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Editor's Note: The President was at Camp David, MD, on December 23, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Memorandum on Assignment of Functions Under Section 1306 of Public Law 107–314

December 15, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Assignment of Functions Under Section 1306 of Public Law 107–314

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby assign to you the functions of the President under section 1306 of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–314)(22 U.S.C. 5952 note), as continued in effect by subsequent law, including section 116 of the Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2006 (Public Law 109–77), as amended.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register.*

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 16. An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Senate Filibuster of the Reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act

December 16, 2005

The PATRIOT Act has protected American liberty and saved American lives since the law's passage after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Today, a minority of Senators filibustered to block the Senate from voting to re-authorize key provisions of the Act. These Senators need to understand that the PATRIOT Act expires in 15 days, but the terrorist threat to America will not expire on that schedule. The terrorists want to attack America again and kill the innocent and inflict even greater damage than they did on September 11th, and the Congress has a responsibility not to take away this vital tool that law enforcement and intelligence officials have used to protect the American people. The Senators who are filibustering the PATRIOT Act must stop their delaying tactics so that we are not without this critical law for even a single moment.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Help the Gulf Coast Rebuild Following Hurricanes Rita and Katrina

December 16, 2005

I commend the Congress for passing an important part of my comprehensive plan to help the citizens of the gulf coast rebuild their lives and their livelihoods. The private sector is critical in the rebuilding effort, and these tax incentives will help boost investment, get people back to work, and return the region to prosperity. Americans will continue to stand with our fellow citizens in the gulf coast region. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the House of Representatives Passage of Immigration Reform Legislation

December 16, 2005

I applaud the House for passing a strong immigration reform bill. America is a nation built on the rule of law, and this bill will help us protect our borders and crack down on

illegal entry into the United States. Securing our borders is essential to securing the homeland. I urge the Senate to take action on immigration reform so that I can sign a good bill into law.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on Guidelines and Requirements in Support of the Information Sharing Environment

December 16, 2005

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Guidelines and Requirements in Support of the Information Sharing Environment

Ensuring the appropriate access to, and the sharing, integration, and use of, information by Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies with counterterrorism responsibilities, and, as appropriate, private sector entities, while protecting the information privacy and other legal rights of Americans, remains a high priority for the United States and a necessity for winning the war on terror. Consistent with section 1016 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–458) (IRTPA), my Administration is working to create an Information Sharing Environment (ISE) to facilitate the sharing of terrorism information (as defined in Executive Order 13388 of October 25, 2005).

Section 1016 of IRTPA supplements section 892 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–296), Executive Order 13311 of July 29, 2003, and other Presidential guidance, which address various aspects of information access. On April 15, 2005, consistent with section 1016(f) of IRTPA, I designated the program manager (PM) responsible for information sharing across the Federal Government. On June 2, 2005, my memorandum entitled "Strengthening Information Sharing, Access, and Integration—Organizational, Management, and Policy Development Structures for Creating the Terrorism Information Sharing Environment" directed that the PM and his office be part of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and that the DNI exercise authority, direction, and control over the PM and ensure that the PM carries out his responsibilities under IRTPA. On October 25, 2005, I issued Executive Order 13388 to facilitate the work of the PM and the expeditious establishment of the ISE and restructure the Information Sharing Council (ISC), which provides advice concerning and assists in the establishment, implementation, and maintenance of the ISE.

On June 2, 2005, I also established the Information Sharing Policy Coordination Committee (ISPCC), which is chaired jointly by the Homeland Security Council (HSC) and the National Security Council (NSC), and which has the responsibilities set forth in section D of Homeland Security Presidential Directive–1 and other relevant presidential guidance with respect to information sharing. The ISPCC is the main day-to-day forum for interagency coordination of information sharing policy, including the resolution of issues raised by the PM, and provides policy analysis and recommendations for consideration by the more senior committees of the HSC and NSC systems and ensures timely responses.

Section 1016(d) of IRTPA calls for leveraging all ongoing efforts consistent with establishing the ISE, the issuance of guidelines for acquiring, accessing, sharing, and using information in support of the ISE and for protecting privacy and civil liberties in the development of the ISE, and the promotion of a culture of information sharing. Consistent with the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 103 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, and sections 1016 and 1018 of IRTPA, I hereby direct as follows:

1. *Leveraging Ongoing Information Sharing Efforts in the Development of the ISE.* The ISE shall build upon existing Federal Government policies, standards, procedures, programs, systems, and architectures (collectively "resources") used for the sharing and integration of and access to terrorism information, and shall leverage those resources to the maximum extent practicable, with the objective of establishing a decentralized, comprehensive, and coordinated environment for

the sharing and integration of such information.

a. The DNI shall direct the PM to conduct and complete, within 90 days after the date of this memorandum, in consultation with the ISC, a comprehensive evaluation of existing resources pertaining to terrorism information sharing employed by individual or multiple executive departments and agencies. Such evaluation shall assess such resources for their utility and integrative potential in furtherance of the establishment of the ISE and shall identify any unnecessary redundancies.

b. To ensure that the ISE supports the needs of executive departments and agencies with counterterrorism responsibilities, and consistent with section 1021 of IRTPA, the DNI shall direct the PM, jointly with the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and in coordination with the heads of relevant executive departments and agencies, to review and identify the respective missions, roles, and responsibilities of such executive departments and agencies, both as producers and users of terrorism information, relating to the acquisition, access, retention, production, use, management, and sharing of terrorism information. The findings shall be reviewed through the interagency policy coordination process, and any recommendations for the further definition, reconciliation, or alteration of such missions, roles, and responsibilities shall be submitted, within 180 days after the date of this memorandum, by the DNI to the President for approval through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHS–CT) and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA). This effort shall be coordinated as appropriate with the tasks assigned under the Guidelines set forth in section 2 of this memorandum.

c. Upon the submission of findings as directed in the preceding paragraph (1(b)), the DNI shall direct the PM, in consultation with the ISC, to develop, in a manner consistent with applicable law, the policies, procedures, and architectures needed to create the ISE, which shall support the counterterrorism missions, roles, and responsibilities of executive departments and agencies. These policies, procedures, and architectures shall be reviewed through the interagency policy coordination process, and shall be submitted, within 180 days after the submission of findings as directed in the preceding paragraph (1(b)), by the DNI to the President for approval through the APHS–CT and the APNSA.

2. *Information Sharing Guidelines*. Consistent with section 1016(d) of IRTPA, I hereby issue the following guidelines and related requirements, the implementation of which shall be conducted in consultation with, and with support from, the PM as directed by the DNI:

a. *Guideline 1—Define Common Standards for How Information is Acquired, Accessed, Shared, and Used Within the ISE*

The ISE must, to the extent possible, be supported by common standards that maximize the acquisition, access, retention, production, use, management, and sharing of terrorism information within the ISE consistent with the protection of intelligence, law enforcement, protective, and military sources, methods, and activities.

Consistent with Executive Order 13388 and IRTPA, the DNI, in coordination with the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Homeland Security, and the Attorney General, shall develop and issue, within 90 days after the date of this memorandum, common standards (i) for preparing terrorism information for maximum distribution and access, (ii) to enable the acquisition, access, retention, production, use, management, and sharing of terrorism information within the ISE while safeguarding such information and protecting sources and methods from unauthorized use or disclosure, (iii) for implementing legal requirements relating to the handling of specific types of information, and (iv)

that include the appropriate method for the Government-wide adoption and implementation of such standards. Such standards shall accommodate and reflect the sharing of terrorism information, as appropriate, with State, local, and tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector. Within 90 days after the issuance of such standards, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General shall jointly disseminate such standards for use by State, local, and tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector, on a mandatory basis where possible and a voluntary basis where not. The DNI may amend the common standards from time to time as appropriate through the same process by which the DNI issued them.

b. *Guideline 2—Develop a Common Framework for the Sharing of Information Between and Among Executive Departments and Agencies and State, Local, and Tribal Governments, Law Enforcement Agencies, and the Private Sector*

Recognizing that the war on terror must be a national effort, State, local, and tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector must have the opportunity to participate as full partners in the ISE, to the extent consistent with applicable laws and executive orders and directives, the protection of national security, and the protection of the information privacy rights and other legal rights of Americans.

Within 180 days after the date of this memorandum, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Health and Human Services, and the DNI, and consistent with the findings of the counterterrorism missions, roles, and responsibilities review under section 1 of this memorandum, shall:

(i) perform a comprehensive review of the authorities and responsibilities of executive departments and agencies regarding information sharing with State, local, and tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector; and

(ii) submit to the President for approval, through the APHS–CT and the APNSA, a recommended framework to govern the roles and responsibilities of executive departments and agencies pertaining to the acquisition, access, retention, production, use, management, and sharing of homeland security information, law enforcement information, and terrorism information between and among such departments and agencies and State, local, and tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and private sector entities.

c. *Guideline 3—Standardize Procedures for Sensitive But Unclassified Information*

To promote and enhance the effective and efficient acquisition, access, retention, production, use, management, and sharing of Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) information, including homeland security information, law enforcement information, and terrorism information, procedures and standards for designating, marking, and handling SBU information (collectively "SBU procedures") must be standardized across the Federal Government. SBU procedures must promote appropriate and consistent safeguarding of the information and must be appropriately shared with, and accommodate and reflect the imperative for timely and accurate dissemination of terrorism information to, State, local, and tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and private sector entities. This effort must be consistent with Executive Orders 13311 and 13388, section 892 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, section 1016 of IRTPA, section 102A of the National Security Act of 1947, the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act of 1974, and other applicable laws and executive orders and directives.

(i) Within 90 days after the date of this memorandum, each executive department and agency will conduct an inventory of its SBU procedures, determine the underlying authority for each entry

in the inventory, and provide an assessment of the effectiveness of its existing SBU procedures. The results of each inventory shall be reported to the DNI, who shall provide the compiled results to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General.

(ii) Within 90 days after receiving the compiled results of the inventories required under the preceding paragraph (i), the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General, in coordination with the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy, and the DNI, shall submit to the President for approval recommendations for the standardization of SBU procedures for homeland security information, law enforcement information, and terrorism information in the manner described in paragraph (iv) below.

(iii) Within 1 year after the date of this memorandum, the DNI, in coordination with the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, Defense, Commerce, Energy, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and the Attorney General, and in consultation with all other heads of relevant executive departments and agencies, shall submit to the President for approval recommendations for the standardization of SBU procedures for all types of information not addressed by the preceding paragraph (ii) in the manner described in paragraph (iv) below.

(iv) All recommendations required to be submitted to the President under this Guideline shall be submitted through the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the APHS–CT, and the APNSA, as a report that contains the following:

(A) recommendations for government-wide policies and procedures to standardize SBU procedures;

(B) recommendations, as appropriate, for legislative, policy, regulatory, and administrative changes; and

(C) an assessment by each department and agency participating in the SBU procedures review process of the costs and budgetary considerations for all proposed changes to marking conventions, handling caveats, and other procedures pertaining to SBU information.

(v) Upon the approval by the President of the recommendations submitted under this Guideline, heads of executive departments and agencies shall ensure on an ongoing basis that such recommendations are fully implemented in such department or agency, as applicable. The DNI shall direct the PM to support executive departments and agencies in such implementation, as well as in the development of relevant guidance and training programs for the standardized SBU procedures.

d. *Guideline 4—Facilitate Information Sharing Between Executive Departments and Agencies and Foreign Partners*

The ISE must support and facilitate appropriate terrorism information sharing between executive departments and agencies and foreign partners and allies. To that end, policies and procedures to facilitate such informational access and exchange, including those relating to the handling of information received from foreign governments, must be established consistent with applicable laws and executive orders and directives.

Within 180 days after the date of this memorandum, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Secretaries of Defense, the Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the DNI, shall review existing authorities and submit to the President for approval, through the APHS–CT and the APNSA, recommendations for appropriate legislative, administrative, and policy changes to facilitate the sharing of terrorism information with foreign partners and allies, except for those activities conducted pursuant to sections 102A(k), 104A(f), and 119(f)(1)(E) of the National Security Act of 1947.

e. *Guideline 5—Protect the Information Privacy Rights and Other Legal Rights of Americans*

As recognized in Executive Order 13353 of August 27, 2004, the Federal Government has a solemn obligation, and must continue fully, to protect the legal rights of all Americans in the effective performance of national security and homeland security functions. Accordingly, in the development and use of the ISE, the information privacy rights and other legal rights of Americans must be protected.

(i) Within 180 days after the date of this memorandum, the Attorney General and the DNI, in coordination with the heads of executive departments and agencies that possess or use intelligence or terrorism information, shall (A) conduct a review of current executive department and agency information sharing policies and procedures regarding the protection of information privacy and other legal rights of Americans, (B) develop guidelines designed to be implemented by executive departments and agencies to ensure that the information privacy and other legal rights of Americans are protected in the development and use of the ISE, including in the acquisition, access, use, and storage of personally identifiable information, and (C) submit such guidelines to the President for approval through the Director of OMB, the APHS–CT, and the APNSA. Such guidelines shall not be inconsistent with Executive Order 12333 and guidance issued pursuant to that order.

(ii) Each head of an executive department or agency that possesses or uses intelligence or terrorism information shall ensure on an ongoing basis that (A) appropriate personnel, structures, training, and technologies are in place to ensure that terrorism information is shared in a manner that protects the information privacy and other legal rights of Americans, and (B) upon approval by the President of the guidelines developed under the preceding subsection (i), such guidelines are fully implemented in such department or agency.

3. *Promoting a Culture of Information Sharing.* Heads of executive departments and agencies must actively work to create a culture of information sharing within their respective departments or agencies by assigning personnel and dedicating resources to terrorism information sharing, by reducing disincentives to such sharing, and by holding their senior managers and officials accountable for improved and increased sharing of such information.

Accordingly, each head of an executive department or agency that possesses or uses intelligence or terrorism information shall:

a. within 90 days after the date of this memorandum, designate a senior official who possesses knowledge of the operational and policy aspects of information sharing to (i) provide accountability and oversight for terrorism information sharing within such department and agency, (ii) work with the PM, in consultation with the ISC, to develop high-level information sharing performance measures for the department or agency to be assessed no less than semiannually, and (iii) provide, through the department or agency head, an annual report to the DNI on best practices of and remaining barriers to optimal terrorism information sharing;

b. within 180 days after the date of this memorandum, develop and issue guidelines, provide training and incentives, and hold relevant personnel accountable for the improved and increased sharing of terrorism information. Such guidelines and training shall seek to reduce obstructions to sharing, consistent with applicable laws and regulations. Accountability efforts shall include the requirement to add a performance evaluation element on information sharing to employees' annual Performance Appraisal Review, as appropriate, and shall focus on the sharing of information that supports the mission of the recipient of the information; and

c. bring to the attention of the Attorney General and the DNI, on an ongoing basis, any restriction contained in a rule, regulation, executive order or directive that significantly impedes the sharing of terrorism information and that such department or agency head believes is not

required by applicable laws or to protect the information privacy rights and other legal rights of Americans. The Attorney General and the DNI shall review such restriction and jointly submit any recommendations for changes to such restriction to the APHS–CT and the APNSA for further review.

4. Heads of executive departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, provide assistance and information to the DNI and the PM in the implementation of this memorandum.

5. This memorandum:

a. shall be implemented in a manner consistent with applicable laws, including Federal laws protecting the information privacy rights and other legal rights of Americans, and subject to the availability of appropriations;

b. shall be implemented in a manner consistent with the statutory authority of the principal officers of executive departments and agencies as heads of their respective departments or agencies;

c. shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals; and

d. is intended only to improve the internal management of the Federal Government and is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agencies, or any other person.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Message to the Congress on Guidelines and Requirements in Support of the Information Sharing Environment

December 16, 2005

To the Congress of the United States:

The robust and effective sharing of terrorism information is vital to protecting Americans and the Homeland from terrorist attacks. To ensure that we succeed in this mission, my Administration is working to implement the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) called for by section 1016 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA). The ISE is intended to enable the Federal Government and our State, local, tribal, and private sector partners to share appropriate information relating to terrorists, their threats, plans, networks, supporters, and capabilities while, at the same time, respecting the information privacy and other legal rights of all Americans.

Today, I issued a set of guidelines and requirements that represent a significant step in the establishment of the ISE. These guidelines and requirements, which are consistent with the provisions of section 1016(d) of IRTPA, are set forth in a memorandum to the heads of executive departments and agencies. The guidelines and requirements also address collateral issues that are essential to any meaningful progress on information sharing. In sum, these guidelines will:

- clarify roles and authorities across executive departments and agencies;
- implement common standards and architectures to further facilitate timely and effective information sharing;
- improve the Federal Government's terrorism information sharing relationships with State, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and foreign allies;
- revamp antiquated classification and marking systems, as they relate to sensitive but unclassified information;
- ensure that information privacy and other legal rights of Americans are protected in the development and implementation of the ISE; and

- ensure that departments and agencies promote a culture of information sharing by assigning personnel and dedicating resources to terrorism information sharing.

The guidelines build on the strong commitment that my Administration and the Congress have already made to strengthening information sharing, as evidenced by Executive Orders 13311 of July 27, 2003, and 13388 of October 25, 2005, section 892 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the USA PATRIOT Act, and sections 1011 and 1016 of the IRTPA. While much work has been done by executive departments and agencies, more is required to fully develop and implement the ISE.

To lead this national effort, I designated the Program Manager (PM) responsible for information sharing across the Federal Government, and directed that the PM and his office be part of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and that the DNI exercise authority, direction, and control over the PM and ensure that the PM carries out his responsibilities under section 1016 of IRTPA. I fully support the efforts of the PM and the Information Sharing Council to transform our current capabilities into the desired ISE, and I have directed all heads of executive departments and agencies to support the PM and the DNI to meet our stated objectives.

Creating the ISE is a difficult and complex task that will require a sustained effort and strong partnership with the Congress. I know that you share my commitment to achieve the goal of providing decision makers and the men and women on the front lines in the War on Terror with the best possible information to protect our Nation. I appreciate your support to date and look forward to working with you in the months ahead on this critical initiative.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 16, 2005.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address

December 17, 2005

Good morning. As President, I took an oath to defend the Constitution, and I have no greater responsibility than to protect our people, our freedom, and our way of life. On September the 11th, 2001, our freedom and way of life came under attack by brutal enemies who killed nearly 3,000 innocent Americans. We're fighting these enemies across the world. Yet in this first war of the 21st century, one of the most critical battlefronts is the homefront. And since September the 11th, we've been on the offensive against the terrorists plotting within our borders.

One of the first actions we took to protect America after our Nation was attacked was to ask Congress to pass the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act tore down the legal and bureaucratic wall that kept law enforcement and intelligence authorities from sharing vital information about terrorist threats. And the PATRIOT Act allowed Federal investigators to pursue terrorists with tools they already used against other criminals. Congress passed this law with a large, bipartisan majority, including a vote of 98–1 in the United States Senate.

Since then, America's law enforcement personnel have used this critical law to prosecute terrorist operatives and supporters and to break up terrorist 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.

Yet key provisions of this law are set to expire in 2 weeks. The terrorist threat to our country will not expire in 2 weeks. The terrorists want to attack America again and inflict even greater damage than they did on September the 11th. Congress has a responsibility to ensure that law enforcement and intelligence officials have the tools they need to protect the American people.

The House of Representatives passed reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act. Yet a minority of Senators filibustered to block the renewal of the PATRIOT Act when it came up for a vote yesterday. That decision is irresponsible, and it endangers the lives of our

citizens. The Senators who are filibustering must stop their delaying tactics, and the Senate must vote to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. In the war on terror, we cannot afford to be without this law for a single moment.

To fight the war on terror, I am using authority vested in me by Congress, including the Joint Authorization for Use of Military Force, which passed overwhelmingly in the first week after September the 11th. I'm also using constitutional authority vested in me as Commander in Chief.

In the weeks following the terrorist attacks on our Nation, I authorized the National Security Agency, consistent with U.S. law and the Constitution, to intercept the international communications of people with known links to Al Qaida and related terrorist organizations. Before we intercept these communications, the Government must have information that establishes a clear link to these terrorist networks.

This is a highly classified program that is crucial to our national security. Its purpose is to detect and prevent terrorist attacks against the United States, our friends, and allies. Yesterday the existence of this secret program was revealed in media reports, after being improperly provided to news organizations. As a result, our enemies have learned information they should not have, and the unauthorized disclosure of this effort damages our national security and puts our citizens at risk. Revealing classified information is illegal, alerts our enemies, and endangers our country.

As the 9/11 Commission pointed out, it was clear that terrorists inside the United States were communicating with terrorists abroad before the September the 11th attacks, and the commission criticized our Nation's inability to uncover links between terrorists here at home and terrorists abroad. Two of the terrorist hijackers who flew a jet into the Pentagon, Nawaf al Hamzi and Khalid al Mihdhar, communicated while they were in the United States to other members of Al Qaida who were overseas. But we didn't know they were here until it was too late.

The authorization I gave the National Security Agency after September the 11th helped address that problem in a way that is fully consistent with my constitutional responsibilities and authorities. The activities I have authorized make it more likely that killers like these 9/11 hijackers will be identified and located in time. And the activities conducted under this authorization have helped detect and prevent possible terrorist attacks in the United States and abroad.

The activities I authorized are reviewed approximately every 45 days. Each review is based on a fresh intelligence assessment of terrorist threats to the continuity of our Government and the threat of catastrophic damage to our homeland. During each assessment, previous activities under the authorization are reviewed. The review includes approval by our Nation's top legal officials, including the Attorney General and the Counsel to the President. I have reauthorized this program more than 30 times since the September the 11th attacks, and I intend to do so for as long as our Nation faces a continuing threat from Al Qaida and related groups.

The NSA's activities under this authorization are thoroughly reviewed by the Justice Department and NSA's top legal officials, including NSA's General Counsel and Inspector General. Leaders in Congress have been briefed more than a dozen times on this authorization and the activities conducted under it. Intelligence officials involved in this activity also receive extensive training to ensure they perform their duties consistent with the letter and intent of the authorization.

This authorization is a vital tool in our war against the terrorists. It is critical to saving American lives. The American people expect me to do everything in my power under our laws and Constitution to protect them and their civil liberties. And that is exactly what I will continue to do, so long as I'm the President of the United States.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his address, he referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission). The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Address to the Nation on Iraq and the War on Terror

December 18, 2005

Good evening. Three days ago, in large numbers, Iraqis went to the polls to choose their own leaders, a landmark day in the history of liberty. In the coming weeks, the ballots will be counted, a new Government formed, and a people who suffered in tyranny for so long will become full members of the free world.

This election will not mean the end of violence. But it is the beginning of something new, constitutional democracy at the heart of the Middle East. And this vote, 6,000 miles away, in a vital region of the world, means that America has an ally of growing strength in the fight against terror.

All who had a part in this achievement, Iraqis and Americans and our coalition partners, can be proud. Yet our work is not done. There is more testing and sacrifice before us. I know many Americans have questions about the cost and direction of this war. So tonight I want to talk to you about how far we have come in Iraq and the path that lies ahead.

From this office, nearly 3 years ago, I announced the start of military operations in Iraq. Our coalition confronted a regime that defied United Nations Security Council resolutions, violated a ceasefire agreement, sponsored terrorism, and possessed, we believed, weapons of mass destruction. After the swift fall of Baghdad, we found mass graves filled by a dictator. We found some capacity to restart programs to produce weapons of mass destruction, but we did not find those weapons.

It is true that Saddam Hussein had a history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. It is true that he systematically concealed those programs and blocked the work of U.N. weapons inspectors. It is true that many nations believed that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. But much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong. As your President, I am responsible for the decision to go into Iraq. Yet it was right to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

He was given an ultimatum, and he made his choice for war. And the result of that war was to rid a—the world of a murderous dictator who menaced his people, invaded his neighbors, and declared America to be his enemy. Saddam Hussein, captured and jailed, is still the same raging tyrant, only now without a throne. His power to harm a single man, woman, or child is gone forever, and the world is better for it.

Since the removal of Saddam, this war, like other wars in our history, has been difficult. The mission of American troops in urban raids and desert patrols, fighting Saddam loyalists and foreign terrorists, has brought danger and suffering and loss. This loss has caused sorrow for our whole Nation, and it has led some to ask if we are creating more problems than we're solving.

That is an important question, and the answer depends on your view of the war on terror. If you think the terrorists would become peaceful if only America would stop provoking them, then it might make sense to leave them alone.

This is not the threat I see. I see a global terrorist movement that exploits Islam in the service of radical political aims, a vision in which books are burned and women are oppressed and all dissent is crushed. Terrorist operatives conduct their campaign of murder with a set of declared and specific goals: to demoralize free nations, to drive us out of the Middle East, to spread an empire of fear across that region, and to wage a perpetual war against America and our friends. These terrorists view the world as a giant battlefield, and they seek to attack us wherever they can. This has attracted Al Qaida to Iraq, where they are attempting to frighten and intimidate America into a policy of retreat.

The terrorists do not merely object to American actions in Iraq and elsewhere; they object to our deepest values and our way of life. And if we were not fighting them in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Southeast Asia, and in other places, the terrorists would not be peaceful citizens; they would be on the offense and headed our way.

September the 11th, 2001, required us to take every emerging threat to our country seriously, and it shattered the illusion that terrorists attack us only after we provoke them. On that day, we were not in Iraq; we were not in Afghanistan. But the terrorists

attacked us anyway and killed nearly 3,000 men, women, and children in our own country. My conviction comes down to this: We do not create terrorism by fighting the terrorists; we invite terrorism by ignoring them. And we will defeat the terrorists by capturing and killing them abroad, removing their safe havens, and strengthening new allies like Iraq and Afghanistan in the fight we share.

The work in Iraq has been especially difficult—more difficult than we expected. Reconstruction efforts and the training of Iraqi security forces started more slowly than we hoped. We continue to see violence and suffering, caused by an enemy that is determined and brutal, unconstrained by conscience or the rules of war.

Some look at the challenges in Iraq and conclude that the war is lost and not worth another dime or another day. I don't believe that. Our military commanders do not believe that. Our troops in the field, who bear the burden and make the sacrifice, do not believe that America has lost. And not even the terrorists believe it. We know from their own communications that they feel a tightening noose and fear the rise of a democratic Iraq.

The terrorists will continue to have the coward's power to plant roadside bombs and recruit suicide bombers. And you will continue to see the grim results on the evening news. This proves that the war is difficult. It doesn't mean that we are losing. Behind the images of chaos that terrorists create for the cameras, we are making steady gains with a clear objective in view.

America, our coalition, and Iraqi leaders are working toward the same goal, a democratic Iraq that can defend itself, that will never again be a safe haven for terrorists, and that will serve as a model of freedom for the Middle East.

We've put in place a strategy to achieve this goal, a strategy I've been discussing in detail over the last few weeks. This plan has three critical elements.

First, our coalition will remain on the offense, finding and clearing out the enemy, transferring control of more territory to Iraqi units, and building up the Iraqi security forces so they can increasingly lead the fight. At this time last year, there were only a handful of Iraqi army and police battalions ready for combat. Now, there are more than 125 Iraqi combat battalions fighting the enemy, more than 50 are taking the lead, and we have transferred more than a dozen military bases to Iraqi control.

Second, we're helping the Iraqi Government establish the institutions of a unified and lasting democracy, in which all of Iraq's people are included and represented. Here also, the news is encouraging. Three days ago, more than 10 million Iraqis went to the polls, including many Sunni Iraqis who had boycotted national elections last January. Iraqis of every background are recognizing that democracy is the future of the country they love, and they want their voices heard. One Iraqi, after dipping his finger in the purple ink as he cast his ballot, stuck his finger in the air and said, "This is a thorn in the eyes of the terrorists." Another voter was asked, "Are you Sunni or Shi'a?" And he responded, "I am Iraqi."

Third, after a number of setbacks, our coalition is moving forward with a reconstruction plan to revive Iraq's economy and infrastructure and to give Iraqis confidence that a free life will be a better life. Today in Iraq, 7 in 10 Iraqis say their lives are going well, and nearly two-thirds expect things to improve even more in the year ahead. Despite the violence, Iraqis are optimistic, and that optimism is justified.

In all three aspects of our strategy, security, democracy, and reconstruction, we have learned from our experiences and fixed what has not worked. We will continue to listen to honest criticism and make every change that will help us complete the mission. Yet there is a difference between honest critics who recognize what is wrong and defeatists who refuse to see that anything is right.

Defeatism may have its partisan uses, but it is not justified by the facts. For every scene of destruction in Iraq, there are more scenes of rebuilding and hope. For every life lost, there are countless more lives reclaimed. And for every terrorist working to stop freedom in Iraq, there are many more Iraqis and Americans working to defeat them. My fellow citizens, not only can we win the war in Iraq, we are winning the war in Iraq.

It is also important for every American to understand the consequences of pulling out of Iraq before our work is done. We would abandon our Iraqi friends and signal to the world that America cannot be trusted to keep its word. We would undermine the morale of our troops by betraying the cause for which they have sacrificed. We would cause the tyrants in the Middle East to laugh at our failed resolve and tighten their repressive grip. We would hand Iraq over to enemies who have pledged to attack us, and the global terrorist movement would be emboldened and more dangerous than ever before. To retreat before victory would be an act of recklessness and dishonor, and I will not allow it.

We're approaching a new year, and there are certain things all Americans can expect to see. We will see more sacrifice from our military, their families, and the Iraqi people. We will see a concerted effort to improve Iraqi police forces and fight corruption. We will see the Iraqi military gaining strength and confidence and the democratic process moving forward. As these achievements come, it should require fewer American troops to accomplish our mission. I will make decisions on troop levels based on the progress we see on the ground and the advice of our military leaders, not based on artificial timetables set by politicians in Washington. Our forces in Iraq are on the road to victory, and that is the road that will take them home.

In the months ahead, all Americans will have a part in the success of this war. Members of Congress will need to provide resources for our military. Our men and women in uniform, who have done so much already, will continue their brave and urgent work. And tonight, I ask all of you listening to carefully consider the stakes of this war, to realize how far we have come and the good we are doing and to have patience in this difficult, noble, and necessary cause.

I also want to speak to those of you who did not support my decision to send troops to Iraq. I have heard your disagreement, and I know how deeply it is felt. Yet now, there are only two options before our country, victory or defeat. And the need for victory is larger than any President or political party, because the security of our people is in the balance. I don't expect you to support everything I do, but tonight I have a request: Do not give in to despair, and do not give up on this fight for freedom.

Americans can expect some things of me as well. My most solemn responsibility is to protect our Nation, and that requires me to make some tough decisions. I see the consequences of those decisions when I meet wounded service men and women who cannot leave their hospital beds but summon the strength to look me in the eye and say they would do it all over again. I see the consequences when I talk to parents who miss a child so much but tell me he loved being a soldier, he believed in his mission, and, "Mr. President, finish the job."

I know that some of my decisions have led to terrible loss, and not one of those decisions has been taken lightly. I know this war is controversial; yet being your President requires doing what I believe is right and accepting the consequences. And I have never been more certain that America's actions in Iraq are essential to the security of our citizens and will lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

Next week, Americans will gather to celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah. Many families will be praying for loved ones spending this season far from home in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other dangerous places. Our Nation joins in those prayers. We pray for the safety and strength of our troops. We trust, with them, in a love that conquers all fear, in a light that reaches the darkest corners of the Earth. And we remember the words of the Christmas carol, written during the Civil War: "God is not dead, nor does He sleep; the Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, with peace on Earth, good will to men."

Thank you, and good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his address, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference

December 19, 2005

The President. Welcome. Please be seated. Thanks.

Last night I addressed the Nation about our strategy for victory in Iraq and the historic elections that took place in the country last week. In a nation that once lived by the whims of a brutal dictator, the Iraqi people now enjoy constitutionally protected freedoms, and their leaders now derive their powers from the consent of the governed. Millions of Iraqis are looking forward to a future with hope and optimism.

The Iraqi people still face many challenges. This is the first time the Iraqis are forming a Government under their new Constitution. The Iraqi Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the Parliament for certain top officials, so the formation of the new Government will take time as Iraqis work to build consensus. And once the new Iraqi Government assumes office, Iraq's new leaders will face many important decisions on issues such as security and reconstruction, economic reform, and national unity. The work ahead will require the patience of the Iraqi people and the patience and support of America and our coalition partners.

As I said last night, this election does not mean the end of violence, but it is the beginning of something new, a constitutional democracy at the heart of the Middle East. And we will keep working toward our goal of a democratic Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself.

Our mission in Iraq is critical to victory in the global war on terror. After our country was attacked on September the 11th and nearly 3,000 lives were lost, I vowed to do everything within my power to bring justice to those who were responsible. I also pledged to the American people to do everything within my power to prevent this from happening again. What we quickly learned was that Al Qaida was not a conventional enemy. Some lived in our cities and communities and communicated from here in America to plot and plan with bin Laden's lieutenants in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere. Then they boarded our airplanes and launched the worst attack on our country in our Nation's history.

This new threat required us to think and act differently. And as the 9/11 Commission pointed out, to prevent this from happening again, we need to connect the dots before the enemy attacks, not after. And we need to recognize that dealing with Al Qaida is not simply a matter of law enforcement; it requires defending the country against an enemy that declared war against the United States of America.

As President and Commander in Chief, I have the constitutional responsibility and the constitutional authority to protect our country. Article II of the Constitution gives me that responsibility and the authority necessary to fulfill it. And after September the 11th, the United States Congress also granted me additional authority to use military force against Al Qaida.

After September the 11th, one question my administration had to answer was how, using the authorities I have, how do we effectively detect enemies hiding in our midst and prevent them from striking us again? We know that a 2-minute phone conversation between somebody linked to Al Qaida here and an operative overseas could lead directly to the loss of thousands of lives. To save American lives, we must be able to act fast and to detect these conversations so we can prevent new attacks.

So, consistent with U.S. law and the Constitution, I authorized the interception of international communications of people with known links to Al Qaida and related terrorist organizations. This program is carefully reviewed approximately every 45 days to ensure it is being used properly. Leaders in the United States Congress have been briefed more than a dozen times on this program. And it has been effective in disrupting the enemy while safeguarding our civil liberties.

This program has targeted those with known links to Al Qaida. I've reauthorized this program more than 30 times since the September the 11th attacks, and I intend to do so for so long as our Nation is—for so long as the Nation faces the continuing threat of an enemy that wants to kill American citizens.

Another vital tool in the war on terror is the PATRIOT Act. After September the 11th, Congress acted quickly and responsibly by passing this law, which provides our law enforcement and intelligence community key tools to prevent attacks in our country. The PATRIOT Act tore down the legal and bureaucratic wall that kept law enforcement and intelligence authorities from sharing vital information about terrorist threats. It allows Federal investigators to pursue terrorists with tools already used against other types of criminals. America's law enforcement personnel have used this critical tool to prosecute terrorist operatives and their supporters and to breakup cells here in America.

Yet key provisions of this law are set to expire in 12 days. The House of Representatives voted for reauthorization, but last week, a minority of Senators filibustered the PATRIOT Act, blocking the Senate from voting to reauthorize key provisions of this vital law. In fact, the Senate Democratic leader boasted to a group of political supporters that the Senate Democrats had "killed the PATRIOT Act." Most of the Senators now filibustering the PATRIOT Act actually voted for it in 2001. These Senators need to explain why they thought the PATRIOT Act was a vital tool after the September the 11th attacks but now think it's no longer necessary.

The terrorists want to strike America again, and they hope to inflict even greater damage than they did on September the 11th. Congress has a responsibility to give our law enforcement and intelligence officials the tools they need to protect the American people. The Senators who are filibustering the PATRIOT Act must stop their delaying tactics, and the Senate must vote to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. In the war on terror, we cannot afford to be without this law for a single moment.

As we fight the war on terror, we'll also continue to work to build prosperity for our citizens. Because we cut taxes and restrained nonsecurity spending, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. We added 215,000 new jobs in November. We've added nearly 4.5 million new jobs since May of 2003. The unemployment rate is down to 5 percent, lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Despite hurricanes and high gas prices, third-quarter growth was 4.3 percent. More Americans own their own homes than at any time in our history. Inflation is low. Productivity is high, and consumer confidence is up. We're heading into a new year with an economy that is the envy of the world, and we have every reason to be optimistic about our economic future.

We made other important progress this year on the priorities of American families. We passed a good energy bill, and we're putting America on the path to make our economy less dependent on foreign sources of oil. We were wise with taxpayers' money and cut nonsecurity discretionary spending below last year's level. We passed the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement to open up markets and help level the playing field for America's workers and farmers and small businesses. We passed bankruptcy reform and class-action lawsuit reform. I appointed John Roberts as the 17th Chief Justice of the United States. Chief Justice Roberts is poised to lead the Supreme Court with integrity and prudence for decades to come.

We've got more work to do in this coming year. To keep our economy growing, we need to keep taxes low and make the tax relief permanent. We must restrain Government spending, and I'm pleased that the House today has voted to rein in entitlement spending by $40 billion, and I urge the United States Senate to join them. We must reduce junk lawsuits and strengthen our education system and give more Americans the ability to obtain affordable health insurance. We must pass comprehensive immigration reform that protects our borders, strengthens enforcement, and creates a new temporary-worker program that relieves pressure on the border but rejects amnesty.

I look forward to the Senate holding an up or down vote on Judge Sam Alito and confirming him by January 20th as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Judge Alito has more prior judicial experience than any Supreme Court nominee in more than 70 years. He's a highly respected and principled jurist, and he will make our Nation proud as a member of the High Court.

As we prepare to spend time with our families this holiday season, we also stop to count

our blessings. We're thankful for our courageous men and women in uniform who are spending the holidays away from loved ones, standing watch for liberty in distant lands. We give thanks for our military families who love and support them in their vital work and who also serve our country. And we pray for the families of the fallen heroes. We hold them in our hearts and we lift them up in our prayers and we pledge that the sacrifice of their loved ones will never be forgotten.

I'll be glad to answer some questions here, starting with you, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Investigation of Leaks/Judicial Safeguards on Wiretaps

Q. Thank you, sir. Are you going to order a leaks investigation into the disclosure of the NSA surveillance program? And why did you skip the basic safeguard of asking courts for permission for these intercepts?

The President. Let me start with the first question. There is a process that goes on inside the Justice Department about leaks, and I presume that process is moving forward. My personal opinion is it was a shameful act for someone to disclose this very important program in a time of war. The fact that we're discussing this program is helping the enemy.

You've got to understand—and I hope the American people understand—there is still an enemy that would like to strike the United States of America, and they're very dangerous. And the discussion about how we try to find them will enable them to adjust. Now, I can understand you asking these questions, and if I were you, I'd be asking me these questions too. But it is a shameful act by somebody who has got secrets of the United States Government and feels like they need to disclose them publicly.

Let me give you an example about my concerns about letting the enemy know what may or may not be happening. In the late 1990s, our Government was following Usama bin Laden because he was using a certain type of telephone. And then the fact that we were following Usama bin Laden because he was using a certain type of telephone made it into the press as the result of a leak. And guess what happened? Saddam—Usama bin Laden changed his behavior. He began to change how he communicated.

We're at war, and we must protect America's secrets. And so the Justice Department, I presume, will proceed forward with a full investigation. I haven't ordered one, because I understand there's kind of a natural progression that will take place when this kind of leak emerges.

The second part of the question is? Sorry, I gave a long answer.

Q. It was, why did you skip the basic safeguards of asking courts for permission for the intercepts?

The President. First of all, I—right after September the 11th, I knew we were fighting a different kind of war. And so I asked people in my administration to analyze how best for me and our Government to do the job people expect us to do, which is to detect and prevent a possible attack. That's what the American people want. We looked at the possible scenarios. And the people responsible for helping us protect and defend came forth with the current program, because it enables us to move faster and quicker. And that's important. We've got to be fast on our feet, quick to detect and prevent.

We use FISA still—you're referring to the FISA court in your question—of course, we use FISAs. But FISA is for long-term monitoring. What is needed in order to protect the American people is the ability to move quickly to detect.

Now, having suggested this idea, I then, obviously, went to the question, is it legal to do so? I am—I swore to uphold the laws. Do I have the legal authority to do this? And the answer is, absolutely. As I mentioned in my remarks, the legal authority is derived from the Constitution as well as the authorization of force by the United States Congress.

Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters].

Iraqi Elections and Constitution

Q. Mr. President, you have hailed the Iraqi elections as a success, but some lawmakers say you are not focusing on the threat of civil war. Do you fear a civil war? And how hard will you push Iraq's competing political parties to get a Government and a constitutional compromise?

The President. I appreciate that. We look at all contingencies, but my optimism about a unified Iraq moving forward was confirmed when over 10 million people went to the polls under a—and voted for a Government under the new Constitution. Constitutions tend to bind societies.

Now, there are some things we've got to watch, Adam, for certain. One, is we've got to help the Iraqi Government as best as they need help, to stand up a Government as quickly as possible. In other words, we're urging them: Don't delay; move as quickly as you can; solve the—get the political parties—once the vote is completed, get the political parties together and come up with a Government.

And it's going to take awhile, because, first of all, the ballots won't be fully counted, I guess, until early January. And then, as I mentioned in my remarks, it takes a two-thirds vote to—first, to seat certain officials. Sometimes it's hard to achieve a two-thirds vote in legislative bodies. How about the Senate, for example? [*Laughter*] But nevertheless, it's going to take awhile. And the American people have got to understand that we think in terms of elections, most of our elections end the day after the election. Sometimes they don't, Adam. [*Laughter*] And so you're going to see a lot of give-and-take, and it's important for us to get this process moving forward.

Secondly, there is an opportunity to amend the Constitution. You remember that was part of the deal with the Iraqis in order to get this process moving. And we'll want to make sure we're monitoring and involved with that part. In other words, involvement doesn't mean telling the sovereign Government what to do. Involvement means giving advice as to how to move forward so a country becomes more unified. And I'm very optimistic about the way forward for the Iraqi people.

And the reason why is based upon the fact that the Iraqis have shown incredible courage. Think about what has happened in a brief period of time—relatively brief. I know with all the TV stations and stuff in America, 2½ years seems like an eternity. But in the march of history, it's not all that long. They have gone from tyranny to an amazing election last December. If I'd have stood up here a year ago, in one of my many press conferences, and told you that in the—"Next year I make this prediction to you, that over 10 million Iraqis, including many Sunnis, will vote for a permanent Government," I think you probably would have said, "There he goes again."

But it happened. And it happened because the Iraqis want to live in a free society. And what's important about this election is that Iraq will become an ally in the war on terror, and Iraq will serve as a beacon for what is possible, a beacon of freedom in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom and liberty. And as I say in my speeches, a free Iraq will serve as such an optimistic and hopeful example for reformers from Tehran to Damascus. And that's an important part of a strategy to help lay the foundation of peace for generations.

John [John Roberts, CBS News].

President's Decision on Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. So many questions, so little time.

The President. Well, keep your question short, then. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'll do my best, sir. But sir, you've shown a remarkable spirit of candor in the last couple of weeks in your conversation and speeches about Iraq. And I'm wondering if, in that spirit, I might ask you a question that you didn't seem to have an answer for the last time you were asked, and that is, what would you say is the biggest mistake you've made during your Presidency, and what have you learned from it?

The President. Answering Dickerson's question. No, I—the last time those questions were asked, I really felt like it was an attempt for me to say it was a mistake to go into Iraq. And it wasn't a mistake to go into Iraq. It was the right decision to make.

I think that, John, there's going to be a lot of analysis done on the decisions on the ground in Iraq. For example, I'm fully aware that some have said it was a mistake not to put enough troops there immediately—or more troops. I made my decision based upon the recommendations of Tommy Franks, and I still think it was the right decision to make. But history will judge.

I said the other day that a mistake was trying to train a civilian defense force and an Iraqi Army at the same time but not giving the civilian defense force enough training and tools necessary to be able to battle a group of thugs and killers. And so we adjusted.

And the point I'm trying to make to the American people in this, as you said, candid dialog—I hope I've been candid all along, but in the candid dialog—is to say, we're constantly changing our tactics to meet the changing tactics of an enemy. And that's important for our citizens to understand.

Thank you. Kelly [Kelly Wallace, Cable News Network].

Open Dialog on Wiretaps

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If you believe that present law needs to be faster, more agile, concerning the surveillance of conversations from someone in the United States to somewhere outside the country——

The President. Right.

Q. ——why, in the 4 years since 9/11, has your administration not sought to get changes in the law instead of bypassing it, as some of your critics have said?

The President. No, I appreciate that. First, I want to make clear to the people listening that this program is limited in nature to those that are known Al Qaida ties and/or affiliates. That's important. So it's a program that's limited, and you brought up something that I want to stress, and that is, is that these calls are not intercepted within the country. They are from outside the country to in the country or vice versa. So in other words, this is not a—if you're calling from Houston to L.A., that call is not monitored. And if there was ever any need to monitor, there would be a process to do that.

I think I've got the authority to move forward, Kelly. I mean, this is what it's—and the Attorney General was out briefing this morning and I—about why it's legal to make the decisions I'm making. I can fully understand why Members of Congress are expressing concerns about civil liberties. I know that. And it's—I share the same concerns. I want to make sure the American people understand, however, that we have an obligation to protect you, and we're doing that and, at the same time, protecting your civil liberties.

Secondly, an open debate about law would say to the enemy, "Here's what we're going to do." And this is an enemy which adjusts. We monitor this program carefully. We have consulted with Members of the Congress over a dozen times. We are constantly reviewing the program. Those of us who review the program have a duty to uphold the laws of the United States, and we take that duty very seriously.

Let's see here—Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News]—working my way around the electronic media, here.

Domestic Wiretaps

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You say you have an obligation to protect us. Then why not monitor those calls between Houston and L.A.? If the threat is so great, and you use the same logic, why not monitor those calls? Americans thought they weren't being spied on in calls overseas—why not within the country, if the threat is so great?

The President. We will, under current law, if we have to. We will monitor those calls. And that's why there is a FISA law. We will apply for the right to do so. And there's a difference—let me finish—there is a difference between detecting, so we can prevent, and monitoring. And it's important to know the distinction between the two.

Q. But preventing is one thing, and you said the FISA laws essentially don't work because of the speed in monitoring calls overseas.

The President. I said we use the FISA courts to monitor calls. It's a very important tool, and we do use it. I just want to make sure we've got all tools at our disposal. This is an enemy which is quick, and it's lethal. And sometimes we have to move very, very quickly. But if there is a need based upon evidence, we will take that evidence to a court in order to be able to monitor calls within the United States.

Who haven't I called on, let's see here. Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network].

Congressional Oversight

Q. Democrats have said that you have acted beyond the law and that you have even broken the law. There are some Republicans who are calling for congressional hearings and even an independent investigation. Are you willing to go before Members of Congress and explain this eavesdropping program? And do you support an independent investigation?

The President. We have been talking to Members of the United States Congress. We have met with them over 12 times. And it's important for them to be brought into this process. Again, I repeat, I understand people's concerns. But I also want to assure the American people that I am doing what you expect me to do, which is to safeguard civil liberties and, at the same time, protect the United States of America. And we've explained the authorities under which I'm making our decisions and will continue to do so.

Secondly, there is a committee—two committees on the Hill which are responsible, and that's the Intelligence Committee. Again, any public hearings on programs will say to the enemy, here's what they do; adjust. This is a war. Of course we consult with Congress and have been consulting with Congress and will continue to do so.

Wendell [Wendell Goler, Fox News Channel]. You got a little problem there, Wendell? [*Laughter*]

Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction/Iraqi Constitution

Q. I'm caught, Mr. President.

The President. Oh, you're caught. [*Laughter*] Well, liberate him. [*Laughter*]

Q. You've talked about your decision to go to war and the bad intelligence, and you've carefully separated the intelligence from the decision, saying that it was the right decision to go to war despite the problems with the intelligence, sir. But with respect, the intelligence helped you build public support for the war. And so I wonder if now, as you look back, if you look at that intelligence and feel that the intelligence and your use of it might bear some responsibility for the current divisions in the country over the war, and what can you do about it, sir?

The President. No, I appreciate that. First of all, I can understand why people were—well, wait a minute. Everybody thought there was weapons of mass destruction, and there weren't any. I felt the same way. We looked at the intelligence and felt certain that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. Intelligence agencies around the world felt the same way, by the way. Members of the United States Congress looked at the National Intelligence Estimate—same intelligence estimate I looked at—and came to the same conclusion, Wendell.

So in other words, there was universal—there was a universal feeling that he had weapons of mass destruction. As a matter of fact, it was so universal that the United Nations Security Council passed numerous resolutions. And so when the weapons weren't there, like many Americans, I was concerned and wondered why. That's why we set up the Silberman-Robb Commission to address intelligence shortfalls, to hopefully see to it that this kind of situation didn't arise.

Now, having said all that, what we did find after the war was that Saddam Hussein had the desire to—or the liberation—Saddam had the desire to reconstitute his weapons programs. In other words, he had the capacity to reconstitute them. America was still his enemy. And of course, he manipulated the Oil-for-Food Programme in the hopes of ending sanctions. In our view, he was just waiting for the world to turn its head, to look away, in order to reconstitute the programs. He was dangerous then. It's the right decision to have removed Saddam.

Now, the American people—I will continue to speak to the American people on this issue, to not only describe the decision-making process but also the way forward. I gave a speech prior to the liberation of Iraq, when I talked about a broader strategic objective, which is the establishment of democracy. And I've talked about democracy in Iraq. Certainly it's not the only rationale; I'm not claiming that. But I also want you to review that speech so that you get a sense for not only the desire to remove a threat, but also the desire to help establish democracy. And the amazing thing about—in Iraq, as a part of a broader strategy to help what I call,

"lay the foundation of peace," democracies don't war; democracies are peaceful countries.

And what you're seeing now is an historic moment, because I believe democracies will spread. I believe when people get the taste for freedom or see a neighbor with a taste for freedom, they will demand the same thing, because I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe everybody has the desire to be free. I recognize some don't believe that, which basically condemns some to tyranny. I strongly believe that deep in everybody's soul is the desire to live in liberty, and if given a chance, they will choose that path. And it's not easy to do that. The other day, I gave a speech and talked about how our road to our Constitution, which got amended shortly after it was approved, was pretty bumpy. We tried the Articles of Confederation. It didn't work. There was a lot of, kind of, civil unrest. But nevertheless, in that—deep in the soul is the desire to live in liberty; people—make the—have got the patience and the steadfastness to achieve that objective. And that is what we're seeing in Iraq.

And it's not going to be easy. It's still going to be hard, because we're getting rid of decades of bitterness. If you're a—you know, you find these secret prisons where people have been tortured, that's unacceptable. And yet there are some who still want to have retribution against people who harmed them.

Now, I'll tell you an amazing story; at least I thought it was amazing. We had people—first-time voters, or voters in the Iraqi election, come in to see me in the Oval. They had just voted that day, and they came in. It was exciting to talk to people. And one person said, "How come you're giving Saddam Hussein a trial?" I said, "First of all, it's your Government, not ours." She said, "He doesn't deserve a trial. He deserves immediate death for what he did to my people." And it just struck me about how strongly she felt about the need to not have a rule of law, that there needed to be quick retribution, that he didn't deserve it. And I said to her, "Don't you see that the trial itself stands in such contrast to the tyrant that that in itself is a victory for freedom and a defeat for tyranny," just the trial alone. And it's important that there be rule of law.

My only point to you is there's a lot of work to get rid of the past, yet we're headed in the right direction. And it's an exciting moment in history.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Getting back to the domestic spying issue for a moment. According to FISA's own records, it's received nearly 19,000 requests for wiretaps or search warrants since 1979, rejected just five of them. It also operates in secret, so security shouldn't be a concern, and it can be applied retroactively. Given such a powerful tool of law enforcement is at your disposal, sir, why did you see fit to sidetrack that process?

The President. We used the process to monitor. But also, this is a different era, a different war, Stretch. So what we're—people are changing phone numbers and phone calls, and they're moving quick. And we've got to be able to detect and prevent. I keep saying that, but this is a—it requires quick action.

And without revealing the operating details of our program, I just want to assure the American people that, one, I've got the authority to do this; two, it is a necessary part of my job to protect you; and three, we're guarding your civil liberties. And we're guarding the civil liberties by monitoring the program on a regular basis, by having the folks at NSA, the legal team, as well as the Inspector General, monitor the program, and we're briefing Congress. This is a part of our effort to protect the American people. The American people expect us to protect them and protect their civil liberties. I'm going to do that. That's my job, and I'm going to continue doing my job.

Let's see here—Sanger [David Sanger, New York Times].

Impact of Intelligence Failures/Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Following up on Wendell's question about the intelligence failures ahead of Iraq, one of the side effects appears to have been that the United States has lost some credibility with its allies when it goes to them with new intelligence.

You, for example, your administration, has been sharing with some of your allies the contents of a laptop computer that was found in Iran concerning their nuclear program. Yet you are still having——

The President. Is that classified? [*Laughter*] No, never mind, Sanger.

Q. Yet you are still having some difficulty convincing people that Iran has a nuclear program. Can you tell us whether or not you think one of the side effects of the intelligence failure has been that it has limited your ability to deal with future threats like Iran, like North Korea, or any other future threats concerning terrorists?

The President. Sanger, I hate to admit it, but that's an excellent question. No question that the intelligence failure on weapons of mass destruction caused all intelligence services to have to step back and reevaluate the process of gathering and analyzing intelligence—no doubt about that. And so there's been a lot of work done to work with other intelligence agencies to share information about what went right and what went wrong as well as to build credibility among all services.

I think, David, where it is going to be most difficult to make the case is in the public arena. People will say, "If we're trying to make the case on Iran, well, the intelligence failed in Iraq; therefore, how can we trust the intelligence in Iran?" And part of the reason why there needs to be a public message on this is because the first hope and the first step is a diplomatic effort to get the Iranians to comply with the demands of the free world. If they don't, there's—along the diplomatic path, there's always the United Nations Security Council. But that case of making—beginning to say to the Iranians, "There are consequences for not behaving," requires people to believe that the Iranian nuclear program is, to a certain extent, ongoing. And so we're working hard on that. I mean, it's no question that the credibility of intelligence is necessary for good diplomacy.

Q. Do you intend to make that case publicly, too, sir? You haven't yet laid out the evidence on Iran——

The President. Well, I think that the best place to make the case now is still in the councils of government and convincing the EU–3, for example, to continue working the diplomatic angle. Of course, we want this to be solved diplomatically, and we want the Iranians to hear a unified voice. I think people believe that—I know this: People know that an Iran with the capacity to manufacture a nuclear weapon is not in the world's interest. That's universally accepted. And that should be accepted universally, particularly after what the President recently said about the desire to annihilate, for example, an ally of the United States.

And so the idea of Iran having a nuclear weapon is—people say, "Well, we can't let that happen." The next step is to make sure that the world understands that the capacity to enrich uranium for a civilian program would lead to a weapons program. And so therefore, we cannot allow the Iranians to have the capacity to enrich. One of the reasons why I proposed working with the Russians, the Russian idea of allowing Iran to have a civilian nuclear powerplant industry without enriched material—in other words, the enriched materials—without enriching material, the enriching material would come from Russia, in this case, and be picked up by the Russians, was to prevent them from having the capacity to develop a nuclear weapon.

So I think there's universal agreement that we don't want them to have a weapon. And there is agreement that they should not be allowed to learn how to make a weapon. And beyond that, I think that's all I'm going to say.

But, appreciate it.

Baker [Peter Baker, Washington Post].

War on Terror and Safeguarding Civil Liberties

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if you can tell us today, sir, what, if any, limits you believe there are or should be on the powers of a President during a war, at wartime? And if the global war on terror is going to last for decades, as has been forecast, does that mean that we're going to see, therefore, a more or less permanent expansion of the unchecked power of the Executive in American society?

The President. First of all, I disagree with your assertion of "unchecked power."

Q. Well——

The President. Hold on for a second, please. There is the check of people being sworn to uphold the law, for starters. There is oversight. We're talking to Congress all the time, and on this program, to suggest there's unchecked power is not listening to what I'm telling you. I'm telling you, we have briefed the United States Congress on this program a dozen times.

This is an awesome responsibility, to make decisions on behalf of the American people, and I understand that, Peter. And we'll continue to work with the Congress, as well as people within our own administration, to constantly monitor programs such as the one I described to you, to make sure that we're protecting the civil liberties of the United States. To say "unchecked power" basically is ascribing some kind of dictatorial position to the President, which I strongly reject.

Q. What limits do you see, sir? What limits do you see broadening——

The President. I just described limits on this particular program, Peter. And that's what's important for the American people to understand. I am doing what you expect me to do and at the same time safeguarding the civil liberties of the country.

John [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

President's Goals for 2006

Q. Thank you, sir. Looking ahead to this time next year, what are the top three or top five—take your pick—accomplishments that you hope to have achieved? And in particular, what is your best case scenario for troop levels in Iraq at this time next year?

The President. This is kind of like—this is the ultimate benchmark question. You're trying to not only get me to give benchmarks in Iraq but also benchmarks domestically.

I hope the world is more peaceful. I hope democracy continues to take root around the world. And I hope people are able to find jobs. The job base of this country is expanding, and we need to keep it that way. We want people working. I want New Orleans and Mississippi to be better places. I appreciate very much the progress that Congress is making toward helping a vision of New Orleans rising up and the gulf coast of Mississippi being reconstructed. I think we can make good progress down there.

One of the key decisions our administration has made is to make sure that the levees are better than they were before Katrina, in New Orleans. That will help—people will have the confidence necessary to make investments and to take risk and to expand.

I appreciate the Congress, and I'm looking forward to the Senate confirming—affirming the U.S. Congress' decisions to fund the education or reimburse States for education. There's some good health care initiatives in the bill. We want to make sure that people don't get booted out of housing. We want to work carefully to make sure people understand that there are benefits or help available that—for them to find housing. We want to continue to move temporary housing on the gulf coast of Mississippi so people can get better—closer to their neighborhoods and get their homes rebuilt. We want to start helping Mayor Nagin get temporary housing near New Orleans so as this economy comes back, people will be able to find jobs.

I appreciate the fact that the Congress passed the GO Zone tax incentives in order to attract capital into the region. So one of my hopes is, is that people are able to find hope and optimism after the Katrina disaster down there, that people's lives get up and running again, that people see a brighter future. I've got a lot of hopes, and I'm looking forward to working with Congress to get those—to achieve some big goals.

Joe [Joseph Curl, Washington Times].

Q. [*Inaudible*].

The President. You see, I hope by now you've discovered something about me, that when I say we're not going to have artificial timetables of withdrawal, and/or, you know, trying to get me out on a limb on what the troop levels will look like—the answer to your question on troop levels is, it's conditions-based. We have an objective in Iraq, and as we meet those objectives, our commanders on the ground will determine the size of the troop levels.

Nice try—end of your try.

Joe.

Timetables and Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, you said last night that there were only two options in Iraq, withdrawal or victory. And you asked Americans, especially opponents of the war, to reject partisan politics. Do you really expect congressional Democrats to end their partisan warfare and embrace your war strategy? And what can you do about that to make that happen?

The President. Actually, I said that victory in Iraq is much larger than a person, a President, or a political party. And I've had some good visits with Senate and House Democrats about the way forward. They share the same concerns I share. You know, they want our troops out of Iraq as quickly as possible, but they don't want to do so without achieving a victory. These are good, solid Americans that agree that we must win for the sake of our security. And I'm interested in, Joe, their ideas and will continue to listen carefully to their ideas.

On the other hand, there are some in this country that believe, strongly believe, that we ought to get out now. And I just don't agree with them. It's a wrong strategy, and I'd like to tell you again why. One, it would dishearten the Iraqis. The Iraqis are making a great—showing great courage to setting up a democracy. And a democracy in Iraq—I know I've said this, and I'm going to keep saying it, because I want the American people to understand—a democracy in Iraq is vital in the long run to defeating terrorism. And the reason why is, is because democracy is hopeful and optimistic.

Secondly, it sends the wrong signal to our troops. We've got young men and women over there sacrificing. And all of a sudden, because of politics or some focus group or some poll, they stand up and say, "We're out of there." I can't think of anything more dispiriting than—to a kid risking his or her life than to see decisions made based upon politics.

Thirdly, it sends the wrong signal to the enemy. It just says, "Wait them out. They're soft. They don't have the courage to complete the mission. All we've got to do is continue to kill and get these images on the TV screens, and the Americans will leave." And all that will do is embolden these people. Now, I recognize there is a debate in the country, and I fully understand that, about the nature of the enemy. I hear people say, because we took action in Iraq, we stirred them up; they're dangerous. No, they were dangerous before we went into Iraq. That's what the American people have got to understand. That's why I took the decision I took on the NSA decision, because I understand how dangerous they are. And they want to hit us again.

Let me say something about the PATRIOT Act, if you don't mind. It is inexcusable for the United States Senate to let this PATRIOT Act expire. You know, there's an interesting debate in Washington, and you're part of it, that says, well, they didn't connect the dots prior to September the 11th—"they" being not only my administration, but previous administrations. And I understand that debate. I'm not being critical of you bringing this issue up and discussing it, but there was a—you might remember, if you take a step back, people were pretty adamant about hauling people up to testify and wondering how come the dots weren't connected.

Well, the PATRIOT Act helps us connect the dots. And now the United States Senate is going to let this bill expire. Not the Senate—a minority of Senators. And I want Senators from New York or Los Angeles or Las Vegas to go home and explain why these cities are safer. It is inexcusable to say, on the one hand, connect the dots, and not give us a chance to do so. We've connected the dots—or trying to connect the dots with the NSA program. And again, I understand the press and Members of the United States Congress saying, "Are you sure you're safeguarding civil liberties?" That's a legitimate question and an important question. And today I hope I'll help answer that. But we're connecting dots as best as we possibly can.

I mentioned in my radio address—my live TV-radio address—that there was two killers in San Diego making phone calls prior to the September the 11th attacks. Had this program been in place then, it is more likely we would have been able to catch them. But they're making phone calls from the United States, overseas, talking about—who knows what they're talking about, but they ended

up killing—being a part of the team that killed 3,000 Americans. And so—I forgot what got me on the subject, but nevertheless, I'm going to—we're doing the right thing.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

Issues of Race

Q. Mr. President, in making the case for domestic spying, could you tell us about planned attacks on the U.S. that were thwarted through your domestic spying plan? And also, on the issue of race, since you brought up the issue of Katrina, 2005 gave us your defense of yourself on race, and some are still not sold on that. In 2006, what are you giving to the Nation on the issue of race, as we're looking to the renewal of the Voting Rights Act in 2007 and things of that nature?

The President. Yes, thanks. April, the fact that some in America believe that I am not concerned about race troubles me. One of the jobs of the President is to help people reconcile and to move forward and to unite. One of the most hurtful things I can hear is, "Bush doesn't care about African Americans," for example. First of all, it's not true. And secondly, I believe that—obviously I've got to do a better job of communicating, I guess, to certain folks, because my job is to say to people, we're all equally American, and the American opportunity applies to you just as much as somebody else. And so I will continue to do my best, April, to reach out.

Now, you talked about—and we have an opportunity, by the way, in New Orleans, for example, to make sure the education system works, to make sure that we promote ownership. I think it is vitally important for ownership to extend to more than just a single community. I think the more African Americans own their own business, the better off America is. I feel strongly that if we can get people to own and manage their own retirement accounts, like personal accounts and Social Security, it makes society a better place. I want people to be able to say, "This is my asset." Heretofore, kind of asset accumulation may have been only a part of—a single—a part of—a segmented part of our strategy. We want assets being passed from one generation to the next. I take pride in this statistic, that more African Americans own a home, or more minorities own a home, now than ever before in our Nation's history, not just African Americans. That's positive.

I still want to make sure, though, that people understand that I care about them, and that my view of the future, a bright future, pertains to them as much as any other neighborhood.

Now, you've mentioned the Voting Rights Act. Congress needs to reauthorize it, and I'll sign it.

The other question was?

Q. Sir——

The President. You asked a multiple-part question.

Q. Yes, I did.

The President. Thank you for violating the multiple-part question rule.

Q. I didn't know there was a law on that. [*Laughter*]

The President. There's not a law. It's an Executive order. [*Laughter*] In this case, not monitored by the Congress—[*laughter*]—nor is there any administrative oversight. [*Laughter*]

Protecting Intelligence Sources and Methods

Q. Well, without breaking any laws, on to—back on domestic spying. Making the case for that, can you give us some example——

The President. Oh, I got you. Yes, sorry. No, I'm not going to talk about that, because it would help give the enemy notification and/or, perhaps, signal to them methods and uses and sources. And we're not going to do that, which is—it's really important for people to understand that the protection of sources and the protections of methods and how we use information to understand the nature of the enemy is secret. And the reason it's secret is because if it's not secret, the enemy knows about it, and if the enemy knows about it, adjusts.

And again, I want to repeat what I said about Usama bin Laden, the man who ordered the attack that killed 3,000 Americans. We were listening to him. He was using a type of cell phone or a type of phone, and we put it in the newspaper—somebody put it in the newspaper that this was the type of device he was using to communicate with

his team, and he changed. I don't know how I can make the point more clear, that any time we give up—and this is before they attacked us, by the way—revealing sources, methods, and what we use the information for, simply says to the enemy, "Change."

Now, if you don't think there's an enemy out there, then I can understand why you ought to say, "Just tell us all you know." I happen to know there's an enemy there. And the enemy wants to attack us. That is why I hope you can feel my passion about the PATRIOT Act. It is inexcusable to say to the American people, "We're going to be tough on terror but take away the very tools necessary to help fight these people." And by the way, the tools exist still to fight medical fraud, in some cases, or other—or drug dealers. But with the expiration of the PATRIOT Act, it prevents us from using them to fight the terrorists. Now, that is just unbelievable. And I'm going to continue talking about this issue and reminding the American people about the importance of the PATRIOT Act and how necessary it is for us in Washington, DC, to do our job to protect you.

Let's see, who else? Jackson—Action Jackson [David Jackson, USA Today]. Got him a new job and everything.

President's Leadership

Q. Thank you, sir. One of the things we've seen this year is the reduction in your approval ratings. And I know how you feel about polls, but it appears to be taking something out of your political clout, as evidenced by the PATRIOT Act vote. What do you attribute your lower polls to, and are you worried that independents are losing confidence in your leadership?

The President. David, my job is to confront big challenges and lead. And I fully understand, everybody is not going to agree with my decisions. But the President's job is to do what he thinks is right, and that's what I'm going to continue to do.

Secondly, if people want to play politics with the PATRIOT Act, it's—let me just put—it's not in the best interests of the country, David. And yesterday—or this morning, I spoke to the Speaker, who called me. He said, "Mr. President, we had a pretty good couple of days. Got your budget passed. Got the Katrina relief package going forward. We're supporting our troops. We've got the free trade"—we talked about passing CAFTA in the past. I mean, we've done a lot. And it's good for the country, by the way.

And so I'm just going to keep doing my job. Maybe you can keep focusing on all these focus groups and polls and all that business. My job is to lead, to keep telling the American people what I believe, work to bring people together to achieve a common objective, stand on principle, and that's the way I'm going to lead. I did so in 2005, and I'm going to do so in 2006.

Thank you all for coming. Happy holidays to you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:32 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; President Mahmud Ahmadinejad of Iran; and Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks During Visit to a "Toys for Tots" Collection Center

December 19, 2005

The President. Two-hundred-eighty-nine-thousand toys being distributed from here to children throughout DC.

It's an interesting process. The toys are collected; the Marines sort with DC police and distribute. Is that right?

Volunteer. Yes.

The President. Thanks for doing this—a great part of the compassion of our country. Now, I told our troops that, one, we're a great military; we're great because of the men and women who serve; we're great because of our strength. We're also great because they're decent people who care about a neighbor in need.

So Laura and I are thrilled to be here. Thank you all for your service. We're getting to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:18 p.m. at the Naval District Washington Anacostia Annex.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Legislative Agenda

December 19, 2005

I appreciate the House of Representatives for its work to meet key national priorities, including funding the war on terror, voting to renew provisions of the PATRIOT Act, assisting hurricane victims, reducing our dependence on foreign sources of oil, and preparing against the threat of an avian flu pandemic. I also applaud the House for being wise with taxpayer dollars and approving a significant reduction in spending on entitlements. I thank the Speaker and the House leaders, Chairman Nussle, and the chairmen of the authorizing committees for their leadership. I urge the Senate to send these bills to my desk promptly so that I can sign them into law.

Statement on the Inauguration of the Afghan National Assembly

December 19, 2005

I congratulate the Afghan people on the inauguration of the new Afghan national assembly. Today is another milestone in Afghanistan's historic transition to a stable and democratic state governed by the rule of law. A freely and fairly elected legislature plays a vital role in the life of a representative democracy. I applaud the members of the national assembly on their service to their country and support their efforts, with President Karzai and his Government, to improve the lives of the Afghan people.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2005

December 19, 2005

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"—which means, God with us.

Matthew 1:23

More than 2,000 years ago, a virgin gave birth to a Son, and the God of heaven came to Earth. Mankind had received its Savior, and to those who had dwelled in darkness, the light of hope had come. Each Christmas, we celebrate that first coming anew, and we rejoice in the knowledge that the God who came to Earth that night in Bethlehem is with us still and will remain with us forever.

Christmas is a season of hope and joy, a time to give thanks for the blessing of Christ's birth and for the blessings that surround us every day of the year. We have much to be thankful for in this country, and we have a responsibility to help those in need. Jesus calls us to help others, and acts of kindness toward the less fortunate fulfill the spirit of the Christmas season.

On Christmas, we pray for freedom, justice, and peace on Earth. We remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and for our freedom, and we ask for God's blessing on their loved ones. We ask God to watch over all of our men and women in uniform. Many are serving in distant lands, helping to advance the cause of freedom and peace. Our entire Nation is grateful to them and prays for their safe return.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a blessed and merry Christmas.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2005

December 19, 2005

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

More than 2,000 years ago, the Jewish people led a revolt against oppressors who forbade them to pray, study the Torah, or observe their religious customs. Led by Judah Maccabee and fueled by their faith, their small army triumphed over tyranny. When they reclaimed the desecrated Temple and prepared it to be purified and rededicated, the holy oil that should have lasted only one day instead burned for eight days. During Hanukkah, Jews around the world honor this miracle by lighting the menorah, a symbol of hope shining through darkness.

As Jewish Americans prepare to light the Hanukkah candles this year, we give thanks for God's many blessings and His watch and care over our Nation. We remember our many military families and ask God's special blessing on those who have lost loved ones in freedom's cause. We are grateful for the courage and commitment of America's men and women in uniform and pray for their safety as they serve around the world to spread peace and liberty.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyful Hanukkah.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2005

December 19, 2005

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

African Americans and people around the world reflect on African heritage during Kwanzaa. The seven days of this celebration emphasize the seven principles of Nguzo Saba—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. These values contribute to a culture of citizenship and compassion, and Kwanzaa activities help pass on African values and traditions to future generations.

As families and friends gather for Kwanzaa, Americans remember the many contributions African Americans have made to our country's character and celebrate the diversity that makes our Nation strong. May your commitment to family, faith, and community thrive during this holiday season and throughout the coming year.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a happy Kwanzaa.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for John J. Danilovich as Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation

December 20, 2005

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's nice to be back here at the State Department. I'm glad to be with my friend, Condi Rice, who's doing a fabulous job as our Secretary of State. It's also good to be here with the Board and staff of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. And I'm proud to be here to congratulate the new Chief Executive Officer, Ambassador John Danilovich.

This is a vital program for our country and for my administration, and that's why I've come. The MCC is an integral part of our strategy to fight poverty and to encourage economic development. And leading this organization requires a combination of idealism and managerial skill and diplomatic savvy and economic expertise. John Danilovich has those qualities. That's why I picked him, and that's why he's going to be a great executive leading this important corporation.

I'm also proud to be standing up here with Irene, and I'm glad to be with his three children, J.C., Alice, and Alex, proud members of the Danilovich family. I appreciate Ambassador Negroponte being here today. Thank you, John. He's doing a fine job as the Director of National Intelligence. In order to defeat the enemy, we have got to have the best intelligence possible. Thanks for your leadership.

Deputy Secretary Bob Kimmitt of the Treasury is with us. I see my friend, Mosbacher, here, from OPIC. Thanks for coming, Rob. Members of the administration too numerous to mention are here, and I want to thank the ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, Your Excellencies, thanks for being here today.

America is founded on the belief that every life has dignity and every life has value, and we have long felt a special responsibility to help the less fortunate. For decades, our country sent aid to developing—to the developing world with the best of intentions, but we did not ask if we were getting the best of results. Too often, American aid was

squandered by inept leaders, pocketed by corrupt officials, and swallowed up by rampant inflation. Without insisting on accountability in exchange for generosity, we were not serving the people of the developing countries, and we were not serving the American taxpayers.

And so my administration decided to do something about it. We decided to insist upon results. Almost 2 years ago, we launched the Millennium Challenge Account as an entirely new way to provide aid. The MCA is based on clear principle: Countries that seek our aid must demonstrate a record of performance. I don't think that's too much to ask on behalf of the taxpayer, nor is it too much to demand on behalf of people living in the countries we're trying to help.

Specifically, countries seeking MCA assistance have got to show results in three key areas. They must govern justly; that makes sense. They must invest in their people; that's a wise use of money. And they must encourage economic freedom.

Poor countries that prove a commitment to these sound policies are eligible to apply for an MCC compact. That's an interesting word, "compact." It means we're working together. It means these countries have to design a proposal that will reduce national poverty and stimulate economic growth. We consider each proposal through a rigorous process—sometimes too slow and too rigorous—and then award compacts to countries with wise proposals that include a way to measure results. By requiring countries to create and implement their own strategies, they have a stake in their own success, and we're giving Americans reason to be confident as we spend their money.

The Millennium Challenge Account has the potential to transform the way the world delivers aid. So far, we have signed compacts with five nations and committed to deliver nearly a billion dollars in assistance. That money is making life-changing difference in some of the poorest countries in the world. In Madagascar, where 80 percent of the people live on less than $2 a day, the MCA compact is helping to modernize the national land registry, which will help secure property rights for more than 60,000 families. In Honduras and Nicaragua, MCA compacts are helping farmers improve their business plans to grow more profitable crops and to get the crops to the markets faster. In Georgia, where I visited last spring, an MCA compact is helping to rebuild a gas pipeline that will provide reliable heat and electricity for more than a million people. And in Cape Verde, off the Atlantic coast of Africa, an MCA compact is funding the construction of new roads and bridges that will connect some of the nation's key islands. These small nations are making big commitments, and America is proud to stand by their side.

We support people who fight corruption. We support people who invest in the health and education of their children. We support people who understand that economic freedom is the way to improve the lives of their citizens.

We have more to do to fight poverty. I believe central to our foreign policy must be, "To whom much is given, much is required." That's why we're leading the fight against HIV/AIDS. That's why we're feeding the hungry. And we're going to continue to help eradicate poverty around the world. John Danilovich is the right person to take on this part of our efforts to fight poverty. He knows how to set priorities. He knows how to solve problems. He knows how to cut through bureaucracy.

In his first 6 weeks on the job, he has taken steps to streamline the administration at the Corporation and to expedite the application process for eligible countries. John and the MCC Board will now consider the applications of nearly two dozen countries that were recently selected as eligible for compacts. Many of these countries have made good progress on their proposals. I've asked John to complete and sign several more compacts in the coming months.

It's a good program. Let's get it moving, and let's implement it for the sake of eliminating poverty around the world. The success of the MCA is reinforcing our belief that lifting nations out of poverty requires partnership, not paternalism. In the 21st century, America is willing to be a partner with every nation that works to advance the prosperity, equality, and liberty of its people.

This is a commitment I've carried across continents from the United Nations in New

York to Europe, to South America, to Africa and Asia. It is a commitment I have urged leaders of other developed nations to adopt, by insisting on measurable results for their own foreign aid. It is a commitment that I urge the United States Congress to continue to support by funding our requests for MCC funding. And it is a commitment that I am honored to entrust to Ambassador John Danilovich as he becomes the second Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Congratulations, John. Thanks for your willingness to serve.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Robert A. Mosbacher, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Ambassador Danilovich.

Memorandum on Designation of Officers of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence To Act as Director of National Intelligence

December 20, 2005

Memorandum for the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Designation of Officers of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence To Act as Director of National Intelligence

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345, *et seq.*, it is hereby ordered that:

Section 1. Subject to the provisions of sections 3 and 4 of this memorandum, the officers of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence named in section 2, in the order listed, shall act as and perform the functions and duties of the office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), during any period in which the DNI and the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence have died, resigned, or otherwise become unable to perform the functions and duties of the office of the DNI, until such time as at least one of the officers listed in this section is able to perform the functions and duties of the DNI.

Sec. 2. Order of Succession.

(a) Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Management;

(b) Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Collection;

(c) Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis;

(d) Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Customer Outcomes;

(e) Chief of Staff, Office of the Director of National Intelligence;

(f) General Counsel, Office of the Director of National Intelligence; and

(g) Chief Information Officer, Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Sec. 3. National Security Act of 1947. This memorandum shall not supercede the authority of the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence to act for, and exercise the powers of, the Director of National Intelligence during the absence or disability of the Director of National Intelligence or during a vacancy in the position of Director of National Intelligence, (National Security Act of 1947, as amended, 50 U.S.C. 403–3a).

Sec. 4. Exceptions.

(a) No individual who is serving in an office listed in section 2 in an acting capacity shall act as the DNI pursuant to this section.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of this memorandum, the President retains discretion, to the extent permitted by law, to depart from this memorandum in designating an acting DNI.

Sec. 5. Publication.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register.*

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 22, 2005]

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

Remarks on Departure for the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland

December 21, 2005

Legislative Agenda

Thank you all. The Senate is debating two very important measures, and I urge the United States Senate to pass the defense appropriations bill. It is an important piece of legislation that provides necessary funding for our troops who are fighting in Afghanistan and in Iraq and who are serving our country around the world. It's an obligation of every Member of the United States Senate to provide necessary funding for our troops on the frontlines so that we can fight and win the war on terror.

And the second important piece of legislation is the PATRIOT Act. In order to protect America, the United States Senate must reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. The terrorists still want to hit us again. There is an enemy that lurks, a dangerous group of people that want to do harm to the American people, and we must have the tools necessary to protect the American people. The PATRIOT Act passed overwhelmingly shortly after the September the 11th attack. It has been an effective tool; it has worked.

And the same as we protected the American people using the PATRIOT Act, we've also protected their civil liberties. There is extensive oversight on this very important program. The PATRIOT Act tore down the wall between law enforcement and intelligence communities, which makes it easier to connect the dots before an attack. The PATRIOT Act also gave law enforcement tools to investigate terrorism that they have already got to investigate other types of crimes.

The PATRIOT Act is scheduled to expire at the end of this year. The terrorist threat is not going to expire at the end of this year. The House has voted to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act, and they left town, because they thought their—because their business is finished. The Senate is still debating this issue. A majority of the United States Senate supports reauthorization; a minority of Senators is filibustering and preventing the Senate from voting to renew the PATRIOT Act. The Senate Democratic leader recently boasted about killing the PATRIOT Act. This obstruction is inexcusable. The Senators obstructing the PATRIOT Act need to understand that the expiration of this vital law will endanger America and will leave us in a weaker position in the fight against brutal killers. It's important that the Senate act quickly on these two bills.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to Caregivers at the National Naval Medical Center

December 21, 2005

Thanks for such a warm welcome. Laura and I are thrilled to be back at this unbelievable facility—unbelievable because of the buildings and the technology that's used here and the equipment but, more importantly, because of the decency and compassion and skill of our healers that work for our country.

So first we want to thank you all for helping do a really important job. And that is to be able to say to our country, at any time anybody gets hurt anywhere, they're going to get the best medical care possible. And that's done right here at Bethesda, as well as Walter Reed. And so we're here to thank the nurses and the docs and the healers and the volunteers who help put the smile on the faces of those who have been hurt as well as their families.

One of the great blessings of our country is the fact that there are millions of compassionate souls who are willing to try to make somebody's life better.

I want to thank Admiral Robinson and Dr. Winkenwerder, Admiral Arthur. I want to thank General Kiley and Lieutenant General Peach Taylor, as well as Major General Farmer. And thank Tom Travis, as well—happens to be his birthday, by the way. [*Laughter*] His wife said, "You're birthday gift is to say hello to the President," not a really good gift. [*Laughter*] Anyway. [*Laughter*]

We're serving in an amazing time. I say, "We're serving," because we're serving together. It is a time when this Nation of ours is facing unbelievable challenges. There is an enemy that still lurks, that wants to bring harm to the American people. And we've got to do everything in our power to protect the American people; that is our solemn duty. There is a fantastic opportunity, as we defeat this enemy, to lay the foundation for peace for generations to come.

We have a great opportunity as a generation called to act, called to protect America, to seize the moment and defeat this ideology with freedom. You know, I like to tell people about how—"amazed" isn't the right word—but how stark this story I'm about to tell you is to me, what an amazing contrast it is about Japan.

You know, my dad, as an 18-year-older signed up—in the United States Navy, by the way. [*Applause*] There you go. And there were a lot of 18-year-old and 19-year-old and 20-year-old kids, and some older people, too—[*laughter*]—to fight against a sworn enemy which had attacked us.

Laura and I just got back from the Far East, and I sat down at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan, talking about how to keep the peace, talking about how to deal with North Korea, talking about how—and thanking him, by the way, for sending troops to Iraq to help this young democracy develop. And it was that contrast between what 41 did and what 43 is doing—that would be my dad and me. [*Laughter*] To sit down with a dad—which we're going to do here over Christmas—who fought the Japanese, and his son is helping to keep the peace with the Japanese, something had to have happened.

And one of my predecessors, Harry Truman, recognized the power of freedom to transform an enemy into an ally; that's what happened. And so Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy, and in that democracies don't fight each other; in that democracy is the best way to encourage a peaceful world; it's working.

And what we're seeing today is brave troops and committed citizens who are not only determined to chase down the killers and bring them to justice before they hurt us again, but understand that by spreading freedom and democracy, we're battling an ideology of darkness with an ideology of hope. And we're laying that foundation for peace for generations to come. The task at hand is one that requires determination and discipline and great faith in the ideals of human freedom and human liberty.

And so coming here today is a chance to not only thank you for being a part of this incredible team of healers but also, being a part of this historic moment. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, working hard to keep the peace, and future generations of Americans will be saying, "Thank God this generation of America stood strong for what we believe."

And so on behalf of a grateful nation, thanks for doing your duty. Thanks for serving. Thanks for being an important part of this march for freedom, and thanks, most of all, for bringing comfort and aid and solace to those who have been hurt on the battlefield and their families.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a blessed 2006. May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Adam M. Robinson, USN, commander, National Naval Medical Center; Maj. Gen. Kenneth L. Farmer, Jr., USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Travis, USAF, commander, 89th Medical Group, and his wife, Sally; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks on Signing the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005

December 21, 2005

Thanks for coming. In a few moments, I will sign the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005. This important bill will help the citizens of the gulf coast continue to put their lives back together and rebuild their communities in the wake of the devastating hurricanes that hit the region earlier this year.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who have joined us here, and those who

haven't joined us here, for passing this important piece of legislation. I want to thank Trent Lott from Mississippi for being here. Trent Lott invited me one time to his home, right there on the gulf coast of Mississippi. It no longer exists. He knows firsthand what it means to live through one of these devastating storms, and I appreciate you, Senator, for being here.

I want to thank Congressmen Jim McCrery of Louisiana and Bill Jefferson of Louisiana. Both these Members have worked very hard for the people of the great State of Louisiana with Congress to put a package together to help the people of Louisiana and Mississippi get back up on their feet.

I want to thank Max Baucus. He's not from the gulf coast area of America. He's from Montana, but he cares. He is ranking member of the Finance Committee, and it's kind for you to be here.

I want to thank members of my Cabinet who have joined us here today, Elaine Chao and Alphonso Jackson, Mike Chertoff.

And finally, I want to thank my friend Don Powell, who is the Federal coordinator for the gulf coast rebuilding effort. His job is to represent the administration there as he interfaces with State and local officials. I want to thank you, Don, for taking on this assignment.

When I spoke to the Nation from Jackson Square in New Orleans, I said our job and our goal for the gulf coast was not just to survive but to thrive, and not just to cope but to overcome. And I meant it. And we're now implementing a comprehensive plan to help the people of the region recover and rebuild. We've helped a lot of people get temporary housing. We're now in the process of helping them to transition to permanent homes. Helping people find housing is going to be one of the really important challenges that we all face together in order to help these areas rebuild.

We're working to assist the school districts that have taken in students from the affected areas. There's a lot of school districts around our country that said, "We want to help. Let us educate the children of those who evacuated," and now we're helping to rebuild them.

We're also helping rebuild the schools in the affected regions. Last week, we announced our plan to strengthen the levee system in New Orleans. And in the last 24 hours, I extended full Federal coverage of the cost of debris removal for Louisiana and Mississippi. We want to get the debris out of the way. I can't imagine anything more discouraging then to continue to see the piles—and I mean, literally, piles—of debris. And the sooner we can get that debris removed and disposed of, the more hopeful people will become.

Today I'm going to sign the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005. It's a step forward to fulfill this country's commitment to help rebuild. It's going to help small businesses, is what it's going to do. For small businesses in the affected area, the GO Zone will double expensing for investments in new equipment from $100,000 to $200,000.

The bill also provides a 50-percent bonus depreciation, and that means tax relief for small businesses that—and businesses that purchase new equipment and build new structures. In other words, this tax act provides incentives for people to move forward. And as these businesses move forward, they're going to need to employ people. So this is a tax bill that has got employment consequences to it. This is going to help the entrepreneurs of Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama. Entrepreneurship creates opportunity, which creates jobs.

This is just part of our plan to help the people get back to work. We've got to help workers get the skills they need. I just met with a group of concerned citizens from business and labor and education, all aspects of society. Again, I want to thank you all for being there. We're talking about how to help put together a strategy that takes advantage of the jobs that are going to be created down there to make sure there's a skill set match. We've got a lot of people that want to work, and yet they may not all be electricians or plumbers. And so one of the real challenges and opportunities we have is to match willing worker with jobs which will actually exist. And that's what we're talking about and strategizing about.

And again, I want to thank you all very much. This is the private sector and public

sector working in close coordination. Don Powell is going to help put together a strategy that will be, one, it's easy to understand; and two, that will have moments that we'll be able to measure whether or not we're making progress.

The GO Zone Act does a couple of other things. It increases funding for Hope Scholarships and lifetime learning credits for students attending colleges and graduate students in the—and graduate schools in the Gulf Opportunity Zone. It's going to make continuing education for workers more accessible and help support high school training that these gulf coast residents are going to need to fill the jobs which are actually going to be existing.

By the way, in a year from now, we're going to be talking about, "What are we going to do about all these jobs, and who's going to fill them?" As a matter of fact, there's a job shortage already down there. And again, I repeat to you, this provides a great opportunity to make sure that the folks in Mississippi and Louisiana who—can find work. And those are the folks we want to be first in line, by the way. If you're from New Orleans, Louisiana, we want you to be the first person to get the job. And what I'm telling you is we're going to work to make sure housing is available for you and that there's a training center or training program that will help you meet your—match your desire to work with the jobs which actually exist.

If you're from Mississippi, we want those new jobs to go to Mississippi residents, and we want to help the Mississippi community college, for example, to become a vital training center for the jobs which are going to be needed to help this important part of our country get back up on its feet.

The Senate passed a deficit reduction bill that's going to provide $2 billion to help States pay for critical medical care for those evacuees who need it. That's important. The defense appropriations bill that the Senate is now considering—and I hope passes—would help repair damaged transportation infrastructure and provide important Federal funding for New Orleans to rebuild the levees and correct any design and construction flaws of those levees. These bills are important for the future of the gulf coast.

DOD bill is really important, as the good Senator will tell you. This time of year, Americans, we give our thanks for the many blessings we have. We renew our commitment to help those who are in need. We are going to continue to work together to build a better future for the people of the gulf coast. And the bill I'm about to sign is going to make a difference. It's an important piece of legislation. It's part of our strategy to accomplish an important national goal, and that is a revitalized gulf coast and a New Orleans that is a shining example of what America can do when it puts its mind to something.

So again, thank you all for coming. Now, my honor to sign the bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. H.R. 4440, approved December 21, was assigned Public Law No. 109–135.

Statement on Senate Action To Extend the PATRIOT Act

December 21, 2005

I appreciate the Senate for working to keep the existing PATRIOT Act in law through next July, despite boasts last week by the Democratic leader that he had blocked the Act. No one should be allowed to block the PATRIOT Act to score political points, and I am grateful the Senate rejected that approach. The terrorists want to attack our country again and inflict even greater damage than they did on September 11, 2001. The PATRIOT Act is a vital tool for America in the war on terror. The Act has torn down the wall between law enforcement and intelligence officials to help us connect the dots and prevent attacks. The work of Congress on the PATRIOT Act is not finished. The Act will expire next summer, but the terrorist threat to America will not expire on that schedule. I look forward to continuing to work with Congress to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act.

Statement on the Senate Vote To Reduce Entitlement Spending

December 21, 2005

The Senate vote to reduce entitlement spending is a victory for taxpayers, fiscal restraint, and responsible budgeting, and it will help keep us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009. I applaud the Republicans in the House and Senate who supported the legislation. This will be the first time in nearly a decade that Congress has reduced entitlement spending. This strong bill demonstrates our commitment to funding our Nation's priorities and ensuring that taxpayer money is spent wisely.

Remarks on Departure for Camp David, Maryland

December 22, 2005

I hope you all have a happy holiday. This has been a year of strong progress toward a freer, more peaceful world and a prosperous America. We had three sets of elections in Iraq. This is an amazing moment in the history of liberty. A new Parliament has been seated in Afghanistan. Our economy is strong and getting stronger. People are working. We've added 4.5 million new jobs since April of 2003. Productivity is up. Small businesses are flourishing. Homeownership is high. It's been a good year for the American people.

We've got a lot of work to do. Yesterday and during this past week, the Congress acted in a wise way with the taxpayers' money, fiscally responsible set of appropriations bills that were passed that funded important priorities, key priorities—to make sure our troops have what they need to do their job. The DOD bill did just that. Another key priority is to make sure the people in the gulf coast of our country get the help they need to help rebuild New Orleans and the Mississippi gulf coast. And there is a good deal of money available for those who suffered from Katrina and Rita.

It appears to me that the Congress understands we've got to keep the PATRIOT Act in place, that we're still under threat. There's still an enemy that wants to harm us, and they understand the PATRIOT Act is an important tool for those of us here in the executive branch to use to protect our fellow citizens. The Senate extended the PATRIOT Act by 6 months.

As we head into the holiday season, I do want to say to the families of those who have got a loved one deployed overseas, we stand with you, and we pray with you for the safety of your loved one. We want to send our greetings to your loved one overseas and tell him how much we appreciate you serving for the cause of freedom and peace.

Anyway, I hope you all have a great holiday. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Congressional Action Funding the Armed Forces for the War on Terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Elsewhere

December 22, 2005

I applaud the Congress for passing legislation to fund our troops who are fighting the war on terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. This funding will help us continue to hunt down the terrorists, pursue our strategy for victory in Iraq, and make America more secure. I look forward to signing the bill into law.

Statement on Congressional Action To Reauthorize the PATRIOT Act

December 22, 2005

I appreciate the strong commitment by the majority of the House and of the Senate to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. The terrorists are determined to strike America again and inflict even greater damage than they did on September 11, 2001. The PATRIOT Act is essential to protecting the American people against the terrorists. The Act tore down the wall between law enforcement and intelligence officials so that they can share information and work together to help prevent

attacks. The Senate Democratic leader boasted last week that the Senate Democrats had "killed the PATRIOT Act." Our Nation's security must be above partisan politics. The PATRIOT Act has helped us disrupt terrorist plots and break up cells here in the United States. I will work closely with the House and Senate to make sure that we are not without this crucial law for even a day.

Proclamation 7970—To Take Certain Actions Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act

December 22, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. Section 506A(a)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974 (the "1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2466a(a)(1)), as added by section 111(a) of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (title I of Public Law 106–200) (AGOA), authorizes the President to designate a country listed in section 107 of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3706) as a "beneficiary sub-Saharan African country" if the President determines that the country meets the eligibility requirements set forth in section 104 of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3703), as well as the eligibility criteria set forth in section 502 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2462).

2. Section 104 of the AGOA authorizes the President to designate a country listed in section 107 of the AGOA as an "eligible sub-Saharan African country" if the President determines that the country meets certain eligibility requirements.

3. Section 112(b)(3)(B) of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3721(b)(3)(B)) provides special rules for certain apparel articles imported from "lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries."

4. In Proclamation 7350 of October 2, 2000, the President designated the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (Mauritania) as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country pursuant to section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act and provided that it would be considered a lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 112(b)(3)(B) of the AGOA.

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

6. Pursuant to section 104 of the AGOA and section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act, I have determined that the Republic of Burundi (Burundi) meets the eligibility requirements set forth or referenced therein, and I have decided to designate Burundi as an eligible sub-Saharan African country and as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country.

7. I further determine that Burundi satisfies the criterion for treatment as a "lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African country" under section 112(b)(3)(B) of the AGOA.

8. Pursuant to section 506A(a)(3) of the 1974 Act, I have determined that Mauritania is not making continual progress in meeting the requirements described in section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act. Accordingly, I have decided to terminate the designation of Mauritania as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A of the 1974 Act, effective on January 1, 2006.

9. Section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) of the United States the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including but not limited to section 104 of the AGOA and sections 506A and 604 of the 1974 Act, do proclaim that:

(1) Burundi is designated as an eligible sub-Saharan African country and as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country.

(2) In order to reflect this designation in the HTS, general note 16(a) to the HTS is

modified by inserting in alphabetical sequence in the list of beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries "Republic of Burundi."

(3) For purposes of section 112(b)(3)(B) of the AGOA, Burundi is a lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African country.

(4) The designation of Mauritania as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A of the 1974 Act is terminated, effective on January 1, 2006.

(5) In order to reflect in the HTS that beginning January 1, 2006, Mauritania shall no longer be designated as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country, general note 16(a) to the HTS is modified by deleting "Islamic Republic of Mauritania" from the list of beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries. Further, U.S. note 2(d) to subchapter XIX of chapter 98 of the HTS is modified by removing "Islamic Republic of Mauritania" from the list of lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries.

(6) The modifications to the HTS made by paragraphs 2 and 5 of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after January 1, 2006.

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

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second 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, 9:51 a.m., December 23, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27.

Proclamation 7971—To Implement the United States-Morocco Free Trade Agreement

December 22, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. On June 15, 2004, the United States entered into the United States-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (USMFTA). The USMFTA was approved by the Congress in section 101(a) of the United States-Morocco Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the "USMFTA Act") (Public Law 108–302, 118 Stat. 1103) (19 U.S.C. 3805 note).

2. Section 105(a) of the USMFTA Act authorizes the President to establish or designate within the Department of Commerce an office that shall be responsible for providing administrative assistance to panels established under Chapter 20 of the USMFTA.

3. Section 201 of the USMFTA Act authorizes the President to proclaim such modifications or continuation of any duty, such continuation of duty-free or excise treatment, or such additional duties as the President determines to be necessary or appropriate to carry out or apply Articles 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 4.1, 4.3.9, 4.3.10, 4.3.11, 4.3.13, 4.3.14, and 4.3.15, and the schedule of reductions with respect to Morocco set forth in Annex IV of the USMFTA.

4. Consistent with section 201(a)(2) of the USMFTA Act, Morocco is to be removed from the enumeration of designated beneficiary developing countries eligible for the benefits of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Further, consistent with section 604 of the Trade Act of 1974 (the "1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, I have determined that other technical and conforming changes to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) are necessary to reflect that Morocco is no longer eligible to receive benefits of the GSP.

5. Section 203 of the USMFTA Act provides certain rules for determining whether a good is an originating good for the purposes of implementing preferential tariff treatment under the USMFTA. I have decided that it is necessary to include these rules of origin,

together with particular rules applicable to certain other goods, in the HTS.

6. Section 204 of the USMFTA Act authorizes the President to take certain enforcement actions relating to trade with Morocco in textile and apparel goods.

7. Subtitle B of title III of the USMFTA Act authorizes the President to take certain actions in response to a request by an interested party for relief from serious damage or actual threat thereof to a domestic industry producing certain textile or apparel articles.

8. Executive Order 11651, as amended, establishes the Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements (CITA) to supervise the implementation of textile trade agreements.

9. Section 604 of the 1974 Act, as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the HTS the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including but not limited to sections 201, 203, 204, and 321–328 of the USMFTA Act, section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and section 604 of the 1974 Act, do proclaim that:

(1) In order to provide generally for the preferential tariff treatment being accorded under the USMFTA, to set forth rules for determining whether goods imported into the customs territory of the United States are eligible for preferential tariff treatment under the USMFTA, to provide certain other treatment to originating goods for the purposes of the USMFTA, to provide tariff-rate quotas with respect to certain originating goods, to reflect Morocco's removal from the enumeration of designated beneficiary developing countries for purposes of the GSP, and to make technical and conforming changes in the general notes to the HTS, the HTS is modified as set forth in Annex I of Publication No. 3721 of the United States International Trade Commission, entitled "*Modifications to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States Implementing the United States-Morocco Free Trade Agreement*" (Publication 3721), which is incorporated by reference into this proclamation.

(2) In order to implement the initial stage of duty elimination provided for in the USMFTA, and to provide for future staged reductions in duties for products of Morocco for purposes of the USMFTA, the HTS is modified as provided in Annex II of Publication 3721, effective on the dates specified in the relevant sections of such publication and on any subsequent dates set forth for such duty reductions in that publication.

(3) The Secretary of Commerce is authorized to exercise my authority under section 105(a) of the USMFTA Act to establish or designate an office within the Department of Commerce to carry out the functions set forth in that section.

(4) (a) The amendments to the HTS made by paragraphs (1) and (2) of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after the relevant dates indicated in Annex II to Publication 3721.

(b) Except as provided in paragraph 4(a) of this proclamation, this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after January 1, 2006.

(5) The CITA is authorized to exercise my authority under section 204 of the USMFTA Act to exclude textile and apparel goods from the customs territory of the United States; to determine whether an enterprise's production of, and capability to produce, goods are consistent with statements by the enterprise; to find that an enterprise has knowingly or willfully engaged in circumvention; and to deny preferential tariff treatment to textile and apparel goods.

(6) The CITA is authorized to exercise my authority under subtitle B of title III of the USMFTA Act to review requests, and to determine whether to commence consideration of such requests; to cause to be published in the *Federal Register* a notice of commencement of consideration of a request and notice seeking public comment; to determine whether imports of a Moroccan textile or apparel article are causing serious damage, or actual threat thereof, to a domestic industry producing an article that is like, or directly competitive with, the imported article; and

to provide relief from imports of an article that is the subject of such a determination.

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

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second 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, 12:29 p.m., December 23, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27.

Proclamation 7972—National Mentoring Month, 2006

December 22, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Through countless acts of kindness, mentors across America are changing our Nation for the better. Every child deserves the opportunity to realize the promise of our country, and mentors show that a single soul can make a difference in a young person's life. During National Mentoring Month, we recognize the many individuals who dedicate their time, talents, and energy to help children develop character and integrity.

Mentors are soldiers in the armies of compassion, sharing their time to help provide a supportive example for a young person. Mentors help children resist peer pressure, achieve results in school, stay off drugs, and make the right choices. Many people become mentors because of the impact of a mentor in their own lives, creating a chain of compassion over the course of generations.

My Administration remains committed to promoting mentoring as an opportunity to strengthen our country. Through the Helping America's Youth initiative, led by First Lady Laura Bush, we will continue to focus on identifying best practices and programs across this great Nation that are changing lives for the better and helping young people grow up to be responsible and successful adults.

In 2006, my Administration will support funding programs to mentor children who have a parent in prison and for youth at risk of gang influence and involvement. The Federal Government can also help local communities by fostering communication between those who are running successful programs and those who want to get involved. Americans can find valuable mentoring opportunities in their hometown by visiting the USA Freedom Corps website at www.USAFreedomCorps.gov or calling 1–877–USACORP.

I appreciate the faith-based and community organizations and all those dedicated to improving the lives of America's children through mentoring. By showing love, support, and compassion, one person can make a difference in the life of a child and help that child learn the importance of serving a cause greater than self. The teachers, coaches, religious leaders, relatives, and other caring adults who mentor contribute to a culture of good citizenship. Their efforts strengthen our country and demonstrate the great influence of one person's kindness and its ability to touch a life.

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 January 2006 as National Mentoring Month. I call upon the people of the United States to recognize the importance of mentoring, to look for opportunities to serve as mentors in their communities, and to observe this month with appropriate activities and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second 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, 9:32 a.m., December 27, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 28.

Executive Order 13393—Adjustments of Certain Rates of Pay

December 22, 2005

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the laws cited herein, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Statutory Pay Systems.* The rates of basic pay or salaries of the statutory pay systems (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5302(1)), as adjusted under 5 U.S.C. 5303(a), are set forth on the schedules attached hereto and made a part hereof:

(a) The General Schedule (5 U.S.C. 5332(a)) at Schedule 1;

(b) The Foreign Service Schedule (22 U.S.C. 3963) at Schedule 2; and

(c) The schedules for the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs (38 U.S.C. 7306, 7404; section 301(a) of Public Law 102–40; section 3(d) of Public Law 108–445) at Schedule 3.

Sec. 2. *Senior Executive Service.* The ranges of rates of basic pay for senior executives in the Senior Executive Service, as established pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 5382, are set forth on Schedule 4 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Sec. 3. *Certain Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Salaries.* The rates of basic pay or salaries for the following offices and positions are set forth on the schedules attached hereto and made a part hereof:

(a) The Executive Schedule (5 U.S.C. 5312–5318) at Schedule 5;

(b) The Vice President (3 U.S.C. 104) and the Congress (2 U.S.C. 31) at Schedule 6; and

(c) Justices and judges (28 U.S.C. 5, 44(d), 135, 252, and 461(a), section 140 of Public Law 97–92, and section 405 of Public Law 109–115) at Schedule 7.

Sec. 4. *Uniformed Services.* Pursuant to section 601(a)–(b) of Public Law 108–375, the rates of monthly basic pay (37 U.S.C. 203(a)) for members of the uniformed services, as adjusted under 37 U.S.C. 1009, and the rate of monthly cadet or midshipman pay (37 U.S.C. 203(c)) are set forth on Schedule 8 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Sec. 5. *Locality-Based Comparability Payments.*

(a) Pursuant to section 5304 of title 5, United States Code, and section 843 of Public Law 109–115, locality-based comparability payments shall be paid in accordance with Schedule 9 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

(b) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall take such actions as may be necessary to implement these payments and to publish appropriate notice of such payments in the *Federal Register*.

Sec. 6. *Administrative Law Judges.* The rates of basic pay for administrative law judges, as adjusted under 5 U.S.C. 5372(b)(4), are set forth on Schedule 10 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Sec. 7. *Effective Dates.* Schedule 8 is effective on January 1, 2006. The other schedules contained herein are effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2006.

Sec. 8. *Prior Order Superseded.* Executive Order 13368 of December 30, 2004, is superseded.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 22, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 12:29 p.m., December 23, 2005]

NOTE: This Executive order and the attached annexes will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27.

Executive Order 13394—Providing an Order of Succession Within the Department of Defense

December 22, 2005

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345 *et. seq.*, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Subject to the provisions of section 3 of this order, the officers named in section 2, in the order listed, shall act as and

perform the functions and duties of the office of the Secretary of Defense (Secretary) during any period when the Secretary has died, resigned, or is otherwise unable to perform the functions and duties of the office of Secretary.

Sec. 2. *Order of Succession.*

(a) Deputy Secretary of Defense;

(b) Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence;

(c) Under Secretary of Defense for Policy;

(d) Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics;

(e) Secretary of the Army;

(f) Secretary of the Air Force;

(g) Secretary of the Navy;

(h) Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller);

(i) Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness;

(j) General Counsel of the Department of Defense, the Assistant Secretaries of Defense, and the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation;

(k) Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Material Readiness and the Director of Defense Research and Engineering;

(l) Under Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and

(m) Assistant Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, and General Counsels of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

Sec. 3. *Exceptions.* (a) No individual who is serving in an office listed in section 2(a)–(m) in an acting capacity shall act as Secretary pursuant to this order.

(b) Precedence among officers designated within the same subsection of section 2 of this order shall be determined by the order in which they have been appointed to such office by the President. Where officers designated within the same subsection of section 2 of this order are appointed on the same date, precedence will be determined by the order in which they have taken the oath to serve in that office.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of this order, the President retains discretion, to the extent permitted by law, to depart from this order in designating an acting Secretary.

Sec. 4. *Judicial Review.* This order is intended 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 any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

Sec. 5. *Revocation.* Executive Order No. 13000 of April 24, 1996, and the President's memorandum of June 2, 2005, entitled: "Order of Succession of Officers to Act as Secretary of Defense," are hereby revoked.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 22, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 12:29 p.m., December 23, 2005]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27.

Memorandum on Order of Succession of Officers To Act as Secretary of Defense

December 22, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Order of Succession of Officers To Act as Secretary of Defense

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345 *et. seq.*, and notwithstanding the Executive Order I issued today entitled, "Providing an Order of Succession within the Department of Defense" (the order), it is hereby ordered as follows:

(1) Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 2 and 4 of this memorandum, the Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense, as designated by the President, shall act as and perform the functions and duties of the office of the Secretary of Defense (Secretary) during any

period when the Secretary has died, resigned, or is otherwise unable to perform functions and duties of the office of the Secretary.

(2) The provisions of paragraph 1 of this memorandum shall only apply if, at the time of the death, resignation, or inability of the Secretary, the Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense meets one or more of the criteria established in section 3345(a)(1)–(3) of title 5, United States Code.

(3) In all other respects, the order shall remain in effect.

(4) The authority of this memorandum shall terminate upon the first appointment by the President of a Deputy Secretary of Defense to occur subsequent to this memorandum, unless sooner terminated by operation of law or by the President.

(5) You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 12:29 p.m., December 23, 2005]

NOTE: This memorandum will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27.

Memorandum on Provision of Aviation Insurance Coverage for Commercial Air Carrier Service in Domestic and International Operations

December 22, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of Transportation

Subject: Provision of Aviation Insurance Coverage for Commercial Air Carrier Service in Domestic and International Operations

By the authority vested in me by 49 U.S.C. 44302, *et seq.*, I hereby:

1. Determine that continuation of U.S.-flag commercial air service is necessary in the interest of air commerce, national security, and the foreign policy of the United States.

2. Approve provision by the Secretary of Transportation of insurance or reinsurance to U.S.-flag air carriers against loss or damage arising out of any risk from the operation of an aircraft in the manner and to the extent provided in Chapter 443 of 49 U.S.C.:

(a) until August 31, 2006;

(b) after August 31, 2006, but no later than December 31, 2006, when he determines that such insurance or reinsurance cannot be obtained on reasonable terms and conditions from any company authorized to conduct an insurance business in a State of the United States; and

3. Delegate to the Secretary of Transportation the authority, vested in me by 49 U.S.C. 44306(c), to extend this determination for additional periods beyond August 31, 2006, but no later than December 31, 2006, when he finds that the continued operation of aircraft to be insured or reinsured is necessary in the interest of air commerce or the national security, or to carry out the foreign policy of the United States Government.

You are directed to bring this determination immediately to the attention of all air carriers within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. 40102(2), and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 12:29 p.m., December 23, 2005]

NOTE: This memorandum will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27.

Memorandum on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2006

December 22, 2005

Presidential Determination No. 2006–06

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2006

Consistent with the authority vested in me by section 1303 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108–375) (the "Act"), I hereby certify that waiving the conditions described in section 1305 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106–65), as amended, is important to the national security interests of the United States, and include herein, for submission to the Congress, the statement, justification, and plan described in section 1303 of the Act. This waiver shall apply for calendar year 2006.

You are authorized and directed to transmit this certification, including the statement, justification, and plan, to the Congress and to arrange for the publication of this certification in the *Federal Register.*

George W. Bush

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 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate James I. Finley to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sharee M. Freeman to be Director of the Community Relations Service at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen Goldsmith to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rodney R. McInnis as a member of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (Department of Commerce, National Maritime Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration member).

The President announced his intention to appoint Charles S. Robb as a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

The President announced his intention to designate Sharee M. Freeman as Acting Director of the Community Relations Service at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of the President of Tanzania on December 21: Jendayi E. Frazer (head of delegation); Cindy Courville; and Michael L. Retzer.

December 20

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari of Iraq to congratulate them on Iraq's successful elections. Later, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel to wish him well after he experienced a mild stoke on December 19.

Later in the morning, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in a signing ceremony for the Stem Cell and Therapeutic Research Act of 2005.

In the evening, the President hosted a holiday reception.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to the areas of Louisiana impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from November 27–29.

December 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and met with the National Security Council. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, where they visited U.S. military personnel injured in Iraq and their family members and presented Purple Hearts to some servicemembers.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Indian Treaty Room, he participated in a meeting on developing a skilled trades workforce to rebuild the gulf coast.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alexander A. Karsner to be Assistant Secretary of Energy (Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy).

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald R. DePriest to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vince J. Juaristi to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation: V. Jay Allen; Stephen A. Baldwin; Jean M. Case; Gerald Colangelo; Evern D. Cooper; Myrka DeLlanos; Hilary E. Duff; Patricia H. Heaton; Kasey K. Kahne; Arthur G. Linkletter; Mary J. Myers; Corinne B. Roberts; Michael W. Smith; Wendy M. Spencer; Roxanne Spillett; Hope Taft; and Charles P. Turlinski.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to the areas of Mississippi impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

December 22

In the morning, the President had breakfast with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

December 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

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 20

James I. Finley,
of Minnesota, to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, vice Michael W. Wynne.

Sharee M. Freeman,
of Virginia, to be Director, Community Relations Service, for a term of 4 years (reappointment).

Stephen Goldsmith,
of Indiana, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2010 (reappointment).

Submitted December 21

Donald R. DePriest,
of Mississippi, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2009 (new position).

Vince J. Juaristi,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National

and Community Service for a term expiring February 8, 2009, vice Leslie Lenkowsky, term expired.

Alexander A. Karsner,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy), vice David Garman.

Howard A. Thrailkill,
of Alabama, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for the term prescribed by law, vice Glenn L. McCullough, Jr., resigned.

Susan Richardson Williams,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2007 (new position).

Withdrawn December 21

Howard A. Thrailkill,
of Alabama, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2007 (new position), which was sent to the Senate on November 17, 2005.

Susan Richardson Williams,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for the term prescribed by law, vice Glenn L. McCullough, Jr., term expired, which was sent to the Senate on November 17, 2005.

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 18

Advance text of the President's address to the Nation on Iraq and the war on terror

Excerpts of the President's address to the Nation on Iraq and the war on terror

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 75

Released December 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Principal Deputy Director for National Intelligence Michael Hayden

Statement by the Press Secretary congratulating the Congolese people for the vote on a new Constitution

Released December 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley to the Center for Strategic and International Studies

Statement by the Press Secretary on additional disaster assistance to Louisiana

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Dakota

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2520

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 52, S. 136, S. 212, S. 279, and S. 1886

Released December 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4440

Statement by the Press Secretary on additional disaster assistance to Mississippi

Fact sheet: A Commitment to Continued Recovery and Rebuilding in the Gulf Coast

Released December 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Ruben Barrales and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Kevin Marshall on Puerto Rico's Status

Statement by the Press Secretary on countries eligible for economic and trade benifits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 38, H.R.

327, H.R. 358, H.R. 797, H.R. 3963, H.R. 4195, H.R. 4324, H.R. 4436, H.R. 4508, S. 335, S. 467, and S. 1047

Fact sheet: President Bush's Accomplishments in 2005

Fact sheet: Fiscal Year 2006: Keeping the Committment To Restrain Spending

Acts Approved by the President

Approved December 18

H.J. Res. 75 / Public Law 109–128
Making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes

Approved December 20

H.R. 2520 / Public Law 109–129
Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act of 2005

S. 52 / Public Law 109–130
To direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey a parcel of real property to Beaver County, Utah

S. 136 / Public Law 109–131
To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide supplemental funding and other services that are necessary to assist certain local school districts in the State of California in providing educational services for students attending schools located within Yosemite National Park, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to adjust the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, to adjust the boundaries of Redwood National Park, and for other purposes

S. 212 / Public Law 109–132
Valles Caldera Preservation Act of 2005

S. 279 / Public Law 109–133
To amend the Act of June 7, 1924, to provide for the exercise of criminal jurisdiction

H.R. 1886 / Public Law 109–134
Naval Vessels Transfer Act of 2005

Approved December 21

H.R. 4440 / Public Law 109–135
Gulf Zone Opportunity Act of 2005

Approved December 22

H.R. 797 / Public Law 109–136
Native American Housing Enhancement Act of 2005

H.R. 3963 / Public Law 109–137
To amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to extend the authorization of appropriations for Long Island Sound

H.R. 4195 / Public Law 109–138
Southern Oregon Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act of 2005

H.R. 4324 / Public Law 109–139
Predisaster Mitigation Program Reauthorization Act of 2005

H.R. 4436 / Public Law 109–140
To provide certain authorities for the Department of State, and for other purposes

H.R. 4508 / Public Law 109–141
Coast Guard Hurricane Relief Act of 2005

H.J. Res. 38 / Public Law 109–142
Recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy

S. 335 / Public Law 109–143
To reauthorize the Congressional Award Act

S. 467 / Public Law 109–144
Terrorism Risk Insurance Extension Act of 2005

S. 1047 / Public Law 109–145
Presidential $1 Coin Act of 2005

H.R. 358 / Public Law 109–146
Little Rock Central High School Desegregation 50th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act

H.R. 327 / Public Law 109–147
To allow binding arbitration clauses to be included in all contracts affecting land within the Gila River Indian Community Reservation