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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Proclamation 7968—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 2005

December 9, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans believe that freedom is God's gift to every man and woman in the world. The Founders adopted our Constitution to secure the blessings of liberty for the people of the United States, and since 1789, generations of Americans have defended and advanced freedom in our Nation.

Throughout our history, the United States has also worked to extend the promise of liberty to other countries. We are continuing those efforts today. We are promoting democracies that respect freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and freedom of the press and that protect the rights of minorities and women. We are standing with dissidents and exiles against oppressive regimes and tyranny.

This year has seen great advances in the spread of democracy and human rights. In January, more than eight million Iraqi men and women braved threats of violence to vote for a provisional government. In October, Iraqis voted in even greater numbers to approve a draft constitution for their country, and on December 15, they will return to the polls to elect a Council of Representatives. Millions of Afghans voted in September in the first free legislative elections in Afghanistan in decades. Countries of the former Soviet bloc are emerging as thriving democracies. A free press is gaining ground in Kyrgyzstan, and civil institutions are being strengthened in Ukraine and Georgia. We have witnessed good progress this year, and America will continue this historic work to advance the cause of freedom.

We remain confident in this cause because we have seen the power of freedom to overcome the dark ideologies of tyranny and terror. Freedom enables men and women to live lives of dignity. And freedom gives the citizens of a nation confidence in a future of peace for their children and grandchildren. As we observe Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we renew our commitment to building a world where human rights are respected and protected by the rule of law and where all people can enjoy freedom and dignity.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 2005, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 2005, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 2005, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to mark these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:18 a.m., December 12, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 13. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 10, 2005

Good morning. This week, Members of a House and Senate conference committee reached an agreement on reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act. Since its passage after the

attacks of September the 11th, 2001, the PATRIOT Act has proved essential to fighting the war on terror and preventing our enemies from striking America again.

This week's agreement would renew all 16 provisions of the PATRIOT Act that are scheduled to expire at the end of this month, and it would make 14 of these provisions permanent. It reauthorizes critical national security tools while bolstering the PATRIOT Act's significant protections of civil liberties. It also includes provisions to fight crime and terrorism at America's seaports and tougher criminal penalties and increased resources to combat the dangerous spread of methamphetamine abuse throughout our country.

I applaud the conference committee for its good work. Now Congress needs to finish the job. Both the Senate and the House need to hold a prompt vote and send me a bill renewing the PATRIOT Act so I can sign it into law.

Over the past 4 years, the PATRIOT Act has been a strong weapon for going after the terrorists. America's law enforcement and intelligence personnel have put the PATRIOT Act to wise and effective use while protecting our civil liberties. They have used the law to prosecute terrorist operatives and supporters or break up terror cells in New York, Oregon, Virginia, California, Texas, and Ohio. The PATRIOT Act has accomplished exactly what it was designed to do—it has protected American liberty and saved American lives.

By renewing the PATRIOT Act, we will ensure that our law enforcement and intelligence officers have the tools they need to protect our citizens. The PATRIOT Act tore down the legal and bureaucratic wall that kept law enforcement and intelligence authorities from sharing vital information about terrorist threats. Now law enforcement and intelligence officers are working together.

The PATRIOT Act also allowed Federal investigators to pursue terrorists with the same tools they already use against other criminals. For example, before the PATRIOT Act, it was easier to track the phone calls of a drug dealer than the phone calls of a terrorist. Before the PATRIOT Act, it was easier to get the credit card receipts of a tax cheat than those of an Al Qaida bankroller. The PATRIOT Act ended these double standards. The theory is straightforward: If we have good tools to fight street crime and fraud, then law enforcement should have at least the same tools to fight terrorism.

The PATRIOT Act is helping America defeat our enemies while safeguarding civil liberties for all our people. The judicial branch has a strong oversight role in the application of the PATRIOT Act. Under the act, law enforcement officers need a Federal judge's permission to wiretap a foreign terrorist's phone or search his property. Congress also oversees our use of the PATRIOT Act. Attorney General Gonzales delivers regular reports on the PATRIOT Act to the House and the Senate.

The valuable protections of the PATRIOT Act will expire at the end of this month if Congress fails to act, but the terrorist threats will not expire on that schedule. In the war on terror, we cannot afford to be without this vital law for a single moment. So I urge Congress to approve the conference committee agreement promptly and reauthorize the PATRIOT Act.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:32 a.m. on December 9 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 9 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to the World Affairs Council and a Question-and-Answer Session in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

December 12, 2005

Thanks for the warm welcome. Thank you for the chance to come and speak to the Philadelphia World Affairs Council. This is an important organization that has, since 1949, has provided a forum for debate and discussion on important issues. I've come to discuss an issue that's really important, and that is victory in the war on terror.

And that war started on September the 11th, 2001, when our Nation awoke to a sudden attack. Like generations before us, we have accepted new responsibilities. We're confronting dangers with new resolve. We're taking the fight to those who attacked us and to those who share their murderous vision for future attacks. We will fight this war without wavering, and we'll prevail.

The war on terror will take many turns, and the enemy must be defeated on many—on every battlefield, from the streets of Western cities to the mountains of Afghanistan, to the tribal regions of Pakistan, to the islands of Southeast Asia, and to the Horn of Africa. Yet the terrorists have made it clear that Iraq is the central front in their war against humanity, so we must recognize Iraq is the central front in the war on terror.

Last month, my administration released a document called the "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq." And in recent weeks, I've been discussing our strategy with the American people. At the U.S. Naval Academy, I spoke about our efforts to defeat the terrorists and train Iraqi security forces so they can provide safety for their own citizens. Last week before the Council on Foreign Relations, I explained how we are working with Iraqi forces and Iraqi leaders to help Iraqis improve security and restore order, to rebuild cities taken from the enemy, and to help the National Government revitalize Iraq's infrastructure and economy.

Today I'm going to speak in depth about another vital element of our strategy: our efforts to help the Iraqi people build a lasting democracy in the heart of the Middle East. I can think of no better place to discuss the rise of a free Iraq than in the heart of Philadelphia, the city where America's democracy was born.

I want to thank the—Buntzie Churchill and Bill Sasso for letting me come. Thank you all for welcoming me. I got something to say—I'm looking forward to saying it here. I'm traveling with United States Senators; they're always quick to hop a ride on Air Force One—[*laughter*]—particularly when they don't have to reimburse the Government. [*Laughter*] But I'm proud to be a friend of Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum. They're fine, honorable Members of the United States Senate. Also pleased that Jim Gerlach and Mike Fitzpatrick and Joe Pitts of the United States Congress are with us. Thanks for serving. Thanks for being here.

A few blocks from here stands Independence Hall, where our Declaration of Independence was signed and our Constitution was debated. From the perspective of more than two centuries, the success of America's democratic experiment seems almost inevitable. At the time, however, that success didn't seem so obvious or assured.

The 8 years from the end of the Revolutionary War to the election of a constitutional government were a time of disorder and upheaval. There were uprisings, with mobs attacking courthouses and government buildings. There was a planned military coup that was defused only by the personal intervention of George Washington. In 1783, Congress was chased from this city by angry veterans demanding backpay, and they stayed on the run for 6 months. There were tensions between the mercantile North and the agricultural South that threatened to break apart our young Republic. And there were British loyalists who were opposed to independence and had to be reconciled with America's new democracy.

Our founders faced many difficult challenges. They made mistakes. They learned from their experiences, and they adjusted their approach. Our Nation's first effort at governing—a governing charter, the Articles of Confederation, failed. It took years of debate and compromise before we ratified our Constitution and inaugurated our first President. It took a 4-year civil war and a century of struggle after that before the promise of our Declaration was extended to all Americans.

It is important to keep this history in mind as we look at the progress of freedom and democracy in Iraq. No nation in history has made the transition to a free society without facing challenges, setbacks, and false starts. The past 2½ years have been a period of difficult struggle in Iraq, yet they've also been a time of great hope and achievement for the Iraqi people.

Just over 2½ years ago, Iraq was in the grip of a cruel dictator who had invaded his neighbors, sponsored terrorists, pursued and

used weapons of mass destruction, murdered his own people, and for more than a decade, defied the demands of the United Nations and the civilized world. Since then, the Iraqi people have assumed sovereignty over their country, held free elections, drafted a democratic Constitution, and approved that Constitution in a nationwide referendum. Three days from now, they go to polls for the third time this year and choose a new Government under the new Constitution.

It's a remarkable transformation for a country that has virtually no experience with democracy and which is struggling to overcome the legacy of one of the worst tyrannies the world has known. And Iraqis achieved all this while determined enemies use violence and destruction to stop the progress. There's still a lot of difficult work to be done in Iraq, but thanks to the courage of the Iraqi people, the year 2005 will be recorded as a turning point in the history of Iraq, the history of the Middle East, and the history of freedom.

As the Iraqi people struggle to build their democracy, adversaries continue their war on a free Iraq. The enemy in Iraq is a combination of rejectionists and Saddamists and terrorists. The rejectionists are ordinary Iraqis, mostly Sunni Arabs, who miss the privileged status they had under the regime of Saddam Hussein. They reject an Iraq in which they're no longer the dominant group. We believe that over time, most of this group will be persuaded to support a democratic Iraq led by a Federal Government that is strong enough to protect minority rights, and we're encouraged that many Sunnis plan to actively participate in this week's election.

The Saddamists are former regime loyalists who harbor dreams of returning to power, and they're trying to foment antidemocratic sentiment amongst the larger Sunni community. Yet they lack popular support, and over time, they can be marginalized and defeated by the people and security forces of a free Iraq.

The terrorists affiliated with or inspired by Al Qaida are the smallest but most lethal group. Many are foreigners coming to fight freedom's progress in Iraq. They are led by a brutal terrorist named Zarqawi, Al Qaida's chief of operations in Iraq, who has stated his allegiance to Usama bin Laden. The terrorists' stated objective is to drive U.S. and coalition forces out of Iraq and gain control of that country and then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Spain to Indonesia.

The terrorists in Iraq share the ideology of the terrorists who struck the United States on September the 11th. They share the ideology with those who blew up commuters in London and Madrid, murdered tourists in Bali, and killed workers in Riyadh and slaughtered guests at a wedding in Amman, Jordan. This is an enemy without conscience, and they cannot be appeased. If we were not fighting and destroying this enemy in Iraq, they would not be leading quiet lives as good citizens. They would be plotting and killing our citizens across the world and here at home. By fighting the terrorists in Iraq, we are confronting a direct threat to the American people, and we will accept nothing less than complete victory.

We are pursuing a comprehensive strategy in Iraq. Our goal is victory, and victory will be achieved when the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq's democracy, when the Iraqi security forces can provide for the safety of their own citizens, and when Iraq is not a safe haven for terrorists to plot new attacks against our Nation.

Our strategy in Iraq has three elements: On the economic side, we're helping the Iraqis restore their infrastructure, reform their economy, and build the prosperity that will give all Iraqis a stake in a free and peaceful Iraq. On the security side, coalition and Iraqi forces are on the offense against the enemy. We're working together to clear out areas controlled by the terrorists and Saddam loyalists and leaving Iraqi forces to hold territory taken from the enemy. And as we help Iraqis fight these enemies, we are working to build capable and effective Iraqi security forces so they can take the lead in the fight and eventually take responsibility for the safety and security of their citizens without major foreign assistance.

We're making steady progress. The Iraqi forces are becoming more and more capable.

They're taking more responsibility for more and more territory. We're transferring bases to their control so they can take the fight to the enemy. And that means American and coalition forces can concentrate on training Iraqis and hunting down the high-value targets like the terrorist Zarqawi and his associates.

Today I want to discuss the political element of our strategy: our efforts to help the Iraqis build inclusive democratic institutions that will protect the interests of all the Iraqi people. By helping Iraqis to build a democracy, we will win over those who doubted they had a place in a new Iraq and undermine the terrorists and Saddamists. By helping Iraqis to build a democracy, we will gain an ally in the war on terror. By helping Iraqis build a democracy, we will inspire reformers across the Middle East. And by helping Iraqis build a democracy, we will bring hope to a troubled region, and this will make the American people more secure.

From the outset, the political element of our strategy in Iraq has been guided by a clear principle: Democracy takes different forms in different cultures. Yet in all cultures, successful free societies are built on certain common foundations: rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, a free economy, and freedom to worship. Respect for the belief of others is the only way to build a society where compassion and tolerance prevail. Societies that lay these foundations not only survive but thrive. Societies that do not lay these foundations risk backsliding into tyranny.

When our coalition arrived in Iraq, we found a nation where almost none of these basic foundations existed. Decades of brutal rule by Saddam Hussein had destroyed the fabric of Iraqi civil society. Under Saddam, Iraq was a country where dissent was crushed. A centralized economy enriched a dictator instead of the people. Secret courts meted out repression instead of justice. And Shi'a Muslims and Kurds and other groups were brutally oppressed. And when Saddam Hussein's regime fled Baghdad, they left behind a country with few civic institutions in place to hold Iraq society together.

To fill the vacuum after liberation, we established the Coalition Provisional Authority. The CPA was ably led by Ambassador Jerry Bremer, and many fine officials from our Government volunteered to serve in the EPA—CPA. While things did not always go as planned, these men and women did a good job under extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances, helping to restore basic services, making sure food was distributed, and reestablishing Government ministries.

One of the CPA's most important tasks was bringing the Iraqi people into the decision-making process of their Government after decades of tyrannical rule. Three months after liberation, our coalition worked with the United Nations and Iraqi leaders to establish an Iraqi Governing Council. The Governing Council gave Iraqis a voice in their own affairs, but it was unelected. It was subordinate to the CPA, and therefore did not satisfy the hunger of Iraqis for self-government. Like free people everywhere, Iraqis wanted to be governed by leaders they had elected, not foreign officials.

So in the summer of 2003, we proposed a plan to transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi people. Under this plan, the CPA would continue to govern Iraq while appointed Iraqi leaders drafted a constitution, put that constitution before the people, and then held elections to choose a new Government. Only when that elected Government took office would the Iraqis regain their sovereignty.

This plan met with the disapproval of the Iraqis. They made it clear that they wanted a constitution that was written by elected leaders of a free Iraq, and they wanted sovereignty placed in Iraqi hands sooner. We listened, and we adjusted our approach. In November of 2003, we negotiated a new plan with the Governing Council, with steps for an accelerated transition to Iraqi self-government. Under this new plan, a Transitional Administrative Law was written by the Governing Council and adopted in March of 2004. This law guaranteed personal freedoms unprecedented in the Arab world and set forth four major milestones to guide Iraq's transition to a constitutional democracy.

The first milestone was the transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi Interim Government by the end of June 2004. The second was for Iraqis to hold free elections to choose a Transitional Government by January of 2005. The

third was for Iraqis to adopt a democratic constitution, which would be drafted no later than August 2005 and put before the Iraqi people in a nationwide referendum no later than October. And the fourth was for Iraqis to choose a Government under that democratic Constitution, with elections held December of 2005.

The first milestone was met when our coalition handed over sovereignty to the Iraqi leaders on June 28th, 2004, 2 days ahead of schedule. In January 2005, Iraqis met the second milestone when they went to the polls and chose their leaders in free elections. Almost 8½ million Iraqis defied the car bombers and assassins to cast their ballots, and the world watched in awe as jubilant Iraqis danced in the street and held ink-stained fingers and celebrated their freedom.

The January elections were a watershed event for Iraq and the Middle East, yet they were not without flaws. One problem was the failure of the vast majority of Sunni Arabs to vote. When Sunnis saw a new 275-member parliament taking power in which they had only 16 seats, many realized that their failure to participate in the democrat process had hurt their chances and hurt their groups—it hurt their constituencies. And Shi'a and Kurdish leaders who had won power at the polls saw that for a free and unified Iraq to succeed, they needed Sunni Arabs to be part of the Government. We encouraged Iraq's leaders to reach out to Sunni leaders and bring them into the governing process. When the Transitional Government was seated in the spring of this year, Sunni Arabs filled important posts, including a Vice President, a Minister of Defense, and the Speaker of the National Assembly.

The new Government's main political challenge—next political challenge was to meet the third milestone, which was adopting a democratic constitution. Again, Iraq's leaders reached out to Sunni Arabs who had boycotted the elections and included them in the drafting process. Fifteen Sunni Arab negotiators and several Sunni Arab advisers joined the work of the constitutional drafting committee. After much tough debate, representatives of Iraq's diverse communities drafted a bold Constitution that guarantees the rule of law, freedom of assembly, property rights, freedom of speech and the press, women's rights, and the right to vote. As one Arab scholar put it, the Iraqi constitution marks "the dawn of a new age in Arab life."

The document that initially emerged from the committee did not unify Iraqis, and many Sunnis on the constitutional committee did not support the draft. Yet Iraq's leaders continued working to gain Sunni support. And thanks to last-minute changes—including a new procedure for considering amendments to the constitution next year—a deal was struck 4 days before the Iraqis went to the polls. The revised Constitution was endorsed by Iraq's largest Sunni party. It was approved in referendum that attracted over a million more voters than in the January elections. Many Sunnis voted against the Constitution, but Sunnis voted in large numbers for the first time. They joined the political process, and by doing so, they reject the violence of the Saddamists and rejectionists. Through hard work and compromise, Iraqis adopted the most progressive democratic Constitution in the Arab world.

On Thursday, Iraqis will meet their fourth milestone. And when they do go to the polls and choose a new Government under the new Constitution, it will be a remarkable event in the Arab world. Despite terrorist violence, the country is buzzing with signs and sounds of democracy in action. The streets of Baghdad and Najaf and Mosul and other cities are full of signs and posters. The television and radio airwaves are thick with political ads and commentary. Hundreds of parties and coalitions have registered for this week's elections, and they're campaigning vigorously. Candidates are holding rallies and laying out their agendas and asking for the vote.

Our troops see this young democracy up close. First Lieutenant Frank Shriley of Rock Hall, Maryland, says, "It's a cool thing riding around Baghdad and seeing the posters. It reminds me of being home during election time. After so many years of being told what to do, having a real vote is different."

Unlike the January elections, many Sunnis are campaigning vigorously for office this time around. Many Sunni parties that opposed the Constitution have registered to compete in this week's vote. Two major

Sunni coalitions have formed, and other Sunni leaders have joined national coalitions that cross religious, ethnic, and sectarian boundaries. As one Sunni politician put it, this election "is a vote for Iraq. We want a national Iraq, not a sectarian one."

To encourage broader participation by all Iraqi communities, the National Assembly made important changes in Iraq's electoral laws that will increase Sunni representation in the new assembly. In the January elections, Iraq was one giant electoral district, so seats in the transitional assembly simply reflected turnout. Because few Sunnis voted, their communities were left with little representation. Now Iraq has a new electoral system, where seats in the new Council of Representatives will be allocated by province and population—much like our own House of Representatives. This new system is encouraging more Sunnis to join in the democratic process because it ensures that Sunnis will be well represented, even if the terrorists and Saddamists try to intimidate voters in the provinces where most Sunnis live.

More Sunnis are involved because they see Iraqi democracy succeeding. They have learned a lesson of democracy: They must participate to have a voice in their nation's affairs. A leading Sunni who had boycotted the January vote put it this way, "The Sunnis are now ready to participate." A Sunni sheik explains why Sunnis must join the process: "In order not to be marginalized, we need power in the National Assembly." As more Sunnis join the political process, the Saddamists and remaining rejectionists will be marginalized. As more Sunnis join the political process, they will protect the interests of their community.

Like the Shi'a and Kurds, who face daily attacks from the terrorists and Saddamists, many Sunnis who join the political process are being targeted by the enemies of a free Iraq. The Iraqi Islamic Party—a Sunni party that boycotted the January vote and now supports elections—has seen its offices bombed. And a party leader reports that at least 10 members have been killed since the party announced it would field candidates in Thursday's elections. Recently, a top Sunni electoral official visited the Sunni stronghold of Baquba. He went to encourage local leaders to participate in the elections. During his visit, a roadside bomb went off. It rattled his convoy, but it didn't stop it. He says this about the attempt on his life: "The bomb is nothing compared to what we're doing. What we're doing is bigger than the bomb."

By pressing forward and meeting their milestones, the Iraqi people have built momentum for freedom and democracy. They've encouraged those outside the process to come in. At every stage, there was enormous pressure to let the deadlines slide, with skeptics and pessimists declaring that Iraqis were not ready for self-government. At every stage, Iraqis proved the skeptics and pessimists wrong. At every stage, Iraqis have exposed the errors of those in our country and across the world who question the universal appeal of liberty. By meeting their milestones, Iraqis are defeating a brutal enemy, rejecting a murderous ideology, and choosing freedom over terror.

This week, elections won't be perfect, and a successful vote is not the end of the process. Iraqis still have more difficult work ahead, and our coalition and the new Iraqi Government will face many challenges, including in four critical errors—areas: ensuring Iraqi security, forming an inclusive Iraqi Government, encouraging Iraqi reconciliation, and maintaining Iraqi democracy in a tough neighborhood.

The first key challenge is security. As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the terrorists and Saddamists will continue to use violence. They will try to break our will and intimidate the Iraqi people and their leaders. These enemies aren't going to give up because of a successful election. They understand what is at stake in Iraq. They know that as democracy takes root in that country, their hateful ideology will suffer a devastating blow, and the Middle East will have a clear example of freedom and prosperity and hope.

So our coalition will continue to hunt down the terrorists and Saddamists. We'll continue training Iraqi security forces to take the lead in the fight and defend their new democracy. As the Iraqi security forces stand up, coalition forces can stand down. And when victory is achieved, our troops will then return home with the honor they have earned.

The second key challenge is forming an inclusive government that protects the interests of all Iraqis and encourages more in the rejectionist camp to abandon violence and embrace politics. Early next year, Iraq's new parliament will come to Baghdad and select a Prime Minister and a presidency council and a cabinet of ministers. Two-thirds of the new parliament must agree on the top leadership posts, and this will demand negotiation and compromise. It will require patience by America and our coalition allies. This new government will face many tough decisions on issues such as security and reconstruction and economic reform. Iraqi leaders will also have to review and possibly amend the Constitution and ensure that this historic document earns the broad support of all Iraqi communities. By taking these steps, Iraqi leaders will build a strong and lasting democracy. This is an important step in helping to defeat the terrorists and the Saddamists.

The third key challenge is establishing rule of law and the culture of reconciliation. Iraqis still have to overcome longstanding ethnic and religious tensions and the legacy of three decades of dictatorship. During the regime of Saddam Hussein, Shi'a, Kurds, and other groups were brutally oppressed, and for some, there is now a temptation to take justice into their own hands. Recently, U.S. and Iraqi troops have discovered prisons in Iraq where mostly Sunni men were held, some of whom have appeared to have been beaten and tortured. This conduct is unacceptable, and the Prime Minister and other Iraqi officials have condemned these abuses. An investigation has been launched, and we support these efforts. Those who committed these crimes must be held to account.

We will continue helping Iraqis build an impartial system of justice that protects all of Iraq's citizens. Millions of Iraqis are seeing their independent judiciary in action, as their former dictator, Saddam Hussein, is put on trial in Baghdad. The man who once struck fear in the hearts of Iraqis has heard his victims recount the acts of torture and murder that he ordered. One Iraqi watching the proceedings said: "We all feel happiness about this fair trial." Slowly but surely, with the help of our coalition, Iraqis are replacing the rule of a tyrant with the rule of law and ensuring equal justice for all their citizens.

Oh, I know some fear the possibility that Iraq could break apart and fall into a civil war. I don't believe these fears are justified. They're not justified so long as we do not abandon the Iraqi people in their hour of need. Encouraging reconciliation and human rights in a society scarred by decades of arbitrary violence and sectarian division is not going to be easy, and it's not going to happen overnight. Yet the Iraqi Government has a process in place to resolve even the most difficult issues through negotiate, debate, and compromise. And the United States, along with the United Nations and the Arab League and other international partners, will support these efforts to help resolve these issues. And as Iraqis continue to develop the habits of liberty, they will gain confidence in the future and ensure that Iraqi nationalism trumps Iraqi sectarianism.

A fourth key challenge is for the Iraqis to maintain their newfound freedoms in a tough neighborhood. Iraq's neighbor to the east, Iran, is actively working to undermine a free Iraq. Iran doesn't want democracy in Iraq to succeed, because a free Iraq threatens the legitimacy of Iran's oppressive theocracy. Iraq's neighbor to the west, Syria, is permitting terrorists to use that territory to cross into Iraq. The vast majority of Iraqis do not want to live under an Iranian-style theocracy, and they don't want Syria to allow the transit of bombers and killers into Iraq. And the United States of America will stand with the Iraqi people against the threats from these neighbors.

We'll continue to encourage greater support from the Arab world and the broader international community. Many Arab States have kept the new Iraq at arm's distance. Yet as more Arab States are beginning to recognize that a free Iraq is here to stay, they're starting to give Iraq's new Government more support. Recently, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan have welcomed the Iraqi Prime Minister on official visits. Last month, the Arab League hosted a meeting in Cairo to promote national reconciliation among Iraqis, and another such meeting is planned for next year in Baghdad.

These are important steps, and Iraq's neighbors need to do more. Arab leaders are beginning to recognize that the choice in Iraq is between democracy and terrorism, and there is no middle ground. The success of Iraqi democracy is in their vital interests because if the terrorists prevail in Iraq, they will then target other Arab nations.

International support for Iraq's democracy is growing as well. Other nations have pledged more than $13 billion in assistance to Iraq, and we call on them, those who have pledged assistance, to make good on their commitments. The World Bank recently approved its first loan to Iraq in over 30 years, lending the Iraqi Government $100 million to improve the Iraqi school system. The United Nations is playing a vital role in Iraq. They assisted in last January's elections and the negotiations for the Constitution and in the recent constitutional referendum. And at the request of the Iraqi Government, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved a resolution extending the mandate of the multinational force in Iraq through 2006. Earlier this year, the European Union cohosted a conference for more than 80 countries and international organizations, so they can better coordinate their efforts to help Iraqis rebuild their nation. Whatever differences there were over the decision to liberate Iraq, all free nations now share a common interest, building an Iraq that will fight terror and be a source of stability and freedom in a troubled region of the world.

The challenges ahead are complex and difficult, yet Iraqis are determined to overcome them and build a free nation. And they require our support. Millions of Iraqis will put their lives on the line this Thursday in the name of liberty and democracy. And 160,000 of America's finest are putting their lives on the line so Iraqis can succeed. The American and Iraqi people share the same interests and the same enemies, and by helping democracy succeed in Iraq, we bring greater security to our citizens here at home.

The terrorists know that democracy is their enemy, and they will continue fighting freedom's progress with all the hateful determination they can muster. Yet the Iraqi people are stepping forward to claim their liberty, and they will have it. When the new Iraqi Government takes office next year, Iraqis will have the only constitutional democracy in the Arab world, and Americans will have a partner for peace and moderation in the Middle East.

People across the broader Middle East are drawing and will continue to draw inspiration from Iraq's progress, and the terrorists' powerful myth is being destroyed. In a 1998 *fatwa*, Usama bin Laden argued that the suffering of the Iraqi people was justification for his declaration of war on America. Now bin Laden and Al Qaida are the direct cause of the Iraqi people's suffering. As more Muslims across the world see this, they're turning against the terrorists. As the hope of liberty spreads in the Middle East, the terrorists will lose their sponsors, lose their recruits, and lose the sanctuaries they need to plan new attacks.

A free Iraq is not going to be a quiet Iraq. It will be a nation full of passionate debate and vigorous political activity. It will be a nation that continues to face some level of violence. Yet Iraqis are showing they have the patience and the courage to make democracy work, and Americans have the patience and courage to help them succeed.

We've done this kind of work before. We must have confidence in our cause. In World War II, free nations defeated fascism and helped our former adversaries, Germany and Japan, build strong democracies, and today, these nations are allies in securing the peace. In the cold war, free nations defeated communism and helped our former Warsaw Pact adversaries become strong democracies, and today, nations of Central and Eastern Europe are allies in the war on terror.

Today, in the Middle East, freedom is once again contending with a totalitarian ideology that seeks to sow anger and hatred and despair. And like fascism and communism before, the hateful ideologies that use terror will be defeated by the unstoppable power of freedom.

And the advance of freedom in the Middle East requires freedom in Iraq. By helping Iraqis build a lasting democracy, we will spread the hope of liberty across a troubled region; we'll gain new allies in the cause of freedom. By helping Iraqis build a strong democracy, we're adding to our own security,

and like a generation before us, we're laying the foundation of peace for generations to come.

Not far from here, where we gather today, is a symbol of freedom familiar to all Americans, the Liberty Bell. When the Declaration of Independence was first read in public, the Liberty Bell was sounded in celebration, and a witness said, "It rang as if it meant something." Today, the call of liberty is being heard in Baghdad and Basra and other Iraqi cities, and its sound is echoing across the broader Middle East. From Damascus to Tehran, people hear it, and they know it means something. It means that the days of tyranny and terror are ending, and a new day of hope and freedom is dawning.

Thank you for letting me come.

I got a little extra time on my hands, so I thought I might answer some questions. [*Laughter*] Yes, ma'am.

Casualties in Iraq

Q. Since the inception of the Iraqi war, I'd like to know the approximate total of Iraqis who have been killed, and by Iraqis I include civilians, military, police, insurgents, translators.

The President. How many Iraqi citizens have died in this war? I would say 30,000, more or less, have died as a result of the initial incursion and the ongoing violence against Iraqis. We've lost about 2,140 of our own troops in Iraq.

Yes.

Progress in Iraq/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, thank you [*inaudible*]——

The President. I'll repeat the question. If I don't like it, I'll make it up. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you for coming to the city where liberty was born. Central to your policy in Iraq is the role of the Iraqis. We hear wildly different tales about how the Iraqis are doing in their own area of defense. Could you give us your perspective on how they're doing, how well their military training is going, what you feel their capability is to do the task that you want them to do, to clear up some of the wildly different impressions that we hear about?

The President. No, I appreciate that. When we first began training—our strategy all along has been to train Iraqis so they can take the fight and succeed in what we're trying to do, which is a democracy, a democracy which will serve as an example for others, a democracy which will join us in the fight on terror, a democracy which will help us prevent other countries from becoming safe haven for terrorists who still want to kill us. That's—that was our objective. And all along we wanted the Iraqis to be able to do—take the fight.

When we first got going, we said, "We'll train an army that will be able to deal with external threats and a civil defense corps that will be able to deal with internal threats." And the problem with that strategy was that the internal threats were a heck of a lot more severe than the external threats, and the army—the civilian corps we trained was not properly trained and equipped.

So we adjusted. We trained everybody for the army and—recognizing that the army is going to have to not only take the fight to the enemy—or the new army take the fight to the enemy, but when we clear enemies out of places like Mosul, that there has to be an Iraqi Army presence to earn the confidence of the people.

When the war first got going, we'd move into Mosul, clear out an enemy, leave, and the enemy would return. And so the Iraqi people had no confidence in the future. They were—they didn't dare, for example, tell coalition forces or Iraqi forces the names of those who were killing their citizens because they didn't have the confidence there would be a force to protect them. And so we began the process of clearing out and holding with more and more trained Iraqi forces. And now the Iraqi forces are helping to rebuild these cities. Democracy is only going to succeed if people say, "My life is going to be better." I mean, no different a campaign here—you know, "Vote for me, I want to help improve your life."

And that's what—and so the strategy has been to—let me say, we adjusted our strategy, and there's about 200,000-plus capable units. Now, not all of them are ready to take the fight to the enemy. In order to have a division or a battalion ready to fight, you've

got to be able to communicate; you've got to be able to move; you've got to be able to have logistical supplies. But more and more of the Iraqis are in the lead in the fight, and more and more Iraqis are being trained so they can hold the positions once we clear.

We are not completed—we haven't completed the job of training the Iraqis. But what is beginning to happen is, is that you're beginning to see our troops step back from the fight. I don't know if you realize, we had some 90 bases in Iraq, and I think we've closed about 40—or turned over—closed or turned over 40 of those bases to the Iraqis. In other words, our profile is beginning to move back as the Iraqis get trained up, so that we can continue working on training and also help them chase down Zarqawi and his buddies. They're—these guys are very tough, and they're coldblooded killers.

The enemy has got one weapon. See, they can't defeat us militarily. What they can do is, they can and will kill innocent people in the hopes of trying to get the United States of America to leave the battlefield early. The only way we can lose is if we lose our nerve. And they know that. And they've stated that publicly.

And—but the training is going much better than it was in the first year. The—and we've just got more to do, and we need to do it, because a free Iraq, again, will be an important ally in this war. This is a global struggle we're in. It's—this isn't an enemy that is isolated, kind of an angry group of people. These are people that have got a totalitarian vision. They've got designs and ambitions. They've laid out their strategy, and they explained their tactics. And we've got to listen to them and take them seriously. And part of their tactics is to create vacuums so that their hateful ideology flows in.

They—listen, the attack of September the 11th was a part of a broad strategy to get us to retreat from the world. And that—people say, "Well, he's making it up, that they want to establish a totalitarian empire that stretches from Spain to Indonesia." I'm telling you what they said, not me. This is what Zawahiri has said—the number-two man in Al Qaida. It seems like to me, we need to take it seriously when the enemy says something.

Kind of getting off subject here, but—yes, sir.

America's Influence Abroad

Q. Mr. President, I'm a proud U.S. citizen, naturalized, and card-carrying Republican. I voted for you both times. I grew up in India, a Sunni. In fact, the President of the Republic of India is a Sunni. And I think it's a great testimony to this nation that was—the vision of which was laid out within a few—half a mile of here, that somebody like me can be in a position of leadership and be successfully engaged in contributing to the current and future economic well-being of this Nation.

Mr. President, I support your efforts in Iraq. But I'd like to know, what are we going to do in the broader battle in creating a favorable image and reaching out to people across the world, so that people like me all over the world can be passionate supporters of the United States?

The President. Yes, I appreciate that. First of all, success will help the image of the United States. Look, I recognize we got an image issue, particularly when you got television stations, Arabic television stations that are constantly just pounding America, creating—saying, "America is fighting Islam; Americans can't stand Muslims; this is a war against a religion." And we've got to, obviously, do a better job of reminding people that ours is not a nation that rejects religion; ours is a nation that accepts people of all faith and that the great strength of America is the capacity for people to worship freely.

It's difficult. I mean, their propaganda machine is pretty darn intense. And so we're constantly sending out messages; we're constantly trying to reassure people, but we're also acting. And that's what's important for our citizens to realize. Our position in the world is such that I don't think we can retreat. I think we have a duty and an obligation to use our vast influence to help.

I cite two examples of where I think it will make a big—of where American image in the Muslim world will be improved. One is the tsunami. The tsunamis hit; it was the United States military, through the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, that provided the logistical organization necessary to get the—to save a lot of lives. We moved. A lot of people kind of sat

around and discussed—not us. We saw a problem, and we moved.

Same in Pakistan. The earthquake in Pakistan is devastating. The United States of America was first on the scene. We got a lot of kids flying choppers all around that country providing help and aid.

And so I guess what I'm saying to you is, is that a proper use of influence that helps improve people's lives is the best way to affect—to change the image of our country and to defeat the propaganda. Having said all that, a lot of people want to come to America. The image may be bad, but give them a chance; all you who want to come to America, raise your hand—there's a lot wanting to come. That's another issue, which is immigration reform.

But thank you for that. One thing America must never do is lose our capacity to take people from all walks of life and help them become an American first and foremost. That's what distinguishes us from other cultures and other nations. You can come from wherever you are, and I can come from Texas, and we both share the same deal—we're Americans first and foremost. I happen to be a Methodist. You're a Sunni. [*Laughter*]

Yes, ma'am.

Lessons of September 11, 2001

Q. Mr. President, I would like to know why it is that you and others in your administration keep linking 9/11 to the invasion of Iraq when no respected journalist or Middle Eastern expert confirmed that such a link existed.

The President. What did she—I missed the question. Sorry. I didn't—I beg your pardon; I didn't hear you—seriously.

Q. I would like to know why you and others in your administration invoke 9/11 as justification for the invasion of Iraq——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——when no respected journalists or other Middle Eastern experts confirm that such a link existed.

The President. I appreciate that. Nine/eleven changed my look on foreign policy. I mean, it said that oceans no longer protect us, that we can't take threats for granted, that if we see a threat, we've got to deal with it. It doesn't have to be militarily, necessarily, but we got to deal with it. We can't just hope for the best anymore.

And so the first decision I made, as you know, was to deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan, because they were harboring terrorists. This is where the terrorists planned and plotted. And the second decision—which was a very difficult decision for me, by the way, and it's one that I didn't take lightly—was that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He is a declared enemy of the United States. He had used weapons of mass destruction. The entire world thought he had weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations had declared in more than 10—I can't remember the exact number of resolutions—that "Disclose or disarm, or face serious consequences." I mean, there was a serious international effort to say to Saddam Hussein, "You're a threat." And the 9/11 attacks extenuated that threat, as far as I was concerned.

And so we gave Saddam Hussein the chance to disclose or disarm, and he refused. And I made a tough decision. And knowing what I know today, I'd make the decision again. Removing Saddam Hussein makes this world a better place and America a safer country.

Last question. I've actually got something to do. [*Laughter*] You're paying me all this money; I'd better get back to work. [*Laughter*]

Hold on a second. Got a guy here.

Homeland Security/Spread of Democracy

Q. Mr. President, I'm from the Phelps School. I'm a supporter of yours.

The President. Oops, that kind of prejudices your question. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, I have a question for you. Do you feel that since invading Iraq, the threat of terrorism on U.S. soil has been reduced significantly?

The President. I think it's been reduced. I don't think we're safe. What will really give me confidence to say that we're safe is when I can tell the American people, "We've got the capacity to know exactly where the enemy is moving." This is a different kind of war. These people hide. They're patient, and they're sophisticated. And that's why our intelligence gathering is really important.

You know, occasionally they come out and want to fight like they're doing in Iraq. This guy, Zarqawi, has sworn his allegiance to bin Laden. He has—he's declared his intentions. But there's a lot of them who lurk and hide. And what we've really got to do is continue to hone our intelligence gathering to make sure that we can, as best as possible, understand their intents and watch their movements. And this requires international cooperation.

I will tell you the international cooperation, when it comes to sharing intelligence, is good. It requires us being able to cut off their money. They move money around. They can't—it turns out, they can't launch attacks without money. And so we're doing the best we can to work with others to find out where their money is moving. And that way, it will be a—give us a chance to find out where they are.

The long run in this war is going to require a change of governments in parts of the world. It's—and this is why it's very important for me to continue to remind the American people about what's taking place in history. One of my favorite stories is to tell people about—or go-bys—is to tell people about my relationship with Koizumi, Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. He's an interesting guy. He likes Elvis, for example, which is—[*laughter*]—interesting—[*laughter*]. He's a friend. He's also a friend when it comes to peace. He's a reliable, steady ally when it comes to dealing with North Korea. North Korea is a country that has declared boldly they've got nuclear weapons; they counterfeit our money; and they're starving their people to death. And it's good to have an ally that understands human rights and the condition of the human being are vital for this world and world peace.

And yet, 60 years ago, my dad fought against the Japanese—many of your relatives did as well. They were the sworn enemy of the United States. I find it amazing—I don't know if you find it amazing—I find it amazing that I sit down with this guy, strategizing about how to make the world a more peaceful place, when my dad and others fought him.

And so what happened? Now, 60 years seems like a long time, particularly if you're 59 like me. [*Laughter*] But it's not all that long in history, when you think about it. And what happened was, a Japanese-style democracy emerged. Democracies yield the peace. That's what history has shown us. That's what I tried to say in my peroration in this speech. That's a long word. I'm doing it for the Senator, Specter, here. [*Laughter*] Just showing off, Senator. Just trying to look good in front of the folks here at home. [*Laughter*] But it's an accurate portrayal of what has happened. Democracies yield the peace.

So the fundamental question is, do we have the confidence and universal values to help change a troubled part of the world? If you're a supporter of Israel, I would strongly urge you to help other countries become democracies. Israel's long-term survival depends upon the spread of democracy in the Middle East. I recognize people have—I fully recognize that some say it's impossible, that maybe only a certain kind of people can be—can accept democracy. I just—I reject that. I don't agree with that. I believe democracy—the desire to be free is universal. That's what I believe. And if you believe that, then you've got to act on it. That doesn't mean militarily. But that means using the influence of the United States to work with others to help—to help freedom spread.

And that's what you're seeing in Iraq. And it's hard. It's hard for a country that has come from dictatorship 2½ years ago to become a democracy. It is hard work. There's a lot of resentment and anger and bitterness. But I believe it's going to happen. And the only way it won't happen is if we leave, if we lose our nerve, if we allow the terrorists to achieve their objective. The only way we can lose this is for us to say to the terrorists, "Maybe you aren't dangerous, after all—you know, by leaving, maybe that you'll become hospitable, you know, decent citizens of the world." That's not reality. And my job as the President is to see the world the way it is, not the way we hope it is.

I, again, want to thank you for giving me the chance to come and deliver this speech. I'm grateful for your interest. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. at the Park Hyatt Philadelphia. In his remarks, he referred to Buntzie Churchill, president, and William R. Sasso, vice-chairman, board of directors, World Affairs Council of Philadelphia; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari, Deputy President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr, Minister of Defense Sadun al-Dulaymi, and Speaker of the Transistional National Assembly Hajim al-Hassani of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Gebran Tueni

December 12, 2005

The murder of Gebran Tueni, a Lebanese patriot, Member of Parliament, and publisher of one of Lebanon's leading newspapers, is yet another act of violence aimed at subjugating Lebanon to Syrian domination and silencing the Lebanese press. Mr. Tueni was a well-known opponent of Syrian interference in Lebanon. Like so many other brave Lebanese, Mr. Tueni knew that his courageous stand on behalf of Lebanon's independence and freedom carried great risk. Despite these dangers to his life, he returned to Lebanon a day before his assassination to continue his efforts to promote freedom and democracy in his country.

I strongly condemn the savage attack on Mr. Tueni and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the other innocent victims killed in Lebanon. Syria must comply with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1595, and 1636 and end its interference in Lebanon once and for all.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Medicare in Springfield, Virginia

December 13, 2005

Dr. Mark McClellan and I have just heard from folks who have been analyzing and/or helping people analyze the current Medicare drug benefit and current Medicare—modernized Medicare program.

Awhile ago, I worked with the Congress to modernize and strengthen Medicare for our seniors. And the reason we did, because if the Government commits to health care for our seniors, it ought to be a program that does the following things: One, provide modern medicine; and two, give seniors a variety of options from which to match their needs to that which is available.

We fully recognize that for some seniors, that this is a daunting task. When you give people choice and options, it is—it can be a situation where people say, "I don't really—this is something I may not want to do." And so I want to assure the seniors the following things: One, the Medicare—the new Medicare plan is voluntary; it's optional; two, that there are people around who are willing to help explain the program for you and to you. There's—when you have choices to make, there's going to be some—you do have choices to make—and somebody will be able to sit down with you and explain why this program is good.

For example, Eloise is talking about the fact that she's spending a lot on prescription drugs, and under the new Medicare plan, she's able to choose a program that will substantially reduce the cost of her prescription drugs. Low-income seniors will get substantial help. People will be able to match a program to their specific needs.

And what we want to assure seniors around the country is that there is help. You can call 1-800-Medicare. You can get on the Internet with medicare.gov. Ask your son or daughter; ask people in your church; ask people in AARP; ask people in your community center to help you look at what's available for you. It's a good deal. It's a good deal for our seniors.

And so one of the reasons we have come today is to encourage people to see what is available in the new law. Enrollment began in mid-November. The program will begin in January of this year. We urge you to look at the options available to you and sign up by May of next year.

This is Government that has recognized it has a responsibility to help our seniors. And the bill I was fortunate enough to sign into law does just that.

Again, I want to thank you all for joining us. I want to thank you for your hard work, Charlotte. Ellen DeMucci is a pharmacist.

One of the interesting groups that are reaching out to our seniors are those who are behind the counter. Ellen and her fellow pharmacists interface with seniors on a daily basis. They know the needs of seniors. They, in many cases, have analyzed what's available for our seniors. They're available to help seniors fill out the forms. She has worked with Eloise.

Again, I urge our fellow citizens to help our seniors realize what's available in this wonderful program. And I finally want to thank Senator Allen and Congressman Davis for joining us as well. They're interested in this program. They're interested in the people of Virginia, and they want to make sure the seniors of Virginia get all the options available for them to choose from.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. at the Greenspring Village Retirement Community.

Remarks to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

December 14, 2005

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here with the men and women of the Wilson Center. According to your mission statement, the Center was created to bring together two groups, political leaders and scholars. I see some of the political leaders who are here, and I presume you've invited me to uphold the scholars' end. [*Laughter*]

I've come to discuss an issue of vital importance to the American people, and that is victory in the war on terror. On September the 11th, 2001, our Nation awoke to a sudden attack, and we accepted new responsibilities. We are confronting new dangers with firm resolve. We're hunting down the terrorists and their supporters. We will fight this war without wavering, and we will prevail.

In the war on terror, Iraq is now the central front. And over the last few weeks, I've been discussing our political, economic, and military strategy for victory in that country. An historic election will take place tomorrow in Iraq. And as millions of Iraqis prepare to cast their ballots, I want to talk today about why we went into Iraq, why we stayed in Iraq, and why we cannot and will not leave Iraq until victory is achieved.

I want to thank Ambassador Gildenhorn for inviting me and introducing me. And I want to thank the members of the Board of Trustees who are here. I appreciate Lee Hamilton, who serves our Nation so well in so many different capacities. Thank you for being the president and director of the Woodrow Wilson Center.

I'm proud to be traveling today with members of my Cabinet: Secretary of State Condi Rice; Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld; and Secretary of Homeland Security Mike Chertoff. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate the Members of the Congress who are here. Thanks for taking time to come. I want to thank the members of the diplomatic corps that have joined us today. And thank you all for being here as well.

We are living through a watershed moment in the story of freedom. Most of the focus now is on this week's elections, and rightly so. Iraqis will go to the polls to choose a government that will be the only constitutional democracy in the Arab world. Yet we need to remember that these elections are also a vital part of a broader strategy for protecting the American people against the threat of terrorism.

We saw the future the terrorists intend for our Nation on that fateful morning of September the 11th, 2001. That day we learned that vast oceans and friendly neighbors are no longer enough to protect us. September the 11th changed our country. It changed the policy of our Government. We adopted a new strategy to protect the American people: We would hunt down the terrorists wherever they hide; we would make no distinction between the terrorists and those who harbor them; and we would advance our security at home by advancing freedom in the Middle East.

September the 11th also changed the way I viewed threats like Saddam Hussein. We saw the destruction terrorists could cause with airplanes loaded with jet fuel, and we imagined the destruction they could cause with even more powerful weapons. At the time, the leaders of both political parties recognized this new reality: We cannot allow the

world's most dangerous men to get their hands on the world's most dangerous weapons. In an age of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.

We removed Saddam Hussein from power because he was a threat to our security. He had pursued and used weapons of mass destruction. He sponsored terrorists. He ordered his military to shoot at American and British pilots patrolling the no-fly zones. He invaded his neighbors. He fought a war against the United States and a broad coalition. He had declared that the United States of America was his enemy.

Over the course of a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply with more than a dozen United Nations resolutions, including demands that he respect the rights of the Iraqi people, disclose his weapons, and abide by the terms of a 1991 cease-fire. He deceived international inspectors, and he denied them the unconditional access they needed to do their jobs. When a unanimous Security Council gave him one final chance to disclose and disarm, or face serious consequences, he refused to comply with that final opportunity. At any point along the way, Saddam Hussein could have avoided war by complying with the just demands of the international community. The United States did not choose war—the choice was Saddam Hussein's.

When we made the decision to go into Iraq, many intelligence agencies around the world judged that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. This judgment was shared by the intelligence agencies of governments who did not support my decision to remove Saddam. And it is true that much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong. As President, I'm responsible for the decision to go into Iraq, and I'm also responsible for fixing what went wrong by reforming our intelligence capabilities. And we're doing just that. At the same time, we must remember that an investigation after the war by chief weapons inspector Charles Duelfer found that Saddam was using the U.N. Oil-For-Food Programme to influence countries and companies in an effort to undermine sanctions, with the intent of restarting his weapons programs once the sanctions collapsed and the world looked the other way.

Given Saddam's history and the lessons of September the 11th, my decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision. Saddam was a threat, and the American people and the world is better off because he is no longer in power. We are in Iraq today because our goal has always been more than the removal of a brutal dictator; it is to leave a free and democratic Iraq in its place.

As I stated in a speech in the lead-up to the war, a liberated Iraq could show the power of freedom to transform the Middle East by bringing hope and progress to the lives of millions. So we're helping the Iraqi people build a lasting democracy that is peaceful and prosperous and an example for the broader Middle East. The terrorists understand this, and that is why they have now made Iraq the central front in the war on terror.

The enemy of freedom in Iraq is a combination of rejectionists and Saddamists and terrorists. The rejectionists are ordinary Iraqis, mostly Sunni Arabs, who miss the privileged status they had under the regime of Saddam Hussein. We believe that, over time, most of this group will be persuaded to support the democratic Iraq led by a Federal Government that is strong enough to protect minority rights. We're encouraged by the indications that many Sunnis intend to participate in tomorrow's elections.

The Saddamists are former regime loyalists who harbor dreams of returning to power, and they're trying to foment anti-democratic sentiment amongst the larger Sunni community. Yet they lack popular support, and over time, they can be marginalized and defeated by the security forces of a free Iraq.

The terrorists affiliated with or inspired by Al Qaida are the smallest but most lethal group. They are led by a brutal terrorist named Zarqawi. He's Al Qaida's chief operations officer in Iraq. He has stated his allegiance to Usama bin Laden. The terrorists have ambitions; they have goals. They want to stop the advance of freedom in Iraq. They want to make Iraq what Afghanistan was under the Taliban, a safe haven from which they can plot attacks against our people.

There is no limit to their brutality. They kill the innocent to achieve their aims. This is an enemy without conscience. And against such enemy, there is only one effective response: We will never back down; we will never give in; and we will never accept anything less than complete victory.

Last month, my administration released a document called the "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq." In recent weeks, I've been discussing our strategy with the American people. At the U.S. Naval Academy, I spoke about how we changed our approach to training Iraqi security forces, so they can take the fight to the enemy and eventually take responsibility for the security of their citizens without major foreign assistance. Iraqi forces are becoming more and more capable.

This time last year, there was only a handful of Iraqi battalions ready for combat. Now there are more than 125 Iraqi army and police combat battalions in the fight against the terrorists. Of these, more than 70 Iraqi battalions are fighting side by side with coalition forces, and more than 50 others are taking the lead in the fight. So far, in December, there have been more than 900 combat operations in Iraq at the company level or above, and 75 percent of these involved Iraqi security forces either in the lead or fighting side by side with our coalition. As these Iraqi forces grow in size and strength, American and coalition forces can concentrate on training Iraqis and hunting down high-value targets like Zarqawi and his associates.

Last week before the Council on Foreign Relations, I explained how we changed our approach to help Iraqis hold and rebuild cities taken from the enemy and how to help them revitalize Iraq's infrastructure and economy. Today, many cities like Mosul and Najaf are coming back to life, and Iraq's economy is growing. Thousands of new businesses have opened in Iraq, personal income is up, and according to one survey, 7 in 10 Iraqis say their lives are going well, and nearly two-thirds expect things to improve in the next year.

Earlier this week at the Philadelphia World Affairs Council, I spoke in depth about how we changed our approach to helping the Iraqis build their democracy. At the request of Iraqi leaders, we accelerated the transition to Iraqi self-government. We set four major milestone to guide Iraq's transition to constitutional democracy: The transfer of sovereignty; elections for a transitional government; the adoption of a democratic Constitution; and elections for a new government under that Constitution. In spite of the violence, Iraqis have met every milestone, and this is changing the political landscape in Iraq.

Sunni Arabs who failed to participate in the January elections are now campaigning vigorously in this week's elections, and we can expect a higher turnout of Sunni voters. As Sunnis join the political process, Iraqi democracy becomes more inclusive, and the terrorists and Saddamists are becoming marginalized.

Each of the changes we have made in our approach in Iraq is helping us meet the hard realities and the facts on the ground. We've adapted our tactics. We have fixed what was not working, and we have listened to those who know best, our military commanders and the Iraqi people.

Our tactics continue to change, but our goal in Iraq has not changed—a free and democratic Iraq. I strongly believe a democratic Iraq is a crucial part of our strategy to defeat the terrorists, because only democracy can bring freedom and reconciliation to Iraq and peace to this troubled part of the world. Our efforts to advance freedom in Iraq are driven by our vital interests and our deepest beliefs. America was founded on the principle that all men are created equal, and we believe that the people of the Middle East desire freedom as much as we do. History has shown that free nations are peaceful nations. And as Iraqi democracy takes hold, Iraqi citizens will have a stake in a common and peaceful future.

As we advance the cause of freedom in Iraq, our Nation can proceed with confidence because we have done this kind of work before. After World War II, President Harry Truman believed that the way to help bring peace and prosperity to Asia was to plant the seeds of freedom and democracy in Japan. Like today, there were many skeptics and pessimists who said that the Japanese were not ready for democracy. Fortunately, President Harry Truman stuck to his guns.

He believed, as I do, in freedom's power to transform an adversary into an ally. And because he stayed true to his convictions, today Japan is one of the world's freest and most prosperous nations, and one of America's closest allies in keeping the peace. The spread of freedom to Iraq and the Middle East requires the same confidence and persistence, and it will lead to the same results.

The people of Iraq are now seeing some of the tangible benefits of their new democracy. They see that as freedom advances, their lives are improving. Iraqis have approved a bold Constitution that guarantees the rule of law and freedom of assembly and property rights and freedom of speech and the press and women's rights and the right to vote. They see their freedom increasingly being defended by their own soldiers and police instead of foreign forces. And they see that freedom is bringing opportunity and a better life.

The Iraqis still face many challenges, including security and reconstruction and economic reform. But they are building a strong democracy that can handle these challenges and that will be a model for the Middle East. Freedom in Iraq will inspire reformers from Damascus to Tehran. This new Iraq shares our deepest values, and it shares our most determined enemies. By helping Iraqis build a nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself, we will gain an ally in the war on terror and a partner for peace in the Middle East.

The stakes in Iraq are high, and we will not leave until victory has been achieved. Today, there's an intense debate about the importance of Iraq to the war on terror. The constant headlines about car bombings and killings have led some to ask whether our presence in Iraq has made America less secure. This view presumes that if we were not in Iraq, the terrorists would be leaving us alone. The reality is that the terrorists have been targeting America for years, long before we ever set foot in Iraq.

We were not in Iraq in 1993, when the terrorists tried to blow up the World Trade Center in New York. We were not in Iraq in 1998, when the terrorists bombed our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. We were not in Iraq in 2000, when the terrorists killed 17 American sailors aboard the U.S.S. *Cole*. There wasn't a single American soldier in Iraq on September the 11th, 2001, when the terrorists murdered nearly 3,000 people in the worst attack on our home since Pearl Harbor.

These acts are part of a grand strategy by the terrorists. Their stated objective is to drive the United States and coalition forces out of the Middle East so they can gain control of Iraq and use that country as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that stretches from Spain to Indonesia. Hear the words of the terrorists. In a letter to the terrorist leader Zarqawi, the Al Qaida leader Zawahiri has outlined plans that will unfold in several stages. These are his words: "Expel the Americans from Iraq. Establish an Islamic authority over as much territory as you can to spread its power in Iraq. Extend the jihad wave to secular countries neighboring Iraq," end quote.

To achieve these goals, the terrorists are targeting innocent men, women, and children. The enemy has only the ability to create chaos for the cameras with spectacular acts of violence. They know they cannot defeat us militarily. So they're trying to break our will in the hopes of getting America to leave the battlefield early, and they cite Vietnam as a reason they can prevail. Zawahiri, in his letter to Zarqawi, wrote, "The aftermath of the collapse of the American power in Vietnam and how they ran and left their agents is noteworthy." In the past, Al Qaida has said that American pullouts of Lebanon and Somalia showed them that America is weak and could be made to run. And now the terrorists think they can make America run in Iraq. There's only one way the terrorists can prevail, if we lose our nerve and leave before the job is done. And that is not going to happen on my watch.

Some in Washington are calling for a rapid and complete withdrawal of our forces in Iraq. They say that our presence there is the

cause for instability in Iraq and that the answer is to set a deadline to withdraw. I disagree. I've listened carefully to all the arguments, and there are four reasons why I believe that setting an artificial deadline would be a recipe for disaster.

First, setting an artificial deadline would send the wrong message to the Iraqis. As Iraqis are risking their lives for democracy, it would tell them that America is more interested in leaving than helping them succeed, put at risk all the democratic progress they have made over the past year.

Secondly, setting an artificial deadline would send the wrong message to the enemy. It would tell them that if they wait long enough, America will cut and run. It would vindicate the terrorists' tactics of beheadings and suicide bombings and mass murder. It would embolden the terrorists and invite new attacks on America.

Third, setting an artificial deadline would send the wrong message to the region and the world. It would tell our friends and supporters that America is a weak and unreliable ally, and that when the going gets tough, America will retreat.

Finally, setting an artificial deadline would send the wrong message to the most important audience, our troops on the frontline. It would tell them that America is abandoning the mission they are risking their lives to achieve and that the sacrifice of their comrades killed in this struggle has been in vain. I make this pledge to the families of the fallen: We will carry on the fight; we will complete their mission; and we will win.

Victory will be achieved by meeting certain objectives: When the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq's democracy; when the Iraqi security forces can protect their own people; and when Iraq is not a safe haven for terrorists to plot attacks against our country. These objectives, not timetables set by politicians in Washington, will drive our force levels in Iraq. As Iraqis stand up, we will stand down. And when victory is achieved, our troops will then come home with the honor they have earned.

One of the blessings of our free society is that we can debate these issues openly, even in a time of war. Most of the debate has been a credit to our democracy, but some have launched irresponsible charges. They say that we act because of oil, that we act in Iraq because of Israel or because we misled the American people. Some of the most irresponsible comments about manipulating intelligence have come from politicians who saw the same intelligence I saw and then voted to authorize the use of force against Saddam Hussein. These charges are pure politics. They hurt the morale of our troops. Whatever our differences in Washington, our men and women in uniform deserve to know that once our politicians vote to send them into harm's way, our support will be with them in good days and bad, and we will settle for nothing less than complete victory.

Before this victory comes, we still have a lot of difficult work ahead. We've made real progress in the last 2½ years, and the terrorists see this progress, and they're determined to stop it. These enemies are not going to give up because of a successful election. They know that as democracy takes root in Iraq, their hateful ideology will suffer a devastating blow. So we can expect violence to continue.

We can also expect that the elections will be followed by days of uncertainty. We may not know for certain who's won the elections until the early part of January, and that's important for our citizens to understand. It's going to take awhile. It's also going to take awhile for them to form a Government. The work ahead will require patience of the Iraqi people and require our patience as well. Yet we must remember that a free Iraq is in our interests, because a free Iraq will be a beacon of hope. And as the Middle East grows in liberty, the American people will become safer, and our Nation will be more secure.

The work ahead will also require continued sacrifice. Yet we can be confident, because history has shown the power of freedom to overcome tyranny. And we can be confident because we have on our side the greatest force for freedom in human history, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

One of these men was a Marine lieutenant named Ryan McGlothlin from Lebanon, Virginia. Ryan was a bright young man who had everything going for him, and he always

wanted to serve our Nation. He was a valedictorian of his high school class. He graduated from William & Mary with near-perfect grade averages, and he was on a full scholarship at Stanford where he was working toward a doctorate in chemistry.

Two years after the attacks of September the 11th, the young man who had the world at his feet came home from Stanford for a visit. He told his dad, "I just don't feel like I'm doing something that matters. I want to serve my country. I want to protect our lands from terrorists, so I joined the Marines." When his father asked him if there was some other way to serve, Ryan replied that he felt a special obligation to step up because he had been given so much. Ryan didn't support me in the last election, but he supported our mission in Iraq, and he supported his fellow Marines.

Ryan was killed last month fighting the terrorists near the—Iraq's Syrian border. In his pocket was a poem that Ryan had read at his high school graduation, and it represented the spirit of this fine Marine. The poem was called "Don't Quit."

In our fight to keep America free, we'll never quit. We've lost wonderful Americans like Ryan McGlothlin. We cherish the memory of each one. We pray the loved ones—pray for the loved ones they've left behind, and we count it a privilege to be citizens of a country they served. We also honor them by acknowledging that their sacrifice has brought us to this moment, the birth of a free and sovereign Iraqi nation that will be a friend of the United States and a force for good in a troubled region of the world.

The story of freedom has just begun in the Middle East. And when the history of these days is written, it will tell how America once again defended its own freedom by using liberty to transform nations from bitter foes to strong allies. And history will say that this generation, like generations before, laid the foundation of peace for generations to come.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. in the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph Gildenhorn, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the "USA PATRIOT and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2005"

December 14, 2005

The PATRIOT Act is essential to fighting the war on terror and preventing our enemies from striking America again. I commend the House for voting today on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act.

The legislation reauthorizes the 16 sunsetting provisions and makes all but two permanent. It bolsters the law's significant protection of privacy and civil liberties. The legislation includes important provisions regarding seaport security, mass transportation security, and terrorist financing. It creates a new National Security Division at the Department of Justice, which was an important recommendation of the WMD Commission that I support. It includes important provisions to strengthen Federal efforts to combat the dangerous proliferation of methamphetamine, which has affected communities across the Nation.

The PATRIOT Act is scheduled to expire at the end of the month, but the terrorist threat will not expire on that schedule. In the war on terror, we cannot afford to be without this law for a single moment. I urge the Senate to pass this legislation promptly and reauthorize the PATRIOT Act.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3199.

Executive Order 13392—Improving Agency Disclosure of Information

December 14, 2005

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to ensure appropriate agency disclosure of information,

and consistent with the goals of section 552 of title 5, United States Code, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Policy.*

(a) The effective functioning of our constitutional democracy depends upon the participation in public life of a citizenry that is well informed. For nearly four decades, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has provided an important means through which the public can obtain information regarding the activities of Federal agencies. Under the FOIA, the public can obtain records from any Federal agency, subject to the exemptions enacted by the Congress to protect information that must be held in confidence for the Government to function effectively or for other purposes.

(b) FOIA requesters are seeking a service from the Federal Government and should be treated as such. Accordingly, in responding to a FOIA request, agencies shall respond courteously and appropriately. Moreover, agencies shall provide FOIA requesters, and the public in general, with citizen-centered ways to learn about the FOIA process, about agency records that are publicly available (e.g., on the agency's website), and about the status of a person's FOIA request and appropriate information about the agency's response.

(c) Agency FOIA operations shall be both results-oriented and produce results. Accordingly, agencies shall process requests under the FOIA in an efficient and appropriate manner and achieve tangible, measurable improvements in FOIA processing. When an agency's FOIA program does not produce such results, it should be reformed, consistent with available resources appropriated by the Congress and applicable law, to increase efficiency and better reflect the policy goals and objectives of this order.

(d) A citizen-centered and results-oriented approach will improve service and performance, thereby strengthening compliance with the FOIA, and will help avoid disputes and related litigation.

Sec. 2. *Agency Chief FOIA Officers.*

(a) *Designation.* The head of each agency shall designate within 30 days of the date of this order a senior official of such agency (at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level), to serve as the Chief FOIA Officer of that agency. The head of the agency shall promptly notify the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB Director) and the Attorney General of such designation and of any changes thereafter in such designation.

(b) *General Duties.* The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency shall, subject to the authority of the head of the agency:

(i) have agency-wide responsibility for efficient and appropriate compliance with the FOIA;

(ii) monitor FOIA implementation throughout the agency, including through the use of meetings with the public to the extent deemed appropriate by the agency's Chief FOIA Officer, and keep the head of the agency, the chief legal officer of the agency, and the Attorney General appropriately informed of the agency's performance in implementing the FOIA, including the extent to which the agency meets the milestones in the agency's plan under section 3(b) of this order and training and reporting standards established consistent with applicable law and this order;

(iii) recommend to the head of the agency such adjustments to agency practices, policies, personnel, and funding as may be necessary to carry out the policy set forth in section 1 of this order;

(iv) review and report, through the head of the agency, at such times and in such formats as the Attorney General may direct, on the agency's performance in implementing the FOIA; and

(v) facilitate public understanding of the purposes of the FOIA's statutory exemptions by including concise descriptions of the exemptions in both the agency's FOIA handbook issued under section 552(g) of title 5, United States Code, and the agency's annual FOIA report, and by providing an overview, where appropriate, of certain general categories of agency records to which those exemptions apply.

(c) *FOIA Requester Service Center and FOIA Public Liaisons.* In order to ensure appropriate communication with FOIA requesters:

(i) Each agency shall establish one or more FOIA Requester Service Centers (Center), as appropriate, which shall serve as the first place that a FOIA requester can contact to seek information concerning the status of the person's FOIA request and appropriate information about the agency's FOIA response. The Center shall include appropriate staff to receive and respond to inquiries from FOIA requesters;

(ii) The agency Chief FOIA Officer shall designate one or more agency officials, as appropriate, as FOIA Public Liaisons, who may serve in the Center or who may serve in a separate office. FOIA Public Liaisons shall serve as supervisory officials to whom a FOIA requester can raise concerns about the service the FOIA requester has received from the Center, following an initial response from the Center staff. FOIA Public Liaisons shall seek to ensure a service-oriented response to FOIA requests and FOIA-related inquiries. For example, the FOIA Public Liaison shall assist, as appropriate, in reducing delays, increasing transparency and understanding of the status of requests, and resolving disputes. FOIA Public Liaisons shall report to the agency Chief FOIA Officer on their activities and shall perform their duties consistent with applicable law and agency regulations;

(iii) In addition to the services to FOIA requesters provided by the Center and FOIA Public Liaisons, the agency Chief FOIA Officer shall also consider what other FOIA-related assistance to the public should appropriately be provided by the agency;

(iv) In establishing the Centers and designating FOIA Public Liaisons, the agency shall use, as appropriate, existing agency staff and resources. A Center shall have appropriate staff to receive and respond to inquiries from FOIA requesters;

(v) As determined by the agency Chief FOIA Officer, in consultation with the FOIA Public Liaisons, each agency shall post appropriate information about its Center or Centers on the agency's website, including contact information for its FOIA Public Liaisons. In the case of an agency without a website, the agency shall publish the information on the Firstgov.gov website or, in the case of any agency with neither a website nor the capability to post on the Firstgov.gov website, in the *Federal Register*; and

(vi) The agency Chief FOIA Officer shall ensure that the agency has in place a method (or methods), including through the use of the Center, to receive and respond promptly and appropriately to inquiries from FOIA requesters about the status of their requests. The Chief FOIA Officer shall also consider, in consultation with the FOIA Public Liaisons, as appropriate, whether the agency's implementation of other means (such as tracking numbers for requests, or an agency telephone or Internet hotline) would be appropriate for responding to status inquiries.

Sec. 3. *Review, Plan, and Report.*

(a) *Review.* Each agency's Chief FOIA Officer shall conduct a review of the agency's FOIA operations to determine whether agency practices are consistent with the policies set forth in section 1 of this order. In conducting this review, the Chief FOIA Officer shall:

(i) evaluate, with reference to numerical and statistical benchmarks where appropriate, the agency's administration of the FOIA, including the agency's expenditure of resources on FOIA compliance and the extent to which, if any, requests for records have not been responded to within the statutory time limit (backlog);

(ii) review the processes and practices by which the agency assists and informs the public regarding the FOIA process;

(iii) examine the agency's:

(A) use of information technology in responding to FOIA requests, including without limitation the tracking of FOIA requests and communication with requesters;

(B) practices with respect to requests for expedited processing; and

(C) implementation of multi-track processing if used by such agency;

(iv) review the agency's policies and practices relating to the availability of public information through websites and other means, including the use of websites to make available the records described in section 552(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code; and

(v) identify ways to eliminate or reduce its FOIA backlog, consistent with available resources and taking into consideration the volume and complexity of the FOIA requests pending with the agency.

(b) *Plan.*

(i) Each agency's Chief FOIA Officer shall develop, in consultation as appropriate with the staff of the agency (including the FOIA Public Liaisons), the Attorney General, and the OMB Director, an agency-specific plan to ensure that the agency's administration of the FOIA is in accordance with applicable law and the policies set forth in section 1 of this order. The plan, which shall be submitted to the head of the agency for approval, shall address the agency's implementation of the FOIA during fiscal years 2006 and 2007.

(ii) The plan shall include specific activities that the agency will implement to eliminate or reduce the agency's FOIA backlog, including (as applicable) changes that will make the processing of FOIA requests more streamlined and effective, as well as increased reliance on the dissemination of records that can be made available to the public through a website or other means that do not require the public to make a request for the records under the FOIA.

(iii) The plan shall also include activities to increase public awareness of FOIA processing, including as appropriate, expanded use of the agency's Center and its FOIA Public Liaisons.

(iv) The plan shall also include, taking appropriate account of the resources available to the agency and the mission of the agency, concrete milestones, with specific timetables and outcomes to be achieved, by which the head of the agency, after consultation with the OMB Director, shall measure and evaluate the agency's success in the implementation of the plan.

(c) *Agency Reports to the Attorney General and OMB Director.*

(i) The head of each agency shall submit a report, no later than 6 months from the date of this order, to the Attorney General and the OMB Director that summarizes the results of the review under section 3(a) of this order and encloses a copy of the agency's plan under section 3(b) of this order. The agency shall publish a copy of the agency's report on the agency's website or, in the case of an agency without a website, on the Firstgov.gov website, or, in the case of any agency with neither a website nor the capability to publish on the Firstgov.gov website, in the *Federal Register*.

(ii) The head of each agency shall include in the agency's annual FOIA reports for fiscal years 2006 and 2007 a report on the agency's development and implementation of its plan under section 3(b) of this order and on the agency's performance in meeting the milestones set forth in that plan, consistent with any related guidelines the Attorney General may issue under section 552(e) of title 5, United States Code.

(iii) If the agency does not meet a milestone in its plan, the head of the agency shall:

(A) identify this deficiency in the annual FOIA report to the Attorney General;

(B) explain in the annual report the reasons for the agency's failure to meet the milestone;

(C) outline in the annual report the steps that the agency has already taken, and will be taking, to address the deficiency; and

(D) report this deficiency to the President's Management Council.

Sec. 4. *Attorney General.*

(a) *Report.* The Attorney General, using the reports submitted by the agencies under subsection 3(c)(i) of this order and the information submitted by agencies in their annual FOIA reports for fiscal year 2005, shall submit to the President, no later than 10 months

from the date of this order, a report on agency FOIA implementation. The Attorney General shall consult the OMB Director in the preparation of the report and shall include in the report appropriate recommendations on administrative or other agency actions for continued agency dissemination and release of public information. The Attorney General shall thereafter submit two further annual reports, by June 1, 2007, and June 1, 2008, that provide the President with an update on the agencies' implementation of the FOIA and of their plans under section 3(b) of this order.

(b) *Guidance.* The Attorney General shall issue such instructions and guidance to the heads of departments and agencies as may be appropriate to implement sections 3(b) and 3(c) of this order.

Sec. 5. *OMB Director.* The OMB Director may issue such instructions to the heads of agencies as are necessary to implement this order, other than sections 3(b) and 3(c) of this order.

Sec. 6. *Definitions.* As used in this order:

(a) the term "agency"; has the same meaning as the term "agency"; under section 552(f)(1) of title 5, United States Code; and

(b) the term "record"; has the same meaning as the term "record"; under section 552(f)(2) of title 5, United States Code.

Sec. 7. *General Provisions.*

(a) The agency reviews under section 3(a) of this order and agency plans under section 3(b) of this order shall be conducted and developed in accordance with applicable law and applicable guidance issued by the President, the Attorney General, and the OMB Director, including the laws and guidance regarding information technology and the dissemination of information.

(b) This order:

(i) shall be implemented in a manner consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations;

(ii) shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the OMB Director relating to budget, legislative, or administrative proposals; and

(iii) is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 14, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 16, 2005]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on December 19.

Memorandum on Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act

December 14, 2005

Presidential Determination No. 2006–05

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 7(a) of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 (Public Law 104–45) (the "Act"), I hereby determine that it is necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States to suspend for a period of 6 months the limitations set forth in sections 3(b) and 7(b) of the Act. My Administration remains committed to beginning the process of moving our Embassy to Jerusalem.

You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit this determination to the Congress, accompanied by a report in accordance with section 7(a) of the Act, and to publish the determination in the *Federal Register*.

This suspension shall take effect after transmission of this determination and report to the Congress.

George W. Bush

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Use of Emergency Supplemental Appropriations

December 14, 2005

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am notifying the Congress of my intent to use funds provided in Public Law 107–38, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, FY 2001, for improvements to the White House Situation Room to enhance the capabilities of the White House in the war on terrorism.

At this time, $3.3 million will be transferred from the Emergency Response Fund to the Department of Defense. As provided in Public Law 107–38, these funds will be made available to the Department of Defense immediately.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington"

December 11, 2005

Thank you all. Thank you very much. Laura and I have really enjoyed the program tonight. We want to thank all the entertainers for their wonderful performances. I thank Dr. Phil and Robin for being such fine emcees for this event. I want to thank Carrie Underwood, CeCe Winans, Ciara, Jane Monheit, Rascal Flatts, The Click Five, and all the performers and choirs that were here.

We particularly want to thank George Stevens, the executive producer of "Christmas in Washington," and his wife, Liz, as well as Michael Stevens, who's the producer and director of "Christmas in Washington," and his wife, Ali, who is the talent producer for "Christmas in Washington." I thank Dick Parsons, who is the chairman and the CEO of Time Warner, and his wife, Linda.

In this season of giving, we count our blessings, and we remember that we are called on to do good works for those in need. On a special day in Bethlehem, the birth of a child brought hope to the world. And at this time of year, we are especially grateful to those whose work brings hope and health to children.

"Christmas in Washington" supports the Children's National Medical Center. All year long, the doctors and nurses and staff of this hospital are providing care, restoring health, and putting the light back into the eyes of children. I thank tonight's sponsors and contributors for their support of this important work.

As we celebrate the holidays, we also remember the men and women who serve and defend America. Our military men and women and their families have the support and the gratitude of our entire Nation.

To all Americans, Laura and I wish you a joyful and peaceful holiday season. God bless you all, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:00 p.m. in the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to television host Phillip "Dr. Phil" McGraw, and his wife, Robin; and Laura, wife of Richard D. Parsons. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 15.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Iraqi Out-of-Country Voters

December 15, 2005

I've just had the really enjoyable experience of visiting with some Iraqi citizens who voted in the elections today. And you might notice, they've got their—got the little ink-stained fingers there.

And, first of all, I was struck by how joyous they were to be able to vote for a Government, a permanent Government under a new Constitution. We take it for granted in America because we tend to—we vote quite often in this country. These good folks got to vote for the first time for a permanent Government.

And there's a lot of joy, as far as I'm concerned, in seeing the Iraqi people accomplish this major milestone in the march to democracy. Millions of people voted. And I haven't seen all the tabulations of the vote, but we're

certain that the turnout was significant and that the violence was down.

And, first, I want to congratulate the Iraqi citizens for being courageous and—in defying the terrorists and refusing to be cowed into not voting. I believe freedom is universal. I believe the Iraqi citizen cares just as much about freedom and living a free life as the American citizen does.

Secondly, I want to thank our Embassy for doing such good work there and working with the Iraqi citizens to get this vote off. And I want to thank the international community for participating in these elections. This is a major step forward in achieving our objective, which is an ally—having a democratic Iraq, a country able to sustain itself and defend itself, a country that will be an ally in the war on terror, and a country which will send such a powerful example to others in the region, whether they live in Iran or Syria, for example.

I've assured these good Iraqis citizens that the United States will stay with them and complete this job. They've expressed concern about listening to the commentary that we'll leave before the job is done; they don't have to worry. We're doing the right thing. And we've got partners in peace with the Iraqi citizens.

This is a crucial part of the war on terror, as is the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act was passed 4 years ago. It gave our law enforcement the tools necessary to help protect the—America, the same tools that law enforcement uses, for example, against drug dealers. The PATRIOT Act is set to expire. The House of Representatives, recognizing the value of the PATRIOT Act, voted in a bipartisan way to extend the PATRIOT Act, and now there are Senators who are filibustering the PATRIOT Act. That is a bad decision for the security of the United States. I call upon the Senate to end the filibuster and to pass this important legislation so that we have the tools necessary to defend the United States of America in a time of war.

I want to thank you all again for coming. May God bless your citizens. May God bless a free Iraq. I appreciate you being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Senators John McCain and John Warner

December 15, 2005

The President. It's my honor to welcome two good friends, the Chairman, John Warner, and of course, John McCain—Senator John McCain, here to the Oval Office. We share a common goal and that is to protect the American people and to win the war on terror.

Senator McCain has been a leader to make sure that the United States of America upholds the values of America as we fight and win this war on terror. And we've been happy to work with him to achieve a common objective, and that is to make it clear to the world that this Government does not torture and that we adhere to the international convention of torture, whether it be here at home or abroad. And so we have worked very closely with the Senator and others to achieve that objective as well as to provide protections for those who are on the frontline of fighting the terrorists.

And so I appreciate your hard work, Senator. You're a good man who honors the values of America. I also appreciate the strong support that you've given—both of you have given in the war on terror. The central front of that war is Iraq. Part of our strategy is to train Iraqis so they can join our forces and fight off the terrorists and, eventually, have the Iraqis be able to stand on their own. The other part is the democratic process that will help marginalize the Saddamists and the rejectionists.

And today the Iraqi people went to the polls. I was so honored to welcome some young Iraqi Fulbright scholars here that were able to vote. And to see the joy—and to hear the joy they expressed and to see the joy on their faces after having just voted in a—for a permanent Government and a new Constitution was just a fantastic experience.

And so I want to welcome you all to the Oval Office. Thanks for coming. Thanks for your good work on behalf of America.

Senator McCain. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the effort that you made to resolve this very difficult issue. I thank you for your

active participation in it. And I also want to thank your National Security Adviser, Steve Hadley, who played a very important role as well. And I'm very pleased that we reached this agreement, and now we can move forward and make sure that the whole world knows that, as the President has stated many times, that we do not practice cruel, inhuman treatment or torture.

This agreement basically does two things: One, puts into the Army Field Manual the specific procedures for interrogations. And two, it prohibits cruel, inhumane—or torture.

In our negotiations, there was legitimate concerns raised by the administration concerning the rights of interrogators. And taking language from the Uniform Code of Military Justice, we provide them with legal counsel and certain protections that a reasonable person might view as carrying out of orders, not to contradict the Nuremberg decision, which, of course, said that obeying orders is not a sufficient defense.

I, again, thank the President. And I would like to also repeat, we've sent a message to the world that the United States is not like the terrorists. We have no grief for them, but what we are is a nation that upholds values and standards of behavior and treatment of all people, no matter how evil or bad they are. And I think that this will help us enormously in winning the war for the hearts and minds of people throughout the world in the war on terror.

And again, I want to thank the President. I want to thank Steve Hadley. I thank all the people who worked so hard to come to this agreement. Now I think we can move forward with winning the war on terror and in Iraq.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thanks, John.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:41 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Message to the Congress on Export of Accelerometers to the People's Republic of China

December 14, 2005

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the provisions of section 1512 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (Public Law 105–261), I hereby certify that the export of 36 accelerometers to the People's Republic of China's Ministry of Railways, for use in a railroad track geometry measuring system, is not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry, and that the material and equipment, including any indirect technical benefit that could be derived from such export, will not measurably improve the missile or space launch capabilities of the People's Republic of China.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 14, 2005.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 16. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks Following Discussions With Ambassador to the United Nations Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaida'ie of Iraq

December 16, 2005

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Ambassador to the United Nations from Iraq. This good man has been a—is an Iraqi patriot. He was there in Iraq right after liberation. He helped write the TAL, which is the go-by for the new Constitution. He's serving his country in New York now. He was a voter yesterday in the elections.

The reason he came by to say hello is, we want to talk about what a glorious day it was yesterday for the Iraqi citizens and what we're going to do to work together to make sure that we complete our mission, and that is to have an Iraq that can defend itself and sustain itself, an Iraq that will help us defeat the terrorists in this war on terror, an Iraq that will serve as such a powerful example

for other countries in the region that share the same desires as the Iraqi citizen—that is the desire to live in a free world and a free society.

I'm so pleased to hear the stories from his Al Anbar Province, where his grandfather was—lived. And he was telling me about the stories from the village where he was from, about how there's no phone service because the terrorists blew up the capacity for people to make phone calls. But they forgot to shut off the Internet, and people were then describing for this good man what it was like to participate in the democratic process.

It was a remarkable day yesterday in the history of mankind and in the history of freedom.

And so, Mr. Ambassador, I'm glad you're here. Thank you so much for serving with such dignity. Welcome. It's been great talking to you.

Ambassador Sumaida'ie. Thank you, Mr. President. I believe that yesterday was a great day for Iraq; it was a great day for freedom. I think it was the turning point and the beginning of the end of terrorism in Iraq.

Iraqis have written, with their blood, a chapter of their history which will be remembered for decades, with the help of the American troops, with your help, Mr. President, and the help of the American people, which we will remember and appreciate for generations.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. And I believe that we should keep our eye on the ball and make sure that the mission is accomplished and we build an Iraq which is stable, at peace with itself and with its neighbor, and forever, I hope, a reliable ally of the United States.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Proclamation 7969—Wright Brothers Day, 2005

December 16, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On December 17, 1903, a wooden aircraft lifted from the sands of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, remaining airborne for 12 seconds and covering a distance of 40 yards. That first powered flight was a heroic moment in our Nation's history and in the story of mankind. On Wright Brothers Day, we celebrate the journey that began at Kitty Hawk and commemorate the imagination, ingenuity, and determination of Orville and Wilbur Wright.

The American experience in air and space is an epic of endurance and discovery. The past 102 years have brought supersonic flight, space travel, and the exploration of the Moon and Mars. Charles Lindbergh's solo, nonstop passage across the Atlantic Ocean and the record-breaking flights of Amelia Earhart captured the public's imagination and encouraged the growth of aviation. Americans such as Chuck Yeager, the first man to break the sound barrier, and Alan Shepard, the first American in space, and Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, the first men on the Moon, led our Nation on a voyage of discovery. These pioneers explored the unknown and brought the bold dream of the Wright Brothers into the future. Their dedication and skill and that of countless others reflect the finest values of our country and have helped ensure that the United States continues to lead the world in flight.

Americans will always be risk-takers for the sake of exploration. As we remember the achievements of the Wright Brothers, we look forward to challenging the frontiers of knowledge in a new century.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 143) as amended, has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 2005, as Wright Brothers Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 20, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 21.

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.

December 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 12

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Manuel Zelaya of Honduras to congratulate him on his election victory. Later, he had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Oval Office, he participated in an interview with Brian Williams for NBC's Nightly News.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Philadelphia, PA. While en route aboard Air Force One, he participated in an additional interview with Brian Williams for NBC's The Today Show.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a third interview with Brian Williams. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, at the State Department, the President attended a holiday reception for the diplomatic corps.

December 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Republican Senators to discuss the war on terror. He then traveled to Springfield, VA.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Residence, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a luncheon for Rep. John Dingell to celebrate his 50th anniversary of becoming a Member of Congress.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michell C. Clark to be Assistant Secretary of Education for Management.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gary A. Grappo to be Ambassador to Oman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raymond L. Orbach to be Under Secretary of Energy for Science.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne-Imelda Radice to be Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jim Davis and Frank D. Ferris as members of the Federal Salary Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joan Stevens Eller and John Leachman Oliver III as members of the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

December 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Jay P. Lefkowitz, Special Envoy on Human Rights in North Korea. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he participated in a briefing with Democratic Members of Congress on the war on terror in Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney. Later, in the private study, he participated in an interview with Brit Hume of FOX News.

In the evening, the President hosted a holiday reception.

December 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office,

he participated in a meeting on Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a holiday reception for the White House press corps.

December 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Senators to discuss the situation in Iraq.

Later in the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nuhayyan of the United Arab Emirates, King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait, and King Abdullah II of Jordan to discuss the situation in Iraq.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Federal Election Commission: Robert D. Lenhard, David M. Mason, Hans von Spakovsky, and Steven T. Walther.

The President announced his designation of Andrew S. Natsios as a member of a Presidential delegation to Indonesia for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Commemoration on December 17–18.

The President declared a major disaster in Connecticut and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from October 14–15.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted December 13

Michell C. Clark,
of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Management, Department of Education, vice William Leidinger.

Michael L. Dominguez,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, vice Charles S. Abell, resigned.

Gary A. Grappo,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman.

Bradford R. Higgins,
of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Resource Management), vice Christopher Bancroft Burnham.

Bradford R. Higgins,
of Connecticut, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of State, vice Christopher Bancroft Burnham, resigned.

Raymond L. Orbach,
of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy (new position).

Anne-Imelda Radice,
of Vermont, to be Director of the Institute of Museum Services, vice Robert S. Martin.

Withdrawn December 13

Ellen G. Engleman Conners,
of Indiana, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of 2 years (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on April 4, 2005.

Edward L. Flippen,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Corporation for National and Community Service, vice J. Russell George, which was sent to the Senate on January 24, 2005.

John M. Molino,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Policy and Planning), vice Claude M. Kicklighter, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on September 6, 2005.

Submitted December 14

Patrick Joseph Schiltz,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Minnesota, vice Richard H. Kyle, retired.

Jack Zouhary,
of Ohio, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio, vice David A. Katz, retired.

Submitted December 15

Terrance P. Flynn,
of New York, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Michael A. Battle, resigned.

Stephen G. Larson,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California, vice Robert J. Timlin, retired.

Submitted December 16

Michael Ryan Barrett,
of Ohio, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio, vice Walter Herbert Rice, retired.

Robert D. Lenhard,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2011, vice Danny Lee McDonald, term expired.

Reginald I. Lloyd,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of South Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice J. Strom Thurmond, Jr., resigned.

David M. Mason,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2009 (reappointment).

Norman Randy Smith,
of Idaho, to be U.S. Circuit Court Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice Stephen S. Trott, retired.

Hans von Spakovsky,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2011, vice Bradley A. Smith, resigned.

Steven T. Walther,
of Nevada, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2009, vice Scott E. Thomas, term expired.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released December 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Homeland Security Adviser Frances Fragos Townsend, Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael O. Leavitt, and Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff on the avian flu

Statement by the Press Secretary: Statement on a Call for the Release of Dr. Kamal Labwani and Other Prisoners of Conscience in Syria

Released December 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Statement on the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit Declaration

Fact sheet: Democracy in Iraq

Released December 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released December 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the December 7 Presidential Directive on U.S. efforts for reconstruction and stabilization

Released December 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan; Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff; Chairman Donald E. Powell of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, who is coordinating Federal gulf coast relief efforts; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; and Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, USA, commander and chief of engineers, Army Corp of Engineers

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on Senator John McCain and amendments to interrogation policy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Malaria Initiative

Fact sheet: Protecting New Orleans From Future Flooding

Released December 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.