

to the Nation in 1941, Franklin Roosevelt said that “Against enemies who preach the principles of hate and practice them, we set our faith in human love, and in God’s care for us and all men everywhere.” We ask for God to watch over our men and women in uniform who are serving overseas. Their families miss them, hold a seat open for them, and pray for their safe return. America’s military men and women stand for freedom, and they serve the cause of peace. Many of them are serving in distant lands tonight, but they are close to our hearts.

As an expression of our hope for peace and happiness in this Christmas season, we light the National Christmas Tree. Jackie, Melissa, and Jenna Kantor of Bethesda are with us here. They started “Project Backpack” to give children displaced by Hurricane Katrina new backpacks filled with books and toys and school supplies. These girls are an example of the compassion that is found in the hearts and souls of Americans everywhere, and they have shown how much good can be done when we reach out to help a neighbor in need. And so Laura and I now invite them to join us to turn on the lights.

And would you help turn on these lights, as well, by counting down. Five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Betchkal, president, Christmas Pageant of Peace; and Rev. Richard B. Martin, pastor, Church of the Nativity, Burke, VA.

Remarks on the National Economy

December 2, 2005

Thanks to good old-fashioned American hard work and productivity, innovation, and sound economic policies of cutting taxes and restraining spending, our economy continues to gain strength and momentum.

Our economy added 215,000 jobs for the month of November. We’ve added nearly 4½ million new jobs in the last 2½ years. Third-quarter growth of this year was 4.3 percent. That’s in spite of the fact that we had hurricanes and high gasoline prices. The unemployment rate is 5 percent, and that’s lower

than the average for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

We have every reason to be optimistic about our economic future. I mean, when you think about the news that’s come in—the jobs report, the recent report on strong economic growth, low inflation, strong productivity, lower gasoline prices, a strong housing market, increases in consumer confidence and business investment—our economic horizon is as bright as it’s been in a long time.

The foundation for growth is strong. It’s based upon low taxes and restrained Government spending, legal reform, incentives for saving and investment.

The small-business sector is vibrant. Most of the new jobs in America are created by the small-business sector, and our entrepreneurs are doing well. We got the best workforce in America—in the world. People are productive. They’re hardworking. Our ingenuity and know-how and—is vibrant. This economy is in good shape.

We’re not going to rest until every American who wants a job can find one. We’re going to continue to work for good policies for our workers and our entrepreneurs. I’ll continue to push for progrowth economic policies, all aimed at making sure every American can realize the American Dream.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Andrew S. Natsios as Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development

December 2, 2005

Andrew Natsios has served as a key member of my administration for more than 4 years. He has exemplified the compassion and generosity of the American people and our deep commitment to helping and improving the lives of those who are suffering. Under his leadership, USAID has implemented important reforms and helped us

combat AIDS and malaria, rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq, provide humanitarian aid in Sudan, and assist victims of the tsunami and the recent devastating earthquake in South Asia. I thank him for his dedicated service to our country, and I wish him and his family well.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

November 26

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

November 27

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with King Abdullah II of Saudi Arabia.

November 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and met with the National Security Council.

Later in the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with Representatives Timothy Murphy, Jim Marshall, and Isaac N. Skelton IV who were in a vehicular accident in Iraq on November 26.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Tucson, AZ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Al Agellon. Later, he had a briefing on border security.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Phoenix, AZ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer William Mitchell.

November 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to El Paso, TX, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Dale Baugh.

Later, he took a driving tour of the Mexico-U.S. border.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Denver, CO.

In the afternoon, the President met with family members of a soldier killed in combat. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

November 30

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia to congratulate her on her election victory. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Annapolis, MD.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Baltimore, MD.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with James R. Mueller, commander in chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to the White House on January 11, 2006.

December 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Theodore E. Cardinal McCarrick, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a Christmas reception at the White House.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornados on November 15.

December 2

In the morning, the President had breakfast with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Later, he had an intelligence briefing and a briefing on pandemic influenza preparedness and response. Later, he received credentials from newly appointed ambassadors to the United States.