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Remarks Following a Meeting With Governors Who Traveled to Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan

April 19, 2006

The President. I just had breakfast with four Governors who have returned from Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I invited Secretary Rice and Secretary Rumsfeld, as well as Steve Hadley and Josh Bolten, to breakfast so that we could hear from these Governors.

First of all, I want to thank the four of them for traveling overseas. I particularly want to thank them for going to see our men and women who are helping secure freedom and peace. I thank them for sending a message from home that we care about them—that we care about our troops; that we'll support our troops; that we appreciate the fact that people are willing to make sacrifices.

I assured them that our goal in Afghanistan and Iraq is victory. And victory will be achieved when there is a democracy in both countries that are able to sustain itself and defend itself.

Secretary Rice brought the Governors up to date about a conversation she had with Ambassador Khalilzad. We fully recognize that the Iraqis must step up and form a unity government so that those who went to the polls to vote recognize that a Government will be in place to respond to their needs. In other words, we also recognize that vacuums in the political process create opportunity for malfeasance and harm. And so we assured these Governors that we understand full well that the political process in Iraq must occur soon, and we're working toward that end.

I again want to thank the Governors for coming. I thought—I asked them if they wouldn't mind saying a few words. We—I don't expect everybody to agree with my decision to go into Iraq, but I do want the people to understand—the American people to understand that failure in Iraq is not an option, that failure in Iraq would make the security situation for our country worse, and that success in Iraq will begin to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

Governor Daniels.

[*At this point, Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana, Gov. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, Gov. Tom Vilsack of Iowa, and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes. Again, I want to thank the four Governors for coming. Thank you for your eloquent statements. I appreciate your service to our Nation. I assured the Governors that the United States will complete the mission; that we will honor those who've paid the ultimate price, by completing the mission; that we will help those who desire to live in freedom, and in so doing, we will lay the foundations of peace for a generation to come.

I appreciate you all coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Governors Daniels, Manchin, Vilsack, and Bush.

Remarks Announcing the Resignation of Press Secretary Scott McClellan

April 19, 2006

Press Secretary McClellan. Good morning, everybody. I am here to announce that I will be resigning as White House Press Secretary.

Mr. President, it has been an extraordinary honor and privilege to have served you for more than 7 years now, the last 2 years and 9 months as your Press Secretary.

The White House is going through a period of transition. Change can be helpful, and this is a good time and good position to help bring about change. I am ready to move on. I've been in this position a long time, and my wife and I are excited about beginning the next chapter in our life together.

You have accomplished a lot over the last several years with this team, and I have been honored and grateful to be a small part of a terrific and talented team of really good people.

Our relationship began back in Texas, and I look forward to continuing it, particularly when we are both back in Texas.

The President. That's right. [*Laughter*]

Press Secretary McClellan. Although, I hope to get there before you. [*Laughter*]

I have given it my all, sir, and I've given you my all. And I will continue to do so as we transition to a new Press Secretary over the next 2 to 3 weeks. Thank you for the opportunity.

The President. First of all, I thank Scott for his service to our country. I don't know whether or not the press corps realizes this, but his is a challenging assignment dealing with you all on a regular basis. And I thought he handled his assignment with class, integrity. He really represents the best of his family, our State, and our country. It's going to be hard to replace Scott. But nevertheless, he's made the decision, and I accept it.

One of these days, he and I are going to be rocking on chairs in Texas, talking about the good old days and his time as the Press Secretary. And I can assure you, I will feel the same way then that I feel now, that I can say to Scott, "Job well done."

Press Secretary McClellan. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:39 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama

April 19, 2006

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for having me. Mr. President—[*laughter*]—got a nice ring to it. [*Laughter*] I respect President Ben Payton for his commitment to education and his commitment to the United States of America, and I'm proud to be on this campus.

I was telling President Payton that I knew about Tuskegee before I knew about most other universities when I was a kid. When I was growing up, believe it or not, in Midland, Texas, which is way out in the desert, I knew about Tuskegee. I knew Tuskegee was a center of excellence, has been for a long period of time. And I saw firsthand, it is still a center of excellence.

George Washington Carver—you've heard of him; so did I as a young guy. [*Laughter*] Booker T. Washington—when you think Tuskegee, you think Booker T. Washington. And when you hear about Booker T. Washington, you think about Tuskegee—Ralph Ellison, or the music of Lionel Richie. I mean, Tuskegee has been a center for educational excellence and a place for opportunity for a long period of time here in the United States of America.

When I was the Governor of Texas—Governors are heads of the National Guard, and I had the opportunity and honor to name the person that headed our Guard. And I picked a fellow named Danny James—General Danny James. It just turns out his father was a man named Chappie James. As a matter of fact, Tuskegee—I was in the Chappie James Building a little while ago. You named the building after a fine person.

I appreciate the role that Tuskegee has had in the 20th century to break down racial barriers, to provide hope, and to help build a better America. What I'm here to talk about is the role Tuskegee will continue to play in the 21st century, and it is to prepare our students and our kids for the jobs of the 21st century. Tuskegee is a really important part of making sure the United States of America provides hope and opportunity for all people.

I want to thank Dr. Shaik Jeelani, who is the director for the Center for Advanced Materials. I don't know if you have seen that facility before. I'm sure some of you have who work here, but if you haven't, I strongly urge you to go there. It's a really interesting center of the—where you'll see the future being explored and developed. There's a lot of science going on there.

I appreciate being joined by Governor Bob Riley. Riley is a friend. Riley cares deeply about educating every child. I'm going to talk about the No Child Left Behind Act as part of the foundation to make sure every child gets educated, but in case I forget, Riley is willing to set high standards and hold people to account and provide help so no child gets left behind. And I want to thank you for your leadership.

Margaret Spellings is with us. She's the Secretary of Education. I've known her for a long time. I know this: She's committed to the public school system and the higher education system of the United States of America. I look forward to working with her to make sure that every child gets a good