything to worry about; you're going to get your check. I've got a lot of work to do on that, and I understand that. But we're making progress. People are beginning to say, "We have a problem." The next phase, when people say we have a problem, is going to be, "What are you going to do about it?" And I'm willing to put out some ideas about what to do about it. In my judgment, ultimately, I think politicians need to be worried about not being a part of the solution.

And so I'm looking forward to continue to make the case. As you know, Terry—you have followed me a lot—I like to get out amongst the people. I get energized—I get energized by being with people, and I get energized when I think about taking on big problems, because that's why we got elected. The American people expect people to come together to solve problems. And I'm looking forward to listening to Republicans and Democrats. I said, "Put your ideas out there. There will be no political third rail when it comes to Social Security." Now is the time for good people of good will to come together and get the problem fixed.

Tax Reform

Q. Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan said today that a consumption tax, maybe even a national sales tax, might spur greater economic growth. What do you think about that?

The President. I think that I'm going to wait until the tax commission I put together, the reform commission headed by former Senator John Breaux, Democrat of Louisiana, former Senator Connie Mack, Republican of Florida, comes forward with some ideas. I told the American people I want to work to simplify the Tax Code and make it easier to understand, so people are spending less time filing paper, and I believe a simplified Tax Code will spur entrepreneurial activity. And so I'm looking forward to what the commission has to say.

War on Terror

Q. You mentioned Usama bin Laden earlier this morning, and you've said several times that there's progress being made on the war on terrorism. But more than 3 years after September 11th, you still don't know where he is. How would you assess the adequacy of the intelligence you're getting on bin Laden, and do you expect that he's going to be found anytime soon, even within your second term?

The President. If Al Qaida was structured like corporate America, you'd have a chairman of the board still in office, but many of the key operators would no longer be around. In other words, the executive vice presidents, the operating officers, the people responsible for certain aspects of the organization have been brought to justice—a lot of them have been. And we are—spend every day gathering information to locate Usama bin Laden and Zawahiri, obviously people like Zarqawi. We're not resting on our laurels. We've had great successes, and—but that doesn't mean that we should stop.

And one of the reasons I came out here was to remind people that we've had great successes. I appreciate their successes—Khalid Sheik Mohammed, Ramzi bin al-Shibh. I can go down the list. But there's more work to be done. And it's a matter of time. As far as I'm concerned and as far as the CIA is concerned, it's a matter of time before we bring these people to justice. And I can't thank the intelligence gatherers, the analysts, and the operators—I can't thank them enough for the sacrifices they're making.

Last question.

Iran/Syria

Q. Mr. President, on Iran, you spoke to Condoleezza Rice yesterday, we were told. What can you tell us about the pros and cons that you're weighing now as you reach a decision on going forward with the EU?

The President. Yes, let me just tell you how I see the state of action here. First, I am most appreciative that our friends in Europe agree with the United States that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon, period—no ands, ifs, or buts. And I thought that was a very important statement from the leaders I met with. And by the way, Mr. Putin feels the same way. And to me that is a very—a positive start for achieving our common objective. First, you got to agree to the goal, and the goal is no weapon.

Secondly, I have told our European friends who are handling the negotiations on behalf of the rest of the world that we want to help make sure the process goes forward. And we're looking at ways to help move the process forward.

The guilty party is Iran. They're the ones who are not living up to international accords. They're the people that the whole world is saying, "Don't develop a weapon." And so we are working with our friends to make sure not only the world hears that but

that the negotiating strategy achieves the objective of pointing out where guilt needs to be as well as achieving the objective of no nuclear weapon. And I felt good about our visits.

I did visit with Condi yesterday, and I'm about to go visit with her again in the Oval Office to discuss not only this issue but other key issues, including Lebanon, where the message is loud and clear from the United States and France and many other nations that Syria must withdraw not only her troops but her secret service forces out of Lebanon now. And I look forward to talking to Condi about getting an amplification on her visit with our allies overseas. I look forward to not only hear their words; I want to hear about their body language. I want to hear about their enthusiasm for the project. I think I'm going to find it was quite high because the people now understand that if you believe in democracy, why not let the democracy in Lebanon flourish and grow? And the United States of America strongly supports democracy all around the world, including Lebanon. And it cannot flourish so long as Syrian troops are there. It's time for Syria to get out.

Listen, thank you all. I appreciate seeing you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John D. Negroponte, nominee to be Director of National Intelligence; former Senators Connie Mack, Chairman, and John B. Breaux, Vice Chairman, President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Khalid Sheik Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan, on September 11, 2002; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Remarks on the Nomination of Stephen L. Johnson To Be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency

March 4, 2005

The President. Good morning. I am pleased to announce my nomination of Stephen Johnson to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Steve Johnson is a talented scientist and skilled manager with a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship. He has 24 years of experience at the EPA, spanning all four decades of the Agency's history. Since late January, he has served as Acting Administrator. He knows the EPA from the ground up and has a passion for its mission, to protect the health of our citizens and to guarantee the quality of our air, water, and land for generations to come. I've come to know Steve as an innovative problemsolver with good judgment and complete integrity. I'm proud to ask him to become the first career EPA employee to hold the office of Administrator, and I'm glad he's agreed to do so.

When confirmed by the Senate, Steve will also become the first professional scientist to lead the EPA. He will use that background to set clear, rational standards for environmental quality and to place sound scientific analysis at the heart of all major decisions. Steve shares my conviction that we can improve the Earth while maintaining a vibrant and competitive economy. He will work cooperatively with leaders in government, industry, and environmental advocacy to continue using our resources wisely. He will listen to those living closest to the land, because they know our environmental needs best.

For the last 4 years, Steve has served at the side of EPA Administrators Mike Leavitt and Christie Todd Whitman, and he shares in their record of achievement. Today, America's air and water are cleaner than in 2001. The clean diesel rule we finalized will cut emissions from heavy-duty vehicles by more than 90 percent over the next 10 years. Our brownfields initiative has helped restore