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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, January 27, 2006

Proclamation 7975—National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 2006

January 20, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation was founded on the belief that every human being has rights, dignity, and value. On National Sanctity of Human Life Day, we underscore our commitment to building a culture of life where all individuals are welcomed in life and protected in law.

America is making great strides in our efforts to protect human life. One of my first actions as President was to sign an order banning the use of taxpayer money on programs that promote abortion overseas. Over the past 5 years, I also have been proud to sign into law the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, and a ban on partial-birth abortion. In addition, my Administration continues to fund abstinence and adoption programs and numerous faith-based and community initiatives that support these efforts.

When we seek to advance science and improve our lives, we must always preserve human dignity and remember that human life is a gift from our Creator. We must not sanction the creation of life only to destroy it. America must pursue the tremendous possibilities of medicine and research and at the same time remain an ethical and compassionate society.

National Sanctity of Human Life Day is an opportunity to strengthen our resolve in creating a society where every life has meaning and our most vulnerable members are protected and defended—including unborn children, the sick and dying, and persons with disabilities and birth defects. This is an ideal that appeals to the noblest and most generous instincts within us, and this is the America we will achieve by working together.

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 Sunday, January 22, 2006, as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. I call upon all Americans to recognize this day with appropriate ceremonies and to reaffirm our commitment to respecting and defending the life and dignity of every human being.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, 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, 9:03 a.m., January 24, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on January 25. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

January 21, 2006

Good morning. This past Thursday, I visited a thriving company in Loudoun County, Virginia, named JK Moving & Storage. I met with the owners and workers and with small-business people from the area, and I discussed my agenda to keep America's economy growing and to help our small businesses stay vibrant and strong.

Our agenda for growing the economy and helping small businesses starts with wise tax policy. Our economy grows when American workers and families can keep more of their hard-earned money to spend, save, and invest as they see fit. Small businesses create most of the new jobs in our country, and tax relief helps them as well, because most small

businesses pay taxes at individual income tax rates.

So after I took office, we cut taxes on everyone who pays income taxes, leaving more money in the hands of workers and families and giving small businesses more resources to expand and hire. We increased the tax incentives for small businesses to invest in new equipment, and we cut taxes on dividends and capital gains. We also put the death tax on the road to extinction, because farmers and small-business owners should not be taxed twice after a lifetime of work.

Thanks to tax relief, spending restraint, and the hard work of America's entrepreneurs and workers, our economy today is strong. We've added over 400,000 jobs in the last 2 months and over 4.6 million jobs since May 2003. Our unemployment rate is now 4.9 percent, lower than the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Our economy grew at 4.1 percent in the third quarter of 2005, and it has been growing at nearly that rate for 2 years. Real after-tax income has grown 7 percent per person since 2001. Productivity is high; inflation is contained; consumers are confident; and more Americans now own their homes than at any time in our Nation's history.

Unfortunately, just as we are seeing how our tax cuts have created jobs and opportunity, some in Washington want to repeal the tax relief. Others want to just let it expire in a few years. Either way, they want to raise your taxes. If that happens, families across America would see their taxes increase dramatically. Small businesses would also pay higher taxes, which would mean less money to hire workers and buy new equipment. To keep our economy growing and our small-business sector strong, we need to ensure that you keep more of what you earn—so Congress needs to make the tax cuts permanent.

For the sake of America's small businesses, workers, and families, we must also make health care more affordable and accessible. A new product known as health savings accounts helps control costs by allowing businesses or workers to buy low-cost insurance policies for catastrophic events and then save, tax-free, for routine medical expenses. This year, I will ask Congress to take steps to make these accounts more available, more affordable, and more portable. Congress also needs to pass association health plans, which allow small businesses across the country to join together and pool risk so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big companies get.

Our small businesses are confronting other challenges that we must address. Too many entrepreneurs face the threats of costly junk lawsuits. Last year, we passed bipartisan class-action reform to ease this burden. Now Congress needs to curb abusive asbestos litigation, pass medical liability reform to reduce the costs of frivolous litigation on our doctors and patients, and penalize those who abuse the legal system by repeatedly filing junk lawsuits.

Rising energy costs are also a concern for small businesses, so we're going to continue to work to develop new technologies and alternative and renewable fuels that will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. And we will continue to open up new markets for small businesses so they can sell their products and services overseas. On a level playing field, I know our workers, farmers, and businesses can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere.

America's economy is strong and growing stronger. Small businesses have been a driving force behind the tremendous growth and job creation of recent years. By adopting sound policies that help our small businesses continue to grow and expand, we will keep the economy moving forward and extend prosperity and hope in our country.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on January 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Telephone Remarks to the March for Life

January 23, 2006

Nellie, thank you very much. I appreciate the invitation to speak. I'm calling from Manhattan, Kansas. [*Applause*] Sounds like you've got some good folks from Kansas there. I want to thank everybody there—if you're from Kansas or anywhere else in our country—for your devotion to such a noble cause.

You believe, as I do, that every human life has value, that the strong have a duty to protect the weak, and that the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence apply to everyone, not just to those considered healthy or wanted or convenient. These principles call us to defend the sick and the dying, persons with disabilities and birth defects, all who are weak and vulnerable, especially unborn children.

We're making good progress in defending these principles, Nellie, and you and I are working together, along with others, to build what I've called a culture of life. One of my first acts as the President was to ban the use of taxpayer money on programs that promote abortion overseas. I want to thank you all for getting that ban on partial-birth abortion to my desk, a bill I was proud to sign and a law which we are going to defend—and are defending vigorously in our courts.

Because we acted, infants who are born despite an attempted abortion are now protected by law. Thanks to "Laci and Conner's Law," prosecutors can now charge those who harm or kill a pregnant woman with harming or killing her unborn child as well.

We're vigorously promoting parental notification laws, adoption, teen abstinence, crisis pregnancy programs, and the vital work of our faith-based groups. We're sending a clear message to any woman facing a crisis pregnancy: We love you; we love your child; and we're here to help you.

There's more work to be done. The House has passed a bill to ensure that State parental involvement laws are not circumvented by those who take minors across State lines to have abortions. And the United States Senate needs to pass this bill so I can sign it into law.

We also must respect human life and dignity when advancing medical science, and we're making progress here as well. Last month, I signed a pro-life bill supporting ethical treatment and research using stem cells from umbilical cord blood. I also renew my call for Congress to ban all forms of human cloning. Because human life is a gift from our Creator and should never be used as a means to an end, we will not sanction the creation of life only to destroy it.

By changing laws, we can change our culture. And your persistence and prayers, Nellie, and the folks there with you, are making a real difference. We, of course, seek common ground where possible. We're working to persuade more of our fellow Americans of the rightness of our cause. And this is a cause that appeals to the conscience of our citizens and is rooted in America's deepest principles, and history tells us that with such a cause, we will prevail.

Again, Nellie, thank you for letting me come to speak to you. Tell everybody there that I ask for God's blessings on them and their families, and, of course, may God continue to bless our grand country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. from Manhattan, KS, to march participants on the National Mall in Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Nellie J. Gray, president, March for Life Education and Defense Fund.

Remarks on the War on Terror and a Question-and-Answer Session in Manhattan, Kansas

January 23, 2006

The President. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for inviting me here to give the Landon Lecture. For those students who are here, I want you to know I can remember what it was like to sit through lectures. [*Laughter*] I didn't particularly like it then. [*Laughter*] Some will take a little different approach. I'm here to tell you how I see the world and how I've made some of the decisions I've made and why I made them.

Before I get there, I want to thank the introducer. So he's on Air Force One; he says, "That's a cute-looking blue tie you have—[*laughter*]—but I strongly suggest,

Mr. President"—[*laughter*]. I said, "I don't know, Senator, if I can take it; I'm worried about all those lobby laws—or the lack of them." [*Laughter*] He said, "Fine, I'll just loan it to you." I said, "Well, now that you're helping me dress, you got any hints on how I ought to do my hair?" [*Laughter*]

Pat Roberts is a good man. He's got a great sense of humor. He loves the people of Kansas, and he loves Kansas State, and I'm proud to be with him on this stage. And I'm proud to be here, as well, with the other United States Senator, Senator Sam Brownback—former president of the Kansas State student body.

I want to thank your Governor. Governor Sebelius, thanks for putting up with me, Roberts, and Brownback as we drove from the airport to here. One hour with the three of us required a lot of patience. [*Laughter*] I'm proud the Governor came with us, and I want to thank you.

I want to thank Congressman Jim Ryun, right from this district. I appreciate you being here, Congressman. I'm not interested in jogging with you. [*Laughter*] I also thank Congressman Dennis Moore and Congressman Jerry Moran, both fine Members of the United Stated Congress from the State of Kansas. Thank you all for coming.

I appreciate President Wefald for having me come. I know Laura was his first choice. [*Laughter*] That's why he's the head of such a fine institution; he's got good judgment. [*Laughter*] By the way, she sends her best. I married really well.

And I want to thank Charles Reagan and Edward Seaton. Charles is the chairman of the Landon Lecture Series. And Edward is the head of the patrons. He said to me, he said, "I so appreciate you believing in free speech; thanks for giving a free one." [*Laughter*] I want to thank Tom Herald, who is the faculty senate president. I want to thank all the faculty members who are here. Thanks for teaching. It's such a noble profession, and I appreciate you lending your expertise to help youngsters learn what is possible and how to think and how to be creative. And I want to thank the president of the student body, Michael Burns, for being here as well.

I appreciate the students being here. I particularly want to thank those who've come from the Last Chance Bar. [*Laughter*] Better than watching daytime TV, I guess. [*Laughter*] I appreciate your interest in your country; looking forward to sharing some thoughts with you, and then I'll answer some questions.

Before I get there, I do want to pay tribute to our wonderful men and women in uniform. Thank you for serving our country.

You know, really one of the interesting things about being the President is to invite my guys, buddies I grew up with from Texas, to the White House. It's really neat to see how they react to the majesty of the White House and the Oval Office and the South Lawn, and just the beauty of Washington. And most of them, after they get over the initial shock of seeing the White House, then come to the shock of wondering how in the heck I got there. [*Laughter*]

But they, oftentimes, they ask me, they say, "What's it like, being the President of the United States?" And my answer to them is, first, it's a huge honor. But secondly, if I had to give you a job description, it would be a decisionmaker. I make a lot of decisions. I make some that you see that obviously affect people's lives, not only here but around the world. I make a lot of small ones you never see, but have got consequence. Decisionmaker is the job description.

First of all, when you make decisions, you've got to stand on principle. If you're going to make decisions, you've got to know what you believe. I guess the best way to summarize me is I came from Texas, and I'm going back to Texas with the exact same values I had when I arrived in Washington, DC.

In order to make good decisions, you've got to rely upon the judgment of people you trust. I'll never forget the first decision I had to make as the President. I wasn't even sworn in yet, and a fellow called me on the phone and he said, "What color rug do you want to have in the Oval Office?" [*Laughter*] "You've got to be kidding me, man." [*Laughter*] He said, "No, what color rug would you like to have in the Oval Office?" I said, "I don't know." He said, well, it turns out that Presidents—you've just got to know, Presidents design their rugs. I said, "Well, to be

honest with you: I don't know much about designing rugs."

So I called, I delegated—that's one of the things you do in decisionmaking. [*Laughter*] I said, "Laura, how about helping design the rug?" [*Laughter*] Part of being a decisionmaker, though, is you've got to help—you've got to think strategically. And so I said to her—she said, "What color do you want?" I said, "Make it say 'this optimistic person comes here to work every single day.' " You can't lead the Nation, you can't make good decisions unless you're optimistic about the future.

So for the students here, as you take over organizations or head out of college and become involved in your life, you've got to be optimistic about—if you're going to lead somebody. Imagine somebody saying, "Follow me; the world is going to be worse." [*Laughter*] That's not a very good organizing principle about which to lead people. I'm optimistic about our future, and the reason I am is because I believe so strongly in what America stands for: Liberty and freedom and human rights and the human dignity of every single person.

Sometimes decisions come to your desk unexpectedly. Part of the job of a President is to be able to plan for the worst and hope for the best, and if the worst comes, be able to react to it. On September the 11th, the worst came. We got attacked. We didn't ask for the attack, but it came. I resolved on that day to do everything I can to protect the American people.

You know, a lot of us grew up thinking that oceans would protect us, that if there was a threat overseas, it really didn't concern us, because we were safe. That's what history had basically told us. Yes, there was an attack on Pearl Harbor, obviously, but it was a kind of hit-and-run, and then we pursued the enemy. A lot of folks—at least, my age, when I was going to college, I never dreamt that the United States of America could be attacked. And in that we got attacked, I vowed then, like I'm vowing to you today, that I understand my most important priority. My most important job is to protect the security of the American people.

I knew right after September the 11th, though, that the attack would begin to fade in people's memories. I mean, who wants to constantly go through life thinking that you're going to get hit again? Who wants to kind of relive those days in your memory? As a matter of fact, I asked the American people to go on about your life. But given the fact that it's human nature to forget or try to put in the past, put the pain in the past, I want to assure you and our fellow Americans I'm not going to put it in the past. The threat to the United States is forefront in my mind. I knew that at times people would say, you know, "It may be an isolated incident; let's just don't worry about it." Well, for me it's not an isolated incident. I understand there is still an enemy which lurks out there.

And so part of my decisionmaking process, part of it, as you see when I begin to make decisions to protect you, to do my number-one priority, rests upon this fact: that there is an enemy which is relentless and desirous to bring harm to the American people because of what we believe in. See, we're in an ideological struggle. It's very important for the students here to understand that there is an enemy which has an ideology, and they're driven by an ideology. They make decisions based upon their view of the world, which is the exact opposite of our view of the world.

Perhaps the best way to describe their political vision is to remind you what life was like for people living in Afghanistan when the Taliban was running that country with Al Qaida as the parasite. If you were a young girl in that society, you had no chance to get educated. If you spoke out against the view of these folks, their religious view, you could be taken to the public square and whipped. In other words, there was not freedom. There wasn't freedom to worship the way you want to, just like we believe here in the United States of America. You can worship; you cannot worship in our country—and you're equally American. You can be a Christian, Jew, or Muslim, and you're equally American. It's the greatness of the United States of America which stands in stark contrast to what these ideologs believe.

Their vision of the world is dark and dim. They have got desires to spread a totalitarian empire. How do we know? Because they told

us. Mr. Zawahiri, the number two in the Al Qaida network, told the world such. He might not have wanted us to read that particular thing he was sending, but nevertheless we did. And he said that, "Here's our designs and our desires." In other words, these people have got an ideology and strategy to implement the ideology. They've got a—they have no heart, no conscience. They kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve their objective. These folks cannot be appeased. We can't hope that nice words will change their point of view.

And so the decision I made right off the bat is, we will find them, and we will hunt them down, and we will bring them to justice before they hurt America again. But that requires a different kind of response than the old days of nations fighting nations. First of all, I want to step back and just tell you—I probably—I hope I say this more than once, but committing U.S. troops into harm's way is the last option of the President. It's the hardest decision a President can make. And so when I'm telling you I made the decision, you all have got to understand, I did not take that decision lightly. I knew the consequences, but I also believed that the consequences of not acting against this enemy would mean I wasn't doing my job of working with others to protect the United States of America.

So we sent our men and women into harm's way—all volunteers. It is really important for the United States of America to have an All-Volunteer Army. The best way to keep people volunteering in the Army is to make sure they got good pay, good training, good equipment, and good housing for their loved ones.

But since we're not able to track vast battalions or armadas, we've got to have intelligence, good intelligence, to help us locate the dark corners of the world where these people hide. A lot of the decisions I make and decisions future Presidents make will be based upon the capacity of our intelligence services to find the enemy and to understand the intentions of the enemy and to share information with our allies. This is a different kind of struggle and requires the best intelligence possible. That's why we're reevaluating, constantly reevaluating how best to use our intelligence services to be able to protect the American people.

We've got to be strong in diplomacy. Secretary Rice, who is a great diplomat, she followed another great—she followed another great diplomat in Colin Powell—they're constantly working to remind people about the stakes. Just like part of my job is to educate the American people about the threats we face, at a lecture series such as this, our Government must constantly remind our friends and allies the nature of the enemy and the stakes that all free countries face. There's a diplomatic effort that's constantly going on.

You can't run your network without money, and so we're working with our friends and allies to seize terrorist assets and choke off their funding sources. In other words, what I'm telling you is, we're using all assets at our disposal to protect you in a different kind of war. In order to make the right decision about how to win this war, it's important to understand the nature of the enemy and to take the enemy's word seriously and to understand their lethality and not let the kind of lull in the action lull us to sleep.

Secondly, right after they attacked us, I laid out a doctrine, and it said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist." The reason I said that is because I understand that a terrorist network can sometimes burrow in society and can sometimes find safe haven from which to plot and plan. The perfect example of that was Afghanistan. For those of you who didn't pay much attention to the initial stages of this war, it became apparent to the world that Afghanistan became safe haven. You'll hear stories about people that went into Afghanistan to be trained—trained as to how to brutally kill people, trained in different methodologies, trained in how to communicate.

So, in other words, the enemy was able to burrow in and felt safe and confident and secure. And I understood in this different kind of war that we had to make it clear to any country that if they harbored a terrorist, they would be held to account. And when the American President speaks, it's really important for those words to mean something. And so when I said to the Taliban, "Get rid of Al Qaida," and they didn't, I made the difficult decision to commit our troops, to

uphold the doctrine that if you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist. And our kids went in, men and women alike, and liberated a country from the clutches of the barbaric regime, the Taliban.

And today, today in Afghanistan—think about what has happened in a brief period of time—today in Afghanistan, there is a fledgling democracy. Al Qaida no longer has run of the country. The Taliban is routed. There's an elected Parliament and a President dedicated to democratic institutions.

The doctrine still stands: If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorists who commit murder.

Thirdly—and this is very important for the students to understand, and others—because oceans no longer protect us, the United States of America must confront threats before they cause us harm. In other words, in the old days, we could see a threat and say, "Well, maybe it will cause harm; maybe it won't." Those days changed, as far as I'm concerned. Threats must be taken seriously now, because geography doesn't protect us, and there's an enemy that still lurks.

And so early in my first term, I looked at the world and saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. And let me tell you why I saw the threat. First of all, there was an immediate threat because he was shooting at our airplanes. There was what's called no-fly zones; that meant the Iraqis couldn't fly in the zones. And we were patrolling with British pilots, and he was firing at us, which was a threat—a threat to the life and limb of the troops to whom I'm the Commander in Chief. He was a state sponsor of terror. In other words, the Government had declared, "You are a state sponsor of terror." And remember, we're dealing with terrorist networks that would like to do us harm.

There's a reason why he was declared a state sponsor of terror—because he was sponsoring terror. He had used weapons of mass destruction. And the biggest threat that this President and future Presidents must worry about is weapons of mass destruction getting in the hands of a terrorist network that would like to do us harm. That is the biggest threat we face. Airplanes were horrible; the attacks of aircraft were horrible. But the damage done could be multiplied if weapons of mass destruction were in the hands of these people.

The world thought Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. It wasn't just me or my administration. My predecessor thought he had weapons of mass destruction. And there's a logical reason why—the data showed that he would likely have weapons of mass destruction, and he'd use them. I told you, the last option for a President is to send troops into combat, and I was hoping that we could solve the issue, the threat, the threat to the United States by diplomatic means.

So I went to the United Nations. Secretary Powell carried our message to the United Nations. It said—see, now, I actually gave a speech to the United Nations, you might remember, and I said to them, basically, how many resolutions is it going to take before this threat will take us seriously? I mean, we passed, I don't know, 14, 15 different resolutions. That's a lot of resolutions. Pretty soon, if you pass that many resolutions, somebody is going to say, "Well, they may not mean anything." I want this body to be effective. It's important for the world, when it speaks, that people listen.

And so we passed another resolution that said that Saddam is in—and it unanimously passed, and the reason why is because the world thought he was a danger. It said, "Disarm, disclose, or face serious consequences." I'm the kind of fellow, when I—when we say something, I mean it, like I told you before. And I meant it.

And so Saddam Hussein was given a choice. He chose war. And so we moved, and he was removed from power. And there is absolutely no doubt in my mind, America is safer for it, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein.

A lot of people, I understand, disagreed with that decision, and that's what democracy is all about. That's what we believe in; we believe you can disagree. There's a custom in our country for people to express themselves, and it's good. It's what makes us a great country, that people can stand up and tell people what's on their mind. And we're going to keep it that way. It's very important for those who didn't agree with the decision, though, to understand the consequences of

success in Iraq. It's really important we succeed for a lot of reasons.

And the definition of success, by the way, is for there to be a country where the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten the democracy, and where Iraqi security forces can provide for the security of their own people, and where Iraq is not a safe haven from which the terrorists—Al Qaida and its affiliates—can plot attacks against America.

We got a strategy, and I'm going to keep talking about the strategy—it will yield a victory. And the strategy is political security and economic in nature. In economic, we're going to help them rebuild their country, help secure their oil supply so they'll have cash flow in order to invest in their people.

On the political front, you've seen it—you've seen what happened in one year's time. It's just amazing, I think. I guess, we take it for granted—some of us do; I don't. The fact that people have gone from living under the clutches of a tyrant who ordered the murder of thousands of his own citizens, to a society in which people last year started voting—[*applause*]—voting for an Interim Government, voting for a Constitution, and then voting for a permanent Government under the new Constitution. The Government is now—they're beginning to form.

In other words, you're seeing a lot of sharp elbows, probably kind of like American politics seem to some people, a lot of throwing of sharp elbows. You didn't see a lot of elbows, political elbows being thrown under the tyrant, did you? That's because tyrants don't allow for the political process to evolve. But we're watching the political process evolve, made complicated by the fact that the terrorists still want to cause destruction and death as this Government is forming to try to stop it.

We got to step back and ask why. Why would they want to stop democracy? And the answer, because democracy stands for the exact opposite of their vision. Liberty is not their credo. And they understand a defeat to their ideology by the establishment of a free Iraq will be a devastating blow for their vision.

And so the Iraqis are showing incredible courage. When somebody says, "If you vote, I'm going to get you," sometimes people maybe say, "Well, maybe I don't want to vote." Eleven million or so Iraqis went to the polls in defiance of these killers. It's a magical moment in the history of liberty.

And then on the security front, our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we'll stand down. Look, we want the Iraqis to be prepared to take the fight to the enemy. Let me talk about the enemy, real quick, in Iraq. There are what we call rejectionists. These are Sunnis that kind of like the fact that they—even though a minority inside the country—had the upper hand for a long period of time with Saddam. And they're worried about whether or not a Constitution that says it will protect minority rights actually will protect minority rights. But the good news is, more and more Sunnis started to vote. And if you watch the news, they're beginning to negotiate; they're beginning to see a better way. In other words, the political process is beginning to marginalize the remaining elements of those who are trying to stop the progress.

One of those elements is Saddamists. These are the thugs that kind of controlled the country. They loved power; they don't want to give it up. And they'd like to return to the good old days, which isn't going to happen.

And the other group of course, is the Al Qaida types—Mr. Zarqawi, who wants us to leave Iraq. They want us to get out of Iraq so Iraq can be a safe haven. It is their stated objective: Don't worry; take your time; keep killing the innocent because America will lose its will. That's what the enemy has said. That's their words.

The way to defeat the enemy is for the political process to marginalize the rejectionists and for us to train the Iraqi forces so they can find the few that want to dash the hopes of the many. And that's what we're doing. Our strategy is twofold: We're on the hunt for the terrorists, and we're training Iraqis. And we're making decent progress. There are more and more Iraqi units in the fight. There's more and more country being turned over to the Iraqis. We got a lot of bases around Iraq, and more of those bases are being given to the Iraqi troops.

This is the year that we'll not only continue to focus on the troops; we'll continue to train Iraqi police. We've seen some problems about what it means to have lived in a society where people want to seek revenge. In other words, they use their police—status as a police person to take it out on others because of past grievances. That's not acceptable to the United States of America, and it's not acceptable to most Iraqis either.

And so part of the training for police is not only to give them the capacity to handle the enemy but to make sure they understand human rights and ethics involved with police work. And so that's what you'll be seeing. You're going to see more Iraqi troops in the fight and more police providing security. And as a result, our commanders on the ground informed me that they thought we could reduce our troop level from the 168,000 that were there—165,000, more or less, that were there for the elections—below 138,000.

Now, I want to emphasize something to you: You heard me say, "Our commanders on the ground said." You see, sometimes in the political process, people feel beholden to polls and focus groups. You don't have to worry about me. I'm going to be listening to the people that know what they're talking about, and that's the commanders on the ground in Iraq. They'll make the decisions. They will give the advice. Conditions on the ground will dictate our force levels over the next year, but the strategy is what I said it is: We'll stay on the offense, and we'll give these brave Iraqis the skills and training necessary to defend their own democracy.

Look, this enemy cannot beat us. They cannot defeat us militarily. There's no chance. The one weapon they have, which is a lethal weapon, is the willingness to kill people. I remember the story—and it just broke my heart to think about the young soldier that was giving candy to a kid, and they set off the car bomb next to the kids. I mean, it's just—I cannot describe to you how brutal these people are. And they understand that their scenes will get on TV.

And I don't know if they can adequately understand the compassion of the American people, but we're compassionate. I told you one of the great beliefs of our country is every life matters, every person counts—whether it be a child here in America or a child in Iraq. And they understand. And so part of my decisionmaking process is to understand the strength of the enemy—the only strength they have—and continue to remind the people that is their only strength, and the only way we can lose is if we lose our nerve and our will. The American people are resolute. They are strong. And we're not going to lose our will to these thugs and murderers.

In the long term—in the short term, we'll stay on the offense; in the long term, the way to defeat these people is to spread liberty. As you study history, I want you to watch the effects of freedom around the world. One of my favorite ways to describe my belief in the capacity of freedom to help achieve peace—not only security for the American people but peace—is to give people the example of my dad and me, in terms of Japan.

My dad was an 18-year-old kid and went to fight the Japanese. I promise you, a lot of folks here's relatives did the same thing. They were called into action because the enemy had attacked us. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. It was a brutal war against the Japanese. Took a lot of lives—Japanese lives and American lives—to win that war. And today, like my recent trip to the Far East, I sit down with Prime Minister Koizumi, who is the Japanese Prime Minister, and talk about the peace. Now, think about that. I particularly want the students to think about what took place when 18-year-old President 41 was fighting the Japanese, and 59-year-old 43—that would be me—is talking to the Prime Minister of the former enemy about peace. And you know what took place? A Japanese-style democracy came to be.

History has shown that democracies yield the peace. Europe is free, whole, and at peace because the nations are democratic. That wasn't always the case, obviously, in the 1900s. Two major wars were fought where a lot of Americans died, and yet systems and forms of government changed. And now Europe is completely different, in terms of security and peace. The Far East—I just mentioned the Japanese example. And that's what the enemy understands, and that's why

they're so brutal and relentless. They understand the march of peace will be contagious. Part of my decisionmaking process is my firm belief in the natural rights of men and women, my belief that deep in everybody's soul is the desire to live free. I believe there's an Almighty, and I believe the Almighty's great gift to each man and woman in this world is the desire to be free. This isn't America's gift to the world; it is a universal gift to the world. And people want to be free.

And if you believe that and if you believe freedom yields the peace, it's important for the United States of America, with friends, to lead the cause of liberty. I'm not saying to any country, "You must have a democracy that looks like America." I am saying, "Free your people. Understand that liberty is universal, and help lay that foundation of peace for generations to come." Someday, an American President will be sitting down with elected leaders from a country like Iraq talking about how to keep the peace. This generation is rising to the challenge. We're looking at history. We understand our values, and we're laying that foundation of peace for generations to come.

We've also got to be diligent here at home. I'm getting ready to answer some questions. Laura said, "Whatever you do, don't get too windy." [*Laughter*]

We've created the Department of Homeland Security. We're reorganizing our intelligence services. I want you to know that every morning, I meet with the Director of National Intelligence or his Deputy, sometimes with the head of the CIA, and always with a briefer, CIA briefer that comes and gives me the latest intelligence and the analysis of intelligence. That's every morning in the White House, except for Sunday.

And the reason I do is because I told you early that my job is not to be complacent; my job is to be on the lookout—along with a lot of other people, I want you to know. We've got 800,000 State and first-responders that have been trained. Security is strong at the airports. I hope they stop taking off the shoes of the elderly. [*Laughter*] I must confess, they haven't taken off my shoes lately at the airport. [*Laughter*]

We're doing a lot of stuff, but I want to talk about two tools necessary to protect you. First, before September the 11th, our law enforcement and intelligence services weren't able to share information. For example, within the FBI, you had your law enforcement division and your intelligence division—and for a lot of reasons, if they had information about a potential terrorist, they couldn't share it. That's hard to fathom, but it's the truth. There was a wall built up, and there's a lot of reasons why the wall was built up—some of it historical, obviously, legal ramifications.

And I didn't think you could ask our frontline officers to defend us if they didn't have all the tools necessary to share intelligence and to share information—by the way, tools which have been granted to use in tracking down drug dealers, for example. My attitude was, if it's good enough—these tools are good enough to find a drug dealer, then they ought to be good enough to protect us from the new threats of the 21st century.

And so the Congress passed what's called the PATRIOT Act by huge majorities. They saw the threat, and they said, "Wait a minute. Let's make sure that if we ask the administration and, more importantly, people in the administration to defend us, let's give them the tools necessary to defend us." Interestingly enough, the PATRIOT Act, some of its provisions, are set to expire. I like to remind people the PATRIOT Act may be set to expire, but the threats to the United States haven't expired. And exactly what has changed, I asked out loud, after the attack of September the 11th and today? Those tools are still needed for our law enforcement officers. I want you to know that this PATRIOT Act is under constant review, and there has been no documented abuses under the PATRIOT Act.

In other words, Congress, in its wisdom when it passed the Act, said, "We'll make sure that the civil liberties of the United States are protected as we give the tools to those who are asked to take the fight to the enemy, to protect us." Congress extended this PATRIOT Act to February the 3d. That's not good enough for the American people, it seems like to me. When they get back there, they need to make sure they extend all aspects of the PATRIOT Act to protect the American people.

The threat still exists, is my message to members of both political parties. The tools—if they were important right after September the 11th, they're still important in 2006. The enemy has not gone away.

Let me talk about one other program—and then I promise to answer questions—something that you've been reading about in the news lately. It's what I would call a terrorist surveillance program. After the enemy attacked us and after I realized that we were not protected by oceans, I asked people that work for you—work for me, "How best can we use information to protect the American people?" You might remember there was hijackers here that had made calls outside the country, to somebody else, prior to the September the 11th attacks. And I said, "Is there anything more we can do within the law, within the Constitution, to protect the American people?" And they came back with a program—designed a program that I want to describe to you. And I want people here to clearly understand why I made the decision I made.

First, I made the decision to do the following things because there's an enemy that still wants to harm the American people. What I'm talking about is the intercept of certain communications emanating between somebody inside the United States and outside the United States; and one of the numbers would be reasonably suspected to be an Al Qaida link or affiliate. In other words, we have ways to determine whether or not someone can be an Al Qaida affiliate or Al Qaida. And if they're making a phone call in the United States, it seems like to me we want to know why.

This is a—I repeat to you, even though you hear words, "domestic spying," these are not phone calls within the United States. It's a phone call of an Al Qaida, known Al Qaida suspect, making a phone call into the United States. I'm mindful of your civil liberties, and so I had all kinds of lawyers review the process. We briefed Members of the United States Congress, one of whom was Senator Pat Roberts, about this program. You know, it's amazing, when people say to me, "Well, he was just breaking the law." If I wanted to break the law, why was I briefing Congress? [*Laughter*]

Federal courts have consistently ruled that a President has authority under the Constitution to conduct foreign intelligence surveillance against our enemies. Predecessors of mine have used that same constitutional authority. Recently there was a Supreme Court case called the Hamdi case. It ruled the authorization for the use of military force passed by the Congress in 2001—in other words, Congress passed this piece of legislation. And the Court ruled, the Supreme Court ruled that it gave the President additional authority to use what it called "the fundamental incidents of waging war" against Al Qaida.

I'm not a lawyer, but I can tell you what it means. It means Congress gave me the authority to use necessary force to protect the American people, but it didn't prescribe the tactics. It said, "Mr. President, you've got the power to protect us, but we're not going to tell you how." And one of the ways to protect the American people is to understand the intentions of the enemy. I told you it's a different kind of war with a different kind of enemy. If they're making phone calls into the United States, we need to know why—to protect you.

And that's the world in which you live. I view it as a chance for—an historic opportunity to make this place better for your children and your grandchildren—"this place" being the world. I'm just confident that if we don't lose our will and stay strong and that as that liberty advances, people may look back at this lecture and other speeches by people who profess the same devotion to freedom that I've had, and say, you know, maybe they're just right. Maybe America, that was founded on natural rights of men and women, is a ticket for peace. Maybe that kind of view—that every person matters, that there are such things as human dignity and the basic freedoms that we feel—that becomes a huge catalyst for change for the better. These troops are defending you with all their might, but at the same time, they're beginning to help change that world by spreading liberty and freedom.

It's such an honor to be the President of the great country that we are, during such historic times, and I want to thank you for giving me a chance to describe to you some

of the decisionmaking processes I've used to do my duty to defend the American people. God bless.

Be glad to answer some questions if you've got some. Thank you. I think there's some people with microphones and all that, that are going to be out there. Anybody has any questions, any boys from the Last Chance Bar got any questions?

Q. [*Inaudible*]—[*laughter*].

Q. Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, yes. Yes, ma'am.

Trade/Beef Industry

Q. Mr. President, we salute what you have done, your aggressive stance on terrorism. But more than that, as you know, Kansas is a beef State. The number one industry in the State of Kansas is beef production and beef processing. A strong beef industry indicates a strong Kansas, and it affects all of us. We sincerely appreciate your efforts in regaining our markets with Japan, your aggressive stance on trade. We support that tremendously. I wondered if you would just comment on what's happened recently.

The President. Yes, well, thanks. Thank you for your leadership. We think we grow pretty good beef in Texas too. [*Laughter*] Now is not the time to compare, of course. [*Laughter*]

Look, here's the thing: There's an interesting debate in the United States about markets, about whether or not we should aggressively seek markets or whether or not we should become protectionists. Protectionism means tariffs and policies that make it difficult for people to trade in the United States and for people in the United States to trade outside the United States. I'm a big believer in opening markets. There's a practical reason why. One is that we're 5 percent of the people, which means—in the world—that means 95 percent of the people are potential customers for U.S. farmers and ranchers and small businesses and entrepreneurs. And so what madam president—former president is referring to is that I have been very aggressive about opening up markets through trade agreements.

I'm a little concerned about trade agreements, though, because it's more and more difficult to get them passed out of the United States Congress. It seems like they're becoming so political that people either are becoming protectionist or lose sight—are losing sight of the value about opening markets.

Look, if you're a cattle raiser in Kansas, you want to be able to sell your product in Japan or South Korea or China. I mean, people want the beef. And the problem we've recently had, as you mentioned, reflects what is necessary to make sure that trade works. And that is, if there are problems, like in this case, some beef coming out of Brooklyn, I think it was, and if the Japanese balk at opening their markets, we have got to be aggressive about explaining to people why our beef is safe. And so part of being—part of making sure that the ranchers, in this case, see the benefits of open markets is when a market gets open, to work hard to make sure that market stays open if there happens to be a problem, or a short-term problem.

Secondly, is to make sure that we're treated fairly. And that part—when you see me arguing for trade agreements, a lot of times it means that a country is getting a better deal from us than we are from them. All I'm saying is, "Look, just treat us the way we treat you. If we open up our markets for your product, you open your markets for our products."

And so my—and I believe, and this is going to sound—let me just say to people as you study the economics of how to make sure this economy continues to grow, one way to do it is to make sure the markets are available, that there be a level playing field. I believe we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as it's fair.

And obviously one area where we're trying to keep those markets open is when it comes to beef. And we had the BSE, and one of the jobs of the Federal Government is to respond quickly to the BSE issue, is to try to settle people's nerves down so we can get those markets reopened. And when I went to see Prime Minister Koizumi, as well as President Roh in South Korea, one of the items I discussed was, "You're missing out on some Kansas beef." [*Laughter*]

Sudan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One of the things that both of our Senate delegation has worked tirelessly on is the situation in the Sudan. Sudan was, of course, slated to be the chair of the African Union next year, which is—they have tried, much like the United Nations, to do something. Does the United States have a larger role to play in the Sudan and the entire sub-Saharan African region?

The President. Yes, great question. We have played an active—first of all, I do want to thank both Senators. I'm on treacherous ground here to kind of credit one versus the other, but I guess I will, since one of them is going to want a free meal going back to Washington—[*laughter*]—I guess both. Sam, I mean—Roberts is great on the issue, and Sam is the person I've been interfacing with the most, frankly, in the whole United States Senate, about his deep concern for life in the Sudan. Matter of fact, in the vehicle driving over here, he brought the issue up.

We have got an important role to play and have played it. I don't know if you remember the Danforth Commission, where Jack Danforth, the former Senator from Missouri, was my Envoy to the Sudan to help resolve the North-South conflict. And there was a peace agreement in place. And the peace agreement was set back, unfortunately, because—well, it's still intact, don't get me wrong, but the implementation was delayed somewhat because of John Garang's untimely death—he was the leader of the south of Sudan. So the important thing there is that we showed, through diplomacy, that it's possible to resolve differences and to begin to reduce the abhorrent issue of slavery.

As you now know, the issue in Sudan is—and by the way, one of the great strengths of this country is our faith-based programs that rose up in indignation about the slavery that was taking place in the Sudan. Much of the first wave of help that went into the Sudan—some of it was Government—most of it was the response of the private sector, particularly the religious communities.

The issue now is Darfur. And when Colin was still the Secretary of State, he declared the policy of the U.S. and our deep concern that we are headed toward genocide. I think we're the only nation that has uttered those words thus far in Darfur. The strategy—and it's a very complex situation. It would take yet another lecture to give you all the kind of ins and outs. But suffice it to say that we are deeply concerned about poor folks who have been run out of their villages into refugee camps, who are still being threatened by Jinjaweed militia and some rebellious groups that are trying to extract political gain through marauding and death and rape and destruction.

We've empowered the AU, and this is what your question really kind of—part of your question leads to—to provide forces on the ground, to provide stability. And what he's referring to is that the Sudanese Government is going to be the head of the African Union—that's what AU stands for—which would then put them the titular head of the troops on the ground. And, obviously, that should be of concern—concern to us. It is a concern to us, and it should be a concern to the AU nations.

That issue has yet to be resolved as to whether or not Sudan will be the AU. This is an important issue. We will continue to work with Congress to provide aid, food aid, and help. We helped fly the AU troops into Sudan. We're watching it very carefully. We are considering different strategies as to how to make sure that there's enough protection, at least to get people help and protection and, at the same time, see if we can't try to broker the same kind of agreement we did North-South, with the Darfur and the Government. Thank you for asking the question.

Yes, sir.

Iran/China

Q. What is your position, or would you comment on a long-term strategy with respect to the geopolitical ambitions of China and Iran?

The President. Yes, great question. First, let me start with Iran. I'm deeply concerned about Iran, as should a lot of people be concerned about Iran. I'm concerned—when the country of Iran, their President announces his desire to see that Israel gets destroyed. Israel is our ally. We're committed to the

safety of Israel, and it's a commitment we will keep.

Secondly, I'm concerned about a nontransparent society's desire to develop a nuclear weapon. The world cannot be put in a position where we can be blackmailed by a nuclear weapon. I believe it is very important for the Iranian Government to hear loud and clear from not only the United States but also from other nations around the world. I also want the Iranian people to hear loud and clear, and that is, we have no beef with you. We are worried about a Government that is transparent, whose aims and objectives are not peaceful. And therefore, we don't think that you should have the capacity to make a nuclear weapon.

The diplomatic strategy is being led right now by what's called the EU–3: France, Germany, and Great Britain, and they're doing a good job of keeping together a common message to say to the Iranians that we expect you to adhere to international norm. The next logical step, if the Iranians continue not to adhere to international norm or the demands of the free world, is to go to the United Nations Security Council.

At the same time, the development of Iraqi democracy is an important message to people inside of Iran. I told you what I believe. I believe everybody desires to be free. I believe women want to be treated equally. And I think that a message of democracy and freedom in that part of the world will embolden reformers. But this is a serious issue.

China is—we have a complex relationship with China. Unlike with Iran, which we sanctioned a long time ago, we've got a lot of relations with China. We've got trade relations with China. We have got diplomatic relations with China. I've met with the Chinese leadership quite often and will tell you my personal relations with Hu Jintao are warm, warm enough to be able to sit with him in private and talk about things that matter to me. And one thing that matters to me is the freedom of the Chinese people.

I think any time in the diplomatic arena, you want the President to be in a position where he can have a relationship where you can speak with candor and your words can be heard, as opposed to a relationship that gets so tense and so off-putting because of distrust. Nobody likes to be lectured in the public arena; let me put it to you that way. I don't like it, and I'm sure other leaders don't like it. And so I've worked hard to make sure that my personal diplomacy is such that I'm able to make certain points with the Chinese.

One such point is that, you know, treat us the way we treat you. You've got a trade imbalance with the United States. And if we don't get it under control, there could be a backlash here. And therefore, we expect you to treat our products the same way we treat you. And by the way, if you happen to dump—choose to dump products, like in textiles, we'll hold you to account under our law.

I talk about their currency with the Chinese. You've got to let your currency float. The market currency ought to be priced through market, not by Government edict, which is—they're beginning to move a little bit on the currency, if you're paying attention to the issue.

Now, I went to church in China. And I was a little nervous, at first, frankly, about a licensed church. I wasn't sure whether or not I was going to go to a church or not a church, and went—Laura and I went with a guy named Luis Palau. And I was impressed by the spirit I felt in the church. And after it was over, I told Hu Jintao, I said, you know, "I'm a religious person, and the more free religion is in your country, the better off your society will be, and you shouldn't fear the church. You ought to come to the church. You know, you ought to see what I saw, which is peaceful people honoring something greater than themselves."

I would hope that China will continue to move in the—or move in the direction of human dignity. I talked to him about, of course, the Dalai Lama, talked to him about the Catholic Church's inability to get their bishops in. In other words, what I do is, I press the freedom issue. We don't always agree with China, of course. It's a complex relationship, but it's one in which, in my judgment, it's best to be in a position where we can dialog and discuss things in order to keep relations on keel and keep peace in that part of the world.

It's really interesting: Do you realize that it takes China 25 million new jobs a year to

stay even? Think about that—I'm out there blowing when we get 4 million in the past—since April of 2003—this guy needs to get 25 million a year. [*Laughter*] And Sam and I and Pat and the Governor were talking about the Chinese demand for energy. One reason they've got such a huge demand for energy is because they've got to grow their economy, 25 million people a year. And their economy is just beginning to modernize, so they're using a lot of raw materials. I'm kind of wandering here, but—which says two things to me, by the way; it's called a filibuster—[*laughter*]—it says we've got to diversify away from hydrocarbons in the United States of America.

When we were driving through the beautiful country coming here, I told the Governor and I told the two Senators, I firmly believe a day is coming when we're going to be able to grow saw grass and convert that into energy. And secondly, we've got to share technology with China so that they become better users of energy and better protectors of the environment. It's a complex relationship that we spend a lot of time thinking about. And I appreciate your question very much. Hu Jintao is coming, I think, here pretty soon, to the United States. And as I say, I enjoy my visits—personal visits with him.

Yes, ma'am.

Iraqi Government

Q. Hello, Mr. President. I am an American Iraqi Kurd. I would like to salute you and salute all the troops are freeing 27 million people. They are free.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, I would like to share this thought with all our Nation and everybody who is questioning what happened to the chemical weapons. Saddam burned 4,500 villagers. I lost more than 10 members of my family underground. We found their bones after, when we freed Iraq. Saddam himself and his people, his followers, they are chemical weapons. Please stop questioning the administration and their decision. It was the best decision anybody could take, freeing 27 million people.

The President. Okay, this is a question and answer period.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. I hate to cut you off. You're on a roll, but what's the question?

Q. Mr. President, all I could tell you, I have two members of my family—they are in the Iraqi Parliament. And both of them are women, my sister-in-law and my aunt. They are in the Iraqi Parliament. And I would like you to share this happiness with me and with all the Iraqi people. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. And here's my message—here's my message to your relatives in the Iraqi Parliament: Work to form a unity government, a government that includes the minorities in the country—a Shi'a, Kurd, and Sunni—no, no, no—[*laughter*]—no, no. [*Laughter*] Thank you—[*laughter*].

Q. My husband is Sunni. My mother-in-law was a Christian, Catholic——

The President. All right. [*Laughter*]

Q. I have two kids——

The President. Thank you. Got a question? Only in America. Hold on. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

Q. I'm from the United Kingdom.

The President. Welcome.

Q. Thank you. Although I might be living here for a while now, and you haven't kicked me out, and I thank you very much for that. [*Laughter*]

The President. Write your Senator. [*Laughter*] Anyway, go ahead.

Q. Us British, we're a querulous people, and we know that we're one of your greatest supporters in the world, and Tony Blair, who I have the greatest respect for, is my leader. When you say, "Jump," he says, "How high?" At least, that's the perception of many of the British people. And when he agrees and does your bidding, then it weakens him on the homefront at home. And many people enjoy this, but some of the more vocal ones will say, "He's a yes-man." Have you discussed that with him, and do you have any——

The President. I appreciate that a lot. First, I'm aware that that is a criticism of Tony, and I just strongly disagree with that. Frankly, it's demeaning to his character and his strength of conviction. But I've heard the criticism, and it's just simply not the case.

Like you, I admire him a lot. He's an independent thinker. He and I share this interesting moment in history together, and we also share this deep belief that liberty will transform the world—it can transform the world. That's what we believe. In other words, there is a philosophical core of Tony Blair that I—belief, core beliefs that Tony and I share.

You know, sometimes we disagree on tactics. We try to work through what we—we've had a lot of disagreements. I mean, a classic came on the Kyoto treaty. You might remember the treaty. I said I just wasn't going to support it. I didn't think it was good for the American economy; I thought there was a better way to go about being good stewards of the environment. He disagreed with me. There's a series of issues where we—International Criminal Court is another good example. I think the International Criminal Court is something we shouldn't join. I just don't want unelected prosecutors prosecuting our troops or our diplomats in a court overseas. Tony disagreed strongly.

I can give you a series of examples where—but we agree strategically. And that's what's important. Look, I'm sorry that his relationship with me causes him political problems at home. Sometimes I can be a little allergic for people overseas, if you know what I mean. [*Laughter*] But I think I would classify our relationship as historic. You don't know this—I'm about to tell you something interesting—that we talk once a week, or try to. And it's a really interesting way to share just thoughts and concerns. And the British-U.S. relationship is unique. It's been unique in the past. It is unique today, and I'm convinced it will be unique in the future, for the good of the world.

But, no, I'm very aware of the political difficulties he's faced. By the way, when you make hard decisions, like Tony has made, and frankly, I've made, it creates angst. I mean, the easy route would have been to do nothing and just hope for the best. And that's why I admire Tony. Tony is a person of great courage.

I can remember—I'll tell you an anecdote—you didn't even ask, and I'm going to tell you. [*Laughter*] And it's been published in a book a guy wrote in Washington. Tony was very worried about his Government. You might remember when the second resolution—we had the first resolution; then there was an argument about what "serious consequences" meant—I guess that's what the problem was. I kind of knew what it meant. He knew what it meant. Others, all of a sudden, had a different view of "serious consequences" when Saddam chose to not deal squarely with the world and not deal with the inspectors. He was worried about his Government, and so was I. And I told him one time, I said, "If you're worried about your Government"—I said, "You don't want your Government to fall, and if you're worried about it, just go ahead and pull out of the coalition, so you can save your Government."

And he said to me, he said, "I'm going to"—he said, "I have made my commitment on behalf of the great country of Britain, and I'm not changing my mind." Basically, what he told me, he said, "George," he said, "politics—I'm not interested in politics; what I'm interested in is doing the right thing." And that's why I admire Tony Blair; he'll do the right thing.

Good question. Yes, sir.

President's Personal Values/Leadership

Q. I have a question less with politics and more with leadership in general. You're in a situation where you're under a lot of flack, especially for your character. And that's something that, it seems to me, means a lot to you, as it does to many of us here. As a leader, as many of us are going to need to know here because we're going to be leaders in just a few years, what's the best way that you go about preparing yourself for attacks on your character, and how do you deal with others in those matters?

The President. Yes, I appreciate that. I would summarize it: faith, family, and friends. I am sustained mightily by the fact that millions of citizens—for whom I'll never get to thank personally—pray for me. It's hard for me to describe why I feel that way, why I'm so sustained. I guess it's just called faith. And I'm sustained by my family. And there's nothing better than going home to somebody who understands and is sympathetic and is part of—we're working together.

I mean, Laura's job is just as important as mine in many ways.

The girls still love me. [*Laughter*] I really love them. And then there's my man, Barney, a little Scottish terrier. [*Laughter*] I say this—and Laura will be furious at me—he's the son I never had, you know? [*Laughter*]

I believe in what I'm doing. And I understand politics, and it can get rough. I read a lot of history, by the way, and Abraham Lincoln had it rough. I'm not comparing myself to Abraham Lincoln, nor should you think just because I mentioned his name in the context of my Presidency—I would never do that. He was a great President. But, boy, they mistreated him. He did what he thought was right.

A lot of politicians, a lot of Presidents have gone through some tough times in the Presidency, and I understand that. One of my biggest disappointments is the tone in Washington, DC. I've done my best to try to elevate the tone. I just—needless name-calling, to me, is beneath the dignity of the office of the President.

I also make time in my day not only for prayer but also—and my family, but also for exercise. I found that part of keeping a positive outlook is to kind of burn off that excess energy, you know what I'm saying? [*Laughter*] I work out; I try to work out 5 or 6 days a week. It's really important—if you feel that's important for your life, to schedule your life. In other words, I have trouble with people saying, "I'm so busy, I can't exercise." I don't think you're too busy for things that are important in your life, and you can figure out ways to make time in your life.

And so I'm the kind of guy—I'm not running too well these days; I'm not running hardly at all. It's kind of like my knees are like tires, you know, and they're bald. [*Laughter*] I'm a mountain bike guy. And it's a fantastic experience.

I think to answer your—summarize your question, is to make sure that you've got good priorities in your life. By having good priorities in your life, it helps you keep perspective on your life. And perspective is very important as you assume responsibility. Thanks for the question.

Yes, ma'am.

Associate Justice-Designate Samuel A. Alito, Jr.

Q. Mr. President, I thank you for being here. I served under your father; he was my Commander in Chief during Desert Storm. And it was with great interest that I followed your campaign; my husband and I both are great fans of yours. I thank you for making the hard decisions, for making—not listening to the critics and keeping your campaign promises.

And I've been following the confirmation hearings of Judge Alito. And I certainly hope he's confirmed. I think he's a good man.

The President. Well, I appreciate that.

Q. But I'd like to kind of know how it stands right now.

The President. Yes, what's happening? First of all, I told the people—and thank you for your kind comments—and I told the people when I ran for President, I would put people on the bench who would strictly interpret the Constitution—in other words, not use their position to write law. We've got legislators to write law; that's their job. The judges are to interpret law.

And Sam has been one of the picks I made for the Supreme Court, Sam Alito. He's a very, very smart, capable man. When you talk to Sam Alito, you think, "smart judge." He's written a lot of opinions. His judicial philosophy is clear, and his judicial temperament that is sound. That's why the American Bar Association gave him the highest possible rating. And now the question is, will Sam Alito be given an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor?

I don't know whether or not in our history there's ever been a filibuster of a Supreme Court judge. One, years ago, according to—Sam, by the way, is on the Judiciary Committee and helps conduct the hearings in a way that I thought has brought dignity to the process.

And so to answer your question, I don't know. You hear gossip about a filibuster, meaning a minority of Democrats—Senators could stop Alito from getting a vote. It would really—I didn't mean to slip; I'm not trying to be—[*laughter*]—I'm not taking political shots. It just so happens that it would be the Democrats who would try to not give him an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. I

think he deserves an up-or-down vote. I believe that if given an up-or-down vote, he'll be confirmed and the decisionmaking—you know, we're in the process now of hearing from the Democrat leadership.

There are 14 Senators, 7 from both political parties, who have vowed to try to prevent a filibuster from taking place without extraordinary circumstances. In other words, if there is extraordinary circumstance, they would agree to a filibuster. There has been no sign of any extraordinary circumstance, except for this extraordinary thing: He's extraordinarily capable to serve on the Supreme Court. And so thank you for your question on Sam. It's going to come to a head here pretty soon. I think the vote in the Committee is—Wednesday is the vote in the Judiciary? Tomorrow, yes. You don't have to worry about it in the Committee—the floor possibly later this week. That's great.

Okay, a couple more and then I've got to head back home. Yes, ma'am.

Social Security Reform

Q. Hi. First I'd like to say that when I was first able to cast my vote for President, it was my honor to vote for you—[*inaudible*]. Can you hear me?

The President. I like that part. [*Laughter*]

Q. My question is about Social Security.

The President. Social Security?

Q. Yes. What are your plans to make sure that it's still viable when all the students sitting here are of an age that it would make a difference in our lives? And also, do you have any advice for us to plan for the problems—[*inaudible*]?

The President. I couldn't hear the question, so I'll put the words in your mouth. [*Laughter*] I guess you asked, is the system going to be viable when you get—yes? No. [*Laughter*]

If I were you, I'd pay attention to the issue. And the reason why is because there's a lot of us getting ready to retire. There's a baby boomer bulge. I was born in '46, on the leading edge of what we call the baby boomers, and there's a lot of us getting ready to retire, which means you are going to have to pay for a lot more people in the system, plus we've been promised greater benefits than the previous generation. So the system is going to go broke unless we do something about it.

Last year I talked about doing something about it, and the Congress didn't do anything about it. So this year I'm going to talk about doing something about it and the next year something about it and the next year something about it. I have a duty to confront problems and not hope, you know, and just kind of—shuffling them along. And so this is a big issue; both Medicare and Social Security are big issues. They're big issues for long-term deficits, and they're big issues for the individuals who are going to be having to pay in the system for people like me. And the fix isn't all that hard.

What is first required is people setting aside needless politics in Washington, DC, and saying, "Why don't we come together and get something done for the sake of a future generation." And we can make sure that this generation—that the up-and-coming generation—see, nothing changes if you're over 55. It's the young people paying into a broke system. By the way, they call it a Social Security trust, there's no "trust." The money is paid, and it's spent on other programs, and all that's left in the Social Security is an IOU. And so it seems like to me that it's really important to kind of lay out all the facts on the table for people to determine whether or not there's a problem or not. And once they see a problem, then they ought to be calling on people on the phone, their elected representatives, saying, "Do something about it."

And I believe we can fix this problem by slowing down the rate of growth of benefits, not cutting benefits; benefits will increase. But the promises have been just too great, and we need to be frank about it. And we need to be open about it to make sure that we save the Social Security system for our younger generation.

I also happen to believe, we have a fantastic opportunity to promote ownership in America. I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and set it aside in a personal savings account. And the reason I believe that is, I think if you own an asset, it helps provide stability in American society. I am concerned that—

I'm concerned at the low rate of return people get on their money through the Social Security—you know, quote, "Social Security trust." I know the power of compounding rate of interest. For those of you studying in economics, look it up. It says money grows exponentially over time. And if you put your money in just a safe series of instruments, it will grow. If you start saving at age 20, it grows quite dramatically over time, and then that's your nest egg. It's what you call—it's a part of a Social Security benefit system. Again, those of us who are retiring, I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about younger workers being given an option.

I'm also concerned about people in our society who've never owned anything. You know, I'm worried about—and I know that if you own—can you imagine a single mom working and able to put some of the money aside for herself if she wants and watch that grow with just safe investments over time, and when she retires, she's got a nest egg that she calls her own, that Government can't spend on another program, a nest egg that she can pass on to her loved one.

I mean, ownership and the ability to pass wealth from one generation to the next is an important part of busting the cycle of poverty, for example. And so this is a great opportunity to think differently about this very important program. And I appreciate you bringing it up, and thanks for being concerned about it. You need to be.

Yes, ma'am.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Do what?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, I'll look at it. Thank you. Appreciate it. Is your return address on there so I can write you back? No? Okay. [*Laughter*] Make sure I get that.

Education

Q. I was just wanting to get your comments about education. Recently, $12.7 billion was cut from education, and I was just wanting to know how that's supposed to help our futures?

The President. Education budget was cut—say it again. What was cut?

Q. Twelve point seven billion dollars was cut from education, and I was just wanting to know how is that supposed to help our——

The President. At the Federal level?

Q. Yes.

The President. I don't think that—I don't think we've actually—for higher education? Student loans?

Q. Yes, student loans.

The President. Actually, I think what we did was reform the student loan program. We're not cutting money out of it. In other words, people aren't going to be cut off the program. We're just making sure it works better. It's part of the reconciliation package, I think she's talking about. Yes, it's a reform of the program to make sure it functions better. It is—in other words, we're not taking people off student loans, we're saving money in the student loan program because it's inefficient. And so I think the thing to look at is whether or not there will be fewer people getting student loans. I don't think so. And secondly, on Pell grants, we're actually expanding the number of Pell grants through our budget.

But, great question. I think that the key on education is to make sure that we stay focused on how do we stay competitive into the 21st century. And I plan on doing some talking about math and science and engineering programs, so that people who graduate out of college will have the skills necessary to compete in this competitive world.

But I'm—I think I'm right on this. I'll check when I get back to Washington. But thank you for your question.

Yes, ma'am.

First Lady Laura Bush

Q. Again, I just wanted to thank you for coming. Your speech was very good. I'm a big admirer of your wife. I know that you said that your role as a President was as a decisionmaker, and I would like you to comment, please, on how your wife contributes to your decisionmaking process and how you confide in her. Thank you.

The President. Yes, thanks. Yes, she's great. She keeps—she tells me when I'm out of line. [*Laughter*]

First of all, Laura pays attention to what's going on. And so she offers her advice, and it's sound advice. She's a west Texas woman,

born and raised in west Texas. Kind of a—I would say she brings common sense. Kind of remind people from here—reminds me of people here from Kansas, down-to-earth, no airs, commonsense point of view. And so I appreciate very much when she does give me her advice, which can be too frequent sometimes. [*Laughter*] Not true, honey. [*Laughter*]

It's like the time—she tells the story about the time when I was running for Congress in 1978 in west Texas, and she criticized one of my speeches. And I ran into the garage door. [*Laughter*] But the best—I guess the best way to describe it is, one, I value her judgment, and I know it comes from her heart. And I appreciate the perspective she brings. Common sense is just a very important part of being a decisionmaker. There is something reassuring to me when I get advice from somebody who's got the best interests in mind, has got my best interests in mind, as well as just this kind of down-to-earth read on the situation. And that's how I view my advice from Laura.

Plus, she does—I mean, I said some things—"wanted dead or alive"—and she said, you might be able to explain that a little—express yourself a little better than that, George W. [*Laughter*] And so we've got a great relationship. You know, when I married her, she really didn't like politics, and particularly—didn't care particularly for politicians either. And here she is, the First Lady of the United States. And she is good. Boy, I tell you, she's—when she speaks, she's very credible because she's a decent, credible person. And I love her a lot.

Yes. Is that a Washington National hat?

"Brokeback Mountain"

Q. Wisconsin, actually.

The President. Okay, yes.

Q. "W" is for Wisconsin. You're a rancher. A lot of us here in Kansas are ranchers. I was just wanting to get your opinion on "Brokeback Mountain," if you've seen it yet? [*Laughter*] You would love it. You should check it out.

The President. I haven't seen it. I'll be glad to talk about ranching, but I haven't seen the movie. [*Laughter*] I've heard about it. I hope you go—you know—[*laughter*]—I hope you go back to the ranch and the farm is what I'm about to say. I haven't seen it. [*Laughter*]

Nuclear Proliferation

Q. Mr. President, I have a question about the nuclear weapons the United States is keeping. It's around 3,000 nuclear weapons, so I want to know your opinion when you are going to destroy them?

The President. Do what, now? I didn't hear what you said.

Q. When you are going to——

The President. I can't hear you very well. I'm sorry. I'm not trying to avoid the question; I just didn't get it.

Q. United States has 3,000 nuclear weapons.

The President. Three thousand nuclear weapons.

Q. Yes. And I want to know your opinion about these weapons of mass destruction, that when the United States is going to destroy the nuclear weapons to prevail the peace in the world.

The President. Got it. No, I appreciate it. One of the first things I did as the President was to negotiate a reduction of nuclear—deployable nuclear weapons with Vladimir Putin. Actually, I think we had 6,000 at the time, and we agreed to reduce our nuclear—deployable nuclear arsenals to between 1,700 and 2,200. And we're in the process of doing that now. And then of course, there will be—another President can then evaluate where we are. So we're in the process of honoring what's called the Moscow Treaty.

A couple of more, and then I've got to hop. Yes, ma'am.

Immigration/Border Security

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—I know that the relationship between United States and Venezuela is no good. That's not my problem. My problem is—or the question I have for you is what are you doing in the borders? You know, we try to secure the United States for terrorism, I know. So we're trying to secure the borders, but as well, some of us who are Hispanics and professional sometimes are denied the opportunity

to work and advance in the workplace because we are minorities.

What are you going to do? I represent—[*inaudible*]—what are you going to do provide the most secure job in which we serve the country, we serve the university? I can't complain in this university; I've been treated like royalty here. But when you work outside the university as a Hispanic, you are not look good enough because they think you come from Mexico.

I come from Venezuela, which is a different country, but all of us are Hispanics, and all of us embrace ourselves in America because America is—North America, the United States. In Central and South America, where one continents embrace each other. So what are you going to do to provide opportunities for the Hispanics who come to this country legally, like I did or who are illegal here? We should help them to get legal here, not provide directly a green card, but help them to become legal in step by step——

The President. Okay.

Q. ——like all of us have done. Thank you.

The President. Yes, I got the question. Immigration. [*Laughter*]

First of all, *bienvenidos*. And we have an obligation in this country to enforce our borders. And there's huge pressure on our borders. We've got a long border, obviously, with Mexico, and a long border with Canada. And the biggest, most problematic area right now is the border with Mexico—California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

The issue is not only Mexican citizens who are coming across the border illegally but it's other citizens who are coming across the border. And our obligation is to use a wise strategy to shut down the trafficking of anything illegal across the border. We're a country of law, and we must enforce the border. And we spend a lot of time in Washington, DC, analyzing the border issues and strategizing with Congress about how to do a better job including the following things: One, increasing the number of Border Patrol agents; two, increasing the use of technology on the border, so that you can see people coming, through drones, for example, and then be able to rally the Border Patrol to stop people from crossing—coming across.

Some physical barriers, particularly in urban centers, are now being constructed. Some berms—there's parts of our border, where, literally, you can just drive across, I mean, there's nothing. You know, you just land, and in you come. And it's hard—the demarcation zone is different, and it makes it hard for people to enforce the border.

Secondly, when we detain somebody at the border, we've got to have a rational policy to help back up the people we're paying to enforce the border. And by that I mean, if you're somebody from Central America, for example, caught coming into our country, that the policy has been to give you a notification to report back to a judge, and they'll hear your case. Well, guess what? A lot of them don't come back. They're here because they're trying to better their lives, and they're going to move into our society as best as they can. And they're not going to return back. So we're ending what's called catch-and-release, and we're beginning to provide more detention space for our Border Patrol to be able to say to people—particularly from Central America and South America, "You've come illegally; we're sending you back home."

Thirdly, in terms of workers, we do have H1, H2B visa programs that we're constantly analyzing with the United States Congress. It makes sense that highly skilled workers, for example, be given work permits here in the United States if it helps us meet an economic objective. But I feel strongly that we need to take the worker program a step further, and I'll tell you why. I'm mindful that most people come here to work. There are a lot of people in your State dependent upon people coming here to work.

I tell you, I used to say that—when I was Governor of Texas, family values didn't stop at the Rio Grande River. And people, if they could make 50 cents and had mouths to feed or $5 and had mouths to feed, a lot of people would come to try find that $5 work. And so here's my position, and that is that if there is someone who will do a job an American won't do, then that person ought to be given a temporary-worker card to work in the United States for a set period of time.

I do not believe that any guest worker program ought to contain amnesty, because I

believe that if you granted amnesty to the people here working now that that would cause another 8 million people or so to come here. I do believe, however, it is humane to say to a person, "You're doing a job somebody else won't do; here is a temporary card to enable you to do the card."

The length of the stay here will be dependent upon the actions of the Congress. It's conceivable you could have a 3-year period with a renewal period. I've thought a lot about this issue; I just want you to know. And by the way, when you mention guest worker, a lot of people automatically spring to amnesty—all he wants to do is grant legal status—that's just not the case; I don't believe we ought to do that. But I do believe we ought to recognize there are people doing work others won't do.

And there's a lot of good employers here in Kansas employing these people, and the employers don't know whether or not somebody is here legally or not. Because what's happened is, a whole kind of industry has sprung up around people coming here. And it's inhumane. It's inhumane for the people being trafficked into the United States, and it's not fair to employers who may be breaking the law.

And here's what I mean. You've got people being smuggled into the United States of America by these criminal networks. They're called *coyotes—coyotes*. And they're bringing them in the back of 18-wheelers—stuffing human beings to come and do work in America that Americans won't do, in the back of 18-wheelers. You've got a whole forgery industry up and running, you know? And so these guys show up with documents that—so the employer says, "Well, you look legal to me." They don't know whether they're legal or not legal.

I think it is a—and I know that we've got a lot of our Border Patrol agents trying to catch people sneaking in the country. And so it seems like to me that why don't we recognize reality, give people worker cards on a temporary basis so somebody can come back and forth legally, with a tamper-proof card that will enable an employer to know whether or not they're hiring somebody who is illegal. And if we catch employers after that hiring somebody illegal, there's got to be a fine and a consequence.

And so a compassionate way to enforce our border is to give people a temporary-worker card without granting amnesty. That's a long answer to a very important problem that is—now is the time for the United States to take it on squarely, in a humane way, that recognizes the situation and deals with it in an up-front way. And I want to thank you for your question.

Look, I've got a dinner tonight. [*Laughter*] I'd like to be here for a longer period of time, but Laura is serving dinner for retiring Alan Greenspan, and I better not be late, otherwise all that advice, it will be kind of—have a little different tone to it. [*Laughter*] I've really enjoyed being here. I want to thank you for your courtesy for having me. Thank you for supporting a great university in Kansas State University.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. at Kansas State University in Bramlage Coliseum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius of Kansas; Jon Wefald, president, Kansas State University; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea; President Mahmud Ahmadinejad of Iran; President Hu Jintao of China; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Statement on the Death of President Ibrahim Rugova of Kosovo

January 23, 2006

I am deeply saddened by the death of President Ibrahim Rugova. For many years, President Rugova led the campaign for peace and democracy in Kosovo. He was a friend of the United States, and he earned the world's respect for his principled stand against violence. Throughout years of conflict, he was a voice of reason and moderation that helped Kosovo's people lay the groundwork for a peaceful future. The United States remains committed to working with the people of Kosovo to build a future that is stable, democratic, and prosperous. On behalf of the

people of the United States, Laura and I extend our condolences to President Rugova's family and to the people of Kosovo.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of Pakistan

January 24, 2006

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. We have just had a wide-ranging discussion, which one should expect when we've got a strategic relationship like we have with Pakistan. I think the relationship with Pakistan is a vital relationship for the United States, and I want to thank the Prime Minister and thank the President for working closely with us on a variety of issues. We're working closely to defeat the terrorists who would like to harm America and harm Pakistan.

We talked about the importance of trade and commerce and investment, and we also talked about the world response to the terrible tragedy that Pakistan has gone through. It's hard to imagine the devastation. The country lost 75,000 people; 4 million people were made homeless. I was very pleased that the United States, our taxpayers, our military could contribute to helping the people of Pakistan recover. They are our friends, and we consider this friendship to be a vital friendship for keeping the peace.

And so Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for coming. I'm really looking forward to going to your country. I'll be traveling to India and Pakistan in March. And I want to thank you for your invitation and your hospitality in advance.

Prime Minister Aziz. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for receiving us. The United States and Pakistan have a multifaceted relationship, covering a host of areas. It goes back in history, and the people of Pakistan value the relationship very much.

Let me, at the outset, say that the assistance the United States has given to Pakistan—the Chinooks, the MASH hospitals, the engineers, and the financial assistance after the earthquake—has touched the hearts and minds of all Pakistanis—and including your private sector and civil society. We really appreciate what has been done, and it will help restore the lives of the people who've been impacted by the earthquake. A sense of caring and sharing always builds a better relationship between countries. And that's what we are seeing between Pakistan and the United States.

Mr. President, we have a multifaceted relationship, and our discussions today, which we'll continue later, have covered a host of areas: the economic side, trade and investment—we are very keen to expand that. Pakistan has a growing economy, and U.S. investors can take part in this growth.

We also strive for peace in our area. It's an area which has a lot of challenges, and we are pursuing peace with all our neighbors. We want a solution of all disputes, including the Kashmir dispute. We want to see a strong, stable Afghanistan. We are against proliferation of nuclear weapons by anybody, and we want to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. There is no good terrorist or bad terrorist, and terrorism knows no borders. Our coalition with the United States in fighting terrorism is very important to all of the world and all of civil society.

We are delighted we are here to share this time with you, and the people of Pakistan and the President and all of our Cabinet and various stakeholders in Pakistan are looking forward to your visit, because we think that this is an important visit for building relations further between our two countries and serving the cause of peace in the world.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan.

Remarks Following a Visit to the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland

January 25, 2006

Thank you very much. I just had a really interesting visit here at the National Security Agency, and I want to thank General Alexander and all the folks who work out here for their hospitality and their briefing. I gave a speech to the men and women who are

dedicating their lives to serving the American people and preventing this country from being attacked again. I was also able to talk to folks who work for the NSA, via video. They're around the world—some are in Iraq, some in Afghanistan. And it's just such an honor to be able to tell these people that the work they do is vital and necessary, and I support them 100 percent.

Most of the accomplishments, of course, that happen out here have got to be secret. But I know the good work they're doing. And so I want to assure the American people that we are lucky to have such professional, smart people working day and night to protect us.

The National Security Agency is playing a crucial part in the war on terror. First of all, the good folks who work out here understand we are at war, and they know what we know—that we face determined enemies who will strike without warning. And they know what I know, that we must learn the intentions of the enemies before they strike. That's what they do here—they work to protect us. The efforts of the people out here are a crucial part in protecting the homeland, and they've been a crucial part in success in Iraq and Afghanistan as well.

Officials here learn information about plotters and planners and people who would do us harm. Now, I understand there's some in America who say, "Well, this can't be true—there are still people willing to attack." All I would ask them to do is listen to the words of Usama bin Laden and take him seriously. When he says he's going to hurt the American people again, or try to, he means it. I take it seriously, and the people of NSA take it seriously. And most of the American people take it seriously as well.

Part of the war on terror—we've seen that part of the terrorists' strategy is to place operatives inside of our country. They blend in with civilian population. They get their orders from overseas, and then they emerge to strike from within. We must be able to quickly detect when someone linked to Al Qaida is communicating with someone inside of America. That's one of the challenges of protecting the American people, and it's one of the lessons of September the 11th.

When terrorist operatives are here in America communicating with someone overseas, we must understand what's going on if we're going to do our job to protect the people. The safety and security of the American people depend on our ability to find out who the terrorists are talking to and what they're planning.

In the weeks following September the 11th, I authorized a terrorist surveillance program to detect and intercept Al Qaida communications involving someone here in the United States. This is a targeted program to intercept communications in which intelligence professionals have reason to believe that at least one person is a member or agent of Al Qaida or a related terrorist organization. The program applies only to international communications. In other words, one end of the communication must be outside the United States.

We know that two of the hijackers who struck the Pentagon were inside the United States communicating with Al Qaida operatives overseas. But we didn't realize they were here plotting the attack until it was too late.

Here's what General Mike Hayden said—he was the former Director here at NSA. He's now the Deputy Director of the National Intelligence—Deputy Director of National Intelligence—and here's what he said earlier this week: "Had this program been in effect prior to 9/11, it is my professional judgment that we would have detected some of the 9/11 Al Qaida operatives in the United States, and we would have identified them as such."

The 9/11 Commission made clear, in this era of new dangers, we must be able to connect the dots before the terrorists strike, so we can stop new attacks. And this NSA program is doing just that. General Hayden has confirmed that America has gained information from this program that would not otherwise have been available. This information has helped prevent attacks and save American lives. This terrorist surveillance program includes multiple safeguards to protect civil liberties, and it is fully consistent with our Nation's laws and Constitution. Federal courts have consistently ruled that a President has authority under the Constitution to conduct foreign intelligence surveillance against our enemies.

My predecessors have used the same constitutional authority on numerous occasions. And the Supreme Court has ruled that Congress gave the President additional authority to use the traditional tools—or "fundamental incidents"—of war in the fight against terror when Congress passed the authorization for the use of military force in 2001. These tools include surveillance to detect and prevent further attacks by our enemies. I have the authority, both from the Constitution and the Congress, to undertake this vital program. The American people expect me to protect their lives and their civil liberties, and that's exactly what we're doing with this program.

I'll continue to reauthorize this program for so long as our country faces a continuing threat from Al Qaida and related groups. This enemy still wants to do harm to the American people. We cannot let the fact that we have not been attacked lull us into the illusion that the threats to our Nation have disappeared. They have not disappeared; the terrorists are still active. And we've seen their activity in London and Madrid and Bali and Beslan and Amman and Baghdad and many other places since September the 11th. Just last week, as I mentioned earlier, we heard from Usama bin Laden. The terrorists will do everything they can to strike us. And I'm going to continue to do everything I can within my legal authority to stop them, and so are the good people here at NSA.

In the long run, we can be confident in the outcome of this struggle, because we've seen the power of freedom to defeat tyranny and terror before. And we can be confident because we know our military and law enforcement and homeland security and intelligence professionals are working day and night to protect us.

I'm grateful for the skill and dedication of the good folks who work out here. These are fine patriots, and they're making America safer. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Keith B. Alexander, USA, Director, National Security Agency; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Former Clerks of Associate Justice-Designate Samuel A. Alito, Jr.

January 25, 2006

Thank you all very much. Thank you all for being here. I just finished a meeting in the Oval Office with a group of distinguished lawyers, many of whom come from different backgrounds, and they've got a wide range of political views. They share two things in common: They all clerked for Judge Sam Alito; and they strongly support his nomination to be an Associate Justice to the Supreme Court.

The relationship between a judge and a law clerk is extremely close. Each judge has only three or four clerks a year, and these clerks serve as the judge's aides and advisers. They provide legal research; they discuss and debate pending cases; and they see firsthand how the judge arrives at decisions.

These fine men and women with me today have worked side by side with Sam Alito, and they are uniquely qualified to assess what kind of Supreme Court Justice he would be. As the full Senate takes up Judge Alito's nomination, it is important for the American people to hear what his former clerks say about this fine judge and his approach to the law.

One of the clerks I met today who describes himself as a Democrat said this about Judge Alito: "He is meticulous in the way he goes about deciding cases. He's meticulous in the way he goes about finding what the law is. I can't think of better qualities for anyone to serve as a judge on the Supreme Court."

Another former clerk here today says this: "I am a Democrat who always voted Democrat, except when I vote for a Green candidate—but Judge Alito was not interested in the ideology of his clerks. He didn't decide cases based on ideology."

Another former clerk who described himself as a proud member of the NAACP and the ACLU says, "After a year of working closely with the Judge on cases concerning a wide variety of legal issues, I left New Jersey not knowing Judge Alito's personal beliefs on any of them."

Another former clerk who describes herself as a left-leaning Democrat told the Senate this about Sam Alito: "He's a man of great decency, integrity, and character. I believe very strongly he deserves to be confirmed as the Court's next Associate Justice."

Another of Judge Alito's former clerks worked for Senator Kerry's Presidential campaign. She said this about Judge Alito: "I learned in my year with Judge Alito that his approach to judging is not about personal ideology or ambition but about hard work and devotion to law and justice."

In case you were wondering, Judge Alito has also the support of Republican clerks. [*Laughter*] In fact, he has the strong support of all 54 of his former clerks, regardless of their political beliefs. Judge Alito has earned broad support from his fellow judges on the Third Circuit. Seven of them took the extraordinary step of testifying on his behalf before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Former Chief Judge Ed Becker, who sat with Judge Alito on more than 1,000 cases, said this about his colleague: "I have never seen a chink in the armor of his integrity, which I view as total. He is a real judge deciding each case on the facts and the law, not his personal views, whatever they may be."

Another colleague on the Third Circuit who was appointed by President Clinton said this about Judge Alito: "He is a fair-minded man, a modest man, a humble man, and he reveres the rule of law." The judge went on to say, "If confirmed, Judge Sam Alito will serve as a marvelous and distinguished Associate Justice."

All these brilliant legal minds are united in their strong support of Sam Alito. And in his confirmation hearings, the American people saw why. Judge Alito is open-minded and principled. He gives every case careful attention, and he makes decisions based on the merits. Judge Alito understands that the role of a judge is to interpret the law, not to advance a personal or political agenda. Judge Alito is a man of character and integrity. Judge Alito will bring to the Supreme Court a broad range of experience and accomplishment.

Before he became a judge, Sam Alito served as a Federal prosecutor, Assistant to the Solicitor General, where he argued 12 cases before the Supreme Court; an attorney in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel; and the U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey—the top Federal prosecutor in one of the Nation's largest Federal districts.

In 1990, Sam Alito was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. He now has more prior judicial experience than any Supreme Court nominee in more than 70 years. The American Bar Association gave Judge Sam Alito its highest possible rating, a unanimous well-qualified. It based its rating on its assessment of his integrity, professional competence, and judicial temperament.

In the past, leading Democrat Senators have called the ABA's rating the gold standard for judicial nominees. Yesterday, Ed Rendell, the Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania and former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, came out in support of Judge Sam Alito. Governor Rendell said he was not pleased with the way his fellow Democrats have handled Sam Alito's nomination and said that Democrats should vote to confirm him. Governor Rendell put it this way: "As long as a Supreme Court Justice has high academic qualifications and significant integrity—and Judge Alito certainly does—we should confirm him."

There's no doubt about Judge Alito's qualifications, his intellect, or his complete dedication to our Constitution and laws. He is exactly the kind of person Americans want on the Supreme Court.

The Senate has a constitutional responsibility to give every judicial nominee an up-or-down vote. In its 216-year history, the Senate has held an up-or-down vote on every Supreme Court nominee with a majority of Senate support. And I call on the United States Senate to put partisanship aside and give Judge Alito the up-or-down vote he deserves and to confirm him as the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

I'm grateful to Judge Alito. And I appreciate his wonderful wife, Martha, and their children for their dignity throughout the confirmation process. America is fortunate that this good, humble man is willing to serve,

and all of us look forward to seeing him take a seat on our Nation's highest Court.

Thank you all for being here. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

The President's News Conference

January 26, 2006

The President. Sorry to interrupt. [*Laughter*] Thank you all very much. I look forward to answering some of your questions here in a minute. I'm also looking forward to going up to Capitol Hill next Tuesday to give my State of the Union Address. I thought it probably best not to practice my speech in front of you here, so you'll pay attention to it when I deliver it. But I do want to give you some thoughts about what I'm thinking about.

First, I recognize we live in a momentous time——

[*At this point, there was technical difficulty with a camera attached to the ceiling.*]

For those of you watching, we seem to have a mechanical flaw. [*Laughter*]

Q. That was an accident, right?

The President. Are you wearing your helmets?

Q. It's that renovation project.

The President. Exactly. [*Laughter*] I'll take it up with the First Lady. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to remind people we're living in historic times and that we have a chance to make decisions today that will help shape the direction of events for years to come. I'm going to continue to talk about an optimistic agenda that will keep—that will remind folks we've got a responsibility to lead. We've got a responsibility to lead to promote freedom and a responsibility to continue to put policies in place that will let us be a leader when it comes to the economy in the world.

I recognize this is an election year, but I believe that we can work together to achieve results. In other words, I think we can set aside the partisanship, that inevitably will come with an election year, and get some stuff done. And that's what I'm going to call Congress to do.

We've got—must work together to protect our Nation's security. I'm going to continue to do everything within my authority to protect the American people. We're going to stay on the offense in the war against terror. We'll hunt down the enemies in Afghanistan and in Iraq and elsewhere. We'll continue our terrorist surveillance program against Al Qaida. Congress must reauthorize the PATRIOT Act so that our law enforcement and intelligence and homeland security officers have the tools they need to rout out the terrorists—terrorists who could be planning and plotting within our borders. And we'll do all this and, at the same time, protect the civil liberties of our people.

We're going to continue to lead the cause of freedom in the world. The only way to defeat a dark ideology is through the hopeful vision of human liberty.

Here at home, we're also—we've got great opportunities. And to seize those opportunities, we have got to lead. Our economy is growing; it is strong. This economy has created millions of new jobs, yet it's an economy that is changing rapidly. And we live in a competitive world. And so policies must be put in place to recognize the competition of the global economy and prepare our people to be able to continue to compete so America can continue to lead.

Of course, we'll talk about fiscal policy in my State of the Union, talking about the Congress to be wise about how we spend the people's money and to make the tax cuts permanent.

I will talk about initiatives to make sure our health care and education and energy is—recognizes the realities of the world in which we live today and anticipates the problems of the world tomorrow so that we can remain competitive.

I will talk about the values that are important for our country. I'm going to remind people, we show the character and compassion of America by taking focused action to confront disease and to help devastated areas of our country that have been—areas that have been devastated by natural disasters,

and ensure that medical research is conducted in a manner that recognizes the dignity of every human life.

I look forward to the speech; I really do. As you can imagine, it's an interesting experience to walk out there and not only talk to Members of Congress but, as importantly, talk to the American people.

I'm also looking forward to the Senate finishing its business on the confirmation of Sam Alito. He's a man of character, and he's a man of integrity. He understands that the role of a judge is to interpret the law. He understands the role of a judge is not to advance a personal or political agenda. Yesterday I had an interesting experience standing with his law clerks, and I could—started reading the notes that, of course, were adequately prepared for me, and the first person said he's a Democrat who supports Alito; the second person was a person who voted Green that supported Alito; the third, a left-leaning woman Democrat who supported Alito; the fourth person I talked about was somebody who worked in the John Kerry campaign who supported Alito. I was wondering, where are all those Republican clerks? [*Laughter*]

My point is, is that he has broad support from people who know him, people from both political parties, because he's a decent man who's got a lot of experience, and he deserves an up-or-down vote on the floor of the Senate. I was interested in Ed Rendell's comments—he's the Governor of Pennsylvania. He was the former chairman of the Democrat National Committee. He did not like the way the debate was headed. He believed that Sam Alito should be confirmed, and so do I. The Senate needs to give him an up-or-down vote as quickly as possible.

Listen, thank you all for giving me a chance to share some thoughts with you. I'd be glad to answer some questions, starting with you, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Palestinian Elections/Hamas

Q. Mr. President, is Mideast peacemaking dead with Hamas' big election victory? And do you rule out dealing with the Palestinians if Hamas is the majority party?

The President. Peace is never dead because people want peace. I believe—and that's why I articulated a two-state solution early in my administration, so that—as a vision for people to work toward, a solution that recognized that democracy yields peace. And the best hope for peace in the Middle East is two democracies living side by side.

So the Palestinians had an election yesterday, and the results of which remind me about the power of democracy. You see, when you give people the vote, you give people a chance to express themselves at the polls. And if they're unhappy with the status quo, they'll let you know. That's the great thing about democracy; it provides a look into society.

And yesterday the turnout was significant, as I understand it. And there was a peaceful process as people went to the polls, and that's positive. But what was also positive is, is that it's a wake-up call to the leadership. Obviously, people were not happy with the status quo. The people are demanding honest government. The people want services. They want to be able to raise their children in an environment in which they can get a decent education and they can find health care.

And so the elections should open the eyes of the old guard there in the Palestinian territories. I like the competition of ideas. I like people who have to go out and say, "Vote for me, and here's what I'm going to do." There's something healthy and—about a system that does that. And so the elections yesterday were very interesting.

On the other hand, I don't see how you can be a partner in peace if you advocate the destruction of a country as part of your platform. And I know you can't be a partner in peace if you have a—if your party has got an armed wing. And so the elections just took place. We will watch very carefully about the formation of the government. But I will continue to remind people about what I just said, that if your platform is the destruction of Israel, it means you're not a partner in peace. And we're interested in peace.

I talked to Condi twice this morning. She called President Abbas. She also is going to have a conference call today about the Quartet—with the Quartet, about how to keep the process on the road to peace.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Palestinian Democracy

Q. If I can follow up, sir.

The President. Yes.

Q. Are you cautioning Prime Minister Abbas not to resign? And——

The President. We'd like him to stay in power. I mean, we'd like to stay in office. He is in power; we'd like him to stay in office. Sorry to interrupt. I knew this was a two-part question, so I tried to head it off.

Q. Will this affect aid to the Palestinians? Will you be able to work with Hamas if they're—assuming they take on a large share of the government?

The President. Well, I made it very clear that the United States does not support political parties that want to destroy our ally Israel and that people must renounce that part of their platform. But the government hasn't formed yet. They're beginning to talk about how to form the government. And your question on Abbas was a good one. And our message to him was, we would hope he would stay in office and work to move the process forward.

Again, I remind people, the elections—democracy is—can open up the world's eyes to reality by listening to people. And the elections—the election process is healthy for society, in my judgment. In other words, it's—one way to figure out how to address the needs of the people is to let them express themselves at the ballot box. And that's exactly what happened yesterday. And you'll hear a lot of people saying, "Well, aren't we surprised at the outcome," or this, that, or the other.

If there is corruption, I'm not surprised that people say, "Let's get rid of corruption." If government hadn't been responsive, I'm not the least bit surprised that people said, "I want government to be responsive."

And so that was an interesting day yesterday in the—as we're watching liberty begin to spread across the Middle East.

Let's see here. Yes, David [David Gregory, NBC News].

Q. Mr. President, good morning. I have a different question, but I'd like to pin you down on this point about Hamas because I don't think you've completely answered it. Are you ruling out dealing with a Palestinian government comprised, in part, of Hamas?

The President. Dave, they don't have a government yet, so you're asking me to speculate on what the government will look like. I have made it very clear, however, that a political party that articulates the destruction of Israel as part of its platform is a party with which we will not deal.

Q. Okay, can I——

The President. No, it's——

Q. But, sir, I'm sorry——

The President. Well, it's unfair to the other people.

Q. No, I'm just—I'm just following up——

The President. You're trying to hoard. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm not trying—I have a question about New Orleans, sir.

The President. This is—I agree with you. I can see the expressions on your colleagues' faces that it's——

Q. Well, I hope it will be worth your time. [*Laughter*]

The President. They don't think so. [*Laughter*]

Gulf Coast Relief Efforts

Q. The administration has rejected a local plan to rebuild New Orleans, and your administrator down there, Don Powell, said that the focus for Federal money should be to rebuild for those 20,000 homeowners who were outside the flood plain. Critics, local officials say that that ignores so many people in New Orleans, the poorest of the poor, the hardest hit areas, people who didn't have flood insurance or didn't expect the levees to break. And they feel, sir, that this is a certain betrayal of your promise that New Orleans would rise again. So why did you reject it? And do you think that the people of New Orleans have to expect that there is a limit for the extent to which the city can be rebuilt?

The President. The Congress has appropriated $85 billion to help rebuild the gulf coast. And that is a good start; it's a strong start; it's a significant commitment to the people whose lives were turned upside down by that—by those—by that hurricane.

Secondly, we have said that we look forward to the time when each State develops its recovery plan. I, early on in the process,

said it's important for the folks in Mississippi to come forward with a recovery plan. And it's important for New Orleans and the State of Louisiana to work together to develop a State recovery plan. And the reason I said that is because I was aware that folks in Congress will want to spend money based upon a specific strategy. In other words, we've got to get comfortable with how to proceed. Those plans haven't—the plan for Louisiana hasn't come forward yet, and I urge the officials, both State and city, to work together so we can get a sense for how they're going to proceed.

Now, having said that, I recognize there were some early things we needed to do to instill confidence. One of them was to say that we will make the levees stronger and better than before and study further strengthening of the levees. In other words, I recognize that people needed to be able to say, "Well, gosh, we can't even get started until we got a commitment from the Federal Government on the levees."

A lot of the money we're spending is prescribed by law, but we also went a step further and proposed to Congress, and they accepted, the CDGB money so that monies can actually go directly to individual families that need help. We'll continue to work with the folks down there. But I want to remind the people in that part of the world, $85 billion is a lot, and secondly, we were concerned about creating additional Federal bureaucracies, which might make it harder to get money to the people.

Q. But is there a limit, sir?

The President. John [John Roberts, CBS News].

Q. I have five questions, sir. I hope you'll indulge me. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's only two-and-a-half times more——

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. On the NSA eavesdropping program, there seems to be growing momentum in Congress to either modify the existing law or write some new law that would give you the latitude to do this and, at the same time, ensure that people's civil liberties are protected. Would you be resistant to the notion of new laws if Congress were to give you what you need to conduct these operations?

The President. The terrorist surveillance program is necessary to protect America from attack. I asked the very questions you asked, John, when we first got going. Let me tell you exactly how this happened. Right after September the 11th, I said to the people, what can we do—can we do more—"the people" being the operators, a guy like Mike Hayden—can we do more to protect the people? There's going to be a lot of investigation and a lot of discussion about connecting dots, and we have a responsibility to protect the people, so let's make sure we connect the dots. And so he came forward with this program. In other words, it wasn't designed in the White House; it was designed where you expect it to be designed, in the NSA.

Secondly, I said, before we do anything, I want to make sure it's legal. And so we had our lawyers look at it—and as part of the debate, the discussion with the American people as to the legality of the program, there's no doubt in my mind it is legal.

And thirdly, will there be safeguards for the—to safeguard the civil liberties of the American people? There's no doubt in my mind there are safeguards in place to make sure the program focuses on calls coming from outside the United States in, with an Al Qaida—from a—with a belief that there's an Al Qaida person making the call to somebody here in the States, or vice versa—but not domestic calls.

So as I stand here right now, I can tell the American people the program's legal; it's designed to protect civil liberties; and it's necessary. Now, my concern has always been that in an attempt to try to pass a law on something that's already legal, we'll show the enemy what we're doing. And we've briefed Congress—Members of Congress. We'll continue to do that, but it's important for people to understand that this program is so sensitive and so important, that if information gets out to how it's—how we do it, how we run it, or how we operate, it will help the enemy.

And so, of course, we'll listen to ideas. But, John, I want to make sure that people understand that if it—if the attempt to write law makes this program—is likely to expose the

nature of the program, I'll resist it. And I think the American people understand that. Why tell the enemy what we're doing if the program is necessary to protect us from the enemy? And it is. And it's legal. And we'll continue to brief Congress. And we review it a lot, and we review it not only at the Justice Department but with a good legal staff inside NSA.

Yes.

Lobbying Reform/Jack Abramoff Investigation

Q. What do you hear or your staff hear about releasing of photographs of Jack Abramoff with you, Mr. President? If you say you don't fear anything, tell us why you won't release them?

The President. She's asking about a person who admitted to wrongdoing and who needs to be prosecuted for that. There is a serious investigation going on, as there should be. The American people have got to have confidence in the ethics of all branches of Government. You're asking about pictures—I had my picture taken with him, evidently. I've had my picture taken with a lot of people. Having my picture taken with someone doesn't mean that, you know, I'm a friend with them or know them very well. I've had my picture taken with you—[*laughter*]—at holiday parties.

My point is, I mean, there's thousands of people that come through and get their pictures taken. I'm also mindful that we live in a world in which those pictures will be used for pure political purposes, and they're not relevant to the investigation.

Q. Do you know how many?

The President. I don't have any idea.

I'm coming your way. Carl [Carl Cameron, FOX News].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning. On the subject of Iran, what parameters might the U.S. be willing to accept Iran having a nuclear power program? And to the extent that you've said in the past that the United States supports the Iranian people, would you support expedited legislation or a move that would send resources to such groups in Iran that might hasten regime change or democratic reform?

The President. I have made it clear that I believe that the Iranians should have a civilian nuclear program—power program under these conditions: that the material used to power the plant would be manufactured in Russia, delivered under IEEE—IAEA inspections—inspectors to Iran to be used in that plant, the waste of which will be picked up by the Russians and returned to Russia. I think that is a good plan. The Russians came up with the idea, and I support it.

And the reason why I think it makes sense is because I do believe people ought to be allowed to have civilian nuclear power. However, I don't believe nontransparent regimes that threaten the security of the world should be allowed to gain the technologies necessary to make a weapon. And the Iranians have said, "We want a weapon."

And it's not in the world's interest that they have a weapon. And so we are working hard to continue the diplomacy necessary to send a focused message to the Iranian Government, and that is, your desires for a weapon are unacceptable. Part of that is—part of that diplomacy was to provide an acceptable alternative to the Iranian desire to have a civilian nuclear power industry.

Secondly, we will support freedom movements all around the world. I constantly talked about today's reformers will be tomorrow's leaders, and therefore, we will work with groups that demand for people to be given the natural rights of men and women, and that right is to live in a free society.

Dana [Dana Bash, Cable News Network].

Lobbying Reform/Jack Abramoff Investigation

Q. Mr. President, you talked about Jack Abramoff in the context of pictures, but it may not necessarily just be about pictures. He also had some meetings with some of your staff. So you remember, you ran on the idea of restoring honesty and integrity to the White House. So why are you letting your critics, perhaps, attack you and paint you with, maybe, a guilt by association? Why not just throw open your books and say, look, here is——

The President. There is a serious investigation going on by Federal prosecutors, and that's their job. And they will—if they believe something was done inappropriately in the White House, they'll come and look, and they're welcome to do so. There's a serious investigation that's going on.

Q. But, sir, don't you want to tell the American people look, as I promised, this White House isn't for sale, and I'm not for sale?

The President. It's hard for me to say I didn't have pictures with the guy when I did. But I have also had pictures with thousands and thousands of people. I mean, people—it's part of the job of the President to shake hands and—with people and smile. [*Laughter*] And I do. And the man contributed to my campaigns, but he contributed, either directly or through his clients, to a lot of people in Washington. And this needs to be cleared up so the people have confidence in the system.

Yes, Peter [Peter Baker, Washington Post].

Palestinian Elections

Q. Mr. President, the U.S. Government has spent about $2 million to help promote the Palestinian Authority in the lead-up to this week's elections. I wonder, sir, whether you feel like it's consistent with your push to spread democracy around the world if the U.S. puts its thumb on the scale? Or are there moments when it's okay to compromise that because you want to keep organizations with a terrorist threat out of government?

The President. I talked to Secretary Rice about the story that you're referring to, and what she told me was, is that this money was part of a USAID package that had been in the pipeline for a while. The—kind of the allegation or the insinuation that we were funding a political effort just simply isn't the case, as far as I can tell.

Q. It was designed to promote the image of the Palestinian Authority among its own people——

The President. As I say, this money was part of a USAID package. We had—I proclaimed, I made it very clear that Jim Wolfensohn was going to be in the region with an economic aid package to help the Palestinian people. Our programs are aimed to help the people. And——

Q. I'm talking about who gets credit. Part of the thing was there would be no——

The President. Well, obviously—obviously——

Q. Credit would go to the Authority.

The President. Yes, well, our attempt was to help the Palestinian people through a active USAID program. And you saw the results of the election.

Q. Why, then, not disclose the USAID involvement?

The President. It is disclosed—you just disclosed it. [*Laughter*]

Elisabeth [Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times]. Thank you. Are you trying to help the man out there?

Q. He's my colleague.

The President. Okay, good.

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. Members of your administration have said that the secret eavesdropping program might have prevented the September 11th attacks. But the people who hijacked the planes on September 11th had been in this country for years, having domestic phone calls and e-mails. So how, specifically, can you say that?

The President. Well, Michael Hayden said that because he believes that had we had the capacity to listen to the phone calls from those from San Diego elsewhere, we might have gotten information necessary to prevent the attack. And that's what he was referring to.

Q. They were domestic calls——

The President. No, domestic outside—we will not listen inside this country. It is a call from Al Qaida, Al Qaida affiliates, either from inside the country out or outside the country in, but not domestically.

Jack Abramoff Investigation

Q. Can I ask you again, why won't you release the photos of yourself with Jack Abramoff?

The President. I just answered the question.

Yes.

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. Your explanation on the monitoring program seems to say that when the Nation is at war, the President, by definition, can order measures that might not be acceptable or even, perhaps, legal in peacetime. And this seems to sound like something President Nixon once said, which was, "When the President does it, then that means it is not illegal," in the areas involving national security. So how do the two differ?

The President. Well, I said yesterday that other Presidents have used the same authority I've had, to use technology to protect the American people. Other Presidents—most Presidents believe that during a time of war, that we can use our authorities under the Constitution to make decisions necessary to protect us.

Secondly, in this case, there is an act passed by Congress in 2001, which said that I must have the power to conduct this war using the incidents of war. In other words, we believe there's a constitutional power granted to Presidents as well as, this case, a statutory power. And I'm intending to use that power—Congress says, "Go ahead and conduct the war; we're not going to tell you how to do it." And part of winning this war on terror is to understand the nature of the enemy and to find out where they are so we can protect the American people.

There's going to be—there will be a constitution—there will be a legal debate about whether or not I have the authority to do this; I'm absolutely convinced I do. Our Attorney General has been out describing why. And I'm going to continue using my authority. That's what the American people expect.

Yes, Mark [Mark Smith, Associated Press Radio].

U.S. Armed Forces

Q. Mr. President, the Pentagon recently studied U.S. forces overseas and concluded that between Iraq and Afghanistan, that the military was very seriously overextended. Then Secretary Rumsfeld told us yesterday, well, that's really not what the study concluded. But this morning General Casey told us, in Iraq, U.S. forces there are stretched. Who's right here?

The President. I haven't seen General Casey's comments, his specific comments. I will tell you this, that after 5 years of war, there is a need to make sure that our troops are balanced properly, that threats are met with capability. And that's why we're transforming our military. The things I look for are the following: morale, retention, and recruitment. And retention is high, recruitment is meeting goals, and people are feeling strong about the mission, Mark. But I also recognize that we've got to make sure that our military is transformed. And that's what's taking place right now. We're transforming the United States Army so that capabilities and the threats are better aligned.

And I'll give—go ahead.

Q. It's not overextended then?

The President. The question is whether or not we can win victory in Iraq. Our troops will have what they—I mean, our commanders will have the troops necessary to do that. The question is, can we help keep the peace in a place like the Far East? Absolutely.

And let me use the Far East as an example of what I'm talking about. There was some 30,000 troops on the South Korean Peninsula. As you might remember, we reduced the amount of manpower, replaced it with technology. A lot of people—some people at the time said, "Well, wait a minute. They're lessening their commitment to peace and security in the Far East by moving people out." I made the case that, no, what we're doing is replacing manpower—we're transforming our military presence in South Korea to be able to meet the threats of the 21st century. And that's what you're seeing all throughout our military.

And so this is a time where we've been in theater for—been in this war against terror for 5 years and, at the same time, transforming. And I think if you look at what our commanders are saying and what are people like Pete Schoomaker are saying is that this transformation is going to make it more likely America will be able to continue in the out years of doing what we need to do to keep the peace.

Yes, Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, do you think you need to be more aggressive with vetoing or at least threatening to veto more spending bills this year? I mean, every year you say, "I want Congress to show spending restraint; this is important for our budget and our economy." But do you think they're doing enough? Do you need to be more aggressive——

The President. Yes, I do think they are when they meet our budget targets. And here's the way—hold on, let me finish, please. Here's the way it works. We sit down and say, "Here's what we'd like you to do. We'd like you to reduce nonsecurity discretionary spending." Or we present a budget target, and they meet them. They have met those targets.

And I am pleased that I've got a working relationship with the Speaker and Leader Frist and other Members of Congress to help meet those targets.

Go ahead; you've got a follow-up?

Q. So essentially, then, you think everything is going fine with the budget, and there's no need to use a veto or anything like that?

The President. Well, I'm fully prepared to use the veto if they overspend. They've got a chance now to continue to show the American people that they're willing to be—have fiscal discipline by voting on the reconciliation package in the House of Representatives. We've still got a lot of work to do, don't get me wrong. And I'll present a—in the process of laying out a budget that will continue to eliminate programs that don't work or that are duplicative in nature, one that says we can cut our deficit in half by 2009 and make sure the American people still get their tax relief.

We don't need to be running up the taxes right now, in my judgment. And I think it is—you know, people say, "Well, let's raise the taxes and balance the budget." That's not how it works. They're going to raise your taxes, and they're going to continue to expand the Government. And I understand that.

Now, in terms of how they spend the money once they meet the budget targets, that's going to be an interesting discussion on Capitol Hill. That's about this business about earmarks and people making special deals in the budget. And they need to—there needs to be earmark reform. And we look forward to working with responsible Members on the Hill about earmark reform.

Yes.

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, last year your administration imposed a package of economic sanctions on North Korea. Now, North Korea says it will not come back to the table in the nuclear talks unless those sanctions go. South Korea is warning of a dispute on the issue. Would you consider removing them, suspending them, making some gesture to get North Korea back to the negotiation table?

The President. Actually, I think what you're referring to is the fact that we're trying—that we are cutting off the transfer of monies generated by illicit activities. When somebody is counterfeiting our money, we want to stop them from doing that. And so we are aggressively saying to the North Koreans, "Just—don't counterfeit our money." And we are working with others to prevent them from illicit activities. That's different from economic sanctions.

Q. Fair enough.

The President. And no, we think it's very important for the North Koreans to come back to the table. There's a six-party talk framework that is hopeful and positive for them. It requires them to make some difficult decisions, and, of course, one of them is to get rid of their nuclear arsenal. But we're more than willing to—and want the six-party talks to continue forward. I think the framework is a framework that can eventually yield to a peaceful settlement of the issue. But the other issue is one that I just wanted to make sure I clarify for you why we're doing what we're doing.

Jonathan [Joseph Curl, Washington Times]——

Q. You see this as completely separate then, sir?

The President. I think——

Q. There's no room to suspend them or—

The President. Well, if somebody is cheating on us, we need to stop it. I mean, the American people—if we know people are counterfeiting our money, they expect the

Government to act. And there is no compromise when it comes to, you know, "Hey, come back to the table so you can counterfeit our money; just counterfeit 20s and not 100s, or whatever it is?" I mean, no. We are going to uphold the law and protect the currency of the American people.

Jonathan.

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. Stepping back from the immediate NSA debate that's going on right now, Vice President Cheney recently said that the White House is reasserting its executive power. Is the NSA program part of that effort? And what do you say to Democrats who charge that you are abusing your constitutional authority?

The President. I would say that there has been a historical debate between the executive branch and the legislative branch as who's got what power. And I don't view it as a contest with the legislative branch. Maybe they view it as a contest with the executive; I just don't. I view it—I view the decisions I've made, particularly when it comes to national security, as necessary decisions to protect the American people. That's how—that's the lens on which I analyze things, Jonathan. And I understand we're at war with an enemy that wants to hit us again. Usama bin Laden made that clear the other day, and I take his words very seriously. And I also take my responsibility to protect the American people very seriously.

And so we're going to do what is necessary, within the Constitution and within the law and, at the same time, guaranteeing people's civil liberties, to protect the people. And that's how I look at this debate. Now, there's all kinds of people taking a step back and saying well, this is this, this is that. And I recognize throughout history, people—there have been a debate about legislative power and executive power. Part of the questions asked here today kind of reflect that debate.

And I'm going to leave that to the lawyers. I believe I've been hired by the people to do my job, and that's to protect the people, and that's what I'm going to do, mindful of my authorities within the Constitution, mindful of our need to make sure that we stay within the law, and mindful of the need to protect the civil liberties of the people.

Q. Mr. President, though—this is a direct follow up to that—the FISA law was implemented in 1978, in part because of revelations that the National Security Agency was spying domestically. What is wrong with that law that you feel you have to circumvent it and, as you just admitted, expand presidential power?

The President. May I—if I might, you said that I have to circumvent it. There—wait a minute. That's a—there's something—it's like saying, you know, "You're breaking the law." I'm not. See, that's what you've got to understand. I am upholding my duty and, at the same time, doing so under the law and with the Constitution behind me. That's just very important for you to understand.

Secondly, the FISA law was written in 1978. We're having this discussion in 2006. It's a different world. And FISA is still an important tool. It's an important tool. And we still use that tool. But also—and we—look—I said, "Look, is it possible to conduct this program under the old law?" And people said, "It doesn't work, in order to be able to do the job we expect us to do."

And so that's why I made the decision I made. And you know, "circumventing" is a loaded word, and I refuse to accept it, because I believe what I'm doing is legally right.

Bob [Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers]——

Q. There are going to be hearings on Capitol Hill starting February 6th regarding——

The President. Regarding that point, right. And Al Gonzales has recently given a speech laying out the administrative position, and I'm sure you analyzed it carefully.

Deans.

U.S. Policy on Detainees in the War on Terror

Q. Sir, you said a few minutes ago the United States needs to continue to lead in the cause of freedom around the world, and yet in recent weeks, a couple of groups—Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International—have criticized the U.S. handling of terrorist suspects. They say that has undermined the U.S. voice as a champion of human rights, and even, perhaps, undercut a generation of progress in human rights.

And my question, sir, is how do you—how do you respond to that?

The President. I haven't seen the report, but if they're saying we tortured people, they're wrong—period.

Q. Could you call on your Texas straight talk and make a clear and unambiguous statement today that no American will be allowed to torture another human being anywhere in the world at any time——

The President. Yes. No American will be allowed to torture another human being anywhere in the world. And I signed the appropriations bill with the McCain amendment attached on because that's the way it is. I know some have said, "Well, why did he put a qualifier in there?" And one reason why Presidents put qualifiers in is to protect the prerogative of the executive branch. You see, what we're always doing is making sure that we make it clear that the executive branch has got certain responsibilities. Conducting war is a responsibility in the executive branch, not the legislative branch.

But make no mistake about it, the McCain amendment is an amendment we strongly support and will make sure it's fully effective.

Let's see, Richard [Richard Bennadetto, USA Today].

2006 Elections

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned earlier that this is an election year. Republicans are expressing great confidence that they're going to be able to take back the Congress.

The President. Who are?

Q. The Democrats, I mean, they're expressing——

The President. We already have the Congress. [*Laughter*]

Q. They say that they can use issues such as corruption and the war in Iraq and high energy prices against Republicans and against you. How much do you plan to go out and campaign——

The President. I'm looking forward on the campaign, but I'm also looking forward to reminding people we have a responsibility to get some things done. And that's part of what the State of the Union is going to be about, but, no, I'm looking forward to getting out there. I've got one more off-year campaign in me as a sitting President, and I'm looking forward to it, Richard. As you know, I like to get out and tell people what's on my mind, explain to people we're a party with ideas, we know how to lead, that—remind people of the stakes in the world in which we live, and that we have a plan to deal with them.

And we've got a good record here in Washington, DC, and I'm looking forward to talking about the economy, for example. That seems like a debate worthwhile having—not only what we have done to make sure that we've overcome a lot of hurdles but how to make sure policies are put in place that this economic growth continues, and remind people we've added a lot of jobs since April of 2003, that the economy is pretty strong this year given the fact—in spite of the fact there was high energy prices and storms. I look forward to debating people whether or not we ought to raise their taxes. I don't believe we should. Matter of fact, I think raising taxes will hurt the economy. And that's a debate I look forward to having with the people as we get closer to the 2006 elections.

And so, look, I don't blame people for saying, "I'm confident about the elections." Can you imagine right here at the election year saying, "I'm not very confident about the elections"? [*Laughter*] No wonder the Democrats are saying that.

But we've got a record, and a good one. And that's what I intend to campaign on, and explain to people why I've made the decisions I've made, and why they're necessary to protect the American people, and why they've been necessary to keep this economy strong, and why the policies we've got will keep this economy strong in the future. And this election is about peace and prosperity. And I intend to get out there and campaign.

Abril—April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

Q. Yes, Mr. President. Good morning.

The President. You're going to have to speak loudly because somebody took your seat. Your name was on my seating chart, and you're not sitting down.

Q. Isn't that a shame.

The President. Well, I mean, look, you're probably going to blame it on me. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm going to let you pass that time.

The President. Just trying to rattle you before you get going.

Gulf Coast Response Investigation

Q. I know. Mr. President, as you're saying Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath is one of your top priorities——

The President. Yes.

Q. Why is it that this administration is not allowing the senior—your senior staff that you conversated with prior to Hurricane Katrina, during, and after, to testify, to interview, or talk with congressional leaders? And why not push Michael Brown, who is now a private citizen, to go before them, as he is what many are calling a linchpin to the whole issue?

The President. Well, let me make sure you have the facts. We have given 15,000 pages of White House documents to the investigators, congressional investigators; some—I think it's 600,000 pages, administrative documents. We have sent a fellow named Rapuano to talk about—he's a White House staffer—to talk to the Committee. There have been a lot of interviews. There have been public testimony.

As a matter of fact, we are so concerned about this that we've started our own investigation to make sure that lessons—that we understand the lessons learned from this. This is a problem we want to investigate thoroughly so we know how to better respond on behalf of the American people.

And so we're fully cooperative with the Members of the House in—of the Senate, and we'll do so without giving away my ability to get sound advice from people on my staff. You see, April, here's—and this is an issue that comes up all the time, and you might—we've had several discussions like this since I've been the President. If people give me advice and they're forced to disclose that advice, it means the next time an issue comes up, I might not be able to get unvarnished advice from my advisers. And that's just the way it works. But we've given thousands of pages of documents over for people to analyze.

Q. Does that include Michael Brown?

The President. Pardon me?

Q. Does that include Michael Brown?

The President. People who give me advice—it will have a chilling effect on future advisers if the precedent is such that when they give me advice that it's going to be subject to scrutiny.

Now, we've analyzed—we've given out all kinds of pages of documents for people, and we're cooperating with the investigators. And that's important for the American people to know. What's also important is, we want to know how we can do a better job. And so we're having a lessons-learned investigation, led by Fran Townsend. And—anyway, we need to know.

Let's see here—yes, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Lobbying Reform/Jack Abramoff Investigation

Q. Sir, back on lobbying—never mind about the photographs, but can you say whether—

The President. It's easy for a radio guy to say. [*Laughter*]

Q. Can you say, sir, whether you were lobbied by Jack Abramoff or other lobbyists, and what your policy is about lobbyists meeting with senior staff?

The President. You know, I, frankly, don't even remember having my picture taken with the guy. I don't know him. And this investigation will—needs to look into all aspects of his influence on Capitol Hill, and if there's some in the White House, I'm sure they're going to come and knock on the door. But I—I can't say I didn't ever meet him, but I meet a lot of people. And evidently, he was just like you were the other day, at a holiday party—came in, put—the grip-and-grin. They click the picture and off he goes. And that's just—I take thousands of—I mean, somebody told me I maybe take over 9,000 pictures this holiday season. And he obviously went to fundraisers, but I've never sat down with him and had a discussion with the guy.

Q. Do you meet with lobbyists?

The President. I try not to. Have I ever met with one? Never having met with one is a—if I ever say that, sure enough, you'll go find somebody. But, no, I don't have them come in.

Now, when, for example, people are helping on issues—like on promoting trade—you bet, we bring them in and I say, "Thank you for promoting CAFTA," or, "Thanks for

working on the vote, " or, "Thanks for helping on tax relief." That may be—if you consider that a meeting, the answer is, yes, I'm sure I have, in a roomful of people, as we either thank people for success in policy or thank people for going out of their way to get a piece of legislation passed on the Hill.

Listen, thank you all very much. Looking forward to Tuesday evening. I hope you are as well. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:15 a.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; James D. Wolfensohn, Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security Kenneth Rapuano. Reporters referred to Donald E. Powell, Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, who is coordinating Federal gulf coast relief efforts; and Mike Brown, former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Remarks Following Discussions With Parliament Member Saad Hariri of Lebanon

January 27, 2006

It's my honor to welcome a Member of the Lebanese Parliament, Saad Hariri, here to the Oval Office. We've just had a very interesting and important discussion about our mutual desire for Lebanon to be free—free of foreign influence, free of Syrian intimidation, free to chart its own course.

The American people mourn the loss of life. I know it's been hard on you and your mom, who we had the honor of meeting in Paris, and your family to think about your dad, a man who cared about Lebanon a lot. It's very important for the investigation into your dad's death to go forward. We expect there to be a full and firm investigation, and the people who are responsible for your dad's death need to be held to account.

I want to thank you for your passion for the people of Lebanon. I was telling him I was raised in west Texas, and I can remember Lebanese-American Texans being such great citizens of our State and our country. Many people of Lebanese extraction want Lebanon to flourish and thrive, and so do I. It will be very important for the region for Lebanon's democracy to be able to reach its full potential. And there's no doubt in my mind, with the focused effort of the free world reminding Syria to uphold to U.N. resolution 1559, we will be able to achieve the objective.

So I talked about a donors conference—he's going to work the world community to try to help organize a conference to help the Lebanese people get going. And we appreciate very much your suggestions and your advice. In the meantime, welcome to the Oval Office. Thank you for your courage. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nazek Hariri, widow of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14, 2005, in Beirut. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 7976—National African American History Month, 2006

January 27, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we celebrate National African American History Month, we recognize the many contributions of African Americans to our country and reinforce our commitment to be a Nation of opportunity and hope for every citizen.

Throughout our history, African Americans have courageously worn our Nation's uniform while defending peace and liberty around the globe. Patriots like Thurgood Marshall and Rosa Parks broke down racial barriers and inspired our Nation to make good on the promise of equal justice under law. Educators like Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. Frederick Patterson transformed the academic world, with the goal of ensuring

that every child has access to a good education. Athletes such as Jesse Owens and Wilma Rudolph and entertainers such as Ossie Davis and Ray Charles have brought pride and joy to generations of Americans. Today, the accomplishments of African Americans in every aspect of our society continue to encourage people to reach as far as their vision and dreams may take them.

African-American organizations have played a vital role in achieving justice and equal rights, and they have helped make communities across our country stronger and better. This year's theme of African American History Month, "Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social, and Civic Institutions," recognizes the African-American groups that have worked to confront injustices and expand opportunities. These organizations believe in the potential and worth of every person, and they have worked to help all Americans receive a quality education, to feed the hungry and house the homeless, to encourage youth to make healthy choices, and to reach out to others in need. By answering the call to love a neighbor as we would like to be loved ourselves, these groups have set a positive example, and we continue to be inspired by their compassion and service to others.

Working together, Federal, State, and local government, community organizations, and individual citizens will continue to foster hope and build a better tomorrow for all our children and grandchildren.

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 February 2006 as National African American History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities that honor the significant contributions African Americans have made to our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., January 31, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on February 1.

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.

January 21

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 22

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

January 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Topeka, KS, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Janet Dunn. He then traveled to Manhattan, KS.

In the afternoon, the President met with family members of a soldier killed in Afghanistan. He then returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with members of the U.S. Walker Cup team.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a retirement dinner for Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.

January 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Senator Norm Coleman of Minnesota and Senator Mark Pryor of Arkansas, cochairs of the National Prayer Breakfast, to discuss preparations for the breakfast.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had a working lunch

with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of Pakistan. Later, on the South Lawn, he participated in a photo opportunity with NASCAR Nextel Cup champion Tony Stewart and members of his racing team.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Gov. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas J. Barrett to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rajkumar Chellaraj to be Assistant Secretary of State for Administration.

The President announced his intention to appoint Margaret Louise Kripke as a member of the President's Cancer Panel (Scientist).

The President announced his intention to designate Mary K. Bush as chair of the Helping to Enhance the Livelihood of People (HELP) Around the Globe Commission.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Pristina, Kosovo, to attend the funeral of President Ibrahim Rugova of Kosovo on January 26: Alphonso R. Jackson (head of delegation); Philip S. Goldberg; and Frank Wisner.

January 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister-elect Stephen Harper of Canada to congratulate him on his election victory. Later, he had an intelligence briefing. He then participated in an interview with the Wall Street Journal.

Later in the morning, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Members of the Senate to discuss the war on terror and the strategy for victory in Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Fort Meade, MD, where, at the National Security Agency, he made remarks to employees. He then participated in a tour of the National Security Agency. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to attend the Inauguration of President Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales of Honduras on January 27: Alberto R. Gonzales (head of delegation); Charles A. Ford; Cresencio Arcos; Miguel A. Estrada; and Redmond James Hogan.

January 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from November 27–28, 2005.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from November 27–28, 2005.

January 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with the Senate Republican Conference to discuss legislative priorities.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with Bob Schieffer of CBS News.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas P. D'Agostino to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs in the National Nuclear Security Administration at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Randall S. Kroszner to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the Fifth District.

The President announced his intention to nominate Boyd Kevin Rutherford to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture (Administration).

The President announced his intention to nominate Kevin M. Warsh to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the Second District.

The President announced his intention to designate Mary M. Rose as Vice Chairman of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

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 January 25

Thomas J. Barrett,
of Alaska, to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation (new position).

Steven G. Bradbury,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Jack Landman Goldsmith III, resigned.

Vanessa Lynne Bryant,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Connecticut, vice Dominic J. Squatrito, retired.

Renee Marie Bumb,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, vice William H. Walls, retired.

Michael A. Chagares,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Michael Chertoff, resigned.

Rajkumar Chellaraj,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Administration), vice William A. Eaton, resigned.

Brian M. Cogan,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York, vice Frederic Block, retired.

Thomas M. Golden,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Franklin Van Antwerpen, elevated.

S. Pamela Gray,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Susan Rebecca Holmes, retired.

Andrew J. Guilford,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California, vice Dickran M. Tevrizian, Jr., retired.

Noel Lawrence Hillman,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, vice William G. Bassler, retired.

Brett M. Kavanaugh,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice Laurence H. Silberman, retired.

Gray Hampton Miller,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, vice Ewing Werlein, Jr., retired.

Richard T. Miller,
of Texas, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Richard T. Miller,
of Texas, to be Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Susan Davis Wigenton,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, vice John W. Bissell, retired.

Submitted January 27

Thomas P. D'Agostino,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Everet Beckner, resigned.

Randall S. Kroszner,
of New Jersey, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

for the unexpired term of 14 years from February 1, 1994, vice Edward M. Gramlich, resigned.

Boyd Kevin Rutherford,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, vice Michael J. Harrison, resigned.

Kevin M. Warsh,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of 14 years from February 1, 2004, vice Ben S. Bernanke, resigned.

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 January 23

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released January 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Statement on a Call for the Release of Remaining Prisoners of Conscience in Syria

Released January 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released January 26

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Released January 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Acts Approved by the President

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