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terrorists, we must stay on the offensive, and Australia has been on the frontlines of every offensive in the war on terror.

In Afghanistan, the first casualty among American allies was an Australian. In Iraq, Australian Special Operation forces were among the first coalition units on the ground. The bravery and skill of the Australian military have helped the people of these two nations claim their freedom and deny the terrorists safe havens from which to launch further attacks.

War has reaffirmed the strength of our alliance, yet our alliance is only one component of our broad partnership. Australia and the United States signed a free trade agreement in 2004 because we recognize that open markets create greater prosperity for both our peoples. We're cooperating to expand trade worldwide. In the Doha negotiations, Australia and America speak with one voice. We continue to urge all parties to reduce global trade barriers that keep millions in the developing world mired in poverty.

Our two nations accept other global responsibilities as well. We helped to build the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, so we can make the latest energy technologies available to all to increase efficiency and reduce pollution.

We've pooled our resources to help the victims of natural disasters, and we're working together to meet the threat of pandemic disease. We share a common approach to security issues, including Iran and North Korea. Our two nations are closer than ever, and Americans admire Australia's strong leader. Prime Minister John Howard has affirmed our common values. He's strengthened our alliance. He's built on our long history of partnership. I value his counsel. I admire his courage.

Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Howard, thank you for making the long journey. We welcome you with the honor due to a valiant nation and with the warmth of close friends. Welcome to America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where Prime Minister Howard was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the Prime Minister Howard.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John Howard of Australia

May 16, 2006

President Bush. Thank you all. It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of Australia here to the East Room for a press briefing. I'm going to feed him tonight—before I feed him tonight, I'm going to feed him to you. [*Laughter*]

We just had a really interesting discussion about a lot of issues. First, I admire John Howard's understanding that the war on terror still goes on and that we've got to be steadfast and firm if we intend to succeed in defeating the terrorists.

Secondly, I appreciate very much his understanding and discussions about the way forward in Iraq. We spent quite a bit of time talking about the new Government. I described to him as best as I could my feelings about the Prime Minister-designee, who I believe is a firm and decisive person that is going to make a difference in that country's future.

I thanked him very much for the commitment of Australian troops. We, of course, talked about the Iraqi security forces' capacity to defend themselves. I reported to him that we're pleased with the progress being made but that the United States will make decisions about our troop levels based upon conditions on the ground.

We talked about Afghanistan. Again, I want to thank the Prime Minister for his support there for this fledgling democracy. We talked about North Korea. We talked about Iran. We talked about a lot. And that's what you'd expect when you're talking to an ally and a friend and a good strategic thinker.

The Prime Minister is capable of not only seeing the problems for today; he's capable of looking down the road. And I appreciate his advice and his judgment on national security matters, as well as in talking about issues like energy and trade. We've got a good relationship with Australia, and we intend to keep it that way.

I always remind my friends who talk to me about countries around the world, I say, I can't think of a country more like—a place more like Texas than Australia. And that's a

compliment—[*laughter*]—except for some of these people over here. [*Laughter*] The people of Australia are independent-minded; they're smart; they're capable; they're hard-working. And I really enjoy my relationship with the Prime Minister.

So Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Thanks for coming, and the floor is yours.

Prime Minister Howard. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. Again, can I thank you very warmly for the great hospitality that you have extended to me. It was a real privilege to sit around the Cabinet table and talk to your Cabinet officers, which followed a very extensive discussion between the two of us about all of those issues of which you spoke.

We remain a steadfast ally of the United States in the war against terror. I've made that clear on every occasion I've spoken here in the United States. The war against terror will go on for a long time; I think we have to accept that. Progress is being made. The challenge remains very, very strong, and there needs to be a continued commitment. And we admire and respect the leadership given by you and by the United States in that war, and it's a war that confronts us all. Those who imagine that somehow or other you can escape it by rolling yourself into a little ball and going over in the corner and hoping that you're not going to be noticed are doomed to be very, very uncomfortably disappointed.

We did have an opportunity to talk extensively about some of the challenges in our immediate region. And I spoke about the situation in East Timor and the Solomon Islands and the importance of the role of Indonesia, the symbolism and also the practical consequence of Indonesia being the largest Islamic country in the world. And therefore, the success and prosperity of moderate Islamic leadership in that country is itself a very important factor in the long-term success of the fight against terrorism, because the fight against terrorism is not only a military and physical one; it is also an intellectual one. And it's a question of providing within the Islamic world a successful democratic model as an alternative to the fanaticism of those who would obscenely invoke the sanction of Islam to justify what they seek to do.

Can I finally say that of the many ties that bind Australia and the United States, as I said on the lawn earlier today, none are more important, of course, than the shared values and the beliefs that both of our countries have—that the spread of democracy around the world is an important goal and an important responsibility. It's been a privilege for our two peoples to enjoy democracy in an uninterrupted fashion for so long that we tend to take it for granted, and we forget its liberating impact on those who taste and experience it for the first time. And both of our societies have a responsibility in expanding the opportunities for democracy, and that, of course, lies very much at the heart of much of what our two societies do.

Mr. President, thank you very, very much for the honor you've done me and the courtesy and friendship that you've extended to me and all of the traveling party. We appreciate it very, very deeply, indeed. Thank you.

President Bush. Two questions a side. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Terrorist Surveillance Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, you've said that the Government is not trolling through the lives of innocent Americans, but why shouldn't ordinary people feel that their privacy is invaded by the NSA compiling a list of their telephone calls?

President Bush. What I have told the American people is, we'll protect them against an Al Qaida attack, and we'll do so within the law. I've been very clear about the principles and guidelines of any program that has been designed to protect the American people.

I've also been clear about the fact that we do not listen to domestic phone calls without court approval and that this Government will continue to guard the privacy of the American people. But if Al Qaida is calling into the United States, we want to know, and we want to know why.

For the Australian press friends here, we got accused of not connecting dots prior to September the 11th, and we're going to connect dots to protect the American people, within the law. The program he's asking about is one that has been fully briefed to Members of the United States Congress in

both political parties. They are very aware of what is taking place. The American people expect their Government to protect them, within the laws of this country, and I'm going to continue to do just that.

Prime Minister Howard. Australian press. Mr. Curry.

Australian Prime Minister Howard

Q. Mr. President, your relationship with Mr. Howard is obviously very close, personally. And I was wondering, first, could you just expand a little on that chemistry? And secondly, sir, do you think you would be able to work effectively with a future Australian leader, be it either a successor of Mr. Howard from his own party or from their opposition?

President Bush. Well, I suspect he's going to outlast me, so that is a moot point—[*laughter*]—probably a question you ought to ask him. Somebody said, "You and John Howard appear to be so close. Don't you have any differences?" And I said, "Yes, he doesn't have any hair." [*Laughter*]

Look, ours is a world in which sometimes people tell you something and they don't mean it. In order to work together to make difficult decisions—decisions of war and peace, decisions of security, decisions of trade—you've got to have somebody you talk to that tells you straight up what's on their mind. You know, politics sometimes produces people that will tell you one thing and don't mean it. It's really hard to be making rational decisions if somebody you're talking to just doesn't level with you.

And that's what I like about John Howard. He may not be the prettiest person on the block—[*laughter*]—but when he tells you something, you can take it to the bank. He is a reliable partner. And we don't agree on 100 percent, of course. But the interesting thing, talking to John Howard, is that you can trust the man. And that's what is a necessary ingredient to be working together for the common good.

And I also appreciate a person who is capable of standing by a decision. I remember the campaign—as a matter of fact, your campaign was right before my campaign—and John Howard stood strong. And I remember telling somebody—and the polls didn't look all that good, I guess, at one point in time—and I remember saying to somebody, "This man is going to be rewarded at the ballot box because the people of Australia want somebody who is consistently strong, not somebody who tries to waffle around trying to figure out where to end up for political expediency."

People may not agree with his position on every issue, but people have got to agree with the fact that he's a man of conviction. And that's the essence of leadership—courage and conviction. And so we've got a relationship that is based upon respect, and I respect him. I've seen him in action. I've seen what it means to have him being pressured—probably by your newspaper. But I've seen him stand strong, and that's what's needed in this world.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters], yes.

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, sir. On immigration, some worry that the U.S. military is stretched too thin. How effective can these National Guard troops be if they're shuttling in and out of the border area every two or three weeks? And how are you going to turn around these House Members who seem to be unswayed by your argument on the guest-worker program?

President Bush. The program to put Guard on the border is one that will enable the Border Patrol to do its job better. It's very important for the American people to know, it's the Border Patrol that's going to be on the frontline of apprehending people trying to sneak into our country. And the Guard will be doing a variety of functions, which I outlined last night.

Secondly, the Guard is—the up to 6,000 Guard in the first year of operation really is not going to put a strain on our capacity to fight and win the war on terror, as well as deal with natural disasters. And, of course, we'll be working in conjunction with Governors to make sure that that's not the case, that it doesn't put an unnecessary strain on other functions of the Guard.

Thirdly, the Pentagon is briefing today—how the program is going to work. There are Guard troops in Arizona and New Mexico and Texas that can be used by the Governors

down there to work with the Border Patrol, that they'll be reimbursed for. And there's also training missions that can be used to help complement the Border Patrol. We're going to have double the Border Patrol agents since 2001, by 2008. And what the Guard is doing, the Guard is providing an interim service until those Border Patrol agents get stood up.

I made it clear to the country last night that we're not going to militarize our border. Mexico is a friend. But what we are going to do is use assets necessary to make sure that we can assure the American people that the border is secure.

Now in order to secure the border, it's important for people up here in Washington to understand that there's got to be a temporary-worker program. Border security and a temporary-worker program are really important because—let me say, a temporary-worker program is really important to border security, because we don't want people trying to sneak into the country. It seems rational to me, to say, "If you're coming to work, come to work in a legal way, on a temporary basis, so you're not trying to sneak across." So the temporary-worker program goes hand in hand with border security. In order for there to be a—in order for us to solve the problem of an immigration system that's not working, it's really important for Congress to understand that there needs a—that the elements I described all go hand in hand.

And so I'll continue to work with them. Look, this is a hard issue for many people.

Q. Would you go along with border protection only and a guest-worker program—[*inaudible*].

President Bush. I said I want a comprehensive bill because I understand there needs to be a comprehensive bill in order to make—in order for us to achieve the objective.

And the objective is, on the one hand, protect our borders, and on the other hand, never lose sight of the thing that makes America unique, which is, we're a land of immigrants and that we—we're not going to discriminate against people. Now we don't think there ought to be an automatic path to citizenship; that's called amnesty. Amnesty would be wrong. Amnesty would say that somebody that stood in line legally is—is mistreated, as far as I'm concerned. Amnesty would mean that more people would try to come and sneak into our country in the hopes that they would be granted automatic citizenship.

But there ought to be a way for somebody to pay a fine or learn English or prove that they've been here for a long time working and be able to get in line—not the head of the line but the back of the line—in order to become a citizen.

You know, there are some in our country who say, "Let's just deport everybody." It's unrealistic. It may sound attractive to some. You can't deport people who have been in this country for a long period of time—millions of people that have been here.

And so we've got to be rational about how we move forward. And part of my appeal last night was to say to people, let's don't get so emotional that we forget who we are. We're a land of immigrants, and when we welcome somebody to our country who is here legally, willing to work and willing to realize a dream, it helps restore our soul.

So this is a difficult debate for Members. I'm going to continue working with them. Part of my job is to lead, and I did last night. I said, here's how we get to where we need to be.

Australia's Wheat Market/Trade

Q. Mr. President, American wheat growers are angry that hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes were paid to Saddam's Iraq to protect Australia's wheat market. Do you share their anger, and do you sympathize with the push on Capitol Hill to investigate this further in America? And Mr. Prime Minister, I'd be interested in your comments on a possible Capitol Hill inquiry into this.

President Bush. My own judgment is, is that the Howard administration is pretty capable of investigating what took place, and I look forward to seeing the results of the investigation.

Prime Minister Howard. For my part, you are aware of what the Australian Government has done. Australia is the only country in the world that has responded to the bulk of findings with a public inquiry with the powers of a royal commission. And you are

aware that the commission has probably completed its public hearings, and we're likely to have a report by the 30th of June.

What the United States Congress does in relation to this is a matter for the United States Congress. And, clearly, if it decides to do something, then we will respond in the appropriate fashion. But for our part, in Australia, we have been open, transparent that we do not approve in any way, shape, or form of the payment of bribes, and if a finding is to that effect, then the full processes of Australian law should be brought to bear. You can't be more transparent than that, and I think that is understood in the United States.

But, obviously, just as we have responsibilities within Australia, the legislators of this country, where I'm a guest, have responsibilities in this country. And if it discharges those in a particular fashion, the way it thinks fit—well, that's its right, and we will respond in what is also the appropriate fashion. I don't think I can add anything more to that, and we have been patently transparent and open. And let me just repeat again, Australia is the only country in the world that has established a public inquiry with the powers of the royal commission.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:43 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister-designate Jawad al-Maliki of Iraq.

Remarks Honoring the 2005 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Sacramento Monarchs

May 16, 2006

Thank you. Please be seated. It is a beautiful day to welcome the Monarchs to the White House. I want to first congratulate the 2005 WNBA champs, the Sacramento Monarchs. We're glad you're here. Thanks for coming, and congratulations to you.

I was thinking about a little one-on-one here on the South Lawn. [*Laughter*] Then I reconsidered. Laura said, "You might as well stick to your mountain bike; don't try to take on these athletes." But we're really glad you're here.

I want to congratulate Coach John Whisenant on being such a fine coach. Congratulations, sir. Glad you're here. Thanks for coming. Glad you brought Joyce. Welcome.

I want to thank my Cabinet Secretary, Alphonso Jackson. Welcome, A.J.—thanks for coming. I knew you were a sports fan, and I knew you appreciated excellence on the court, so I'm not surprised you're here.

I want to thank Doris Matsui, Congresswoman Matsui—thanks for coming—from the Sacramento area, as well as John Doolittle. I really appreciate you all being here. Thanks for taking time to honor these champs.

I appreciate Donna Orender, the president of the WNBA. Thanks for coming. Proud you're here. I want to thank John Thomas of Maloof Sports & Entertainment for coming. John, congratulations for putting together a good franchise. Good job. It's not easy to field a championship team, but you've done so.

I'm also proud to be up here with Yolanda Griffith, the WNBA Finals MVP. Congratulations, Yolanda—[*applause*]—popular member of the team, as you can tell. I want to welcome all the other Monarch players who are here. I'm honored to be up here with you. I can't thank you enough for coming by to give us a chance to pay a proper tribute to your championship run.

I also want to welcome members of the local Junior WNBA program; glad you all are here. Welcome to the White House. This is the—interestingly enough, the 10th year of the WNBA, and I don't know if you can remember, but I certainly do, when a lot of people were speculating that the WNBA wouldn't last. "They couldn't possibly make it," they were saying. Well the truth of the matter is, the WNBA has not only lasted; it's thrived. And American sports are better for it.

A lot of fans are coming to see the games, which is a good indication. The WNBA broadcasts are seen now in 193 countries in 31 different languages. That means a lot of people are paying attention to what you're doing on the courts. And we appreciate it.