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Editor's Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on March 31, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, March 31, 2006

Message on Freedom Efforts in Belarus

March 24, 2006

I send greetings to those working to return freedom to Belarus and observing the 88th anniversary of the first effort to establish an independent Belarus.

Freedom is the birthright of every human soul and the permanent hope of all mankind. The desire for justice, freedom, human rights, and accountable, representative government is universal. Nations grow by allowing the talents and liberties of their people to flourish, not by suppressing freedom. By upholding the rule of law, limiting the power of the state, holding free and fair elections, and respecting the rights of all people, governments can foster more hopeful societies and empower their citizens.

I appreciate those who labor in the shadows to return freedom to Belarus, and our Nation's thoughts are with those who have been harassed, detained, imprisoned, or beaten for their efforts. The United States condemns the actions by Belarusian security services on the morning of March 24, and we urge all members of the international community to join us in condemning any and all abuses and demanding that Belarusian authorities respect the rights of their own citizens to express themselves peacefully. The United States will continue to stand with the people of Belarus and all those who are working to help Belarus take its rightful place in the community of democracies.

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

Proclamation 7991—To Implement Certain Provisions of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement With Respect to El Salvador

March 24, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. On August 5, 2004, the United States entered into the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (Agreement) with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The Agreement was approved by the Congress in section 101(a) of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the "Act") (Public Law 109–53, 119 Stat. 462) (19 U.S.C. 4001 note).

2. Section 201 of the Act authorizes the President to proclaim such modifications or continuation of any duty, such continuation of duty-free or excise treatment, or such additional duties, as the President determines to be necessary or appropriate to carry out or apply Article 3.3 and Annex 3.3 (including the schedule of United States duty reductions with respect to originating goods) of the Agreement.

3. Presidential Proclamation 7987 of February 28, 2006, modified the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) to provide for the preferential tariff treatment being accorded under the Agreement for certain goods of El Salvador.

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

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

(1) In order to provide for the preferential tariff treatment being accorded under the Agreement for certain sugar and sugar-containing goods of El Salvador and to provide a tariff-rate quota for such goods of El Salvador, the HTS is modified as set forth in the Annex to this proclamation.

(2) The amendments to the HTS made by paragraph (1) of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after the date of this proclamation.

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

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of March, 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, 9:19 a.m., March 28, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 29. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

March 25, 2006

Good morning. On Monday, I will attend a naturalization ceremony here in Washington. It's always inspiring to watch a group of immigrants raise their hands and swear an oath to become citizens of the United States of America. These men and women follow in the footsteps of millions who've come to our shores seeking liberty and opportunity, and America is better off for their hard work and love of freedom.

America is a nation of immigrants, and we're also a nation of laws. And our immigration laws are in need of reform. So at Monday's ceremony, I will discuss my vision for comprehensive immigration reform that will secure our borders, improve enforcement of our immigration laws, and uphold our values.

Comprehensive immigration reform begins with securing our borders. Since I took office, we've increased funding for border security by 66 percent, and the Department of Homeland Security has caught and sent home nearly 6 million illegal immigrants. To improve security at the border, we're hiring thousands more Border Patrol agents. We're deploying new technology like infrared cameras and unmanned aerial vehicles to help our agents do their job. And we're installing physical barriers to entry, like fences in urban areas.

We're also working to end the unwise practice of catch-and-release. For decades, many illegal immigrants were released back into society soon after they were caught, because we did not have enough detention space. So we're adding more beds so we can hold the people we catch, and we're reducing the time it takes to send them back home. When illegal immigrants know they will be caught and sent home, they will be less likely to break the rules, and our immigration system will be more orderly and secure. We're making good progress, but we have much more work ahead, and we will not be satisfied until we have control of our border.

Comprehensive immigration reform also includes strengthening the enforcement of our laws in America's interior. Since I took office, we've increased funding for immigration enforcement by 42 percent. We're increasing the number of immigration enforcement agents and criminal investigators, enhancing worksite enforcement, and going after smugglers and gang members and human traffickers.

Finally, comprehensive immigration reform requires a temporary-worker program that will relieve pressure on our borders. This program would create a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill jobs that Americans will not

do. By reducing the number of people trying to sneak across the border, we would free up our law enforcement officers to focus on criminals and drug dealers and terrorists and others who mean us harm.

One thing the temporary-worker program would not do is provide amnesty to those who are in our country illegally. I believe that granting amnesty would be unfair, because it would allow those who break the law to jump ahead of people who play by the rules and wait in the citizenship line. Amnesty would also be unwise, because it would encourage waves of illegal immigration, increase pressure on the border, and make it more difficult for law enforcement to focus on those who mean us harm. For the sake of justice and for the sake of border security, I firmly oppose amnesty.

In the coming days, the United States Senate plans to consider proposals on immigration reform. This is an emotional debate. America does not have to choose between being a welcoming society and being a lawful society. We can be both at the same time. As we debate the immigration issue, we must remember, there are hard-working individuals, doing jobs that Americans will not do, who are contributing to the economic vitality of our country.

To keep the promise of America, we must enforce the laws of America. We must also ensure that immigrants assimilate into our society and learn our customs and values—including the English language. By working together, we can meet our duty to fix our immigration system and deliver a bill that protects our country, upholds our laws, and makes our Nation proud.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:59 a.m. on March 24 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 24 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony

March 27, 2006

Thank you all. Thank you very much. It's good to be with you. I am grateful for the chance to witness this joyous and uplifting ceremony. It is inspiring to see people of many different ages, many different countries raise their hands and swear an oath to become citizens of the United States of America.

For some of you, this day comes after a long and difficult journey. For all of you, this is a defining moment in your lives. America is now more than your home; America is your country. I welcome you to this free nation. I congratulate you and your families, and it's an honor to call you fellow Americans.

I appreciate the Attorney General. Dr. Gonzales, thank you, sir. And, Alfonso, it's good to be up here with you. I want to thank the president general of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Ms. Presley Wagoner, for letting us use this fantastic facility for this important ceremony. Thank you for singing the National Anthem so beautifully.

It is fitting that we hold this ceremony at the home of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Daughters of the American Revolution were the daughters of immigrants, because the leaders of our revolution all had ancestors who came from abroad. As new citizens of the United States, you now walk in the footsteps of millions. And with the oath you've sworn, you're every bit as American as those who came before you.

Our immigrant heritage has enriched America's history. It continues to shape our society. Each generation of immigrants brings a renewal to our national character and adds vitality to our culture. Newcomers have a special way of appreciating the opportunities of America, and when they seize those opportunities, our whole nation benefits.

In the 1970s, an immigrant from Ireland—or the 1790s, an immigrant from Ireland designed the White House, right where Laura and I live. And he helped build the Capitol. In the 1990s, an immigrant from Russia helped create the Internet search engine Google. In between, new citizens have made

contributions in virtually every professional field, and millions of newcomers have strengthened their communities through quiet lives of hard work and family and faith.

America's welcoming society is more than a cultural tradition; it is a fundamental promise of our democracy. Our Constitution does not limit citizenship by background or birth. Instead, our Nation is bound together by a shared love of liberty and a conviction that all people are created with dignity and value. Through the generations, Americans have upheld that vision by welcoming new citizens from across the globe, and that has made us stand apart.

One of my predecessors, President Ronald Reagan, used to say this: "You can go to live in France, but you cannot become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Japan, but you cannot become Japanese. But anyone, from any corner of the world, can come to live in America and be an American."

The new Americans we welcome today include men and women from 20 countries on 5 continents. Their ages range from 18 to 59, and they work as teachers and small-business managers and nurses and software engineers and other professions.

One new citizen is Veronica Pacheco. Veronica first came to the United States from Bolivia 15 years ago. In 2000, she moved here permanently and found a job at a catering company in Virginia. Every Friday and Saturday, she spent 5 hours studying English at the local community college. Over the years, she saved enough money to buy her own townhouse. Here's what Veronica says about America: "This is a country of opportunity. If you want to be successful, you can do it. You can have your dreams come true here."

Another new citizen is Maisoon Shahin. Maisoon grew up in Kuwait and moved to the United States with her husband 7 years ago. She enrolled in the community college to improve her English, took a job teaching marines to speak Arabic. Here's what Maisoon said: "The United States is a symbol of justice, freedom, and liberty. I love that. Here they respect people because they are people. I feel I am honored, and I feel that I'm loved."

America is stronger and more dynamic when we welcome new citizens like Maisoon and Veronica to our democracy. With that in mind, I've called on Congress to increase the number of green cards that can lead to citizenship. I support increasing the number of visas available for foreign-born workers in highly skilled fields like science, medicine, and technology. I've signed legislation creating a new Office of Citizenship at the Department of Homeland Security to promote knowledge of citizenship rights and procedures.

And after September the 11th, I signed an Executive order making foreign-born members of our military immediately eligible for citizenship, because those willing to risk their lives for our democracy should be full participants in our democracy.

Over the past 4 years, more than 20,000 men and women in uniform have become citizens of the country they serve. They've taken the citizenship oath on the decks of aircraft carriers, on deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, and at military bases around the world. At Bethesda Naval Medical Center, I watched a brave marine born in Mexico raise his right hand and become a citizen of the country he had defended in uniform for more than 26 years. It's a privilege to be the Commander in Chief of men and women like these, and I'm proud to call them fellow citizens.

All who swear the oath of citizenship are doing more than completing a legal process; they're making a lifelong pledge to support the values and the laws of America. The pledge comes with great privileges, and it also comes with great responsibilities. I believe every new citizen has an obligation to learn the customs and values that define our Nation, including liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God, tolerance for others, and the English language.

Those of us who have been citizens for many years have responsibilities as well. Helping new citizens assimilate is a mission that unites Americans by choice and by birth. I appreciate the work of patriotic organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution. Some of the new Americans here today might have used DAR's Manual for Citizenship to prepare you for the citizenship test. They obviously did a pretty good job, since you passed. [*Laughter*]

Many other organizations, from churches to businesses to civic organizations, are answering the call to help new citizens succeed in our country, and I am grateful for all those who reach out to people who are going to become citizens.

Government is doing its part to help new citizens succeed as well. The Office of Citizenship has created a new official guide for immigrants. This free publication includes practical advice on tasks like finding housing and jobs or enrolling your children in school or paying taxes.

We're conducting outreach programs with faith-based and community groups to offer civics and English language courses. My administration will continue to pursue policies that open a path to education and jobs, promote ownership, and to give every citizen a chance to realize the American Dream.

Our Nation is now in the midst of the debate on immigration policy, and it's good. Immigration is an important topic. Immigration is also an emotional topic, and we need to maintain our perspective as we conduct this debate. At its core, immigration is a sign of a confident and successful nation. It says something about our country that people around the world are willing to leave their homes and leave their families and risk everything to come to America. Their talent and hard work and love of freedom have helped make America the leader of the world. And our generation will ensure that America remains a beacon of liberty and the most hopeful society the world has ever known.

America is a nation of immigrants, and we're also a nation of laws. All of you are here because you followed the rules, and you waited your turn in the citizenship line. Yet some violate our immigration laws and enter our country illegally, and that undermines the system for all of us. America should not have to choose between being a welcoming society and being a lawful society. We can be both at the same time. And so, to keep the promise of America, we must enforce the laws of America.

We must also reform those laws. No one is served by an immigration system that allows large numbers of people to sneak across the border illegally. Nobody benefits when illegal immigrants live in the shadows of society. Everyone suffers when people seeking to provide for their families are left at the mercy of criminals or stuffed in the back of 18-wheelers or abandoned in the desert to die. America needs comprehensive immigration reform.

I've laid out a proposal for comprehensive immigration reform that includes three critical elements: securing the border, strengthening immigration enforcement inside our country, and creating a temporary-worker program. These elements depend on and reinforce one another, and together they will give America an immigration system that meets the needs of the 21st century.

The first element is securing our border. Our immigration system cannot function if we cannot control the border. Illegal immigration puts a strain on law enforcement and public resources, especially in our border communities. Our Nation is also fighting a war on terror, and terrorists crossing the border could create destruction on a massive scale. The responsibility of Government is clear: We must enforce the border.

Since I took office, we've increased funding for border security by 66 percent. We've expanded the Border Patrol to more than 12,000 agents, an increase of more than 2,700 agents. And the budget next year funds another 1,500 new agents. We're helping these dedicated men and women do their jobs by providing them with cutting-edge technology like infrared cameras, advanced motion sensors, and unmanned aerial vehicles. We're installing protective infrastructure, such as vehicle barriers and fencing in urban areas, to prevent people from crossing the border illegally. And we're integrating manpower and technology and infrastructure in more unified ways than ever. Our objective is to keep the border open to trade and tourism and closed to criminals and drug dealers and terrorists.

Our strategy to secure the border is getting results. Since I took office, our agents have apprehended and sent home more than 6 million people entering this country illegally, including more than 400,000 with criminal records. Federal, State, and local and travel enforcement officials are working side by side. Through the Arizona Border Control Initiative, we apprehended more than

600,000 illegal immigrants in Arizona last year. The men and women of our Border Patrol have made good progress, but we have much more work ahead, and we cannot be satisfied until we're in full control of the border.

We're also changing the way we process those we catch crossing the border illegally. More than 85 percent of the illegal immigrants we apprehend are from Mexico, and most are sent back home within 24 hours. We face a different challenge with non-Mexicans. For decades, Government detention facilities did not have enough beds for the non-Mexican illegal immigrants caught at the border, and so most were released back into society. They were each assigned a court date, but virtually nobody showed up. This practice of catch-and-release is unwise, and my administration is going to end it.

To end catch-and-release, we're increasing the number of beds and detention facilities by 12 percent this year and by another 32 percent next year. We're also expanding our use of a process called expedited removal, which allows us to send non-Mexican illegal immigrants home more quickly.

Last year, it took an average of 66 days to process one of these illegal immigrants. Now, we're doing it in 21 days. The goal is to increase the process faster. It's helped us end the catch-and-release for illegal immigrants from Brazil and Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua caught crossing our Southwest border. And since last summer, we've cut the number of non-Mexican illegal immigrants released in society by more than a third. We've set a goal to end catch-and-release over the next year. I look forward to working with Congress to close loopholes that makes it difficult for us to process illegal immigrants from certain countries. And we will continue to press foreign Governments like China to take back their citizens who have entered our country illegally.

When illegal immigrants know they're going to be caught and sent home, they will be less likely to break the rules in the first place. And the system will be more orderly and secure for those who follow the law.

The second part of a comprehensive immigration reform is strengthening enforcement of our laws in the interior of our country. Since I took office, we've increased funding for immigration enforcement by 42 percent, and these resources have helped our agents bring to justice some very dangerous people: smugglers, terrorists, gang members, and human traffickers. For example, through Operation Community Shield, Federal agents have arrested nearly 2,300 gang members who were here illegally, including violent criminals like the members of MS–13.

Better interior enforcement also requires better worksite enforcement. Businesses have an obligation to abide by the law. The Government has the responsibility to help them do so. Last year, I signed legislation to more than double the resources dedicated to worksite enforcement. We'll continue to confront the problem of document fraud, because hard-working businessowners should not have to act as detectives to verify the status of their workers.

Next month, we're going to launch law enforcement task forces in 11 major cities to dismantle document fraud rings. We're working to shut down the forgers who create the phony documents, to stop the smugglers who traffic in human beings, and to ensure that American businesses are compliant with American law.

The third part of comprehensive immigration reform is to make the system more rational, orderly, and secure by creating a new temporary-worker program. This program would provide a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill the jobs that Americans are unwilling to do. Workers should be able to register for legal status on a temporary basis. If they decide to apply for citizenship, they would have to get in line. This program would help meet the demands of a growing economy and would allow honest workers to provide for their families while respecting the law.

A temporary-worker program is vital to securing our border. By creating a separate legal channel for those entering America to do an honest day's labor, we would dramatically reduce the number of people trying to sneak back and forth across the border. That would help take the pressure off the border and free up law enforcement to focus on the

greatest threats to our security, which are criminals and drug dealers and terrorists.

The program would also improve security by creating tamper-proof identification cards that would allow us to keep track of every temporary worker who is here on a legal basis and help us identify those who are here illegally.

One thing the temporary-worker program should not do is provide amnesty for people who are in our country illegally. I believe granting amnesty would be unfair, because it would allow those who break the law to jump ahead of people like you all, people who play by the rules and have waited in the line for citizenship.

Amnesty would also be unwise, because it would encourage future waves of illegal immigration, it would increase pressure on the border and make it difficult for law enforcement to focus on those who mean us harm. For the sake of justice and border security, I firmly oppose amnesty.

This week, the Senate plans to consider legislation on immigration reform. Congress needs to pass a comprehensive bill that secures the border, improves interior enforcement, and creates a temporary-worker program to strengthen our security and our economy. Completing a comprehensive bill is not going to be easy. It will require all of us in Washington to make tough choices and make compromises, and that is exactly what the American people sent us here to do.

As we move toward the process, we also have a chance to move beyond tired choices and the harsh attitudes of the past. The immigration debate should be conducted in a civil and dignified way. No one should play on people's fears or try to pit neighbors against each other. No one should pretend that immigrants are threats to American identity because immigrants have shaped America's identity.

No one should claim that immigrants are a burden on our economy because the work and enterprise of immigrants helps sustain our economy. We should not give into pessimism. If we work together, I'm confident we can meet our duty to fix our immigration system and deliver a bill that protects our people, upholds our laws, and makes our people proud.

It's a joyful day for all of you, and it's one you'll always remember. When you came here this morning, I was the President of another country. Now I'm the President of your country, and I'm grateful for that honor. I wish you good luck as citizens of the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth.

May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the DAR Administration Building. In his remarks, he referred to Alfonso Aguilar, Chief, Office of Citizenship, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate Conrad Burns

March 27, 2006

Senator, thank you. I kind of like being on the same platform as Senator Burns because he makes me sound like Shakespeare. [*Laughter*] I like a plain-talking fellow. The good thing about Conrad Burns is, you know where he stands. That's why the people of Montana respect him and they like him. And I'm here to urge the good people of the State of Montana to send him back to the United States Senate.

I appreciate Phyllis. Phyllis, it's great to see you. Conrad married well. [*Laughter*] So did I. And Laura sends her love to both you all. It was neat to meet daughter Keely and son Garrett, daughter-in-law Kate. But right before we came on, the Senator wanted me to make sure I understood how brilliant and beautiful his granddaughter Ella is. That says something about the man. He's got his priorities straight. He cares deeply about his family. He understands the importance of family in our society, and I appreciate your priorities, Senator.

By the way, he also loves Montana. Every time I see him, he says, "I want you to remember the great State of Montana." He cares deeply about the people there, and he knows the State about as well as anybody

could possibly know it. He's traveled the State. He tells people what's on his mind. He is—he's a down-to-earth guy. And the people of Montana have got to understand he can get some things done here in Washington, DC. No, there's a lot of eloquent folks in this town, but it's sometimes short of doers and people who can accomplish some things. I'm here because Senator Burns can get some things done for the good of the people of Montana and the people of the United States of America.

I thank Congressman Denny Rehberg for being here as well. He's a good, down-to-earth guy too. And he's serving the great State of Montana with class and dignity. He is the—he's the leader of the Montana congressional delegation. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Senator Kit Bond. Senator Bond from Missouri is here tonight. It's nice of him to come by. It's good of you to honor your old buddy, and I'm proud to—I recently said hello to former Senator Don Nickles from Oklahoma. Don, thank you for coming here as well. Montana has elected some fine people—no finer person than Marc Racicot, who I've gotten to know really well, and I appreciate you being here, Governor. Thanks for coming.

Karl Ohs, who is the chairman of the Republican Party, and Sherri is with us—Republican Party of Montana, that is. I appreciate you being here, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for coming. I want to thank John Green, who is the finance chair. Thank you all for listening to John's admonition to support this good man. Long word—he's trying to show off here for the folks of Montana. [*Laughter*]

I particularly want to thank the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades for endorsing Conrad Burns tonight. The Painters' general president, Jimmy Williams, is here. Jimmy, thank you for supporting this good man. I'm proud you're here. There's Jimmy over there.

We've got a lot to do in this country. We're in—we're going through historic times, and it's important to have people in the United States Senate who understand the stakes, understand the world in which we live. It's important to have clear-eyed realists working with the administration to lay the foundation for peace. It's really easy to be out there talking about the world the way you'd like it to be, but we can't afford that luxury because we're in a war against some terrorists who would like to harm America again.

Our—over my time—my remaining time here and the time that Senator Burns will have here after he's reelected, we'll be working on making sure that we accomplished our most important objective, and that is to protect the American people from further harm. I know some probably think that, well, this war on terror is isolated to a few angry individuals that got lucky on September the 11th. That's not how I look at the world, and that's not how Conrad Burns looks at the world. After that attack, I vowed that I'd use everything in our national—everything we could, all our national assets to do our most important job, and that is defend the American people, which means we better have some people in the United States Senate who understand the best way to defend the American people is to stay on the offense against an enemy who would do us harm, to defeat an enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

I appreciate people standing up and supporting the President when he enforces doctrine. I said to the world, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist." And the Taliban didn't take us seriously. So for our own national security and for liberating others, we sent a mighty coalition into Afghanistan to free the people of that country and, at the same time, secure our own. And Conrad Burns stood strong when it came to the liberation of Afghanistan, and I want to thank you for your support.

I want to thank you for your support in Iraq. Iraq is the central front in the war on terror. And one of the lessons of September the 11th is that when this Nation sees a threat, we must take the threat seriously, before it materializes.

And I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. But it wasn't just me who saw the threat. Members of the United States Senate from both political parties saw the same threat. My predecessor saw the threat. Members of the House of Representatives from both political parties saw the threat. Fifteen members of the United Nations Security Council saw the threat. And the United Nations Security

Council said to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." It was his choice to make. He chose war. And the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And we need people in the United States Senate who understand the stakes in this theater of the war on terror. The enemy cannot defeat us. They cannot defeat us militarily. The only thing they can do is to use their terror tactics to shake our will. And I'm enjoying working with a United States Senator like Conrad Burns whose will cannot be shaken because of the actions of thugs and assassins. The United States of America will accomplish our mission. There will be a democratic Iraq that is able to defend itself, sustain itself, and become an ally in the war on terror.

In order to achieve that objective, we must have Senators who support our men and women in combat, and Conrad Burns does. And we must have Senators who will not—who will not—lose their nerve in the face of these terrorist attacks. Conrad Burns is such a man.

I believe liberty and freedom are universal. So does Senator Burns. We believe that there is an Almighty, and the Almighty's gift to each man and woman on the face of this Earth is freedom. The United States of America was formed on the natural rights of men and women. And it should not surprise us when 11 million Iraqis went to the polls in defiance of terrorists and car bombers and assassins and says, "We want to be free." A free Iraq—a free Iraq will help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

I like to remind people about this interesting fact of history. My dad—18-year-old kid—raised his arm and said, "I want to volunteer to defend the United States of America against the Japanese." What I find interesting is that some 60 years later, his son, the current President, sits down with the Prime Minister of Japan talking about keeping the peace. We talk about North Korea; we talk about how proud I am that the Japanese have committed forces to help bring security to the people of Iraq so their democracy can develop. Japan is an ally. Japan is a friend in peace.

And what happened between then 18-year-old George H.W. and 59-year-old W.—[*laughter*]—standing here? What happened was, the Japanese adopted a Japanese-style democracy. History has proven people want to be free, and democracies yield the peace. And I believe 30 or 40 years from now, an American President will be up here talking—will be talking to people, and they'll be looking back at this moment in history and say, thank God that people like Senator Conrad Burns and Chairman John Warner of the United States Senate and Senator Kit Bond were wise enough to understand about the power of liberty to transform nations into allies. And they'll be keeping the peace with democratically elected leaders in the broader Middle East, starting with Iraq.

These are the stakes. We're laying the foundation of peace, and it's important to have Members of the United States Senate who can look beyond the short term, who have got a strategic view of the world in which we live. And Conrad Burns has that view. Proud to stand with you in laying that foundation.

Here at home we've been through a lot together. We've had a recession; we've had a stock market correction; we've had corporate scandals; we had an attack on our Nation; we went to war to defend ourselves; we had major natural disasters; we had rising energy prices. But we acted. We put progrowth economic policies in place. We believe that when people have more money in their pockets to save or to spend or to invest, the economy benefits. And so we cut the taxes on the hard-working people of America, and our economy is strong, and it's getting stronger.

People say here in Washington, "Oh, well, these tax cuts didn't make a difference." I can remember all the dire predictions when the debates went on about the ability for taxes to help revitalize our economy and overcome the obstacles we went through. Not Conrad Burns, he understood the basic principle of trusting people with their own money. Today, our economy has grown to 3.5 percent. We have 4.8 percent unemployment nationwide. We've added over 5 million jobs in the last 2½ years. Productivity is up; homeownership is at an alltime high; small

businesses are flourishing. The tax cuts we passed are working.

And now the people of Montana are going to be facing a decision as to whether or not they want their taxes to go up or stay low. You see, the Democrat Party showed its true colors during the tax debate. Time in and time out, they voted against cutting the taxes on the American people. And now you hear them talking about, "Well, we need to raise taxes to balance the budget." Conrad and I know better. We've been in Washington long enough to understand how Washington works. Yes, they'll raise your taxes, but they will figure out new ways to spend your money. To keep this economy strong, we must make the tax relief permanent. And I'm proud to have Conrad Burns on the side—[*applause*].

There are a lot of things we need to do during my—the rest of my time here and for Conrad's time as a reelected Senator, starting with making sure we get off foreign oil. In order to make sure this country is competitive over the next 30 to 50 years, in order to make sure we remain the economic leader of the world, we have got to be wise about our energy policy.

Conrad reminded me, walking in here, that we've got plenty of coal in the great State of Montana. And that's why I'm such a strong supporter of clean coal technologies to make sure we can use that coal in environmentally friendly ways and get us off Middle Eastern oil.

But that's just the start. We got to change how we fuel our automobiles. I want it to be said that when there's a good soy crop out of Montana, we got more biodiesel available for people to use in their automobiles. I want it to be said, when we have a technological breakthrough, which we're close to getting to, that we can use sawgrass grown in the State of Montana to help grow—to help produce ethanol so we become less dependent on Middle Eastern oil. I want it to be said that this country is imaginative in our use of technology to make us less dependent, for economic security as well as national security.

And Conrad Burns understands that. The people of Montana need to put him back in the United States Senate to join us in making sure we have energy independence.

One of the things that's important for the people of Montana to understand is, you better have somebody here in Washington who's effective when it comes to representing the farmers and ranchers. You know, a lot of times you get the big talkers running for office, but they get here to Washington and they're unable to deliver. I'd suggest the voters of Montana pay careful attention to the record of this United States Senator when it comes to representing the basic industries and the small-business owners and the hard-working people of the State of Montana.

I remember when I went to Billings, and we sat around and talked to those farmers and ranchers about the threats to their industry and about the opportunities. Conrad was there. He was talking their language. They didn't need a dictionary or a Roget's Thesaurus to figure out what he was saying. [*Laughter*]

He's the kind of person the people of Montana need here. They need somebody who's steadfast when it comes to defending the country; who's wise about how we spend your money; who understands that the money we spend is your money, not the Government's money; who understands good tax policy can keep this economy growing; who knows we've got to have a good, wise energy policy; and who can speak the language of the farmers and the ranchers, right here in Washington, DC.

I'm proud to stand by this man. I strongly urge the people of Montana to reelect Conrad Burns to the United States Senate.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:07 p.m. at the Madison Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Phyllis Burns, wife of Senator Conrad Burns; former Gov. Marc Racicot of Montana; Sherri Ohs, wife of Montana Republican Party chairman Karl Ohs; John Green, national finance committee chairman, Senator Burns' reelection campaign; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Interview With Foreign Print Journalists

March 27, 2006

The President. Thanks for coming. I'm looking forward to going down to Cancun. I'm very grateful for President Fox's hospitality. I've never been to Cancun, but I've had a lot of friends who have been to Cancun, and they tell me if I stay too long, I won't return. This is a relatively quick trip. I'm looking forward to going to the Mayan ruins, which will be really exciting. And I'm looking forward to both bilateral and our trilateral discussions.

With Mexico, obviously, there's big issues, particularly immigration right now. But I'll remind people that our relationship is more than just the migration issue. Mexico is our second-largest trading partner. The relationship with Mexico is a strong and vital relationship. Obviously, not only do we have important trade equities, but we've also got common values, and we've got millions of Mexican Americans who take great pride in their heritage. And so Mexico has been and will be a vital issue for future Presidents. And it's very important for us to work on a relationship that has a foundation of mutual benefit, as well as openness and candor when it comes to dealing with difficult issues.

And I really value my friendship with President Fox. Obviously, we have been through a lot during my Presidency and his. We've agreed on things, and we haven't agreed, but we've always remained friends, and that's a sign of a vital relationship. I'm obviously aware that there is a political season coming up, but until someone is sworn in office, my relationship will be with Vicente Fox as the leader of our important friend to the south. And I'm sure there's going to be all kinds of speculation about whether or not the United States will be involved in the election, and we won't be, pure and simple.

The relationship with Canada is also a vital relationship. Canada is our largest trading partner. This will be my first meeting with the Prime Minister as—with him as the Prime Minister. Obviously, I met him in the past. I'm looking forward to it. This will be the third Prime Minister with which I've dealt as the President. I've had good relations with the previous Prime Ministers, and I'm looking forward to good relations with Stephen Harper.

I'm fully aware of the relationship—the nature of the relationship between Canada and the United States. One, it's a vital relationship, but it's also one in which there is a certain skepticism about the United States, and therefore, I will do my very best to find common ground and to convince—through my relationship with the Prime Minister, convince the people of Canada we genuinely care about our friends and neighbors to the north and will work to resolve different issues in an aboveboard way that is mutually beneficial.

So it's an important meeting, and it's a way for us to confirm the—and then, eventually, the three of us will get into a room to meet. And it's a very strong signal that the three of us working together are better than each of us working apart, and that whether it be border security or commerce or hearing the values that are important in our neighborhood, we can do a lot together. And I find these meetings to be very useful and very important.

All right, we'll go around a couple of times. Pepe.

Mexico-U.S. Relations

Q. Sir, you mentioned the ties that bind both countries, the U.S. and Mexico. But those ties are also—those issues are extremely politically charged in both countries—trade, immigration, et cetera. So my question would be, where do you expect to lead the U.S.-Mexico relation in the next 3 years?

The President. Appreciate that. First, I think it's very important for both President Fox and myself to explain to both our countries the benefits of $300 million [billion] * two-way trade—well, nearly $300 million [billion] * in the year 2005 of two-way trade. In other words, it's one thing to talk trade, and I fully understand that unless those benefits are translated to more and more people, people begin to wonder whether or not trade is worthwhile.

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* White House correction.

You'll find that here in America we're having a debate as well, over trade. I said in my State of the Union that we've got to reject protectionism because I believe that trade, when it's done right, free and fair, is beneficial to the parties. And I strongly believe that the trade between the United States and Mexico has been beneficial for Mexico, as it has for the United States. But as a leader, I've got to continue to explain to people why.

I have a different perspective than many because of the relationship between—because of my time as Governor of Texas, and I remember full well what life was like on the border before NAFTA. And if you go down to the border now, you see vitality on the border, you see that—and vitality on both sides of the border.

There's been—commerce has helped people get jobs, and commerce has helped people realize a better life. And it's important for us to make sure we continue to explain that because if not, there will be protectionist tendencies that will tend to emerge, not only in our two countries but around the world. And in my judgment, leadership has got to fight off protectionist tendencies. I think that would tend to isolate each other and make it more difficult for us to realize the benefits of our relationship.

There's also going to be an important call for our countries to work together to emphasize the institutions, the democratic institutions that are vital for a functioning and stable society: anticorruption measures; free press; free religion; institutions that sometimes can be challenged in the course of politically—development within our neighborhood and around the world, for that matter.

So the common value theme is a very important theme for me to continue to work with Vicente Fox and whoever were to replace him—obviously, we've got a lot of human issues to deal with. The migration of people across our border is a vital issue that must be done in the same way to protect and honor people's lives. Americans are—I am disgusted by a system in which people are snuck across the border in the bottom of an 18-wheeler. This is inhumane. There's a more humane way to deal with our neighborhood.

There's a lot of big issues that confront us. But in order to make the relationship vital, we've got to explain to people exactly why—you know, the consequences of, for example, not having commerce flow as frequently as we do.

Tell me your papers now. Pepe.

Q. It's El Universal.

Q. La Opinion.

The President. *Si.* Thank you. Welcome.

Immigration Reform

Q. Over a million people across the country have marched in support of legalization and against H.R. 4437, the Sensenbrenner bill.

The President. In support of what? Legalization, you said?

Q. Legalization, yes. Since you're opposing amnesty, sir, would you agree on a language that puts the undocumented on a path to earn legalization——

The President. Let me tell you what I am for. First of all, there is a—the legislative process is one that, obviously, it goes through the House and then the Senate, and if there are differences, it has got to be resolved. And what people are now doing is reacting to a legislative process. I believe that any immigration bill ought to make sure that we're, one, able to secure the borders. That's what Americans want; that's what any country should want. Your borders ought to be secure.

And I also recognize that part of securing the borders requires a guest-worker program. In other words, the two go hand in hand. I don't believe people who have been here illegally should be granted citizenship status right off the bat. That's amnesty.

Let me finish.

I just, as a matter of fact, gave a speech to a group of citizens that have become U.S. citizens today, in my presence. They had stood in line. And I do not think a country that relies upon law ought to say to somebody who was here illegally, you get to be ahead of the line.

In other words—so therefore, I think that part of a rational worker program is—say you're here on a temporary basis, and if you choose to be a citizen or want to be a citizen, you get in line. But like I said today, I've

called upon Congress to increase the number of green cards. To me, that's the most rational way of dealing with the citizenship issue. It's essential that we not have automatic amnesty or legality. First of all, it would send a signal that said all you've got to do is get here illegally and eventually you get in the head of the line. And that's—I don't think it will work.

Q. But what if they get in line behind those who are waiting for their green cards now?

The President. That's why I said I think one way to deal with this is to increase the number of green cards. And right now part of the problem is that the green cards are limited. And that's why I have spoken before and again reiterated my position that there ought to be a temporary-worker program; people who want to be here should not get—be a citizen should not get ahead of the line but ought to be waiting in line. And if the Congress so desires, they ought to increase the number of green cards in order to take the pressure off the system.

Q. But——

The President. It's a plan that—again, I know people are saying, "Well, the House bill didn't have a temporary-worker program in there," and I think any bill should be a comprehensive bill including a temporary-worker program. I've spoken out on it ever since I've been the President, and I think it is the best way to go because I realize that, one, it is important to enforcing the border—that being a temporary-worker program; secondly, that it's a humane way to deal with people who are making a contribution to our economy.

In other words, if something is illegal, then people will figure out ways to get around the system. That's what creates the *coyotes*; that's what creates the smugglers; that's what creates the document forgers; that's what creates these places where people are dumped for a period of time and then smuggled across and then told to walk; that's what creates the dangerous predicament for people coming across the desert. And so there's a—and that's why people—that's what causes people to hide in the shadows of our cities.

And there's a much more rational way and much more humane way to deal with people who are doing jobs that Americans won't do. Anyway, that's why I think the work component is a vital part of an immigration policy, and I believe border—I know border security and a guest-worker program go hand in hand. In other words, one supports the other.

U.S. Border/Homeland Security

Q. I guess I wanted to ask you about an issue on the northern border that's of some concern. Your administration has proposed a Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which would require passports or passport-like documents for Canadians and Americans coming and going. And there's been some concern in Canada that this will, in effect, do more to harm economic trade and tourism and do little to actually improve security. And I'm wondering, when you're moving towards, sort of, a more integrated approach to security on things like NORAD, why move ahead with something that really amounts to a bit more of a restriction?

The President. Well, I think—first of all, we have the same issue to the south, by the way. How do you come up with a policy where there are thousands of border crossings a day, without—and trying to have a rational approach to determining who's coming in and who's going out of the country, without endangering workforce, tourism, trade? Our goal is to, obviously, consult with our partners to develop, you know, passport and/or passport-like document, you said, and I think that may be the operative word as a plan develops.

There is a desire for a lot of our citizenry, and it's reflected in the Congress, to know, as I said, who's coming in and who's going out, and why. And I think that—I'm pretty confident that if we work closely, we can develop such a plan that enables a scanning device or a card that can be dealt with on a scanning device to not stop the flow of traffic of people who make a daily routine of it, and also make sure that we know who's coming in the country.

The purpose is not to impede trade and/or cross-border relations. The purpose is to expedite them in a way that gives both countries, or all three countries, comfort in knowing who's coming across. In Texas, for example, like in El Paso, on a daily basis, there's thousands of people that it's just a part of

their daily routine. And the idea would be to develop a document that could be scanned as they just walk across the bridge. It's the same concept for Canada as well.

Q. You couldn't just do it through a driver's license? I mean, that's the——

The President. Well, that's what they're working on. First of all, we have found in our own country that drivers' license aren't necessarily a secure document. I mentioned to you that this is a—the document forgery is a significant problem for our country, primarily for people coming in from the south. And you've got a person looking for somebody to help build an apartment building, and people show up, and they flash a document, and the employer is not equipped to be a document checker. It's not what they do.

And so they say, "Sure, come on and work." And the truth of the matter is, there is a whole industry out there to provide fake documents for people doing work that Americans won't do, because the system needs—the system says—just hasn't been rational, let me just put it to you that way. And therefore, there's a skepticism about certain documents which can be forged. And that's why you're seeing the notion of trying to develop one that is tamper-proof, for not only border crossings but also for working.

And it seems to me to make sense without—again, I understand the sensitivity. I'm very aware, and I'm sure Stephen and Vicente will bring this up. I've already talked to Vicente about the issue in regards to Mexico.

Look, again, this is an issue I'm very familiar with because of my time as the Governor of Texas—immigration issues and border issues are—it's been a part of our State's history for a long period of time.

Yes, Pepe. You're not going back to migration, are you?

Immigration Reform

Q. Unless you want to go there.

The President. No, but Maribel will. [*Laughter*] I can see it's on the tip of her tongue. No, that's all right. It's a big issue. It's a huge issue. Look—and you should.

Q. The question would be, though—if you excuse me, a few months ago, or a year ago, you said that you would invest political capital in the issue of—the immigration issue.

The President. Yes. You did come back to it. That's good.

Q. Yet in the last couple of weeks, there have been a lot of people in this town talking that your political capital is wasted. So——

The President. Don't underestimate me, Pepe.

Q. No, I don't. But——

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*]

Q. Is this Congress underestimating you? Because——

The President. We'll see. But I will keep speaking out on it. One thing is I'm—I believe it's very important to get this issue—to reform the immigration system. I have spoken out on it before, and I will continue speaking out on it. It's now coming to a head. And I will continue to call Congress to have a comprehensive package that is more than just border security but also enforcement—interior enforcement, as well as a guest-worker program. And I'm going to say it again, that—particularly for the American audience—the two go hand in hand. A temporary-worker program that enables people to cross our border legally to do work Americans won't do takes pressure off of Border Patrol agents who are trying to stop illegal activities, which makes it easier to secure the border.

Government of Mexico/Mexican National Economy

Q. If I may, sir, then what would you expect—or what would you propose or expect or hope that the Mexican Government would do in this case?

The President. No, I appreciate that. I think it's very important for the Mexican Government to continue doing what they have recently done, which is to make it clear to the American people that we have responsibilities on both sides of the border. And I thank President Fox for putting out those statements.

You're aware of, I'm sure, a series of advertisements in our newspapers that said, we have an important relationship with the United States. And it requires the understanding that we will work together on our border—as well as, by the way, working on

the southern border of Mexico, because many of the folks that are now coming into our country are coming up from Central America, for example. A lot of folks from Central America have been crossing into Mexico and across. And part of making sure that our borders are secure—all our border, when I say "our borders," I'm talking about Mexico and the United States' borders in this case, is that we work hand in glove in the north, and also help in the south.

And Vicente has told me he understands that there is an issue on the southern border of Mexico. It's a difficult border to enforce, but it's important.

The truth of the matter is, the long run for the issue is going to be for Mexico's economy to extend its promise beyond just certain regions. Look, I strongly believe most people want to be able to find decent wages at their home, where people are able to provide for their families. And I've told our people ever since I've been involved in this issue that—and the way I like to put it is, family values don't stop at the Rio Grande River. In other words, moms and dads in Mexico are anxious to put food on the table for their children. And therefore, many of them are willing to come great distances and lengths to be able to provide for their families. And I think most people would rather be providing for their families close to their homes.

And so part of a larger strategy has got to be to make sure that we work in concert to develop—to encourage economic growth so that there are meaningful jobs throughout the country. That's why I'm a believer in trade. I believe if we were ever to stop our trade, it would make it harder for prosperity to spread.

And I appreciate Vicente's understanding that education programs are vital. People have got to have a skill set in order to be able to make sure that jobs are—that jobs spread throughout the country. And for a period of time, many people used to come across the border from the border regions, but prosperity, as I mentioned to you, is visible. The life has changed on the border. But the prosperity on the border has caused people from other parts of the country who are looking for work to migrate north, come across the border, and try to find jobs in the United States.

And I believe that the immigrant worker has helped grow our economy. In other words, there's jobs Americans will not do, and it makes sense to have a legal policy that says, if there's a job Americans won't do and people are willing to do it for the sake of their families, we ought to encourage them to do so and make it a legal, temporary experience. And we'll negotiate what the definition of temporary is, and we'll negotiate the kind of documentation necessary to make sure that they're not—there's not a lot of fraud. And we will—and also the issue of citizenship. And again, my own judgment is, is the best way to deal with the citizenship is to not say—to say to somebody, "If you're here illegally, you don't get to take somebody else's place in line who is here legally." The reason we have lines is because of the green card issue. There's a shortage of green cards. And Congress has the right to increase the number of green cards.

Yes, Miss Maribel.

Naturalization/Amnesty

Q. Sir, do you believe there is a difference between amnesty and earned legalization——

The President. What does "earned legalization" mean? Why don't you give me your description, and I will answer your question.

Q. According to Chairman Specter is, they have to pay a fine—the undocumented, I'm talking about—pay a fine, get in line, prove they have a job, that they have paid taxes, that they don't have a criminal record.

The President. Right. But "get in line," you said?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's exactly what I just said. Somebody, in order to become a citizen, must get in line. And amnesty means you're automatically legal and you get ahead. In other words, there is no line, you're just it. You know, you've been here, undocumented; you're legal; boom, you don't have to wait in line.

Getting in line is exactly what I just said. You can call it by any way you want to call it. I would say that it's a system that does not—that rewards and understands people

here are doing jobs Americans won't do—take out "rewards"—understands that there are people doing jobs that Americans won't do, but you don't get to be an automatic citizen. You have to get in line.

Q. So you agree with Senator McCain, then.

The President. Look, I'm just telling you exactly what I am for. And what I am for is a program that is not amnesty. In other words, amnesty means you're automatically legal. And there are some that believe that ought to happen, that think that's a rational policy. I disagree. And the reason I disagree was, one, it undermines rule of law. In other words, there's a lot of people here trying to become a citizen that are waiting in line, and all of a sudden—and they're doing it legally, and all of a sudden, you know, by law, it means that those who have been here not legally get ahead of the line.

Secondly, I think it sends a wrong message. In other words, basically, "It's okay, fine, all you have to do is come, come in the country, be undocumented, and in a matter of time, we'll make you legal." And I think that will cause another group of people to come. So therefore, my view is, is that, yes, you can become a citizen, but you have to get in line. In other words, you can't get ahead of those who have been here playing by the rules.

And the bottleneck is the number of green cards the Government issues. And that can be changed, and that's why I called upon Congress to increase the number of green cards.

Now, was that your question? [*Laughter*] You can see, Sheldon, that the migration issue is a consuming issue. And it's an important issue. One of the things that's very important is that this issue be conducted in such a way as it brings dignity to our process, that immigration is emotional and the people who are speaking out on the issue must understand its emotional nature and must not pit neighbor against neighbor, must treat people with respect. After all, we are a nation of immigrants, and I believe has helped—it helps revitalize our soul. I think it's a very important part of our Nation's history, and America should be viewed as a welcoming society that supports its laws, and the two don't necessarily contradict each other.

Trade Relations With Canada

Q. If I could ask you about—a bit of a two-parter. I know you don't like two-parters, necessarily.

The President. It hasn't stopped these people. [*Laughter*] Did it stop you, Nedra [Nedra Pickler, Associated Press], the two-part question, or are you still giving them?

Q. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Q. You mentioned that there's skepticism in Canada about the U.S. And I'm wondering, over the last few years you've had some——

The President. Let me just make sure that—first of all, I believe most—I believe people on both sides of the border think it's a very important relationship, and there's great friendships. Having said that, the Canadians have, oftentimes, taken independent view of decisions the United States makes. And there is concern about some of the decisions I have made, yes. I just want to make sure that it's not, kind of, universal skepticism—kind of, define it to the proper source.

Q. There's been some personal invective hurled at you over the years by Canadian Parliamentarians. You were the star in one of the former Government's campaign ads.

The President. Did it work?

Q. It didn't work for them.

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*]

Q. I wonder whether that's tarnished your image of Canada at all, and whether—one of the issues that's caused a lot of skepticism——

The President. If it did tarnish my image of Canada, it would also tarnish my image of my own country, because part of being in the political scene is that people—it's the great thing about free societies, people speak their minds. That's what happens here in this country as well.

Q. Well, do you see the opportunity for better relations, and specifically on the issue of softwood lumber? That's an issue that's caused a lot of skepticism.

The President. It has.

Q. People are looking for a strong signal from the President of the United States.

The President. Right. No, I understand. First of all, the relationship is much deeper than softwood lumber. And there will be—I'll comment on softwood lumber in a minute. First of all, I'd like to get the issue solved. So the strong signal is, is that I've told our folks that, let's work hard to bring this issue to conclusion. And we were close to getting it done at one point. And so my strong signal is, yes, let's get this behind us.

I predict, however, that there will be other issues that arise because of our—when we trade as much as we trade, nearly half-a-billion [half-a-trillion]* two-way trade in '05, there's going to be issues that come up. I can remember the potato issue—I don't know if it had as much impact on thought that softwood lumber did, but it was an important issue. I guess it was mainly confined to the eastern part of the country.

But with as much trade as we've got going for us, there will be other issues that arise. Same with Mexico, by the way. We're dealing with, you know, tomatoes, on occasion, or corn syrup, I think it was—yes, corn syrup. And it's just very important to be in a position to have a relationship such that we can work through these problems. But, no—democracy is what it is. It's a chance for people to express themselves. Sure, there were some harsh words, but—at least from my perspective, the people tend to discount the polemics and the, you know, kind of, just how politics works, and they want to know whether or not there's a genuine commitment to friendship. And there is, between not only America and Canada but also between the United States and Mexico. It's been a long-term relationship.

The migration issue, obviously, as you can see, has created a great deal of, at least, questioning, because it's on people's minds.

Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. Would it help if there was a little more maturity in the relationship, in terms of how Canada deals with the U.S.? Because there's been a perception in Canada that we haven't always been—dealt with you square on issues like missile defense or—you know, there have been a few things.

The President. I don't view—I, frankly, view the relationship as a good and strong relationship. Look, people—face it, part of the problem that we had was because of my decision to go into Iraq. And the Government of both countries didn't agree, and I understand that. War is terrible. It's an awful thing. And yet we're still able to maintain good relations.

When people are dealing with the subject of war, there is a lot of emotion. And I fully understand that. So I view the relationships both as not only important and vital, but I do view them as mature. As I said, this is the third Prime Minister with whom I will have dealt, and I—there is a certain camaraderie that takes place by virtue of our close ties and close history. And I bear no ill will whatsoever, and I understand the strategic importance of being close to our friends, and to have a capacity to talk among ourselves.

As I say, there's a lot we can get done by working together. The great competition for our respective economies, in the long run, will be coming from the Far East. And therefore, the more close our relationships and the more we're able to deal with cross-border issues on trade and other issues, the more we'll be able to work in concert to keep our standard of living high. And Vicente is—you've heard him talk a lot about his worries about China's trade into the hemisphere, and his concerns about job losses as a result of competition. And I believe that rather than, kind of, walling ourselves off, I believe that cooperation, like we have done through the NAFTA process, dealing with disputes in an openhanded way, will enable us to be able to leave in place something beyond our respective times in office, so that future leaders can compete confidently.

And obviously, that's part of a policy. I would like to extend this kind of cooperative spirit beyond just the three of us. That's why the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas—which 28 of 32 members, if I'm not mistaken, supported the Free Trade Agreement of the Americans—that's the concept behind this notion of having a hemisphere that trades freely in order to be competitive—help us be competitive, which will help maintain standards of living. That's, after all, one of the key goals of any government.

* White House correction.

Good, we'll see you all down there. Thank you, looking forward to it.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:09 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico; and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 28. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Announcing the Resignation of Andrew H. Card, Jr., as White House Chief of Staff and the Appointment of Joshua B. Bolten as White House Chief of Staff

March 28, 2006

Earlier this month, Andy Card came to me and raised the possibility of stepping down as Chief of Staff. After 5½ years, he thought it might be time to return to private life, and this past weekend, I accepted Andy's resignation.

Andy Card has served me and our country in historic times: on a terrible day when America was attacked; during economic recession and recovery; through storms of unprecedented destructive power; in peace and in war. Andy has overseen legislative achievements on issues from education to Medicare. He helped confirm two Justices to the Supreme Court, including a new Chief Justice.

In all these challenges and accomplishments, I have relied on Andy's wise counsel, his calm in crisis, his absolute integrity, and his tireless commitment to public service. Andy is respected by his colleagues for his humility, his decency, and his thoughtfulness. They have looked to him as a leader and a role model, and they, like me, will miss him.

On most days, Andy is the first one to arrive in the West Wing and among the last to leave. And during those long days over many years, I've come to know Andy as more than my Chief of Staff. He is leaving the White House, but he will always be my friend. Laura and I have known Andy and his wife, Kathi, for more than 20 years, and our close friendship will continue.

With me today is Joshua Bolten, who will be the new White House Chief of Staff. Josh is a man with broad experience, having worked on Capitol Hill and Wall Street and the White House staff and for nearly 3 years as a Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Josh is a creative policy thinker. He's an expert on the budget and our economy. He's respected by Members of Congress from both parties. He's a strong advocate for effective accountable management in the Federal Government.

He's a man of candor and humor and directness, who's comfortable with responsibility and knows how to lead. No person is better prepared for this important position, and I'm honored that Josh has agreed to serve.

The next 3 years will demand much of those who serve our country. We have a global war to fight and win. We have great opportunities to expand the prosperity and compassion of America. We've come far as a nation, yet there's a lot on the road ahead. I'm honored to have served with Andrew Card. I've got great confidence in my next Chief of Staff.

Congratulations, Josh.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:31 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chief of Staff Card and Chief of Staff-designate Bolten.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting

March 28, 2006

Good morning. We've just finished our third Cabinet meeting of this year. I want to thank my Cabinet members for joining us. We talked about the war on terror. We talked about a war on terror that requires all of us involved in Government to respond and to protect America and help spread freedom.

My Cabinet officials obviously have got many responsibilities in their agencies, but we talked about their need to assume additional responsibilities to make sure that we're using every element of national power to win the war on terror and to secure the peace.

This morning we had briefings from General Abizaid, Ambassador Khalilzad, and

General Casey. We heard from the Ambassador about work toward a unity government. I'm pleased to hear from Zal that the Iraqis are now back at the table discussing the formation of a government, the process by which they will conduct a government once a unity government is formed, as well as, obviously, beginning to continue to—or continuing to discuss who will fill the key slots in the government.

We also heard from General Abizaid as well as General Casey who reported on the ongoing efforts to win this war on terror, to defeat the enemy all around General Abizaid's theater of responsibility, as well as defeat the enemy in the central front in the war on terror, which is Iraq.

I appreciate very much General Pace joining us today as well. These leaders, folks on the ground who know the condition on the ground, recognize this is hard work, but they also report on steady progress that we're making toward meeting our important goals—important goal is to make sure Iraq is a democracy that can sustain herself, defend herself, and is not a safe haven for the terrorists.

Tomorrow I'm going to deliver a third in a series of speeches about the situation in Iraq. During Saddam Hussein's brutal rule, he exploited the ethnic and religious diversity of Iraq by setting communities against one another. And now the terrorists and former regime elements are doing the same; they're trying to set off a civil war through acts of sectarian violence. But the United States and our Iraqi forces cannot be defeated militarily. The only thing the Iraqi insurgents, as well as the terrorists, can possibly do is to cause us to lose our nerve and retreat, to withdraw.

I'm going to discuss how the Iraqi people and our coalition continue to work together to build a stable and free and prosperous Iraq. I'll remind the people we're not going to lose our nerve. The stakes are high; we will complete this mission. Our strategy for rebuilding Iraq is comprehensive, and it includes a commitment from all parts of the Federal Government.

Secretary Rice encouraged our Cabinet members to build relationships with their counterparts in Iraq once the new Iraqi Government is formed. And I expect them to follow through on that—on their commitments. See, by making a broad commitment from the Federal Government, we'll help the Iraqis establish a democracy, we'll help them build the institutions necessary for a stable society, and we'll help defeat the terrorists.

Today was the—today two members of my Cabinet—we had the honor—a chance to honor two members of my Cabinet who won't be with us much longer: Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton and Chief of Staff Andy Card. These two folks have served our country with distinction and honor. I am proud to work side by side with them, and I'm proud to call them friend. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Gen. Peter Pace, USMC, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Interview With CNN Espanol

March 28, 2006

White House Chief of Staff

Q. Thank you for the interview. A very busy day at the White House, so I have to ask you, you accepted the resignation of Andrew Card today—is this a sign of a major shakeup at the White House?

The President. No, it's a sign of a fellow who has worked 5¼ years. He's here every morning early in the morning; he stays late; and he put his heart and soul in the job. And he came to me about 2½ weeks ago, or 2 weeks ago, and said, "I think it may be time for me to go on; you know, I've given it my all." And I thank him for his service. I consider him an incredibly close friend. And, obviously, I picked Joshua Bolten to take his place. And now Josh's job is to design a White House staff that meets the needs of the President, which is one of the key—most important needs, is to make sure I get information in a timely fashion so I can make decisions.

Q. Any more changes coming up?

The President. Well, Josh has just begun to take a look at the White House structure. And I haven't had a chance to talk to him about the future yet. But right now I'm honoring and celebrating the service of Andy Card.

President's Upcoming Visit to Mexico

Q. Let's talk about Cancun. You'll meet with President Fox, Prime Minister of Canada. What do you expect to accomplish in that trip?

The President. Well, I think it's very important for the three of us to continue to commit ourselves to a relationship that—a commercial relationship based upon trade, free and fair trade, a security relationship based upon, kind of, mutual understanding of how we can cooperate. We're going to have a cultural event. We're going to go to the ruins, which will be fantastic, the Mayan ruins.

But the point is, is that the three of us need to be interconnected and work closely together for the good of our respective peoples. I'll remind people that we're not starting anything new. We're really building on what our predecessors left behind. In 2005, there was enormous trade between Mexico and the United States, much more significant than it was, you know, 10 years ago. And I believe both countries benefit from that trade.

But it is also not a given that people in both our countries accept trade. And therefore, one of the jobs of leadership is to remind people about the benefits, that trade equals jobs, and jobs means people have a chance to realize hopeful dreams.

Immigration Reform

Q. The Government of Mexico recently placed ads in U.S. papers acknowledging their responsibility in the border problem and saying they should have a role in the way the guest-worker program is shaped. Should Mexico have that role? Is that appropriate?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, the fact that they put those ads in the papers talking about joint responsibility in the border makes it easier for those of us who believe in comprehensive migration or immigration reform to get something done. And I appreciate the Government's stand there.

The truth of the matter is, the laws of the United States will be written inside the Congress. Of course, thoughtful suggestions may help. But the job is really to get a bill out of the Senate and eventually the House—or out of a conference committee—that I can sign. And I'm interested in comprehensive immigration reform. That includes not only border security but also a temporary-worker plan that recognizes there are hard-working people here doing jobs Americans won't do, and they ought to be here in such a way so they don't have to hide in the shadows of our society.

The fundamental issue, by the way, it seems like to me, on the guest-worker plan, is should somebody get to the head of the line when it comes to citizenship? And my answer is, no, they ought to get in line, but they don't get to get to the head of the line. And that's where some of the tension about the debate is taking place right now.

Q. The debate is taking place in the Senate. They are discussing a plan, and they're including your guest-worker program that you've requested. But the House said, no. The Sensenbrenner bill doesn't include a guest-worker program.

The President. Well, I wouldn't give up on it yet; we're just starting. For your listeners, this is a process. The House has passed a bill; the Senate, hopefully, will pass a bill; and then they'll get to conference and work something out in conference. And I have called upon both the House and the Senate to pass a comprehensive bill. And a comprehensive bill means, to make sure you include a guest-worker program as part of a comprehensive bill.

I happen to believe a guest-worker program recognizes reality—what's taking place in our economy today. But it also—a guest-worker program is part of border security. I mean, rather than have people sneaking across the border to come and do jobs that Americans won't do, it seems like it makes sense for people to be given an identification card that they can come and use to do a job on a temporary basis, so they can go back and forth freely with this tamper-proof ID card and not have to sneak across, so that

our Border Patrol agents on both sides of the border are really dealing with drug smuggling or gun smuggling or terrorists trying to sneak into the country.

Illegal Immigration

Q. So the question is, after those 6 years, if they get the 6 years in this program, how will you enforce sending people back who have to go back who have been living——

The President. Well, you'll have to have a tamper-proof card in order to work. In other words, there will be—it will make it much easier to have employer enforcement in place when there is a card that you know is tamper-proof, in other words, one that can't be forged.

Right now there's a whole document forging industry that has evolved. There are people sneaking across in 18-wheelers or people risking their lives. And the system is inhumane, as far as I'm concerned, and it needs to be reformed.

Border Security

Q. The White House supported the Sensenbrenner bill in the House, making the exception that you were going to pursue a temporary-guest-worker program. Now, that bill includes the construction of 700 miles of border, and that is seen not only in Mexico but in many Latin American countries as a sign that the U.S. wants to isolate itself from the region. Is that——

The President. I don't think people ought to read that into it. I think people ought to—first of all, the House is the beginning of the process, as you know. But people shouldn't—it's impractical to fence off the border. But it is also realistic to give our Border Patrol agents tools to be able to do their job. We ought to enforce our borders. That's what the American people expect. I've talked to President Fox about Mexico enforcing her southern border, and he agrees there ought to be border enforcement down there. But he, like I, understand it's difficult to enforce large borders.

And I don't think anybody believes that you could totally fence off the border and be effective. But I do think we ought to be in a position to give our Border Patrol agents better tools, more effective ways to prevent people from smuggling people and/or drugs across our border.

Venezuelan President Chavez

Q. I want to ask you about Venezuela, President Hugo Chavez. He refers to you in very strong terms. He does the same about Secretary Rice. What is your reaction to that, and where do you see—how do you see that affecting relations between your two countries?

The President. I judge the President based upon his honoring of the institutions that make democracy sound in Venezuela. I think it's very important for leaders to honor the freedom to worship, the freedom of the press, contracts, legal—to honor legal contracts, to allow people to express their opinion without fear. And it's very important for leaders throughout the hemisphere, whether they agree with America or not, to honor the tenets of democracy. And to the extent he doesn't do that, then I believe he should be subject to criticism.

Iraq

Q. President—Iraq. You've been telling people the U.S. is going the right way. But the polls—and you've said you don't follow the polls—the polls say people don't agree with you. Could it be that they're right and you're wrong?

The President. History will prove whether I'm right. I think I'll be right, because I do believe freedom is universal. I remember it wasn't all that long ago that 11 million Iraqis went to the polls in the face of terrorist threats, in the face of potential assassination, and said, we want to be free. That was last December.

That sentiment still exists in Iraq. The enemy has got—those who want to stop democracy have got one weapon, and that is the ability to kill innocent life to get on the TV, to shake our will. And my will is not going to be shaken. You cannot have a President make decisions based upon yesterday's polls. You must have a President who believes in certain principles and is willing to lead based upon a vision for a better future.

And I believe my vision for a better future entails having a democratic Iraq as a friend and an ally and to prevent the stated goals

of the enemy from taking place. They want us to leave Iraq so they can establish a safe haven from which to launch attacks on our people again. And I take their goal seriously, and I will use all resources at my disposal in order to protect the American people.

Q. *Muchas gracias, Senor Presidente.*

The President. *Si, por nada.*

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:08 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on the Death of Caspar Weinberger

March 28, 2006

Caspar Weinberger was an American statesman and a dedicated public servant. He wore the uniform in World War II, held elected office, and served in the Cabinets of three Presidents. As Secretary of Defense for President Reagan, he worked to strengthen our military and win the cold war. In all his years, this good man made many contributions to our Nation. America is grateful for Caspar Weinberger's lifetime of service. Laura and I send our condolences and prayers to the entire Weinberger family.

Interview With CTV

March 28, 2006

Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. Well, first of all, Mr. President, thank you very much for inviting us into your home. We certainly appreciate that.

Before we get on to talking about Canada-U.S. relations, I want to deal a little bit with your personal relations with Canadians. They haven't exactly been a roaring success. Does that matter? Does that matter to you? Does it matter to the relationship?

The President. I think I've had very good relations with the Canadians with whom I've dealt. I mean, Prime Minister Chretien and his successor, Paul Martin, and I got along just fine. We didn't always agree, but I can understand people not agreeing with some of the decisions I made. But that doesn't necessarily mean there's any problems with the relationship.

I guess much has been made about some of the name-calling that went on. That's just part of politics, and it doesn't bother me in the least. If I was bothered about name-calling from Canada, I'd certainly be bothered about name-calling from the United States as well. [*Laughter*]

The relationship between Canada and the United States is really a relationship not necessarily by government only but by the peoples, by the interchange, by the exchanges we have, by the relatives on both sides of the border. And that's what really makes the relationship unique and very strong.

Trade With Canada/Softwood Lumber

Q. In that regard, Prime Minister Harper, the new—I think this is now the third Prime Minister you've gone through——

The President. It is. [*Laughter*]

Q. ——in Canada. He said that of the top priorities that he's got, softwood lumber has to be number one; says it's, in his words, putting a very serious strain on the relationship between the two countries. You've often said that this is something that you want to take care of. I'm giving you an opportunity to make some news here. [*Laughter*]

The President. I may not see that. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. [*Laughter*] What would be—is there any one thing that you can do to unblock this issue?

The President. Well, I can tell our people to try to find common ground. I thought we were pretty close to a deal a couple of years ago—I can't remember the exact timing of it, but I know we've been working on softwood lumber for quite a while.

I fully understand how difficult an issue this is, particularly from Canada's perspective, since there's been some rulings. And we want to get it solved. I told that to Stephen Harper, that I understand its importance. I understand its priority. And I'd like to get the issue resolved once and for all, myself. The best thing I can do is tell our negotiators that—see if you can find common ground.

Again, we were close to an agreement before—maybe that's a place for people to look for common ground.

I know it's not going to get solved if it's done—if these negotiations are public; it's going to require some very quiet consultations to see if we can do what I'd like to see done.

Q. Can it be solved on your watch?

The President. I certainly hope so. This is a difficult issue. I know it creates anxieties in Canada. I really don't want to create anxieties. On the other hand, I do want to be fair to our folks here as well, and I think we can find ground.

Canada-U.S. Border/Homeland Security

Q. Talking about common ground, it seems to me that there's so much that we have in common between these two countries—we've got the world's largest undefended border; we're both countries at war; we've got boots on the ground in Afghanistan. And yet here at home, we're putting more barriers along that Canadian-American border.

You've often said that the reason for this—or what Stephen Harper calls the passport problem—you've said that it's because you want to know who's coming and going across that border. So I guess it begs the question, are the Canadians not telling you who's coming and going? Are we not doing a good enough job?

The President. Oh, I think Canada has been very cooperative, and the relationship between our services is very good. The idea is to have—it doesn't necessarily have to be a passport. It can be a document, a tamper-proof document that will expedite border crossings, not delay border crossings. The idea is to make sure that tourists and trade moves freely and terrorists don't.

And right after September the 11th, obviously, our country took a hard look at the procedures enabling people to come back and forth across our borders, both north and south. And the idea was to come up, as I said, with a tamper-proof document. I know they've been focused on the passport, but surely we can design something—the law doesn't say passport only; the law says, kind of, passport-like, if I'm not mistaken.

But the key is that it be tamper-proof. We've found a lot of, for example, driver's license forgeries throughout the United States that make it difficult to—you know, as best as we can assure our citizens that we know who's coming in and who's not.

Q. I guess part of the problem for a lot of people in this is they say, look, it's not so much guys like you and me going across—we've all got passports or identity cards. But it's the minor league, peewee hockey team, or the peewee baseball team that won't be able to play in each other's countries right now because it's too much of a hassle to get this card.

The President. Again, the idea is to make it hassle-free as best as possible. I can understand—I mean, on any change of the status quo, you can always find, kind of, the nightmare scenario that makes life—it makes it feel like life is going to be a lot worse. I don't think it necessarily has to be. I think we can work with our Canadian counterparts to come up with something that's rational and meets the law that has been passed by the Congress and that I signed.

Trade With Canada

Q. Can you foresee—you're going down to Cancun as part of the exercise, I guess, of imagining a new North America and then getting it going. In your vision, can you foresee a day when there would be free travel of people across the borders without identity cards, just free movement of people in North America?

The President. Oh, I don't know. That's probably down the road. But I'm not imagining an important relationship, though, because we're really building on what our predecessors left behind, which is a trading arrangement that has substantially increased trade between the United States and Canada and Mexico.

Canada is our number one trading partner. I'm a believer that trade helps grow economies. I think free trade is an important part—and fair trade, something that Canadians want and something that Americans want is, free and fair trade—benefits both of us. You know, we traded about nearly $500 billion, two-way trade, in 2005, which is very positive for both our economies.

What I'm concerned about is that protectionist tendency and isolationist tendency that could emerge in both our countries as well as in Mexico, which would make it harder for us to realize the benefits of collaboration together, make it harder for us to, kind of, grow together. And that would be not beneficial for the hemisphere, and frankly, it will make it a lot harder for future Americans and Canadians and Mexicans to compete with the Chinese, for example.

And so there is a relationship which exists which needs to be protected and nurtured and streamlined and made more efficient, and that's really what the discussions will be in Cancun.

Canadian Government

Q. A quick last question for you, I don't know if you're going to take the bait on this one.

The President. Probably not.

Q. Okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. Now that you've let me know——

Q. I let the cat out of the bag.

The President. ——let me know there was a hook coming. [*Laughter*]

Q. Are you any happier with the Conservative Government in Canada than a liberal government?

The President. I am—I respect the will of the Canadian people, and as I say, you know, this is—there were some tense times when I made the decision to go to war in Iraq, and I understand that. I'm not the—I fully understand why people, not only in Canada but in the United States, expressed deep concern about the use of force to protect ourselves. I stand by the decision. I think it's the right decision. And therefore, I wasn't surprised when I heard, you know, members of political parties in both our countries express deep concern about it.

Having said all that, however, in the midst of turbulent times, my relationships with the two Prime Ministers, prior to Stephen Harper, were good, solid relationships. We had candid discussions; we were friendly toward each other; we shared the same values of human rights and human dignity and freedom to speak and freedom to worship.

So I view the relationship with Canada as a very strong and important relationship for the United States of America. It's a relationship that we should never take for granted, and I'm confident the Canadians won't take our relationship for granted. And it's a relationship that needs attention and care. And there are problems that arise, like softwood lumber. Hopefully we'll get that solved. But we've also had a BSE issue that came up on my watch, which we solved, as well as potatoes. We had a potato issue when I first became President of the United States, that we worked through with Prime Minister Chretien.

Q. Mr. President, you've been very generous with your time, and I appreciate it.

The President. Well, thanks for coming.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Welcome to Washington.

Q. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:55 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 29.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria

March 29, 2006

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome back to the Oval Office. We have just had a discussion that covered a lot of topics. Every time I meet with the President, he brings a fresh perspective about the politics and the situation on the continent of Africa, and I want to thank you. I want to thank you for your leadership.

The President and I talked about Darfur and the Sudan, and I made it very clear to him that we're deeply concerned about the humiliation, the rape, the murder that is taking place among the—against the citizens of Darfur. He agreed. And I want to thank you for your compassion.

We talked and strategized about how to move forward, how to make it clear to the Sudanese Government that there will be a

international response in working toward a peace. We talked about a dual track, that the rebels must come together and negotiate with the Government, and at the same time, we talked about bolstering the AU peacekeeping force with a blue-helmeted force. And I explained to him my desire to have a NATO overlay to make sure that force is robust.

We talked about economic development. Of course, I brought up energy to the President. He's—he and I talked about the situation in the Nigerian Delta. He talked to me about his strategy to deal with the energy issue.

And finally, I appreciate the decision he made regarding Charles Taylor. In my visit last week with the President of Liberia, we talked about Charles Taylor. The fact that Charles Taylor will be brought to justice in a court of law will help Liberia and is a signal, Mr. President, of your deep desire for there to be peace in your neighborhood.

So welcome to the Oval Office. It's good to have you here, sir.

President Obasanjo. Thank you very much. And as usual, I want to thank you for the warm and hardy reception that you have accorded us.

The areas that I would call the areas of concern, by the time I arrived here last night, seemed to have been definably dealt with by this morning, particularly the issue of Charles Taylor. And as I said to you about a minute—a few minutes ago, Charles Taylor should be landing in Liberia by now, which should start putting the issue of Charles Taylor behind all of us.

I appreciate the understanding of everybody and the way that the issue has been handled. I met the press earlier today to actually give what was our own position and how we were hoping to deal with the issue of Charles Taylor's disappearance. And of course, I do not agree, must disagree that we have been negligent in the way we handled the Charles Taylor issue. If we had been negligent, then Charles Taylor would have got away. He would not have been arrested if there was connivance or condonation on our part.

Having said that, we, of course, talked about the general situation of peace and security in the West Africa subregion, and how West Africa subregion, with Charles Taylor issue behind us, how West Africa subregion is gradually becoming a haven of peace. We have dealt with Togo; we have dealt with Guinea-Bissau; we have dealt with Sierra Leone. Hopefully, we are now dealing with Liberia. And things seem to be going fairly well in Cote D'Ivoire. Well, of course, we are keenly watching the situation in Guinea—Conakry.

Then we looked at the rest of Africa, particularly Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the Great Lakes, generally. Then we talked about the issue of development, particularly security—supplies, security, stability, and also price stability of hydrocarbons from the Gulf of Guinea area, and how we are working hard to establish a Gulf of Guinea commission that will also deal with the issue of reconciling and dealing with ending misunderstanding among those in that—among countries that are in the Gulf of Guinea, how we can protect and how we can monitor what happens in that area, because the hydrocarbon we need for our own development and we need for the economic development and progress of the world. We are moving in this regard not only by ourselves but also by our—with our development partners.

Then, of course, we talked about NEPAD, which is where we work with the G–8 and—politically and individually.

And we—I briefed the President on what we are doing with the Niger Delta, which is very important. And we are very grateful that the measures we are taking, which are essentially socioeconomic measures to address some of the grievances, identified grievances, will resolve the issues of the Niger Delta.

I think these are some of the points. And I think—I want to thank President for remaining his charming self. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Charles Taylor of Liberia, who was arrested on March 29 in Nigeria on United Nations war crimes charges; and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

Remarks to Freedom House and a Question-and-Answer Session

March 29, 2006

The President. Thank you. Please be seated. I shouldn't be so instructive to the diplomatic corps. [*Laughter*] Peter, thank you for your warm introduction. Thank you for your commitment to freedom. It turns out freedom runs pretty deep in Peter's family. I don't know if you know this or not, but his son is a Marine First Lieutenant named Elliot Ackerman. He fought in the battle of Fallujah. I know you're proud of your son, and I'm proud to be the Commander in Chief of men and women who volunteer to defend our own freedom.

I appreciate very much the men and women of Freedom House. For more than 60 years, this organization has been a tireless champion for liberty. You've been a clear voice for the oppressed across the world. At Freedom House, you understand that the only path to lasting peace is the expansion of freedom and liberty.

Free societies are peaceful societies. When governments are accountable to their own citizens, when people are free to speak and assemble, when minorities are protected, then justice prevails. And so does the cause of peace.

Freedom House was founded on the principle that no nation is exempt from the demands of human dignity. And you're carrying that message across the world, from Africa to China to Belarus and beyond. At Freedom House, you also understand free societies do not take root overnight, especially in countries that suffer from decades of tyranny and repression. You understand that free elections are an instrument of change; yet they're only the first step. So as you press for democratic change across the world, you're helping new democracies build free institutions they need to overcome the legacies of tyranny and dictatorship.

I want to thank you for your vital work. You're making a significant contribution to the security of our country. I'm also honored that we've got distinguished members of the legislative body with us, particularly Senators—John Warner, who is the chairman of the Armed Services Committee; Senator Dick Lugar, who is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; and, of course, Senator Ted Stevens. I thank the Members from the House and Senate who have joined these distinguished Senators. I appreciate you taking time to come and listen to me. Just listen to me a little more often. [*Laughter*]

I particularly want to pay homage to Ambassador Max Kampelman. Thank you very much. I was telling the Ambassador, right before I came over I was having a little visit with my Chief of Staff-to-be, Josh Bolten. It turns out that Josh's dad and the Ambassador were lifelong friends. And as I came over here, he said, "You make sure that you say hello to one of the finest men our country has ever produced." So, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of a grateful President and a grateful Chief of Staff-to-be, thank you for serving our country.

I appreciate the other members of the Freedom House Board of Trustees, and I thank the diplomatic corps for joining us as well.

We meet at a time of war but also at a moment of great hope. In our world and due in part to our efforts, freedom is taking root in places where liberty was unimaginable a couple of years ago. Just 25 years ago, at the start of the 1980s, there were only 45 democracies on the face of the Earth. Today, Freedom House reports there are 122 democracies, and more people now live in liberty than ever before.

The advance of freedom is the story of our time, and we're seeing new chapters written before our eyes. Since the beginning of 2005, we've witnessed remarkable democratic changes across the globe. The people of Afghanistan have elected their first democratic Parliament in more than a generation. The people of Lebanon have recovered their independence and chosen their leaders in free elections. The people of Kyrgyzstan have driven a corrupt regime from power and voted for democratic change. The people of Liberia have overcome decades of violence and are now led by the first woman elected as a head of state in any African nation. And the courageous people of Iraq have gone to the polls not once, not twice, but three times, choosing a transitional government, a

democratic Constitution, and a new Government under that Constitution.

Each of these countries still faces enormous challenges that will take patience and the support of the international community to overcome. Yet Freedom House has declared, the year 2005 was one of the most successful years for freedom since the Freedom House began measuring world freedom more than 30 years ago. From Kabul to Baghdad to Beirut and beyond, freedom's tide is rising, and we should not rest, and we must not rest, until the promise of liberty reaches every people and every nation.

In our history, most democratic progress has come with the end of a war. After the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II and the collapse of communism in the cold war, scores of nations cleared away the rubble of tyranny and laid the foundations of freedom and democracy.

Today, the situation is very different. Liberty is advancing not in a time of peace but in the midst of a war, at a moment when a global movement of great brutality and ambition is fighting freedom's progress with all the hateful violence they can muster. In this new century, the advance of freedom is a vital element of our strategy to protect the American people and to secure the peace for generations to come. We're fighting the terrorists across the world because we know that if America were not fighting this enemy in other lands, we'd be facing them here in our own land.

On September the 11th, 2001, we saw the violence and the hatred of a vicious enemy and the future that they intend for us. That day I made a decision: America will not wait to be attacked again. We will confront this mortal danger. We will stay on the offensive. America will defend our freedom.

We're pursuing the terrorists on many battlefronts. Today, the central front in the war on terror is Iraq. This month I've given a series of speeches on recent events in Iraq and how we're adapting our approach to deal with the events on the ground. At George Washington University, I reported on the progress we have made in training the Iraqi security forces, the growing number of Iraqi units that are taking the lead in the fight, the territory we're handing over to them, and the performance they turned in after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra.

Last week in Cleveland, I told the American people about the northern Iraqi city of Tall 'Afar, which was once a key base of operations for Al Qaida and is now a free city that gives us reason to hope for a free Iraq. I explained how the story of Tall 'Afar gives me confidence in our strategy, because in that city, we see the outlines of the Iraq we've been fighting for, a free and secure people who are getting back on their feet, who are participating in government and civic life, and are becoming allies in the fight against the terrorists.

Today I'm going to discuss the stakes in Iraq and our efforts to help the Iraqi people overcome past divisions and form a lasting democracy, and why it is vital to the security of the American people that we help them succeed.

In the wake of recent violence in Iraq, many Americans are asking legitimate questions: Why are Iraqis so divided? And did America cause the instability by removing Saddam Hussein from power? They ask, after three elections, why are the Iraqi people having such a hard time coming together? And can a country with so many divisions ever build a stable democracy? They ask why we can't bring our troops home now and let the Iraqis sort out their differences on their own.

These are fair questions, and today I'll do my best to answer them. I'll discuss some of the reasons for the instability we're seeing in Iraq, why democracy is the only force that can overcome these divisions, why I believe the vast majority of Iraqis want to live in freedom and peace, and why the security of our Nation depends on the success of a free Iraq.

Today, some Americans ask whether removing Saddam caused the divisions and instability we're now seeing. In fact, much of the animosity and violence we now see is the legacy of Saddam Hussein. He is a tyrant who exacerbated sectarian divisions to keep himself in power. Iraq is a nation with many ethnic and religious and sectarian and regional and tribal divisions. Before Saddam Hussein, Iraqis from different communities managed to live together. Even today, many Iraqi tribes have both Sunni and Shi'a branches.

And in many small towns with mixed populations, there's often only one mosque, where Sunni and Shi'a worship together. Intermarriage is also common with mixed families that include Arabs and Kurds and Sunnis and Shi'a and Turkmen and Assyrians and Chaldeans.

To prevent these different groups from coming to challenge his regime, Saddam Hussein undertook a deliberate strategy of maintaining control by dividing the Iraqi people. He stayed on top by brutally repressing different Iraqi communities and pitting them one against the other. He forced hundreds of thousands of Iraqis out of their homes, using expulsion as a weapon to subdue and punish any group that resisted his rule. By displacing Iraqi communities and dividing the Iraqi people, he sought to establish himself as the only force that could hold the country together.

In Saddam's campaign of repression and division, no Iraqi group was spared. In the late 1980s, Saddam Hussein unleashed a brutal ethnic cleansing operation against Kurds in northern Iraq. Kurdish towns and villages were destroyed. Tens of thousands of Kurds disappeared or were killed. In his effort to terrorize the Kurds into submission, Saddam dropped chemical weapons on scores of Kurdish villages. In one village alone, a town called Halabja, his regime killed thousands of innocent men and women and children, using mustard gas and nerve agents. Saddam also forcibly removed hundreds of thousands of Kurds from their homes, and then he moved Arabs into those homes and onto the properties of the people who were forced to leave. As a result of his strategy, deep tensions persist to this day.

Saddam also waged a brutal campaign of suppression and genocide against the Shi'a in the south of Iraq. He targeted prominent Shi'a clerics for assassination. He destroyed Shi'a mosques and holy sites. He killed thousands of innocent men, women, and children. He piled their bodies into mass graves. After the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Saddam brutally crushed a Shi'a uprising. Many Shi'a fled to the marshes of southern Iraq. They hid in the wetlands that could not be easily reached by Saddam's army.

The wetlands, by the way, were also home to the Marsh Arabs, an ancient civilization that traces its roots back 5,000 years. So Saddam destroyed the Marsh Arabs and those who hid in the marshes by draining the marshes where they lived. In less than a decade, the majority of these lush wetlands were turned into barren desert, and most of the Marsh Arabs were driven from their ancestral home. It is no wonder that deep divisions and scars exist in much of the Shi'a population.

Saddam also oppressed his fellow Sunnis. One of the great misperceptions about Iraq is that every Sunni enjoyed a privileged status under Saddam's regime. In truth, Saddam trusted few outside his family and his tribe. He installed his sons and his brothers and his cousins in key positions. Almost everyone was considered suspect, and often those suspicions led to brutal violence.

In one instance, Saddam's security services tortured to death a pilot from a prominent Sunni tribe and then dumped his headless body in front of his family's house. It caused riots that he then brutally suppressed. In the mid-1990s, Saddam rounded up scores of prominent Sunni economists and lawyers and retired army officers and former government officials. Many were never heard from again.

It is hard to overstate the effects of Saddam's brutality on the Iraqi nation. Here's what one marine recalls when he was on the streets of the Iraqi capital. He said, quote, "I had an Iraqi citizen come up to me. She opened her mouth, and she had no tongue. She was pointing at the statue. There were people with no fingers waving at the statue of Saddam, telling us he tortured them. People were showing us scars on their back." Iraq is a nation that is physically and emotionally scarred by three decades of Saddam's tyranny, and these wounds will take time to heal. As one Marsh Arab put it, "Saddam did everything he could to kill us. You cannot recover from that right away."

These are the kinds of tensions Iraqis are dealing with today. They are the divisions that Saddam aggravated through deliberate policies of ethnic cleansing and sectarian violence. As one Middle East scholar has put it, Iraq under Saddam Hussein was "a society

slowly and systematically poisoned by political terror. The toxic atmosphere in today's Iraq bears witness to his terrible handiwork."

The argument that Iraq was stable under Saddam and that stability is now in danger because we removed him is wrong. While liberation has brought its own set of challenges, Saddam Hussein's removal from power was the necessary first step in restoring stability and freedom to the people of Iraq.

Today, some Americans are asking why the Iraqi people are having such a hard time building a democracy. The reason is that the terrorists and former regime elements are exploiting the wounds inflicted under Saddam's tyranny. The enemies of a free Iraq are employing the same tactics Saddam used—killing and terrorizing the Iraqi people in an effort to foment sectarian division.

For the Saddamists, provoking sectarian strife is business as usual. And we know from the terrorists' own words that they're using the same tactics with the goal of inciting a civil war. Two years ago, we intercepted a letter to Usama bin Laden from the terrorist Zarqawi, in which he explains his plan to stop the advance of democracy in Iraq. Zarqawi wrote: "If we succeed in dragging the Shi'a into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger. The only solution is for us to strike the religious and military and other cadres among the Shi'a with blow after blow."

The terrorists and Saddamists have been brutal in the pursuit of this strategy. They target innocent civilians; they blow up police officers; they attack mosques; and they commit other acts of horrific violence for the cameras. Their objective is to stop Iraq's democratic progress. They tried to stop the transfer of sovereignty. They tried to stop millions of Iraqis from voting in the January 2005 elections. They tried to stop Sunnis from participating in the October referendum on the Constitution. And they tried to stop millions from voting in the December elections to form a Government under that Constitution.

And in each case, they failed. With every election, participation was larger and broader than the one that came before. And in December, almost 12 million people—more than 75 percent of eligible voters—defied the terrorists to cast their ballots. With their votes, the Iraqi people have spoken and made their intentions clear: They want to live in liberty and unity, and they're determined to chart their own destiny.

Now the elements of a free Iraq are trying to stop the—the enemies of a free Iraq are trying to stop the formation of unity government. They've learned they cannot succeed by facing coalition and Iraqi forces on the battlefield, so they've taken their violence to a new level by attacking one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites. They blew up the Golden Mosque in Samarra in the hope that this outrageous act would provoke the Shi'a masses into widespread reprisals which would provoke Sunnis to retaliate and drag the nation into a civil war.

Yet despite massive provocations, Iraq has not descended into civil war. Most Iraqis have not turned to violence. The Iraqi security forces have not broken up into sectarian groups waging war against each other. Instead, Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish soldiers stood together to protect religious sites, enforce a curfew, and restore civil order.

In recent weeks, these forces passed another important test when they successfully protected millions of Shi'a pilgrims who marched to the cities of Karbala and Najaf for an annual religious holiday. In 2004, the terrorists launched coordinated strikes against the pilgrims, killing scores of innocent worshipers. This year, the pilgrimage was largely peaceful, thanks to the courage and the unity of the Iraqi security forces. In the midst of today's sectarian tension, the ability of Iraqis to hold a peaceful gathering by millions of people is a hopeful sign for the future of Iraq.

In these last few weeks, we've also seen terrible acts of violence. The kidnapings and brutal executions and beheadings are very disturbing. There's no place in a free and democratic Iraq for armed groups operating outside the law. It's vital to the security of a free Iraq that the police are free of militia influence. And so we're working with Iraqi leaders to find and remove leaders from the national police who show evidence of loyalties to militias. We're partnering U.S. battalions with Iraqi national police to teach them

about the role of a professional police force in a democratic society. We're making clear to Iraqi leaders that reining in the illegal militias must be a top priority of Iraq's new government when it takes office.

The violence we're seeing is showing the Iraqi leaders the danger of sectarian division and underscoring the urgency of forming a national unity government. Today, Iraqi leaders from every major ethnic and religious community are working to construct the path forward. Our Ambassador to Iraq, Zal Khalilzad, is helping Iraq's leaders reach out across political and religious and sectarian lines, so they can form a government that will earn the trust and the confidence of all Iraqis.

Putting aside differences to build a democracy that reflects the country's diversity is a difficult thing to do. It's even more difficult when enemies are working daily to stop your progress and divide your nation. Yet Iraqis are rising to the moment. They deserve enormous credit for their courage and their determination to succeed.

Iraqi leaders are coming to grips with an important truth: The only practical way to overcome the divisions of three decades of tyranny is through democracy. Democracy is the only form of government where every person has a say in the governance of a country. It's the only form of government that will yield to a peaceful Middle East. So Iraqis are working to overcome past divisions and build a free society that protects the rights of all its citizens. They're undertaking this progress with just a year's experience in democratic politics.

Many of the institutions and traditions we take for granted here in America—from party structures to centuries' experience with peaceful transitions of power—are new to Iraq, so we should not be surprised if Iraqis make mistakes or face setbacks in their efforts to build a government that unites the Iraqi people.

We're beginning to see the signs of progress. Earlier this month, Iraqi leaders announced they had reached an agreement on the need to address critical issues, such as de-Baathification in the operation of security ministries and the distribution of oil revenues, in the spirit of national unity. They agreed to form a new national security council that will improve coordination within the government on these and other difficult issues. This council will include representatives from all major political groups, as well as leaders from Iraq's executive, judicial, and legislative branches. As a result of this council's considered advice, the Iraqi Government that emerges will be more effective and more unified.

Another important sign of progress is that Saddam Hussein is now being called to account for his crimes by the free citizens of a free Iraq. Millions of Iraqis are seeing their independent judiciary in action. At the former dictator's trial, Iraqis recently saw something that's got to be truly amazing to them. When Saddam Hussein stood up and began to give a political speech, the presiding judge gaveled him down. Saddam growled at the judge, declaring, "I'm the head of state." The judge replied, "You used to be the head of the state. And now you're a defendant." Three years ago, any Iraqi who addressed Saddam in this way would have been killed on the spot. Now the former dictator is answering to a judge instead of meting out arbitrary justice, and Iraqis are replacing the rule of a tyrant with the rule of law.

Finally, some Americans are asking if it's time to pull out our troops and leave the Iraqis to settle their own differences. I know the work in Iraq is really difficult, but I strongly feel it's vital to the security of our country. The terrorists are killing and maiming and fighting desperately to stop the formation of a unity government because they understand what a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East means for them and their ideology. They know that when freedom sets root in Iraq, it will be a mortal blow to their aspirations to dominate the region and advance their hateful vision. So they're determined to stop the advance of a free Iraq, and we must be equally determined to stop them.

The irony is that the enemy seems to have a much clearer sense of what's at stake than some of the politicians here in Washington, DC. One Member of Congress who has proposed an immediate withdrawal of American forces in Iraq recently explained that what would happen after American forces pulled

out was this: He said, "They'll fight each other; somebody will win; they'll settle it for themselves." While it might sound attractive to some, it would have disastrous consequences for American security. The Iraqi Government is still in transition, and the Iraqi security forces are still gathering capacity. If we leave Iraq before they're capable of defending their own democracy, the terrorists will win. They will achieve their stated goal. This is what the terrorists have told us they want to achieve. They will turn Iraq into a safe haven. They will seek to arm themselves with weapons of mass destruction. They will use Iraq as a base to overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East. They will use Iraq as a base from which to launch further attacks against the United States of America.

Mindful of recent history, I ask you to think about what happened in Afghanistan. In the 1980s, the United States helped Afghan freedom fighters drive the Soviet Red Army from Kabul, and once the Soviets withdrew, we decided our work was finished and left the Afghans to defend themselves. Soon the terrorists moved in to fill the vacuum. They took over the country; they turned it into a safe haven from which they planned and launched the attacks of September the 11th.

If we leave Iraq before the job is done, the terrorists will move in and fill the vacuum, and they will use that failed state to bring murder and destruction to freedom-loving nations.

I know some in our country disagree with my decision to liberate Iraq. Whatever one thought about the decision to remove Saddam from power, I hope we should all agree that pulling our troops out prematurely would be a disaster. If we were to let the terrorists drive us out of Iraq, we would signal to the world that America cannot be trusted to keep its word. We would undermine the morale of our troops by betraying the cause for which they have sacrificed. We would cause the tyrants in the Middle East to laugh at our failed resolve and tighten their repressive grip. The global terrorist movement would be emboldened and more dangerous than ever. For the security of our citizens and the peace of the world, we will not turn the future of Iraq over to the followers of a failed dictator or to evil men like bin Laden and Zarqawi.

America will leave Iraq, but we will not retreat from Iraq. We will leave because Iraqi forces have gained in strength, not because America's will has weakened. We will complete the mission in Iraq, because the security of the American people is linked to the success in Iraq.

We're pursuing a clear strategy for victory. Victory requires an integrated strategy: political, economic, and security. These three elements depend on and reinforce one another. By working with Iraqi leaders to build the foundations of a strong democracy, we will ensure they have the popular support they need to defeat the terrorists. By going after the terrorists, coalition and Iraqi forces are creating the conditions that allow the Iraqi people to begin rebuilding their lives and their country. By helping Iraqis with economic reconstruction, we're giving every citizen a real stake in the success of a free Iraq. And as all this happens, the terrorists, those who offer nothing but death and destruction, are becoming isolated from the population.

I wish I could tell you the violence in Iraq is waning and that all the tough days in the struggle are behind us. They're not. There will be more tough fighting ahead with difficult days that test the patience and the resolve of our country. Yet we can have faith in the final outcome because we've seen freedom overcome the darkness of tyranny and terror and secure the peace before. And in this century, freedom is going to prevail again.

In 1941, the year the Freedom House began its work, the future of freedom seemed bleak. There were about a dozen lonely democracies in the world. The Soviet Union was led by the tyrant Stalin, who massacred millions. Hitler was leading Nazi Germany in a campaign to dominate Europe and eliminate the Jewish people from the face of the Earth. An imperial Japan launched a brutal surprise attack on America. Today, six decades later, the Soviet Empire is no more; Germany and Japan are free nations, and they are allies in the cause of peace; and the majority of the world's governments are democracies.

There were doubters six decades ago who said that freedom could not prevail. History has proved them wrong. In this young century, the doubters are still with us but so is the unstoppable power of freedom. In Afghanistan and Iraq and other nations, that power is replacing tyranny with hope, and no one should bet against it.

One of the greatest forces for freedom in the history of the world is the United States Armed Forces. In the past 4½ years, our troops have liberated more people than at any time since World War II. Because of the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform, 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan have tasted freedom, and their liberation has inspired millions more across the broader Middle East to believe that freedom is theirs as well.

This is going to be freedom's century. Thank you for giving me a chance to come and visit with you. May God bless. [*Applause*]

Okay, sit down, please. All right, I'll be glad to answer some questions.

Yes, sir. Yes, please.

Millennium Challenge Account

Q. I have a question. I am from Mali. A couple of years ago, the Millennium Challenge Account was created to help countries that were already on the path to democracy. Looking at a country like Mali in West Africa, where just yesterday we celebrated our 15 years of freedom—we haven't seen any money yet. [*Laughter*]

The President. I like a good lobbyist. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, isn't it cheaper and easier for people—people from Mali and all throughout Africa, who already are in love with America, and isn't it easier politically to you and show to your critics that, look, in Iraq, maybe we need some [*inaudible*]—we're in there, but in places like Mali that have freedom, we can step in and help them without expecting something back? Thank you.

The President. No, I appreciate that. I—he's referring to a foreign policy initiative of mine called the Millennium Challenge Account. I want to thank the Members of Congress who have been strong supporters of the Millennium Challenge Account. I would hope they would continue to support the Millennium Challenge Account.

The Millennium Challenge Account, the idea behind it was, is that nations are capable of defeating corruption; they are capable of investing in health and education for their citizens; and they are capable about supporting market-oriented economies. If you believe that, then why shouldn't our aid say, you get aid in return for fighting corruption, investing in the health and education of your citizens, and putting market-oriented economic measures in place?

We started the process recognizing that a lot of people would raise their hands, including Mali, by saying we'll start with the poorest nations first. I must confess that our Millennium Challenge Account, while funded in its first year, was a little slow to get going. We've changed the structure to make sure money gets out the door so that other nations such as Mali will be eligible for application and consideration.

I can remember when I first put in the Millennium Challenge Account. People were somewhat aghast that the United States would dare ask for conditions for its money. Those are the defeatists in the world, those who believe that certain people can't fight corruption. We believe opposite of that in America. We believe in high standards, and the taxpayers sure believe in accountability for our foreign dollars.

So thank you for bringing it up. I appreciate a man who is willing to stand up and defend his country in front of the President and all the cameras. [*Laughter*]

Yes, sir.

Liberia/Sudan

Q. Mr. President, I'm from The Economist magazine. I understand, Mr. President, you met with President Obasanjo of Nigeria today. I wonder if you could tell us what you discussed and also if——

The President. No, but keep going. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. Are you now confident——

The President. I can tell you what I discussed.

Q. Are you now confident that Charles Taylor, the recently recaptured Liberian warlord, will stand trial?

The President. I am much more confident today than I was yesterday. [*Laughter*] This is what we call embedding. [*Laughter*] I talked to the President about a variety of things, one of which, of course, was Charles Taylor. There is a process to get Charles Taylor to the court in the Netherlands. Such a process will require a United Nations Security Council resolution. Secretary Rice, who was in the meeting, told me that she thought that might happen relatively quickly. And so therefore, I think he is headed for where he belongs, which is trial.

I spoke to President Sirleaf about this issue as well. She was deeply concerned that Charles Taylor could be in a position to disturb this young democracy. I must tell you that I was most impressed by the leader from Liberia. I think America is going to be—should be very anxious to work with her and help this country overcome years of violence.

But I do believe that he is headed for trial. We certainly will do our efforts in the diplomatic channels to see to it that that's the case.

We also talked about Sudan. I'm deeply worried about the human conditions in Darfur. Ours is a government that spoke out about genocide, and we meant it. I thanked President Obasanjo for the AU presence in the Sudan. I told him, however, I did not think the presence was robust enough. I do believe there needs to be a blue helmeting of not only the AU forces but additional forces with a NATO overlay. And the reason I believe that NATO ought to be a part of the operation is twofold: One, to provide logistical and command and control and airlift capability but also to send a clear signal to parties involved that the West is determined to help a settlement—to help affect in a settlement, that this is serious business, that we're just not playing a diplomatic holding game, but that when we say "genocide," we mean that the genocide needs to be stopped.

Secondly, we talked about the need for a parallel track, a peace process to go forward, that there needs to be unity amongst the rebel groups. The President told me he has met with the rebel groups, trying to come up with a focused message that can then be used to negotiate with the Government of Sudan. There is a pretty good template to go by, a resource-sharing arrangement. There's a governing structure that, if implemented, would be—in the north/south—because of the north/south agreement, could be a go-by for the Darfur region. But those are the two main things I talked to him about.

Yes, sir. Are you embedded? [*Laughter*]

Environment/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. From Australia. I've got a question about global warming: A couple of days ago, in the Australian Parliament, Tony Blair called for greater action. And this seems to be something that the U.S. President could make a major difference on. There's a virtual consensus that the planet is warming. If you addressed issues like emissions, fuel efficiency, issues to do with alternative energy in your last few years as President, it could make a significant difference, I think, to the——

The President. I appreciate you bringing that up.

Q. ——and I suppose I want to know, what is your plan?

The President. Good. We—first of all, there is—the globe is warming. The fundamental debate: Is it manmade or natural? Put that aside. It is in our interests that we use technologies that will not only clean the air but make us less dependent on oil. That's what I said in my State of the Union the other day. I said, look—and I know it came as quite a shock to—for people to hear a Texan stand up and say, "We've got a national problem; we're addicted to oil." But I meant what I said.

Being addicted to oil is a problem for our economy. In a global economy, when burgeoning economies like India and China use more fossil fuels, it affects the price of gasoline here in America. In a world in which sometimes people have got the oil we need, don't like us—kind of a undiplomatic way of putting it—it means we've got a national security issue.

I have—much of my position was defined early on in my Presidency when I told the world I thought that Kyoto was a lousy deal for America. And I tell you why it was a lousy deal for America. It meant that we had to cut emissions below 1990 levels, which would

have meant I would have presided over massive layoffs and economic destruction. I believe the best way to put technologies in place that will not only achieve national objectives like less addiction to oil but also help clean the air, is to be wealthy enough to invest in technologies and then to share those technologies with parts of the world that were excluded from the Kyoto Protocol.

And so I guess I should have started differently when I first became President, and said, "We will invest in new technologies that will enable us to use fossil fuels in a much wiser way." And what does that mean? Well, it means that we've got to figure out how to use ethanol more in our cars. Ethanol is produced mainly by cane and corn. But we're near some breakthroughs—that we can use sawgrass and biomass to be able to produce ethanol.

It means we got to continue investing in hybrid batteries. Ours is a country where many people live in urban centers, like Washington, DC. And it's possible to have a hybrid battery breakthrough which says that the first 40 miles of an automobile can be used by electricity alone. Right now the hybrid vehicles, as you know, switch between gasoline and electrical power. But that consumes gasoline, which means we're still reliant upon oil. The idea is to get off of oil.

On the electricity front, we need to be using nuclear power more in this country, in my judgment. It is a renewable source of energy that has zero gas emissions. We've got a great natural resource here in America called coal. We have 250-plus years of coal reserves. But we also recognize that by—burning coal causes environmental problems, and so we're spending billions on research to come up with clean coal technologies. And we'd like to share those technologies with other nations of the world that are beginning to grow, so that they are good stewards of the environment as well.

And so I got a comprehensive plan that uses technologies to help this Nation from a national and economic perspective but also will help improve the global economy—the environment from those new, burgeoning economies that are—like China and India, to be exact.

Yes.

Iraq/Syria/Iran

Q. Mr. President, first, thank you for your remarks and your commitment to advance freedom and the courage to use your office to follow through with it. My question is about Iraq. And I wonder if you could tell us, to what degree do you think the insurgency inside Iraq is dependent—dependent on foreign support, particularly from regional powers——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——and what are we doing, or what could we do more to prevent that?

The President. There are three elements of the insurgency. One are the rejectionists. Those are the Sunnis that didn't feel like they were going to get a fair shake in what they viewed would be a Shi'a-led government. They are slowly but surely recognizing that democracy is their best hope. Then there are the Saddamists. Those are the folks that received enormous privilege under Saddam Hussein, and they're furious that they don't have those privileges. And the last group, of course, is Al Qaida. Now, Al Qaida has stated clearly what I told you during the speech. They have made it abundantly clear that their ambitions are to drive us from the country. They're the ones that we worry about—were receiving foreign assistance—money, as well as safe haven.

The two countries that worry us the most, of course, are the two neighboring countries next to Iraq. That would be Syria and Iran. And we are making it abundantly clear to both that we think it's in their interests to let an Iraqi democracy develop.

Syria has been a—Syria is a complicated issue because of Lebanon. It's not complicated; actually, it's quite clear what needs to be done. Our first focus with Syria, besides stopping cross-border infiltration—that, frankly, has required our—required us to adjust our tactics on the ground and spend a lot of time training people to stop the cross-border infiltration, because there's some doubt as to whether or not we're getting much cooperation on the other side of the border. But we spend a lot of time working with particularly France in making it abundantly clear, we expect the Syrians to allow the Lebanese democracy to evolve.

I guess it's kind of hard to give up on a country on which you've had a stranglehold. There was a troop withdrawal, as you know. My main concern is to whether or not they withdraw more than just troops, whether they draw intelligence services and people that were in a position to influence the future of the country.

It is very important that there be full cooperation in the investigation of the death of Mr. Hariri. But our message to Bashar Asad is that we expect—if they want to be a welcomed country into the world, that they have got to free Lebanon, shut down cross-border infiltration, and stop allowing Hezbollah, PIJ, and other terrorist groups to meet inside the country.

The Iranian issue is more—in dealing with Iran, we're dealing with more than just influence into the formation of a national unity government. I happen to believe that ultimately the Iraqis will say, we want to have our own government. We want to be on our own feet. We've had a little problem with Iran in the past, and therefore, let us, kind of, manage our own affairs. No question right now we're concerned, however, about influencing the formation of the government, but also, obviously, we're deeply concerned about whether or not the Iranians have the wherewithal and/or the knowledge about building a nuclear weapon.

My negotiation strategy on this issue is that I believe it is better for the Iranians to hear from more than one voice as to whether or not the world accepts them as a viable nation in the international affairs. And so we have asked Germany and France and Great Britain to take the lead, to send a clear message to the Iranian Government.

It's difficult to negotiate with nontransparent societies. It's easier for a nontransparent society to try to negotiate with countries in which there's a free press and a free political opposition and a place where people can express their opinions, because it sometimes causes people to play their cards publicly. In negotiating with nontransparent societies, it's important to keep your counsel.

But I am pleased with the progress we have made on the diplomatic front. As you know, there are now talks of a Presidential letter out of the United Nations, and my Secretary of State, working with Ambassador John Bolton, are constructing such a letter and trying to make sure that there is common consensus, particularly amongst the P–5 plus Germany. As a matter of fact, Condi leaves, I think, today, if not tomorrow, for Europe to sit down with the P–5 plus Germany to continue keeping people knitted up on our strategy. Obviously, there's some cross pressures to some members of the P–5. There's a lot of politics in Europe, there's—which is a good thing, by the way, that people are questioning whether or not it's worth it to try to stop the Iranians from having a nuclear weapon. I just believe strongly it's worth it. Now is the time to deal with these problems before they become acute.

I'm troubled by a nontransparent regime having a weapon which could be used to blackmail freedom-loving nations. I'm troubled by a President who has declared his intentions to destroy our ally, Israel. And we need to take these admonitions and these threats very seriously in order to keep the peace.

So issues around Iraq are complicated and necessary, and that's why my administration spends a lot of time on them.

Yes, sir. You're going to ask me if I read the book. [*Laughter*]

Spread of Democracy/Russia/China

Q. Mr. President, as you noted at the beginning—I'm with Freedom House, and I gave the President a copy of our annual report, "Freedom in the World," before he took the stage. And as you noted, our reports have——

The President. Little print, no pictures. Go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. It's the bible of freedom, yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm the funny guy. Go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. Our publications have confirmed that freedom is advancing overall in the world during the years of your administration. There is one big, important country, however, in which freedom has declined year by year the last several years, and that's Russia.

The President. Correct.

Q. You have a big summit coming up in July with the G–8 in St. Petersburg. There's

been an increasing crackdown on civil society and political parties in Russia, and I'm wondering if the time between now and the St. Petersburg summit, what you and the administration can do to raise these issues and try to help the defenders of freedom in Russia?

The President. I appreciate that. The G–8 will raise the issue. That's the interesting thing about, kind of, meetings and moments. And I have worked very hard to convince Vladimir Putin that it's in his interest to adopt Western-style values and universal values—rule of law, freedom of religion, the right to people to assemble, political parties, free press.

My strategy with Vladimir Putin is to be in a position where I can talk frankly to him. I've heard some say, "Don't go to the G–8." I think that would be a mistake for the United States not to go to the G–8. I remember very—because I need to be in a position where I can sit down with him and be very frank about our concerns.

I remember meeting with the human rights groups in Russia. And I asked them, "What strategy should I take as the President of the United States? Should I be in a position where I can engage the President in frank discussion? Or should I publicly scold him, in which case he may turn a deaf ear?" And the universal consensus for them kind of played to my own instincts, which is that I think it's important for the United States to be in a position to be able to express our concerns.

Listen, we work with Russia on a variety of issues. Nunn-Lugar is an issue where we work with Russia, for example. But I spend a lot of time with the President making it clear that he should not fear democracy on his border, nor should he fear democracy within his borders. I like to make the case to him that democracies don't war with each other. You don't need to remind him about the brutal history that the Soviet Union went through in World War II. But I do think it's illustrative to point out—like I pointed out in the speech—that Europe is now free, whole, and at peace, and there's a reason why. It's what Americans have got to understand. We tend to forget. Ours is a society where things are, like, instant, so therefore, history almost is, like, so far back it doesn't count. But it counts when you really think about life lost on the continent of Africa and wonder why there's no war today. And there's a reason why there's no war today. And that's because history has proven democracies don't war with each other.

And so in my explanation, to different events that are taking place, to the President, I try to point to historical truths, that it's in an interest of a country like Russia to understand and welcome democracy. It's in an interest for the country to give people the freedom to express themselves.

I do spend time with him in private talking about issues like the NGO law. And as you noticed, they changed laws—obviously now the—it's how laws get implemented matters. But I'm confident that will be a topic of discussion.

I haven't given up on Russia. I still think Russia understands that it's in her interest to be West, to work with the West, and to act in concert with the West. Nobody is saying to Russia, you must look like the United States of America. But we are saying there's just some basic institutions that ought to be adopted. And I will continue making that case.

I do think it's important for me to go to the G–8 so I can make the case. One of the things that I find is that nations oftentimes approach me at these different meetings we go to and say, "Hey, pass the message for me, will you? We need you to pass a message, Mr. President. You're the person who can best make the case." And so I'm pretty confidence in these countries' interest that I be in a position where I'm able to walk into the room with the President of Russia and him not throw me out. And, in fact, that he—you know, we've got a relationship—personal relationships such that there is the possibility for candid conversation.

The other big opportunity for democracy, of course, is China. President Hu Jintao is coming to our country, as you know. I will continue to remind him, ours is a complex relationship and that we would hope that he would not fear a free society, just like it doesn't appear that he's fearing a free market. I happen to believe free markets eventually yield free societies. One of the most pure forms of democracy is the marketplace,

where demand causes something to happen. Excess demand causes prices to—the supply causes prices to go up, and vice versa. That stands in contrast to governments that felt like they could set price and control demand.

One of the things that I think should be a part of any foreign policy is to shine the spotlight, is to open societies. You heard me talk about what it's like to deal with nontransparent societies. I think a useful tool of foreign policy for our country is, try to let the sun shine in. China has recently read the book on Mao. It's an amazing history of a couple of things: one, about how fooled much of the world was, and how brutal this country was. And yet now there's more transparency into China.

I will make it clear, of course, to the President that our relationship is vital on a variety of fronts. One such front is the economy, and we expect that country to treat us fairly. We expect there to be strong adherence to intellectual property rights. We believe that we grow pretty good crops and grow good beef, and perhaps it's in their interest to open up their markets to our agricultural products. We expect our manufacturers to be treated fairly. We don't believe in state subsidization of industry to give unfair advantage to state-owned enterprise. In other words, there's a variety of things we'll talk about, and one of them is freedom.

I have been—I don't hesitate to talk to him about my visits with the Dalai Lama who is—comes and sees me in the White House; nor do I hesitate to talk about the concerns of the Catholic Church. I'm anxious to talk to him about the evangelicals' concerns inside of China, reminding him that a whole society is one that's just more than open markets; there's institutions and common values that are necessary.

Some, of course—let me say, if I might make a philosophical statement about how I think. As Peter mentioned, there is a philosophical debate taking place in the world—at least I think it is—and that is, whether freedom is universal, or whether, one way to put it, it just applies to only a handful of us. I believe in the universality of freedom. That's what I believe. Much of my foreign policy is driven by my firm belief that everybody desires to be free; that embedded in the soul of each man and woman on the face of the Earth is this deep desire to live in liberty. That's what I believe. I don't believe freedom is confined just to the United States of America, nor do I believe that we should shy away from expressing our deep desire for there to be universal liberty.

You hear the debate, "Well, they're just imposing their values. That's all they're doing." Well, those are the folks who must not think that freedom is universal. They're not American values. There's something universal about the notion of liberty—at least I think it is. And that's what's going to drive my foreign policy. I'll be unabashed about trying to work for more free societies. I believe that's the calling of the 21st century. I meant what I said, that in the 21st century, America ought to work to end tyranny in our world. It is a noble goal for the United States of America.

I'm concerned about isolationist tendencies in our country that would say, "Well, maybe this isn't—maybe we're not up to this task." Well, if we're not up to this task, who is up to the task? I'm concerned about protectionist policies in our country, which says to me, "We don't have the confidence to compete anymore. Let us withdraw within our borders." I strongly reject isolationism and protectionism. It's not in our country's interest, nor is it in the world's interest.

There's great talk about what you do as the American President with American influence. I believe American Presidents ought to confidently use American influence for the good of the world, and that includes demanding universal liberty and human rights and human dignity.

Yes, sir.

Spread of Democracy/Egypt

Q. Mr. President, I'm from the Public International Law and Policy Group. I'm also from Egypt, and I aspire to one day go back there and join Egyptian politics. So my question is——

The President. Go for President. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm working on it; I'm working on it—in 2017, everyone. [*Laughter*] But my question is, would you support the regime of

Gamal Mubarak if he takes over after President Mubarak?

The President. That's a leading question. [*Laughter*]

Q. ——question.

The President. No. That's a "question I don't answer" question. [*Laughter*] I support a country which does not fear political movements but is willing to compete with political movements. That's the kind of country I support.

There's a—first of all, I appreciate the fact that there were elections in Egypt. That's positive. I think people in positions of responsibility, like mine, ought to say, if there seems to be a movement gaining ground on the streets, the question ought to be why; not how can we repress it, but what is taking place? What is it that's causing somebody to be in favor? What are they saying that I'm not saying, or what are they doing that I'm not doing?

Competition for ideas and the votes of people are very healthy in societies. As a matter of fact, it's one of the ways to defeat the terrorists. Terrorists feed on resentment. When people don't feel their voices are heard, they become resentful, and then they become eligible for recruitment. If people don't feel like they have a chance to express themselves and have a government listen to them, they're likely to turn to people—the false prophets, people who subvert a great religion to play on people's frustrations and then use that false prophecy to kill.

And so I—to answer your question is, is that I support an openness in the political process. I think when—I think Egypt is a—has a chance to be one of the leaders of the freedom movement in the Middle East. And I recognize that not everybody is going to embrace this concept of democracy and freedom as firmly as I'd like them to. But all of us have got to continue to advance progress.

One of the interesting debates we have about the freedom movement is whether or not institutions have to be right before there's elections. So in other words, kind of, one of these interesting philosophical debates that's taking place. My answer—you heard my answer—my answer is, you got to have—you can't wait for perfect, because it's an excuse for the status quo.

Elections start the process; they're not the end of the process. They're oftentimes the beginning of the process. And one of the reasons I respect the Freedom House is because you understand that you follow elections with institution-building and the creation of civil society. But for those who say, "Well, we can't have elections until everything is just right or until we know the outcome of the elections," are those who provide excuse, in my judgment, for a foreign policy which in the past has said, it's okay, just so long as energy is priced okay; and okay, so there's no ruffles on the—the sea looks calm. My problem with that attitude is, beneath the surface, there's resentment and anger.

I'll also tell you another—I'm not going to tell you your business in the Freedom House, but I think a movement that must be tapped into in order to advance freedom is the women's movement. I just—there is something universal about the desire to be treated fairly and equally. And therefore, in societies in which women are not being treated fairly and equally—provides great opportunities to advance the cause of freedom. We've got to be wise about how we do it in the United States. Sometimes the stamp of America obviously provides those who are trying to resist freedom, giving them an excuse not to; I understand that. But it's—there are great opportunities in the world.

The temptation in today's society is to say, it's not worth it, or, certain people can't self-govern. It's really part of the debate in Iraq, isn't it, when you think about it—is, can these people self-govern? And I can understand why some in America say they can't, because all they see is unbelievable violence. And we're a country of deep compassion; we care. One of the great things about America, one of the beauties of our country, is that when we see a young, innocent child blown up by an IED, we cry. We don't care what the child's religion may be or where that child may live, we cry. It upsets us. The enemy knows that, and they're willing to kill to shake our confidence. That's what they're trying to do.

They're not going to shake my confidence, I just want you to know. I understand their

tactics, and I know their designs. But I also believe that Iraqis can and want to self-govern. That's what I believe. And so when you see me make decisions or make statements like I make, you've got to understand it's coming from a basic set of beliefs. That's what I believe. And that's what a decisionmaker ought to do. The decisionmaker ought to make decisions based upon deep-seated beliefs. You don't need a President chasing polls and focus groups in order to make tough decisions. You need Presidents who make decisions based upon sound principle.

Now, people may not agree with the decisions; I understand that. But I hope after this talk, those of you who didn't agree at least know I'm making my decisions based on something I believe deep in my soul and something that's worked in the past. Democracies have yielded the peace. I believe 30 years form now, people are going to look back at this moment and say, thank goodness a generation of Americans stood up and said, "We have faith in democracy, faith in democracy to lay the foundation for peace," and an American President will be discussing issues of peace with duly elected leaders in the Middle East, and our children will be better off for it.

And I want to tell you one anecdote now that you've got me wound up. [*Laughter*] I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi. I tell this story all the time, because one of my jobs is to go out and explain to the American people the consequences of the decisions that I have made and why I think it's in our interests. Koizumi and I are not only good friends, but we're partners in peace. We talk about a variety of issues—North Korea is an issue, we talk—you know, he's got 1,000 troops in Iraq. Isn't that amazing, when you think about it? Because he understands the benefits of democracy in the broader Middle East. We're close friends.

Sixty years ago—it seems like an eternity for a lot of people, I recognize that, but it's not that long ago—my dad fought the Japanese, and so did your relatives. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. I find it unbelievable part of history that I am now sitting down at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan talking about the peace, and my dad fought them. And so what happened? What happened was, Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. That's what happened. And now they're peaceful. And they sit at the table with their former enemy. I think that's a lesson worth listening to and understanding.

But I bet you after World War II, there were great doubters as to whether or not Harry Truman was doing the right thing to help Japan become a democracy. I see Stevens nodding; he was there. Weren't you? [*Laughter*] Well, I wasn't. [*Laughter*] But I'm reading a lot about it. And I believe it's a lesson for all of us in this—in the 21st century. Spreading democracy is hard work. It's hard to overcome sectarian division and torture. It's hard to overcome that. But it's worth it, for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

Yes. Yes, ma'am. Okay, I'll get you over there. [*Laughter*] You're in the end zone. You're next.

Progress in Iraq

Q. Oh, I'm next.

The President. No, you're not next. She's next. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm with Creative Associates, and we're one of the small companies that has the honor to work in Iraq, so today is a real honor to be here. As you were mentioning all the steps that we're going to have to go through in the near future, I'm still very concerned that we might not be concentrating on the suffering of the children.

The President. In Iraq?

Q. In Iraq. So I would like to be sure that as the different programs get processed that we don't give up on the children.

The President. Good, thank you very much. Our soldiers are good Samaritans. They're unbelievable. I see pictures all the time from family members of our soldiers in Iraq of their loved one showing compassion to children. No question, I'm concerned about the children in Iraq as well. So our—we've got people in the field who care about the children too. The truth of the matter is, if you care about the children of Iraq, then you would want to make sure that Iraq doesn't slip back into tyranny. Thousands of children lost their parents because of Saddam Hussein.

And so I want to thank you for your work. It's very important for the security situation to improve so that NGOs, people of compassion, are able to help lift lives. But there's a lot of work to be done. There's just a lot of work to be done—same in Afghanistan. First of all, we've rebuilt thousands of schools in Iraq, as we have in Afghanistan as well. And the world is more hopeful as the result of the liberation of these people. Afghanistan—it's obvious—when you have a society in which young girls weren't allowed to go to school because of the Taliban—thought it was, like, against humanity to send girls to school, and now they can. There's an amazing change in that society.

But I readily concede there's a lot of work left to be done. It's—there's no such thing as instant success. I told you that—and by the way, after World War II, Germany and Japan took awhile to rebuild, and it took awhile for those societies to become stable societies. It just takes awhile.

Our march, by the way, between Revolution, liberation, and Constitution wasn't all that smooth either. And frankly, our adhering to the full extent of the liberties embedded in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence took awhile. I realize that when I talk to my Secretary of State. We were—we had people enslaved in the United States for a century. It takes a while. It's hard work. And the fundamental question the American people have to answer is, is it worth it? You've got my position: It absolutely is worth it.

Freedom is contagious, by the way. As liberty begins to spread in the Middle East, more people will demand it. And we should not shirk our duty, nor should we be afraid to encourage reformers. The worst thing that could happen, in my judgment, for the peace of the world is for the United States to lose our nerve and retreat. And there's—anyway. Yes.

Thank you. You've been very anxious. This better be a good one. Yes, you've been waving and yelling over there—[*laughter*]—waving, yelling, stomping your feet. It's a free society. That's what happens. [*Laughter*]

Message to the People of Iraq

Q. I'm Iraqi-American.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I think based on what—review over 30 years of Saddam's oppression and the regime in Iraq, and also based on the belief that you have—as an Iraqi mother, Iraqi-American mother and a woman—and I went back 2 years ago without—I worked for a year—there's always that concern and still worrisome. These are beautiful messages, yet there's a big gap that never crosses that ocean. It never gets to the Iraqi, to the simple man, the Iraqis facing despair, disillusionments, all kinds of things. I speak to Iraqi friends and families on daily basis. This is what their message is: We hear of these things, but we don't see it. It doesn't get to us.

The President. Yes, tangible results on the street, right.

Q. But it's not only us, Mr. President. It's not only that. It doesn't reach them in any kind of media, unfortunately. So how can we do that? I've been wondering about this, and you are the only person, I think, who can maybe do something.

The President. Talk to the Iraqi people?

Q. Talk to someone, talk to the Iraqi, relay that message that we are honest, we have great beliefs, and we want to do something.

The President. Well, I appreciate that. First of all, I've got great confidence in the people of Iraq. Iraqis are entrepreneurial; they're well-educated; they're peace-loving. Iraqi mothers want their children to grow up in a peaceful world. That's what mothers want all over the world.

And so I—what my concern is, is that the tangible benefits of democracy aren't reaching into people's pockets yet. I mean, there's got to be a direct correlation with someone's lifestyle, someone's standard of living, and a style of government. And that's one of the things that people who push freedom understand. I mean, there's got to be a—people got to see the direct benefits at some point in time about being free. One direct benefit is that there's not going to be a central government summarily pulling you out of society and killing you if need be. That's the biggest benefit.

But there also has to be tangible benefits on the street. I try to speak to the Iraqi people all the time. Sometimes the message gets

through the filters, sometimes it doesn't. I want them to hear a couple of things. I want the Iraqi people to hear I've got great confidence in their capacity to self-govern. I also want to hear—the Iraqi people to hear, it's about time you get a unity government going. In other words, Americans understand newcomers to the political arena, but pretty soon, it's time to shut her down and get governing.

I want the Iraqi people to hear that we care deeply about the individuals in Iraq, regardless of their religion. That's what we care about. And we want them to worship freely. I like the fact in Iraq that there's a burgeoning free press; there's a lot of press, which is a positive sign. It's a healthy indication. I also want the Iraqis to hear that while there's a political debate going on here in America, I believe in what we're doing, and we're not going to leave prematurely, that we have got a mission, along with the Iraqis, and that is to secure a country for its democracy and to help them defend themselves, deny Al Qaida a safe haven, and have an ally in the war on terror.

And so I thank you for that admonition for me to speak out to the Iraqi people. I try to do it as much as I possibly can.

Yes, ma'am. No, not—[*laughter*]. Ambassador, you want to ask a question next? Yes, okay, fine.

Immigration Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm glad to see you here speaking today. I have a question about the immigration issue that's going on right now. And I'm just curious—the Senate will probably pass a measure; the House has already passed a measure. And I'm curious, what kinds of components are you looking for in an immigration bill that you can support? And how do you reconcile a guest-worker program for undocumented residents who are here, versus those who are on line and in the system waiting 5 and 10 years to get here?

The President. No, that's a great question. Thanks. It's obviously topic du jour and—[*laughter*]. Pretty fancy, huh? Topic du jour? [*Laughter*] I don't want to ruin the image. [*Laughter*]

I believe there ought to be three components to good immigration law. First of all, I hope we get a bill out of the Senate. There's one out of the House. It goes to what's called conference. And here's my suggestions: One, that we're a nation of law, and we ought to enforce our borders. Both the House and the Senate passed good border enforcement measures. We're modernizing or upgrading our border. We recognize that it's important to have more Border Patrol, which we do. But the Border Patrol needs additional tools in order to do their job. We're talking about long borders. It's a subject I'm quite familiar with since I was the Governor of a State that had a long border with Mexico. And so the American people have got to know that we'll enforce law.

Secondly, we've got to enforce—and by the way, part of enforcing law means to make sure that when somebody is caught coming into our country illegally, they're not let back out in society. We had a real issue with detention beds, particularly for non-Mexican illegal people coming in. We'd catch people from Central America. And people worked hard; they spotted people being smuggled across. They were detained—the people being smuggled across. They said, "Check in with your immigration officer in 15 days," and nobody did. And so now we've added the number of detention beds and are working for expedited removal procedures with the countries in Central America. As far as the Mexican folks sneaking in the border, they're sent back very quickly, back into their country. Since 2001, believe it or not, we've stopped 6 million people trying to sneak into our country—an amazing statistic. It's a lot.

Secondly, there's got to be better interior enforcement. But it's very difficult to enforce—get an employer to enforce the law when the employer is uncertain as to whether or not the documentation being presented for the needed worker is legal.

It turns out—what's very interesting is that when you deny—when you make something illegal and there's a demand for it, people find ways around it. That's why you've got a whole smuggling industry called *coyotes*. That's why you've got unbelievable document forging going on. That's why there's tunnels. I mean, there's imaginative ways by

people—by unscrupulous people to take advantage of people who are coming here to do an honest day's work.

Thirdly, my judgment is, you cannot enforce the border without having a temporary-guest-worker program. The two go hand in hand. There are people doing jobs Americans will not do. Many people who have come into our country are helping our economy grow. That's just a fact of life. And I believe that we ought to say to somebody doing a job an American won't do, here is a tamper-proof identity card that will enable you to be here for a period of time. And if that person wants to become a citizen of the United States, because we're a nation of law, they get at the end of the line, not the beginning of the line.

I also believe—and the Senate is working through different measures to say to the person getting into the line, there's a consequence for being here illegally. Now, if Congress believes that the line is too long or that we should facilitate people's capacity to then get a green card and become a citizen, increase the number of green cards. But people who have been here legally should not be penalized by someone who's been here illegally.

And so I'd like to tell the American people, we are a nation of law but that doesn't preclude us from being a welcoming nation. I think a system which forces people underground and into the shadows of our society, which causes people to have to sneak across our border and risk their life, is a system that needs to be changed.

I also know—and I used to tell this to people down there in Texas—family values don't stop at the Rio Grande River. If you're a mother or a father who's worried about putting food on the table and you're living in an impoverished area and you know there's a job that Americans won't do here, you'll come to do it for the sake of your family. And therefore, I think it makes sense to have a temporary-worker program that says, you're not an automatic citizen, to help, one, enforce the border, and two, uphold the decency of America. If our Border Patrol agents don't have to focus on people trying to sneak across to get a job, they will be able to be more focused on people smuggling drugs, smuggling guns, smuggling terrorists.

And so I look forward to the debate. I'm going to say again what I've said before on this debate. It's very important for all of us in this debate to conduct ourselves with the following principles in mind: One, we're a nation of immigrants; two, our soul is refreshed by newcomers to our society; three, we love the idea of people starting with nothing and ending up with something in America; four, we value family values, no matter where they may be; and five, we've got to be careful about the language we use when it comes to debating this important subject. People should not pit neighbor against neighbor, group of people against group of people in our country. Ours is a nation that's able to assimilate people because we believe in human rights and human dignity of all.

Final question.

Palestinian Government/Israel

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Okay, two questions. Please, ma'am. You're last. You're the last guy. You're the closer. [*Laughter*] It's a baseball term. Yes, you're the closer. You've been persistent. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and I think I sprained my arm trying to get your attention. But the main reason for that is because I think I speak for the unheard people. I'm a Palestinian, and I come from a refugee camp, and I'm currently working at the World Bank.

The President. Welcome.

Q. Thank you. What can I say to my cousins, my friends, people in the streets who are asking, why is the United States punishing us and cutting funds for people who choose fair and free elections? I think the National Endowment for Democracy has characterized it as the textbook, fair and free elections. Then why are we punishing the people of—I don't mean the government—the people of Palestine—the refugees, the poor, the malnourished mothers and children?

The President. No, great question. Thank you for asking it. Just to step back, I believe I'm the first President to have articulated the—my desires for there to be a Palestinian state living at peace with Israel. And I still think it's a real possibility for that to happen. I believe democracies don't war with each

other, and I believe a Palestinian democracy is in the interests of the Palestinian people, the Israelis, and the rest of the world.

Secondly, I think that aid should go to suffering Palestinians, but nor should it go to a government, however, which has expressed its desire to destroy its neighbor. If the goal of the United States is two states living side by side in peace, and one government elected says, "We want to destroy one of the parties," it makes no sense for us to support that government. We support the election process. We support democracy, but that doesn't mean we have to support governments that get elected as a result of democracy.

Now, Palestinians must make a choice as to whether or not it makes sense for them to have a government that says they want to destroy their neighbor. I don't think it does. As a matter of fact, I think it's important for governments to say, we want to work out our differences in a peaceful way. But I am concerned about the suffering Palestinian people. I think the U.S. Government has got aid that goes directly to people. And I know that we'll continue to call upon governments in the region to support the Palestinian people.

I weep about the suffering of the Palestinians. I particularly weep about the fact that the leadership has let them down for year after year after year. And now is the time for strong leaders to stand up and say, we want the people to decide. And I was pleased that there was an election in the Palestinian territories, and I agree with you that the elections were good elections. And—but now the government has to make a choice, and we will continue to watch very carefully about the choice they make.

Final question. Then I'm going down to be with the President of Mexico and the Prime Minister with Canada—Cancun. [*Laughter*] No Speedo suit here. [*Laughter*] Thankfully. [*Laughter*]

Progress in Iraq

Q. You ready?

The President. Yes. Sorry to interrupt you. Just testing your concentration. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, I am on the board of trustees of Freedom House.

The President. Thank you for having me.

Q. And my—you mentioned about Iraq.

The President. Iraq?

Q. About Iraq, the effect of leaving prematurely and the issue it would cause—is there an opportunity right now to perhaps supplement the American forces and perhaps finally to replace them with a strong, large, broad-based troops, security forces of Muslim countries from North Africa, from Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, which could go in there and then perhaps help in the situation? Because Iraq—a disaster in Iraq is a disaster for the whole region.

The President. That's a really good question. I think the preferred strategy is to spend time and efforts on getting the Iraqis stood up so they can defend themselves. At some point in time, the Iraqi citizens are going to have to make the conscious decision that democracy is worth defending. And I appreciate the efforts of some in the Arab world to help train Iraqi police, like the Jordanian academy. There is support for training amongst different Arab nations, as there is from NATO. And the fundamental question is, what will expedite the situation so that the Iraqis are fully prepared to do their job?

So the question—I would reverse your question and say, are we prepared to have others help the Iraqis defend themselves? And the answer is, absolutely. But the Iraqis must be encouraged to continue to take the lead. And that's a measurable part of our progress on the ground, more territories controlled by Iraqis. The march I just described to you was policed by, or guarded by Iraqi units who were in the lead. That Tall 'Afar example I used the other day talked about the Iraqi divisions in the lead that helped secure this city.

The ultimate solution for Iraq is for there to be a unity government which brings people confidence, one that unites different factions, thereby marginalizing the rejectionists, but also making sure the Iraqi Army is prepared to do what it needs to do, as well as a police force.

When we first got in there, we said, "Well, let's prepare an Iraqi Army for an outside threat." It turns out it wasn't necessary. The biggest threat was inside the country. And so we adjusted our strategy and started training Iraqis so that they are prepared to be

able to defend sectors of their country. And now the big—Senator Warner came and briefed us at the White House the other day. He said—and this is what the General is telling me as well—we've made good progress in training the Iraqi Army. The problem is the Iraqi police force. And there is a national police force, which is more efficient than local police forces. It still needs to make sure there are coalition troops embedded in the police force to make sure that these police understand that there's—you don't seek reprisal as a police force. You've got to earn the confidence of all people, no matter what their religion is. And we're still working with local police forces.

So in due respect, I think the question is, how do we expedite more Iraqis to earn the confidence of the Iraqi people. We're dealing with a shattered confidence. There's a sense that, well, they may leave us, or our guys aren't prepared to provide security. And the quicker we can get the Iraqis stood up and trained, the faster the Iraqi people will have confidence, not only in their own security situation but in their government.

And so thanks for the suggestion. Listen, I've enjoyed it; I hope you have. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:53 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill. In his remarks, he referred to Peter Ackerman, chairman of the board, Freedom House; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; former President Charles Taylor of Liberia, who was arrested on March 29 in Nigeria on United Nations war crimes charges; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Hu Jintao of China; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; President Vicente Fox of Mexico; and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. Participants referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Gamal Mubarak, son of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Proclamation 7992—Cancer Control Month, 2006

March 29, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During National Cancer Control Month, we continue the fight against cancer and work to reduce the risk of this deadly disease among our citizens.

Cancer survival rates are increasing, with approximately 10 million survivors in the United States. New understanding of diseases, better diagnostic tools, and innovative treatments help provide hope and healing to those who have been diagnosed with cancer. Across our country, cancer patients are living longer and fuller lives.

Despite these advances, cancer is still the second leading cause of death in our country, and some cancers, such as breast, prostate, lung, leukemia, and melanoma, continue to be too prevalent. By increasing public awareness and encouraging people to take appropriate steps to protect themselves, we can help prevent certain types of cancer. Individuals can reduce the risk of developing the disease by avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol and by making healthy lifestyle choices. These include eating well, exercising regularly, and avoiding significant weight gain. I also encourage all Americans to get regular preventive screenings and speak with a health care provider about additional ways to reduce the risk of developing cancer.

My Administration is dedicated to furthering our progress in the fight against cancer. We lead the world in cutting-edge medical research, and I have requested $5.9 billion in my fiscal year 2007 Budget for cancer-related activities within the Department of Health and Human Services. America will continue to aggressively fight cancer, encourage innovative research, and spread hope to those affected.

As we observe Cancer Control Month, I commend the strength and courage of cancer survivors, whose perseverance is an inspiration to all Americans. Our Nation is grateful for the generosity and skill of our medical professionals. These healers, along with the

loving family members and friends of cancer patients, reflect the compassionate spirit of our people and help build a healthier future for our citizens. Cancer can be prevented, treated, and defeated, and we will continue to strive to reach the day when the battle to beat cancer has been won.

In 1938, the Congress of the United States passed a joint resolution (52 Stat. 148; 36 U.S.C. 103) as amended, requesting the President to issue an annual proclamation declaring April as "Cancer Control Month."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim April 2006 as Cancer Control Month. I encourage citizens, government agencies, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other interested groups to join in activities that will increase awareness of how to prevent and control cancer.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of March, 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., March 31, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 3.

Proclamation 7993—National Child Abuse Prevention Month, 2006

March 29, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our society has a responsibility to protect our children and help them thrive. During National Child Abuse Prevention Month, we underscore our strong commitment to preventing child abuse and neglect and to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to grow up in safe and nurturing environments.

Parents hold the primary responsibility for a child's health and well-being and provide a foundation of love and support for their children. Parents are not alone as they work to keep their children safe. Helping children requires a commitment from other family members, as well as individuals and organizations in every community. Educators, concerned citizens, faith-based and community organizations, and public officials all have vital roles in protecting our children and supporting families. When children are surrounded by positive relationships and experiences, they are more likely to grow into confident and caring adults.

My Administration remains dedicated to protecting our youth from child abuse and neglect. The Federal Interagency Workgroup on Child Abuse and Neglect, led by the Department of Health and Human Services, provides a forum for Federal agencies to share information and make policy and program recommendations regarding the prevention, intervention, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Through the National Child Abuse Prevention Initiative, my Administration is partnering with organizations across our country to promote the well-being of children and families and to assist efforts to eradicate abuse.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families hosts the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information website at www.nccanch.acf.hhs.gov, which offers more information on how to prevent, recognize, and report signs of child abuse. By working together to provide America's young people the love, guidance, and protection they need, we can help protect our youth from abuse and give them the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

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 April 2006 as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. I encourage all citizens to protect our children and help build strong communities where individuals, families, and children are valued and supported.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of March, 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., March 31, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 3.

Proclamation 7994—National Donate Life Month, 2006

March 29, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

National Donate Life Month is an opportunity to celebrate the tremendous generosity of those who have saved lives by becoming organ, tissue, marrow, and blood donors and to encourage more Americans to follow their fine example.

Last year, more than 28,000 organ transplants took place in the United States—more than at any other time in history. Despite this progress, more than 90,000 of our fellow citizens remain on a waiting list for a donation, and many lives are lost each year while waiting for organ transplants. Through programs like the Workplace Partnership for Life, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services, my Administration remains committed to supporting organ, marrow, tissue, and blood donations. As public and private organizations work together, we will educate more Americans about the importance of giving life.

During National Donate Life Month, I urge more Americans to make the decision to donate the gift of life. Individuals can learn more about becoming an organ and tissue donor at www.organdonor.gov. By saying yes to organ and tissue donation on their driver's licenses, adding their name to donor registries, or talking about their decision with family and friends, citizens help save lives and contribute to a more compassionate and hopeful society.

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 April 2006 as National Donate Life Month. I call upon health care professionals, volunteers, educators, government agencies, faith-based and community groups, and private organizations to help raise awareness about the urgent need for organ and tissue donors throughout our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of March, 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., March 31, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 3.

Exchange With Reporters in Cancun, Mexico

March 30, 2006

Jill Carroll

Q. Mr. President, do you have a reaction to Jill Carroll's release?

The President. Thank God.

Q. What is your reaction?

The President. I'm really grateful she was released and thank those who worked hard for her release, and we're glad she's alive.

It's good to see you all. And I'd like to make sure you work more than you play.

Trade With Canada

Q. Are you optimistic you can resolve the softwood dispute today?

The President. I'm always optimistic.

NOTE: The exchange began at 8:07 a.m. at the LeBlanc Spa and Resort. In his remarks, the President referred to American journalist Jill Carroll, who was taken hostage in Baghdad, Iraq, on January 7 and released on March 30. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Chichen-Itza Archaeological Ruins With President Vicente Fox of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Chichen-Itza, Mexico

March 30, 2006

[*At this point, President Fox spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much for your hospitality. This is a good start to a very important series of discussions. It is an honor to be here with the Prime Minister of Canada as well. We've got vital relations that will matter to the future of our people. And I look forward to the discussions.

And I want to thank you for letting us begin our very important meetings at this very significant historical site. And I congratulate our guide, and I want to thank those who have worked hard to make sure this important part of history is accessible and is available for people to understand the past, so we can better understand the future.

So Mr. President, thank you for having us.

[*Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English.*]

Prime Minister Harper. And I can repeat the same thing quickly, if you don't mind. Forgive us; that's how we speak Spanish in the north. [*Laughter*] Wonderful to be here. Thank you for the welcome, President Fox. I think we stand here in a historic site, a symbol here of our determination to build a new future for all inhabitants of North America. And I am honored to be with President Bush and President Fox and look forward to our discussions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Vicente Fox of Mexico in Cancun, Mexico

March 30, 2006

President Fox. We are ready. Good afternoon. I would like to welcome President Bush to Quintana Roo, to Cancun, and to Mexico. It is a great honor to have him here, particularly in this place in Cancun, which is all set and receiving many visitors. But the best visitors are President Bush and Prime Minister Harper, with our working agenda that will be fruitful and positive for the three countries in Latin America.

Some words from Mr. Bush.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much. First of all, thanks for inviting us to Cancun. It's such a beautiful part of the world. The hospitality is magnificent. I know you were hit hard by hurricanes, which reminds me that I need to thank you and the Mexican people for your strong support and help after Hurricane Katrina.

I will never forget being on the—in the gulf coast area of my country, helping people—lift people's spirits. And we went to a school that had been destroyed by Katrina, a little elementary school. And there was the Navy construction team working side by side with members of the Mexican Navy. It was a great sign of cooperation, and it reflects the spirit of friendship that defines the relationship between our two countries and defines our personal relationship.

When you were speaking, I thought about the first time I went to visit you. I was newly-elected and flew down to your fantastic ranch. And that started a very important relationship. And I think it's important for the people of our countries to know that while we haven't agreed on every single issue, that nevertheless, we work in the spirit of friendship and cooperation.

Today we had a very important discussion. We discussed border security. The President understands, and I understand, we have an obligation to secure our borders. And I want to thank your Government for sending out such a strong statement about the need for—that the shared responsibility we have. In other words, border security is not just one country's prerogative; it's the prerogative and

duty of both countries. And we spent time talking about how to work together to continue to strengthen that cooperation necessary to do our duty.

I also appreciate the President's work to enforce Mexico's southern border. It's a difficult job, but nevertheless, the President shared with me the strategies he's employing to do that job as well.

Obviously, the migration issue came up. I told the President there is a legislative process that's going forward, and that it may look cumbersome to some, but that's how our democracy works. I told the President that I am committed to having a comprehensive immigration bill on my desk. And by "comprehensive" I mean not only border security—a bill that has border security in it, a bill that has interior enforcement in it, but a bill that has a worker permit program in it. And that's an important part of having a border that works.

We don't want people sneaking into our country that are going to do jobs Americans won't do; we want them coming in, in an orderly way—which will take pressure off of both our borders. And I explained to the President my vision of the citizenship issue. I don't believe somebody should be allowed to come into our country and get ahead of the line, the citizenship line.

And so I told President Fox that I think a program that will work is somebody working on a temporary basis with a tamper-proof ID card. And if they want to become a citizen, they can get in line, but not the head of the line. And I reminded the President, I called for an increase of green cards the other day in Washington, DC, as one way to help manage this issue.

But at any rate, we're in the middle of a legislative process. I'm optimistic we can get a bill done, and I look forward to continuing to work with members of both parties to get a bill done.

We also talked about President Fox's vision of working together in our hemisphere, particularly in Central America. And he's proposed a very innovative set of ideas to help stabilize and help encourage growth in Central America, starting with an energy initiative. And of course we appreciate your leadership on that issue, and I look forward to sending some of our experts down to listen to the ideas being talked about.

One idea, of course, we want to inject in the conversation is the idea of developing alternatives to gasoline that comes from crude oil, that we'd like to see more use of ethanol, and how we can work together to increase the crops necessary to become the feedstock for an ethanol production.

But at any rate, the point I'm making is, is that we've got a lot to do in our relationship. President Fox is—if people take an objective look at his record, one of the things that I'm most proud of, and I think our country must be most appreciative of, is the stability of the Mexican economy. It's important to have a trade partner that has got a stable economy. And, Mr. President, you've done a fine job of providing stability and increasing the net worth of your citizens, and that's important for the American economy as well. The more net worth there is in Mexico, the more likely it is a Mexican may be wanting to buy a U.S. product—and vice versa, by the way. And so our trade has made a difference in the lives of our citizens, and your leadership has made a difference in the state of your economy.

So it's good to be with you again, sir. Thank you for your warm hospitality.

President Fox. Thank you, President Bush. Thank you. I would like to mention with great satisfaction how productive the relation with the United States has been on bilateral basis, how the NAFTA, the Free Trade Agreement of North America has been, in order to promote development here in Mexico. And all this is part of a commitment and obligation of generating opportunities, making sure that we can build up, create jobs, create greater income, revenues for the families in Mexico, the *maquilla*, the—[*inaudible*]—industry installed in the border of the country.

There is a deficit of 100,000 people. They want to give jobs to 100,000 people due to the great growth that's going on. And not only in this field but in many other fields, in many other areas, we have been working. We might say that something that appeared in the mass media in Mexico—opposition of a state, clearly, very clearly in Mexico of the political parties—the Congress; the House of

Representatives; the upper chamber, the Senators; the Executive power, the President of the Republic; the Governors of the States; everybody, everybody has a very clear idea in the topic of our relationship with the United States and particularly, migration. It is a shared—shared—responsibility, and we understand very clearly here in Mexico all the main characters of the political scenario that we have to work so as to assume our responsibility.

Furthermore, we are working with Central American countries with the same purpose. Let us assume shared responsibilities. It is very clear for us that tomorrow, the Congress of the United States might approve any sort of bill, any sort of matter, migration-wise. It is a sovereign decision, of course, in the United States, but Mexico assumes its responsibilities to work with passion, with commitment, diligently, with our economy and developing opportunities for our people.

Our commitment with the citizenship is very broad. For example, with the United States, we work closely with Homeland Security, with the Ministry of the Interior here in Mexico, with Secretary Abascal. Secretary Abascal has a total support of the President of the Republic, and the possibility of adding the support of all the ministries and all the different Federal agencies that have to do with safety and security, so that we can give steps forward in this topic in the border.

We want to have a safe border for the benefit of our citizens and for the benefit of our relationship with the United States. Likewise, we have intensified our actions with the OASISS project. We are going after the criminals that are trafficking with people, that are, let's say, promoting illegally the movement of citizens to the United States—the alien smugglers. We have stopped more than 120 of these criminals, alien smugglers.

Likewise, in the southern border, as President Bush said, we are very active, very active on what has to do with patrol, constructions of different stations so as to stop migrants, illegal migrants, people that are coming illegally to the Mexican territory, and sending them back to their own countries, with due respect to human rights. But we're doing an efficient work in that sense.

Now, with the same type of orientation, the idea that we share with President Bush, to consider an important element to thrust development in the Central American economies so that they can grow, they can generate jobs, that through this project and through this program they can generate actual opportunities in these countries, and this is a program of energy.

With this program, we want to achieve the construction of refineries for oil, different docks to build natural gas, sources of electric energy on the other hand, and conversion of natural gas—liquid, fluid gas to natural gas. It is a program that we shall approve next May, the Central American countries and Mexico. And we are cordially inviting the United States to attend, to know, to observe, to see the project, so as to know, how can we interact with the strength and the capacity of North America so as to integrate a strong development and solid process in the Central American countries.

We have spoken—we have mentioned about the whole American canal. We have to reactivate the working commission in this area so that we can discuss ideas and give solutions for both parts, as we have always done, worked together, have a dialog, find solutions. And this is what we have proposed in reference to the total or whole American channel.

Thus I want to thank President Bush for his attendance, for his presence, and for his work, as well as all his team.

Tomorrow in the trilateral meeting, we will be covering other topics—the topic of safety and security and then some other developing topics amongst the three countries, the three partners that belong to this bloc of both economy, trade, and association for our prosperity and security of North America.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:12 p.m. at the Fiesta Americana Condesa Cancun Hotel. President Fox spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. President Fox referred to Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and Secretary of Government Jose Carlos Maria Abascal Carranza of Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Cancun

March 30, 2006

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you. This is a—we've had a day full of talks. I had a really good meeting with the Prime Minister on the choppers, flying to the Mayan ruins. We've also had a very good meeting here. We talked about a lot of subjects.

I view the relationship with Canada as a vital relationship for the United States. The relationship, of course, is defined Government-to-Government. It's also defined people-to-people, and there's a lot of people in my country who respect Canada and have great relations with Canadians, and we intend to keep it that way.

The Prime Minister, of course, was—made an emphatic case for softwood lumber. And I appreciate his steely resolve to get something done. And I assured him that our intention is to negotiate in good faith, in a timely fashion, to resolve this issue. And I appreciate your—appreciate you pushing.

We also talked about the mutual values we share: respect for human life and human dignity. And along those lines, I want to thank you very much for two things: One, the quick response that your Government and your country gave to those who suffered by Katrina. It indicates the Canadian people's desire to help humans when they suffer. I appreciate very much your trip to Afghanistan and you and your Government's support of their fledgling democracy, support of people that have been under the brutal thumb of tyrants—so brutal they wouldn't let young girls go to school—and it's representing the great Canadian tradition of really helping restore human dignity to people's lives.

The Prime Minister and I talked about a variety of subjects. We've got a lot of common interests. We've got a lot of trade between our countries—nearly half a billion dollars in—$500 billion in the year 2005. And that trade means jobs on both sides of the border. And it's our intention to make sure that we continue to trade as freely as possible so that our people can benefit. All in all, Mr. Prime Minister, I found today to be a valuable day, and I want to thank you very much for your candor.

Prime Minister Harper. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and no translation was provided.*]

I'll try to repeat all of that. [*Laughter*] First of all, just to begin by saying that we had a long meeting both this morning and this afternoon, the President and I, discussing particularly global security issues of national and shared security interests.

And as you know, we're cooperating on these things in places like Afghanistan, Sudan, Haiti. Canada and the United States from time to time will disagree on particular courses of action that should be taken, and we may have different perspectives and even different interests, but there should be no doubt that Canada and the United States share very important common values—values like freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We believe that these values are important not only for Canada and the United States, but they are the right of every people on the face of the Earth. We may disagree on how we get there, but that's the objective that we share.

We're going to meet later on in the spring to further discuss cooperation on some of these matters. We're also going to be discussing some initiatives we've taken to task some of our officials to discuss some energy and environmental concerns. We're anxious—we're in a continental security market, and we're anxious to see our officials discuss not just energy security but how we can harness energy, new energy technology, to make real progress on greenhouse gas emissions and also on pollution. So we'll have some discussions in the next few weeks along those lines.

We're going to move quickly to renew—to sign an agreement to renew NORAD, to take that to Parliament in the not-too-distant future.

Of course, we discussed softwood lumber. The President has expressed his desire to see a resolution. I certainly accept at face value the President's commitment to that. I just reminded the President that Canada's position on this is very clear, and if we don't see

a resolution, Canada is certainly going to continue to pursue all its legal options as well as enhanced support for our industry through this battle.

We talked about issues like passports, Devil's Lake, BSE, all areas where there remain some difficulties and some—[*inaudible*]—but I think we agreed to work together to seek some collaboration on all these fronts. In particular—and I didn't mention this in French—we've asked—we're going to be asking Secretary Chertoff and Minister Day to meet as soon as possible, at the highest levels, to do what we can to see how we can accommodate congressional legislation on passport travel issues. These present for us some pretty significant challenges, and we are concerned about the disruptions to trade and other travel that this may bring about.

And let me just end by saying as I think you heard me say a few days ago, I expressed through Ambassador Wilkins, and I've had a chance to do it—[*inaudible*]—how much the Government of Canada appreciates the actions taken by our allies and our friends both in the United Kingdom and in the United States in the liberation of the hostages that were held in Iraq. You know, Iraq, in particular, has been a source of some disagreement—dare I say some tension—between our two peoples, but I think this incident reminds us that when the chips are down, we all pull together and support each other. I hope that's a lesson we keep in mind for the future.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. at the Fiesta Americana Condesa Cancun Hotel. Prime Minister Harper referred to Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day of Canada. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Vicente Fox of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Cancun

March 31, 2006

President Fox. Good morning. Welcome for your interest and your presence and attendance. We have come to an end in this productive meeting, as you well know, with bilateral meetings yesterday and today a trilateral meeting, a very productive one, followed by an enlarged meeting, trilateralwise, with the attendance of the entrepreneurial community, business, and investment of our three countries. Consequently, we will give you full information.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, to make some comments.

Prime Minister Harper. Thank you. Thank you, President Fox, and ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to thank President Fox first of all. It was a pleasure to meet President Fox and President Bush to discuss issues of importance to our countries and our common will to work together.

In North America, we have an economy that is integrated; it is not necessary to differentiate our products. And we have discussed the progress accomplished in the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, and we are committed to considering the private sector. First of all, we believe that it is an engine of competitiveness, made up of members of the private sector, that will allow us to make our economies even more competitive.

Our ministers will be working on this. They will be identifying our priorities, and they will make sure that they are followed up. We will be cooperating on issues of importance—on border security, management of urgent situations, as well as energy security. We will prepare a coordinated and exhaustive way to approach the issues of the bird flu, and we will be guided by common principles. Over the course of the next few months, we will be doing everything possible to ensure the security along our borders and to be able to move our merchandise back and forth. We will be working in the area of energy, the area of research and innovation, to be able to deal with clean technologies.

We are happy with the discussions of our trade ministers on cooperation and of the negotiation of our countries, and we encourage them to follow up with this work.

This meeting has been extremely productive. And Presidents Bush and Fox have accepted my invitation for the next summit

meeting, which will take place in Canada in 2007.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Harper continued in English.*]

——grateful for our host, President Fox, and to the workers here at the hotel and the Mexican people for their warm hospitality.

Over the past 2 days, I've had the pleasure of meeting with President Fox and President Bush to discuss issues that jointly affect our three nations. I've been encouraged by the common will of our three nations. We are living today in an integrated economy. We cannot afford the politics of isolation.

During my meetings with Presidents Bush and Fox, we reviewed the progress of our Security and Prosperity Partnership, which provides a framework to advance the common interests in areas of security, prosperity, and quality of life.

We committed to further engage the private sector. We've agreed to set up a North American Competitiveness Council, made up of business leaders from all three countries, to advise us on ways to improve the competitiveness of our economies. They will meet with our ministers, identify priorities, and make sure we follow up and implement them.

We agreed to expand our existing cooperation on key issues such as border security, emergency management, and energy security. As an immediate priority, we'll develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to preparing for a possible avian or pandemic influenza outbreak in North America. Our action will be guided by shared principles. We'll take concrete steps in the coming 24 months to improve the security at our borders and to ensure the smooth and efficient flow of goods and people, particularly—particular discussions with President Bush on the Windsor-Detroit Corridor.

We'll collaborate on energy, especially with respect to innovation and science and technology, with the focus on clean technologies. We also welcome the discussions—the recent discussions by our trade ministers on NAFTA collaboration on trade negotiations with third countries. And we urge that this work be given priority.

These talks were productive. And I'm, of course, very pleased that President Bush and President Fox have accepted my invitation to have the next leaders' meeting in Canada in 2007.

Thank you.

President Fox. President Bush.

President Bush. Thank you for your hospitality. It's a really good choice to pick Cancun—as my press corps will tell you. They're looking forward to staying by the pool after I leave. [*Laughter*] It's a beautiful—beautiful part of the country.

I want to thank you for your friendship as well. It's been a joy discussing very important issues with you over the course of my Presidency. And this is probably one of the most productive meetings we've had. It's been a pleasure to meet with Prime Minister Harper in his official capacity as the Prime Minister of Canada. I find him to be a very open, straightforward fellow. If he's got a problem, he's willing to express it in a way that's clear for all to understand. And that's the way I like to deal with people.

We've got big goals for this very important relationship. One goal is prosperity. You can't achieve a standard of living increase for your people unless you have a prosperous neighborhood, and it's this prosperity that has been much of a focus on NAFTA. And one of my vows, and I know the other leaders share this goal, is to make sure that people are able to connect the NAFTA relationship with improvement of their own quality of life.

I know there's deep concern about social justice throughout the neighborhood, and social justice can be achieved more likely if people are able to realize their dreams and if there's a prosperous society. And prosperity has been increased as a result of the trade between our nations. And we want to make sure that trade continues in a way that's fair and free but also in a way that enables our countries to be able to compete with the great challenges we face.

And we face prosperity challenges from abroad like never before—the challenge of a growing Chinese economy or the challenge of an Indian economy. And my attitude is, we shouldn't fear these challenges; we ought to welcome them and position ourselves so that we can compete. And I think the leaders

share that sense of unity when it comes to being a competitive part of the world in the future.

We talked about security. Look, we got long borders, and we got to make sure we work hard to secure the borders. We also have got to make sure we got smart borders. And so the whole vision of our borders has got to be to enhance trade and tourism but to prevent smugglers and terrorists and dope runners from polluting our countries. And I'm confident, with the use of technology and by close collaboration, we'll be able to achieve those objectives.

I want to thank the CEOs and the business leaders from the three countries who are here. I thought we had a very constructive discussion about ways to make sure that there is harmonization between our industries so that the people benefit. And they brought some really good ideas.

We talked about, of course, bird flu, avian flu, and the need to be prepared in case there is an outbreak. We spend a lot of time in my own country preparing for an avian flu outbreak, strategizing as how to coordinate efforts between the Federal, State, and local governments; working to wisely spend money to come up with, hopefully, a vaccine that would then be available for sharing around the world. And I do want to thank Canada for having taken the lead early in this issue and preparing the world for what is possible so that there's good information sharing if the bird flu were to break out in Southeast Asia, for example. But my point is, it's very important for us to share information and data and strategies amongst our three countries so that if this were to happen, there is a focused, coordinated, intelligent response.

We talked about energy. My view of the energy initiative is that we've got to be wise about the resources we have and be smart about the investment for research and development so we can change our energy habits. The truth of the matter is, we'll all be better off if we use alternative sources of energy like ethanol or explore how to use hybrid batteries in a better way. I mean, there's some really interesting things coming down the pike, and I look forward to not only leading my own nation to spend money to be on the leading edge of technological change when it comes to energy but also sharing those technologies and ideas with our counterparts. Because we want to make sure that we've got national security concerns addressed when it comes to energy; we also want to be good stewards of the environment—and we can do both by the use of proper technologies.

It's been a good meeting. I want to thank you for your leadership. I like coming to meetings where people put things on the table and we try to come up with solutions. And this has been such a meeting, Mr. President. Good job. *Es todo*.

President Fox. Thank you. Thank you so much. Undoubtedly, these two days have brought about spaces for meeting of both friends and partners, and undoubtedly, we have made a very good use of time.

The visit to Chichen-Itza was excellent, as well as yesterday evening's dinner, in a relaxed atmosphere but, likewise, creating this association and making a very productive association. Equally important were the different working meetings.

We took advantage of time, we were not working isolated. We touched upon fundamental items in that meeting. First of all, we carried out an evaluation meeting. Then we got information about the development of programs. And then we gave the necessary instructions for the works that should be carried out in the next period of work.

This is a most important thing and this association has become a dynamic and professional process, a constructive process, a short-term action process, and great vision and perspective in a long term. Consequently, we have concluded that institutionalizing all these mechanisms is of utmost importance so that they will have continuity, so that there will be a followup—a necessary followup, so that they will be fruitful both at a short, middle, and long term.

So we have established the next meeting. The Prime Minister of Canada has suggested and has invited us to Canada. Next June, we shall have, let's say, an information, evaluation, and results study of the work of this association, this Security and Prosperity Partnership. And we have carried out a series

of actions that should be integrated in this report.

First of all, I would like to make clear what has been the results of 12 years of joint work in the Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA. The three nations are fully satisfied of what we have been able to achieve. We have seen the fruits of work through this tool of cooperation, trade, and investment. Nonetheless, we're not fully satisfied. We have to give steps forward. We have many an opportunity and many a challenge.

I want to mention two figures in reference to the results of NAFTA. Mexico has a commercial balance trade of $535 billion, the seventh in size throughout the world. And these would be a direct product of both trade and investment that has been carried out among the three partner countries. And then we should point out that every single State, border States with the United States had per capita income to December as of last year that go beyond to $10,000. The per capita average income has to do with $7,500—the highest in Latin America. Nonetheless, the borderline States are above $10,000 per capita income, and some of them have a per capita rate to $10,000.

We're not talking about small numbers, small figures; we're talking about a concrete result of the efforts and work through trade. It is achieved through investment, and likewise, it is achieved through joint work, everybody's work. Behind all this, there's nothing else but work, work, and work.

Now I would like to mention a couple of items in the goals. First, strengthen and maintain, growing, the Free Trade Agreement, first of all. Benefits are evident, but before the new reality of the 21st century, we have decided to give steps forward and strengthen the relationship. Now we have the alliance both for security and prosperity. One item is as important as the other—shared responsibility an important element—one as important as the other. And that is what the three countries think.

We started with the constitution of the North American Competitiveness Council, so as to consider public and private policies—face a challenge of our region. We want to institutionalize our mechanisms, have a clear project for the next month of June. It would imply mechanisms by means of which we will give the necessary importance and long-term action, something constant, and continuity should be achieved as well. That has been fruitful, and that can give very good results for our region. We are not renegotiating what has been successful or open the Free Trade Agreement. It's going beyond the agreement, both for prosperity and security.

Summarizing, we have to increase competitiveness of our economies, of our companies, our enterprises, our structures, and likewise, our technological and educational levels so as to face competition of other blocs in the world. We have to homogenize normotivity standards so as to have common standards to facilitate jobs and productivity. We have to make borders much more modern with technology so as to guarantee security but the good flow of commodities and products. We have invested a good amount of time to logistics, efficiency and efficacy in customs, topics that have to do with sharing—sharing these efficiencies.

We are totally aware that we require infrastructure studies in the borderline areas so as to analyze needs, to facilitate both trade and passage of people and goods. This is fundamental; security is fundamental for our future development. It is a problem and a challenge shared by the three countries. Migration can only be solved in that we agree upon under the framework of a legislation that will guarantee our legal order, safe and respectful migration, respecting the rights of people.

We have spoken about the collaboration of the three countries to support development and generation of opportunities for Central American countries and the Caribbean-area countries. We have seen an excellent level of relationships, and these are giving steps forward. They're better and better.

We have more points of coincidence amongst the three countries. I would like to thank the attendance, the presence, in this beautiful port of Cancun in this area of the Riviera Maya. You can see it is dynamic, a beautiful place, as it always has been. We receive millions of tourists every single year, people that come over, and we're proud to receive.

We want to thank President Bush; we want to thank Prime Minister Harper—my acknowledgment, my thanks, and my commitment. We shall be working together, no doubt about it, to give steps forward in the field of prosperity and security. May you have a happy return back home. Thank you.

For the question-and-answer period, we have two questions for the journalists of each country.

Border Security/Trade

Q. Good morning, Presidents and Prime Minister. President Fox, what are the concrete measures that Mexico is implementing to guarantee this indispensable security so as to have a legal, safe, and orderly migration?

For President Bush and President Harper, do you consider that there should be a continuity on the economic policy in Mexico before the change of President in our country? Last but not least, how can the partners of NAFTA—can be competitive before the Asian countries if there are so many differences that are leading us to talk first about security, then productivity? And what are the unilateral decisions on migration matters? Thank you.

President Fox. First, security. Many actions have been implemented. Many actions have to do with close cooperation with the security authorities with the United States. This effort, headed by the representative of Homeland Security, Mr. Chertoff, and Minister of the Interior here in Mexico, Mr. Abascal, and the cooperation based upon mutual trust, coresponsibility, and what has to do with security in the borders.

Likewise, we're doing our own work in cases of homicides and crimes among the different Mafias, the drug cartels. We shall continue working on this. There's a presence of Federal forces in the main points in the border, and then a great commitment to win the battle against organized crime and drug trafficking, particularly in the city of Nuevo Laredo. We have programs such as Programma OASISS, OASISS Program, so as to attack the people that are trafficking with people, with migrants. And fortunately, there are more than 120 in jail. And then we have a permanent program, 24 hours a day, so as to achieve this.

We are working in the inner part and in the southern part of the country to stop migration flows that come from Central America that are crossing illegally the southern border of Mexico. And with all due respect to the dignity of these people, respecting their human rights, they are stopped; they remain on temporary bases and stations. They offer them services with dignity, and then we send them back to their communities of origin; 240,000 people—people that were detained, and then they were sent back to Central America.

We are working jointly with the Central American Governments. We have spoken about the fact that the decision of Mexico is not only assuming our responsibilities migration-wise, but we have a firm commitment of generating jobs and employment. We're working jointly with Central America so as to achieve this, so each country will absorb our commitment and our total commitment generating opportunities within our own countries.

And so this program, like the energy initiative for Central America, is one that has the purpose of bringing development and growth to the Central American economies. Thus we're working on a broad spectrum on the issue of security in all of its facets.

President Bush. I don't see how you can be prosperous if you don't have security. I mean, it's—if people are concerned that, for example, the towns along the border aren't secure, it's going to be difficult to keep prosperity alive. And so I appreciate the President's commitment to security along our border, and we've got—we share the same commitment. It's very important to enforce laws. Robust economy depend upon the rule of law, and therefore, when countries enforce law, it kind of creates the conditions for continued economic growth.

When you have robust trade like we have, there are issues that come up. One way to look at it is, if we had no trade, there would be no issues. And the more issues there are and the more opportunities there are to discuss them, the likelier it is these economies will continue to grow. And so I don't—I don't worry about having to deal with problems. As a matter of fact, I view the problems that have arisen as a result of complex and active

trade as positive. And the fundamental question is, can we resolve these issues in a responsible way? And one of the reasons we meet is to put ourselves in a position to do so.

You mentioned something about the elections. I'm not going to talk about them. The only thing I am going to talk about is, I love to have a strong, vibrant democracy on our southern border. And I want to thank the President for his strong leadership and his recognition that democracy is a very important legacy of his administration, the previous administration, that we certainly hope there will be a peaceful transition of power, and I'm confident there will be one.

Prime Minister Harper. Obviously, I don't want to get into the issue of Mexican politics, but I can say the same thing that I said yesterday with regard to the leadership of President Fox. We've had both bilateral and multilateral relationships progressively growing and without precedent. I trust that the President is going to leave a stronger economy that is shared, a firm democracy, respect for human rights, and faithfulness to the most important principles for our shared progress, for the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, and all the good results that come from a free market economy.

All of these things lead to more progress, which we hope the next President will be able to build upon, which will benefit all of our countries.

[*Prime Minister Harper continued in English.*]

And I'll just repeat that I, obviously, do not intend to make any comments or get myself involved in Mexican politics, but I'll just repeat what I said yesterday, which is that President Fox has provided unprecedented leadership for both our bilateral and our trilateral relations, unprecedented progressive leadership.

I believe that the legacy of that leadership will be to leave behind not just the strong democracy that believes in liberty and human rights but also loyalty and adherence to the principles that are—on which the success of our integrated economy is based. And those are the principles of NAFTA, the principles of our security and economic partnership, and, of course, the advantages of free markets from which all of our nations benefit.

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, would you veto an immigration bill that did not include a guest-worker program? And how do you counter the angry argument from conservatives on Capitol Hill who are saying that your demand for one could hurt the Republican Party this fall?

President Bush. The migration issue has been a topic of discussion here, as you can imagine. I told the President exactly what I told our country, that, one, I expect the debate to bring dignity to America, in recognition that America is a land of immigrants and people ought to be treated with respect; and this debate ought to be a debate that does not pit neighbor against neighbor; that focuses on three elements. One is that we are a nation of laws and therefore must enforce our laws. And that includes enforcing the laws of people coming into our country illegally.

President Fox and I discussed this issue at length. I don't know if people recognize, but his Government, all aspects of the Mexican Government came together to send a clear message to the American people: The Mexican Government understands it has a responsibility as well, to protect the border. It is a nation of law. You heard the President talk about not only enforcing the northern border but also the southern border.

I also have said to the American people that we must enforce our laws in the interior of the country. Employers must be held to account if they're employing the people in our country illegally. However, part of the problem is—that complicates the lives of our many employers who are providing employment for people who are here illegally, is that there has been a lot of document forgery. There's an industry that has sprung up, and part of that industry is to provide forged documents so that our employers don't know whether a person is in our country legally or not.

I also believe strongly that an important part of securing the border and enforcing our laws is to recognize there are people in our

country doing work that Americans will not do. And those people ought to be given a chance to have a tamper-proof card that enables them to work in our country legally for a period of time. That's called a guest-worker program. One of the important issues about a guest-worker program is, what does that mean for someone's desire to become a citizen of our country? I believe if someone has been here in our country illegally, they should not get at the head of the line if they want to become a citizen. In other words, we have a line of people waiting, people who are in our country legally, waiting to become a citizen. And people who have been in our country illegally should not get ahead of the line who are there legally.

A nation of laws can also be a welcoming nation, and I believe a guest-worker program will help us rid the society and the border of these *coyotes* who smuggle people in the back of 18-wheelers. I believe it will help get rid of the document forgers. I believe it will help people on both sides of our border respect the laws of our border and enforce our borders. I believe it is important to bring people out of the shadows of American society so they don't have to fear the life they live. I believe it's important for our Nation to uphold human rights and human dignity. And the plan I've just proposed is one that will do all that and achieve important objectives.

And I'm looking forward to working with the Congress. We're making the—I told the President, we're making progress. You know, there's a legislative process. It's—some guy, some wag one time put it, it's like watching people make sausage. It's kind of a—you know, probably appears a little unpleasant from your perspective. [*Laughter*] But we're making progress. And I want a comprehensive bill. And I've made that very clear to the Members of the Congress, and I will continue making it clear to Members of Congress.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Bush. So, no answer—I said I want a comprehensive bill. You're presuming there won't be a comprehensive bill; I believe there will be a comprehensive bill.

Canada-U.S. Relations/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, can you explain to Canadians——

President Bush. Which one?

Q. That would be you, Mr. Bush.

President Bush. Me.

Q. Could you explain to Canadians why they'll need to have a passport or an unspecified secure document before they cross over to the United States? And what would the impact be on both of our countries, economically, if Canada doesn't follow through by the deadline of the end of next year?

President Bush. I appreciate you bringing up this issue. This is an issue, obviously, that affects not only border crossings with Canada; it also affects border crossings with Mexico. The Congress passed the law, and I intend to enforce the law. But the law said there ought to be a passport or a passport-like document that I believe, if properly implemented, will facilitate travel and facilitate trade, not hinder travel and trade. And the reason I believe that is, I think we can be wise about the use of technologies to—envision a card that can be swiped across a reading device that facilitates the movement of people.

It's a—look, I understand this issue has created consternation. Your Prime Minister made it very clear to me that he's very worried that such a implementation of the law on the books will make it less likely people will want to travel between our countries. I've heard from business leaders who are concerned about the bookings for conventions. And so what I've told the Prime Minister and told President Fox, as well, is that we have an obligation to work very closely with our counterparts to provide a set of standards as to what will meet the obligations of the law.

Again, I repeat to you, I believe this can be done in such a way that it makes future travel, future relations stronger, not weaker.

Prime Minister Harper. Maybe I could just add to that. Obviously, we are concerned. I expressed those concerns to President Bush, and I know they've been expressed by Canadian business leaders as well. The President is confronted with legislation passed by Congress and has a responsibility

to act upon that legislation, and we understand that. We understand the security concerns that are behind that.

At the same time, we're obviously concerned that if we don't move quickly and properly on this, that this could have effects on trade and movement of people, conventions, you name it, that is not helpful to our economy or to relationships. So we've agreed that Minister Day and Secretary Chertoff will meet as soon as possible to make this their top priority.

Democracy in Mexico

Q. Mr. President Fox, two questions. The first is, our Senate last night passed a law, and I'd like to know what you're going to do? Will you veto that law, or will you leave the legislative packet to the next President of our country? And second, you have spoken and you have warned us Mexicans against populism and the demagogues who exist in campaigns, in Presidential campaigns, and that we are going through a very difficult stage. I'd like to ask if you already forgot the populist language that you used in your own Presidential campaign when you even talked about—[*inaudible*]—and things like that? What about talking about democracy using a populist language in the past, but now you are against candidates doing that.

President Fox. In reference to the first item, the Ministry of the Interior will inform, on behalf of the Federal Government, our position. And I celebrate—I'm glad that both the Congress, the lower chamber and the upper chamber, have exercised their autonomy, their freedom. They have discussed and approved one more of the many laws that have been approved in our country in this last 5 years of democratic and respectful Government—the autonomies and the independence on the other two powers. As never before, we have lived this reality that has been positive, fruitful, in reference to the application of our autonomy and constitutional freedom that all the other powers have.

Now, in reference to the second item, I can only say—and I will say it very clearly—from the second of July and since the second of July of the year 2000, there has been absolute freedom, and that is of utmost importance for all of us. Every single person should express according to his own decision and convenience, by all means, respecting the rights of third parties. But above all this, we have the freedom of both Mexicans, ladies and gentlemen, that work in the mass media: press; newspapers; journals; TV. We have now a freedom that we never had in the past. Every single citizen in our country nowadays exercises this freedom openly. This is one of the great fruits and results of democracy won in the second of July of the year 2000.

Iran

Q. President Bush, Secretary of State Rice is finding common ground with the British today on the view that the next step against Iran could be sanctions. Do you agree that's the way to go if Iran fails to comply with the Security Council's 30-day deadline on its nuclear program?

President Bush. Thanks. First, I do want to offer my country's assistance to the people affected by the recent earthquakes in Iran. We obviously have our differences with the Iranian Government, but we do care about the suffering of Iranian people.

There is common agreement that the Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon, the capacity to make a nuclear weapon, or the knowledge as to how to make a nuclear weapon. And the reason there's common agreement is because the Iranian Government with such as weapon, as is now constituted, would pose a serious threat to world security.

Condoleezza Rice is in Europe today to discuss with the P–5, the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany, a strategy to go forward in a unified way that says to the Iranian Government, the world rejects your desires to have a nuclear weapon. Condi is strategizing with those who will be making the U.N. Security Council decisions as to that united front. In other words, we agree on a goal; now the question is, how do we work together to achieve that goal? And you're watching Secretary of State Rice work with our friends to remind the Iranians on a regular and consistent basis that if they want to be—participate in the international order of things, if they don't want to isolate themselves, they must listen very carefully to what we are saying with unified voice.

Murder Investigation in Cancun

Q. My question is to President Fox, and I wonder if we could prevail upon you, sir, to answer it in English. A few weeks ago, there was a very bloody murder here with the Ianiero family in Cancun. Two young Canadian mothers are very concerned, back in Canada, that Mexican authorities have mistakenly made them suspects amidst concerns, also in Canada, the Mexicans may have bungled this investigation. Can you tell us where this investigation is going, and can you assure those two young women, indeed, they are not suspects?

President Fox. Well, we are absolutely sorry, and we have our, well, feelings that a crime has been carried out here in a hotel in Cancun. The attorneyship office is working, both the Federal one and the local one—they're working on the investigation. When the data is ready and when they finally decide, we can claim which are the guilty people. As of now, that is the only information we have at hand. We're working closely. We are reporting to the Government and the authorities of Canada. Investigation is being carried out. So far we cannot make any further comments. Thank you.

Prime Minister Harper. ——say that we do appreciate the full cooperation of the Mexican Government, Mexican police at all levels. There has been consultation with our officials, and I've spoken to the RCMP, and they assure me that that has been the case, particularly since the commitments made by Secretary Derbez in Ottawa. So we are working together in this; we're fully apprised of the situation. I can just add one small thing, which is that we're told once again, and I think we've been saying this repeatedly for some time, there is no extradition pending—extradition demand pending, nor is there one anticipated in the near future. And that's probably about all I can say.

President Fox. *Muchas gracias*.

NOTE: The news conference began at 10:45 a.m. in the Fiesta Americana Condesa Cancun Hotel. President Fox spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Portions of Prime Minister Harper's remarks were in French, and an English translation was provided. Prime Minister Harper referred to Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day of Canada; and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Luis Ernesto Derbez Bautista of Mexico. President Fox referred to Secretary of Government Jose Carlos Maria Abascal Carranza of Mexico.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, and President Vicente Fox of Mexico—The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Progress

March 31, 2006

Canada, Mexico and the United States share a continued commitment to enhance the security, prosperity and quality of life of our citizens within North America. We recognize that the success of our countries is enhanced by working cooperatively. The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, which celebrates its first anniversary this month, provides a framework for us to advance collaboration in areas as diverse as security, transportation, the environment and public health.

This Partnership has increased our institutional contacts to respond to our vision of a stronger, more secure, and more prosperous region. In June 2005, our three governments released detailed work-plans identifying key initiatives that form an ambitious agenda of collaboration. Since June, we have worked to implement these initiatives. Many will take months or years to be completed, but we already note significant results. We ask our Ministers to build on this momentum.

We have discussed how we can ensure North America is the most economically dynamic region in the world and a secure home for our citizens. Today, we exchanged views with private sector leaders on how to enhance the competitiveness of North America.

Building on existing commitments, we agree that priority initiatives warrant special attention in the coming year:

Strengthening Competitiveness in North America. We are pleased to announce the creation of a North American Competitiveness Council (NACC). The Council will comprise members of the private sector from

each country and will provide us recommendations on North American competitiveness, including, among others, areas such as automotive and transportation, steel, manufacturing, and services. The Council will meet annually with security and prosperity Ministers and will engage with senior government officials on an ongoing basis.

We are convinced that regulatory cooperation advances the productivity and competitiveness of our nations and helps to protect our health, safety and environment. For instance, cooperation on food safety will help protect the public while at the same time facilitate the flow of goods. We affirm our commitment to strengthen regulatory cooperation in this and other key sectors and to have our central regulatory agencies complete a trilateral regulatory cooperation framework by 2007.

North American Emergency Management. A disaster—whether natural or manmade—in one of our countries can have consequences across national borders. Our vision for a North American response, relief and recovery strategy would ensure that critical equipment, supplies and personnel can be deployed expeditiously throughout North America. We commit to develop a common approach to critical infrastructure protection, coordinated responses to cross border incidents, and coordinated training and exercises, with the participation of all levels of government in our countries.

Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza. Given the highly integrated nature of our economies, an outbreak of pathogenic avian flu or human pandemic influenza in any one of our countries would affect us all. Today, we have agreed to develop a comprehensive, science-based and coordinated approach within North America to avian influenza and human pandemic influenza management. We have endorsed a set of shared principles to underpin cooperative activities by our Governments in all stages of avian influenza and human pandemic influenza management: prevention; preparedness; response; and recovery. Pursuant to these principles, officials will develop, as an immediate priority, incident management protocols to ensure that we are well prepared in advance of an outbreak in North America. For instance, we have agreed to work together to accelerate research, development, production, and availability of human pandemic influenza vaccines, and develop a strategy to best facilitate the sharing of information to enhance the availability of vaccines to the region. We will also establish a small Coordinating Body of senior officials to ensure follow-up on these commitments.

North American Energy Security. A sustainable, secure and affordable supply of energy is key to fueling the North American economy. Collaboration in the areas of innovation, energy efficiency, and technology development, including moving these technologies to market, promotes energy security. Our governments renew their commitment to trilateral cooperation on clean energy technologies, conservation, and market facilitation as a means to meeting our shared goals of energy security and sustainable development. Officials will also examine how this cooperation can be expanded to further our climate efforts.

North American Smart, Secure Borders. Our vision is to have a border strategy that results in the fast, efficient and secure movement of low-risk trade and travelers to and within North America, while protecting us from threats including terrorism. In implementing this strategy, we will encourage innovative risk-based approaches to improving security and facilitating trade and travel. These include close coordination on infrastructure investments and vulnerability assessments, screening and processing of travelers, baggage and cargo, a single integrated North American trusted traveler program, and swift law enforcement responses to threats posed by criminals or terrorists, including advancing a trilateral network for the protection of judges and officers.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America represents a broad and ambitious agenda. We instruct our Ministers to develop options to strengthen the SPP and present them next June as part of the second report on progress of the SPP.

President Fox and President Bush were pleased to accept, on behalf of their countries, Prime Minister Harper's invitation to host the next trilateral leaders meeting in Canada in 2007.

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

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, and President Vicente Fox of Mexico—The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Next Steps

March 31, 2006

The three leaders of North America agreed to advance the agenda of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) by focusing on five high priority initiatives:

The North American Competitiveness Council. Increasing private sector engagement in the SPP by adding high-level business input will assist governments in enhancing North America's competitive position and engage the private sector as partners in finding solutions. The Council will:

- Consider issues that could be addressed trilaterally or bilaterally, as improvements in our bilateral relationships enhance North American competitiveness.
- Address issues of immediate importance and provide strategic medium and long-term advice.
- Provide input on the compatibility of our security and prosperity agendas, given the linkages between security and prosperity in a global marketplace.
- Offer ideas on the private sector's role in promoting North American competitiveness.

Advancing Cooperation on Avian and Pandemic Influenza. Leaders agreed to the following principles to guide collaboration on all stages of avian or pandemic influenza management:

- Share information among our governments in an open, timely and transparent manner.
- Adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach that incorporates animal and public health aspects in managing avian influenza and influenza pandemics.
- Ensure coordination within our respective national governments on all aspects of emergency management for an avian influenza outbreak or a human influenza pandemic, by building on existing mechanisms of cooperation and strengthening them as required.
- Coordinate our actions and leverage our respective capacities to ensure rapid and effective steps are taken to deal with avian influenza outbreaks or a human influenza pandemic in North America.
- Advise one another in advance of making any decision that could seriously affect the other countries.
- Base our actions on the best available science and evidence-based decision-making.
- Agree that the imposition and removal of veterinary or public health measures on the movement of people, animals, and goods, under our national laws and international obligations, will not be more restrictive or maintained longer than necessary to achieve the veterinary or public health objective so as to avoid unnecessary interference with the movement of people and goods within North America.
- Ensure that the business continuity plans of our respective governments consider the highly interconnected nature of our economies.
- Strive to utilize clear and consistent messaging to the public and international organizations that is proactive, timely and accurate.

North American Energy Security Initiative. A secure and sustainable energy supply is essential for our economic prosperity in North America. To advance our energy agenda we have agreed to:

- Enhance the development of a diverse energy resource base in North America by increasing collaboration on research, development and commercialization of clean energy-related technologies, and
- Strengthen the North American energy market by improving transparency and regulatory compatibility, promoting the development of resources and infrastructure, increasing cooperation on energy efficiency standards, and supporting other efforts aimed at addressing challenges on the demand side.

North American Emergency Management. The commitments made in the SPP recognize that a disaster—whether natural or man-made—in one North American country can have consequences across national borders, and may demand a common approach to all aspects of emergency management. Recent experience with hurricanes, ice storms, industrial accidents and the like demonstrate our interdependencies, as well as the need for coordination and mutual assistance in protecting and safekeeping our populations. Moving forward we will:

- Develop a common approach to critical infrastructure protection, and response to cross border terrorist incidents and natural disasters, across a number of different sectors including, but not limited to, transportation, energy, and telecommunications.
- Develop and implement joint plans for cooperation for incident response, as well as conduct coordinated training and exercises in emergency response.

Smart, Secure Borders. Leaders agreed to complete the following activities, to contribute to smart and secure borders, over the next twenty-four months:

- Collaborate to establish risk-based screening standards for goods and people that rely on technology, information sharing and biometrics.
- Develop and implement compatible electronic processes for supply chain security that use advanced electronic cargo information to analyze risk and ensure quick and efficient processing at the border;
- Develop standards and options for secure documents to facilitate cross-border travel;
- Exchange additional law enforcement liaison officers to assist in criminal and security investigations; and,
- Develop coordinated business resumption plans at border crossings to ensure legitimate trade continues.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America Key Accomplishments since June 2005

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), launched by the leaders of Mexico, Canada and the United States in March 2005, aims to promote growth and economic opportunity, increase security, and improve the quality of life of our peoples. In June 2005, lead Ministers issued a joint report outlining steps to achieve these goals. Since then, highlights of accomplishments include:

- To enhance growth and competitiveness in a key sector, the North American Steel Trade Committee developed a new strategy aimed at reducing market distortions, facilitating trade and promoting overall competitiveness through innovation and market development.
- To adapt to changes in sourcing and production methods, the three countries have analyzed ways to liberalize requirements for obtaining NAFTA duty-free treatment. Changes to the rules of origin have been implemented successfully and technical teams are working on additional changes.
- To speed up response times when managing infectious disease outbreaks, save lives, and reduce health care costs, the United States and Canada signed an agreement to enable simultaneous exchange of information between virtual national laboratory networks (PulseNet).
- To make consumer goods safer, save lives, and prevent injuries, the United States and Mexico signed an agreement for advance notifications when consumer goods violate one country's safety standards or pose a danger to consumers. Canada and the United States signed a similar agreement in June.
- The United States and Canada signed an agreement, which is a milestone in pipeline regulatory cooperation, to allow increased compliance data sharing, staff exchanges and joint training. The sharing of best practices will lead to a more uniform regulatory approach for cross border pipelines.
- The United States and Canada reached a full Open-Skies aviation agreement, removing all economic restrictions on air service to, from, and beyond one another's territory by the airlines of both

countries. The agreement will encourage new markets development, lower prices and greater competition.

- The United States and Mexico expanded air service in specific markets by increasing the number of designated passenger airlines per city-pair, and opening cooperative marketing arrangements (code-sharing) to airlines of either country and carriers of third countries.
- In order to increase navigational accuracy across the region, five Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) stations were installed in Canada and Mexico in 2005.
- To promote prosperity by reducing the costs of trade, the United States and Canada decreased transit times at the Detroit/Windsor gateway, our largest border crossing point, by 50 percent.
- To support increased trade and expedite secure processing of cross-border trade and travel between Mexico and the United States, six FAST/Express lanes are operating at the US-Mexico border, a new lane in Nogales will open soon, and we are working on a project for a lane in Matamoros. Exclusive lines and schedules will be implemented at nine crossings.
- To allow more efficient examination of rail cargo for hazardous materials and illicit flows of goods, the United States and Mexico have installed gamma ray equipment at key border crossings.
- To speed cargo shipping, the three countries are developing uniform in-advance electronic exchange of cargo manifest data for maritime, railroad and motor carriers.
- To improve air quality and promote a more competitive automotive industry, Mexico implemented an official standard to reduce sulfur in fuels. This will increase supply of low-sulfur fuels in Mexico.
- To increase border security, Mexican and U.S. agencies are harmonizing risk assessment mechanisms, exchanging information, and establishing protocols to facilitate detection of fraud and smuggling.
- To strengthen the integrity and security of asylum and refugee status determination systems, the United States and Canada launched a pilot project to share information on refugee and asylum claimants based on a comparison of fingerprint records.
- To address border violence, United States and Mexico signed an Action Plan to Combat Border Violence and Improve Public Safety. Officials of the two countries in Nogales, AZ-Nogales, Sonora and Laredo, TX-Nuevo Laredo completed protocols on border security and public safety.
- Under the United States-Mexico Voluntary Repatriation Program, more than 35,000 persons, including 20,500 in 2005, were returned to their home in a secure, legal, and humanitarian way.
- To increase maritime security, the United States and Canada completed joint exercises on the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers in September and in February during Super Bowl XL. Officers, who were cross-designated on vessels of the other nation, could authorize pursuit of suspect vessels crossing jurisdictions.
- To advance preparedness to address a cyber incident affecting critical infrastructure, authorities from the United States and Canada completed a multinational exercise, Cyberstorm, in February 2006.
- To enhance aviation security, the United States, Canada, and Mexico completed training on principles to protect aircraft from terrorism threats, on marksmanship skills, and on emergency procedures.
- To enhance port security, Canada and the United States concluded port facility visits at Oakland, CA and Vancouver, BC in October 2005 to facilitate the development of benchmark security standards.
- To ensure food safety while facilitating trade, a Food Safety Coordinating Task Force was formed and is developing a prioritized list of standards to compare for similarities, differences, and scientific bases for the differences. These

efforts will facilitate the development of North American standards and, as appropriate, the removal of differences in standards.

- To enhance clarity and compatibility of energy regulation, Canadian, U.S. and Mexican regulators began regular meetings to exchange information on regulatory standards and energy market developments and to discuss bringing gas from Alaska to the North American market.

- To reduce marine air pollution, Canada and the United States have coordinated data collection, marine inventory development and air quality monitoring. The two countries are preparing to approach the International Maritime Organization to designate special areas for controlling sulfur emissions from marine vessels.

- Canada and the United States are developing Mutual Assistance Arrangements, which will enhance our preparedness for cross-border public health emergencies; Mexico has been invited to participate.

[NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.]

Statement on the Earthquakes in Iran

March 31, 2006

On behalf of the American people, Laura and I express our sincere condolences for the loss of life and suffering caused by the series of earthquakes in the Iranian province of Luristan. Our thoughts and prayers are with families and individuals who have lost loved ones. The United States stands ready to assist the people of Iran, and we hereby extend an offer of humanitarian assistance.

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.

March 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Camp David, MD.

March 26

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

March 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald S. Cooper to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harry R. Hoglander and Peter W. Tredick to be members of the National Mediation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Molly A. O'Neill to be Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency for Environmental Information.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: John Nau (General Public); D. Franklin Arey III (General Public); Alan Autry; and Matt Blunt.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marilyn Castor Machon Pattillo and Frank Jao as members of the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities: Ricardo Barraza, Jr.; Herbert Bartlett; Sharman Word Dennis; Carmela Vargas Gonzales; Harris N. Hollin; Casey Patrick O'Halloran; Thomas J. Reilly;

Steven C. Rhatigan; Neil Romano; and Dallas Rob Sweezy.

March 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with outgoing Prime Minister Percival James Patterson of Jamaica to commend him for his distinguished service. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister-designate Portia Simpson Miller of Jamaica to congratulate her on taking office.

In the afternoon, the President met with Members of Congress who had recently visited Iraq.

During the day, the President met with President-elect Rene Preval of Haiti.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by tornadoes and severe storms on March 11–13.

March 29

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel to congratulate him on his party's success in the recent election. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President met with Republican congressional leaders to discuss legislative priorities. Later, he participated in a photo opportunity with Spring 2006 White House interns. He then traveled to Cancun, Mexico.

March 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, the President traveled to Chichen-Itza, Mexico, where he toured the Chichen-Itza archaeological ruins. He then returned to Cancun, Mexico.

In the evening, at the Fiesta Americana Condesa Cancun Hotel, the President had dinner with President Vicente Fox of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

The President announced his nomination of Daniel L. Cooper to be Under Secretary for Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

March 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the Fiesta Americana Condesa Cancun Hotel, he participated in a meeting with American, Canadian, and Mexican chief executive officers to discuss the North American economy. He then traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The President announced his appointment of Dana M. Perino as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Press Secretary.

The President announced his appointment of Kenneth A. Lisaius as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Press Secretary.

The President announced his appointment of Christopher G. Michel as Special Assistant to the President for Speechwriting.

The President announced his appointment of Blain Rethmeier as Special Assistant to the President for Communications.

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 March 27

Ronald S. Cooper,
of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term of 4 years, vice Eric S. Dreiband, resigned.

Harry R. Hoglander,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2008 (reappointment).

Michael D. Kirby,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Moldova.

Molly A. O'Neill,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Kimberly Terese Nelson.

Peter W. Tredick,
of California, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2007, vice Edward J. Fitzmaurice, Jr., term expired.

Withdrawn March 27

Henry W. Saad,
of Michigan, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, vice James L. Ryan, retired, which was sent to the Senate on February 14, 2005.

David C. Sanborn,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Maritime Administration, vice William Schubert, which was sent to the Senate on January 18, 2006.

Submitted March 30

Daniel L. Cooper,
of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary for Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs for a term of 4 years (reappointment).

Gary D. Orton,
of Nevada, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Nevada for the term of 4 years, vice Richard Zenos Winget.

Withdrawn March 30

Daniel P. Ryan,
of Michigan, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, vice Patrick J. Duggan, retired, which was sent to the Senate on February 14, 2005.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

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

Released March 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Comprehensive Immigration Reform: Securing our Border, Enforcing our Laws, and Upholding our Values

Released March 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Illinois

Released March 29

Fact sheet: Strategy for Victory: Freedom in Iraq

Released March 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Daniel W. Fisk of the National Security Council on the President's visit to Mexico

Statement by the Press Secretary on China's treatment of Kim Chun-Hee

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.