AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Remarks Following a Dinner With Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago and Business Leaders in Chicago, Illinois

July 6, 2006

Laura said, "What do you want for your birthday?" I said, "I want to have dinner in Chicago with the mayor." [*Laughter*] Thank you all for joining us. We've had a wonderful discussion. Chicago is a fabulous town, Mayor. And you're awfully kind to host us here.

Somebody said, "Well, what's your birthday wish?" I've got a lot of birthday wishes. I hope our troops are safe. I hope Roger Ebert does well. That's a birthday wish. I know a lot of people here in Chicago are praying for him. It's been a heck of a birthday party tonight, and I appreciate you all joining me, and looking forward to having my cake.

Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:21 p.m. in the Chicago Firehouse Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Chicago Sun-Times film critic Roger Ebert who had emergency surgery on July 2. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference in Chicago

July 7, 2006

The President. Please be seated. Thank you. It's nice to be here in Chicago. Mr. Mayor, I thought you might have had enough of me last night. [*Laughter*] Thanks for the birthday party. I really enjoyed our dinner and enjoyed our conversation. Jesse, thanks for being here as well. It's awfully kind of you to come.

I do want to thank the trustees of this beautiful museum for opening up your facility for a press conference. I hope it doesn't ruin the atmosphere of the museum. I will try to make sure it doesn't. I'm looking forward to a tour of this museum after the press conference.

I'm sure you're wondering why I would have a press conference in Chicago. It's a fabulous city, plus I'd like to see what it's like to have a major press conference outside of Washington. It might do me some good. The truth of the matter is, it might do the White House press corps some good as well. So I welcome the Chicago reporters here. Thank you for coming.

I had a fine dinner last night at the Chicago Firehouse and a good breakfast today at Lou Mitchell's. It's really interesting sites here in Chicago, and it's a lot of fun going to them. And I want to thank the gracious hospitality of the restauranteurs and the people of Chicago for—by welcoming me.

I had some conversations with some of the business leaders last night and for breakfast, and there's kind of an interesting sense of optimism here in this part of the world, and the statistics bear that out. In the Chicago area, businesses have added over more than 74,000 new jobs over the past 2 years. And that's positive; it's a good sign. The unemployment rate in this area is 4.3 percent—that's below the national average. People are working. People are able to find jobs. Illinois created more jobs than any other State in the month of April. So the entrepreneurial spirit is strong here.

One of the things I detected from the business leaders, that there's a sense of optimism which encourages people to invest. And when you invest, you create the conditions for job growth. Major companies have announced plans to add even more jobs.

This morning we got some good news—the Nation added 121,000 new jobs for the month of June. That's over 5.4 million jobs since August of 2003; that's 34 months of job increases. In the first quarter, our economy grew at 5.6 percent. Productivity is high. People are better off. Things are working. And so the fundamental question we face in Washington is, how do we keep economic vitality alive? What do we do? What are the policies necessary to keep this growth strong?

And one policy is to keep taxes low. If you raise taxes, you take money out of the pockets of small businesses and entrepreneurs, which makes it harder to increase employment. One of the reasons I'm here at this museum is because one way to make sure we continue

to grow our economy is to have a workforce that's capable of filling the jobs of the 21st century.

One of the subjects the mayor and I talked about last night was the No Child Left Behind Act and what the city of Chicago is doing to hold people to account and have high standards and to offer different choices to parents here in Chicago, through charter schools, for example. The mayor said something interesting—he said, "Reading scores are up." That's a good sign. It means people are measuring, and teachers are teaching. And when you have the basics—the basic foundation for good education laid, then you can focus on math and science.

So the truth of the matter is, we have to make sure our kids have got the math and science skills to fill the jobs of the 21st century. We live in a global economy in an interconnected world, and if we can't provide the employees for the jobs of the 21st century, they're going to go somewhere else. So education is crucial to make sure we're a competitive and vibrant nation.

Job training is really important. The Labor Department, working with the local folks here, have set up one-stop centers in Chicago to help connect workers with employers. You've got a good community college system here. Community colleges are really important to make sure that workers are given the skills to fill the jobs which actually exist. And the Lake Land Community College system is a strong program. There's Federal help, and there's State help, and there's local involvement, all aimed at making sure people have got the capacity to have the—to fill the jobs. I mean, you have got a growing economy like this; there's concern by employers whether or not they're going to be able to find people to do the work. And education is the gateway to make sure that we remain a competitive economy.

I also believe strongly that we've got to open up markets to goods produced here in Illinois, goods and services. In other words, one way to make sure this economy of ours grows is to reject protectionism and be confident in our capacity to trade. I'm getting ready to go to the G–8, and one of the topics there is going to be the Doha round of the WTO, which basically—the commitment is that a world that trades freely is a world in which people are going to be able to find work here at home, and it means we have better capacity to be able to help lift nations out of poverty.

We talked last night about immigration. I found it interesting that the people that were there with the mayor and me, employers and chamber of commerce-type people, put immigration as one of the issues they want to talk about. I told them this; I said, "First of all, I'll always remember that immigrants have helped shape the character of this Nation." We are a land of immigrants. I also reminded them that the system we got today isn't working, and it needs to be changed and reformed.

We're a nation of law, and we can be a compassionate nation when it comes to immigration, and the two don't conflict. So I've talked about a comprehensive immigration plan. Look, people in this country expect us to secure the border, and we will. And the way you do that is, you add more manpower and you put new technologies on the border to keep people from sneaking across.

But in order to enforce this border, we've got to have a rational way that recognizes there are people sneaking across to do work Americans aren't doing. They're doing jobs Americans are not filling. And my attitude is this: When you find a willing worker and a willing employer, there ought to be a legal way to let somebody come here to work on a temporary basis. It takes pressure off the border. When you got people sneaking across to do work, it puts pressure on the border. If somebody can come in on a legal way, it's going to make it easier for our Border Patrol agents to do their job.

Secondly, one of the serious issues we have, and one of the issues that the—some of the leaders brought up yesterday was—the guy said, "We really shouldn't be in a position to be document verifiers." And when you make something illegal that people want, it's amazing what happens—kind of a whole industry of smugglers and innkeepers and document forgers that sprung up. And so people show up and say, "I want to work." The guy says, "Show me your document," and they don't know whether it's real or not.

And we got a Basic Pilot program to help people verify whether documents are real.

But one way to do it is, if you have a temporary-worker program, say, here's a tamper-proof card that will enable our employers to be able to verify whether someone is here legally to do work on a temporary basis and enable the Government to hold people to account for hiring illegal workers. See, it's against the law to hire somebody who is here illegally, and the American people expect us to enforce the law, and we will. But the system needs to be reformed.

I told the workers last night that there are about 11 million people here, more or less, who have been here for awhile, that are building families, and they're good workers. And they said, "What are you going to do about it?" And I said, well, there's two extremes on this issue. One extreme is, kick them out, deport everybody. That's not going to work. It may sound like a kind of an interesting sound bite, kind of a nice throwaway line, but it's not going to work. It's impractical.

The other option is to say, well, you're an automatic citizen. That's called amnesty. That won't work. And the reason that won't work is, if you grant 8 or 9 million people who are here illegally automatic citizenship, it means another 8 or 9 million coming.

The best way to deal with this problem, in my judgment, is to say, look, you're here illegally; there's got to be a consequence. The consequence could be a penalty, a fine. It could be proof that you're not a criminal. In other words, there's got to be ways to say—make restitution for society for breaking the law; but say to the person, you can get in the citizenship line, but at the back of the line, not at the beginning. See, there are people in line who want to become a citizen of the United States. It doesn't make sense to penalize those who are here legally, playing by the rules, to let people who have been here illegally get ahead of them.

This is a comprehensive plan. Look, the House has passed a bill; the Senate has passed a bill. And we're working in Washington to reconcile the differences. It's hard work. It's not an easy assignment. But I'm confident if we all keep working on it, we can get a comprehensive bill done, which will be good for the country and send the message that we're a land of different folks from different religions and different backgrounds, all united under the great American ideal.

I spend a lot of time worrying about the war on terror. I think about it every single day. My biggest job, frankly, is to protect the American people. And this is a dangerous world, and there are people out there lurking who are trying to figure out ways to hurt us. I know some dismiss that as empty rhetoric; I'm just telling you, it's the truth. And therefore, we're doing a lot of stuff in Washington. We're reforming our intelligence services to be able to react better. The FBI is now focusing on counterterrorist activities. The CIA is developing more human intelligence, which will make it easier to be able to do our duty.

We're also on the offense against the terrorists. We'll keep the pressure on them. We'll bring them to justice before they hurt our people.

The central front in the war on terror is Iraq. And I know Iraq is on the minds of a lot of people here in Chicago. It's hard work. It's hard work because we face an enemy that will kill innocent people in order to achieve an objective, and their objective is to drive us out of Iraq so they can have safe haven from which to launch attacks against modern Muslim nations, so they can spread their ideology of hate. They want us to—they believe capitalist societies and democracies are inherently weak. They do not believe that we've got the capacity to do the hard work necessary to help the Iraqis succeed.

And they're mistaken; they're just wrong. Success in Iraq is vital for the security of the United States, and success in Iraq is vital for long-term peace. And so therefore, we'll complete the mission.

And we've got good partners. Zal Khalilzad came in the other day, who is our Ambassador to Iraq. And he, like me, has confidence in Prime Minister Maliki. He's a guy who can set goals and follow through on those goals. He understands what needs to be done in order to succeed. And he represents the will of 12 million people who went to the polls. That's a pretty interesting

sign that the Iraqi people want to live in freedom.

There's been a lot of sacrifice in the war on terror. People have lost life. We've lost, obviously, a lot of lives here on the homeland, and we've lost lives overseas. I think of Corporal Ryan Cummings, from right here in the Chicago area. He was an honor student at Hoffman Estates High School. He volunteered for the United States Marine Corps. He served two tours of duty in Iraq, and then he volunteered for a third. Ryan understood the stakes. He understood that we must win. And so he said, "I'd like to go back." And he was killed in Anbar Province last month.

Our prayers go out to Ryan's family. I marvel at the strength of his mother, when she said, "He wanted to be doing something that made a difference; he was doing what he wanted to do."

I have confidence in the capacity of liberty to transform hostile regions to peaceful regions. And I have confidence in our capacity to win the war on terror because of people like Ryan Cummings are willing to step up and serve this Nation.

There's a lot of issues that I'm sure we'll be talking about today—North Korea and Iran, hopefully the Middle East, maybe some local issues here in Chicago. It's my honor to be here. Thank you for coming. And now I'll start answering some questions, starting with one of the senior members of the press corps—are you over 60?

North Korea/Missile Testing

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You look like you're about 65. Anyway, go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. Harsh. Mr. President, Japan has dropped the threat of sanctions from its proposed Security Council resolution about North Korea. Why was that necessary? And how do you punish or penalize a country that's already among the poorest and most isolated in the world?

The President. I think that the purpose of the U.N. Security Council resolution is to send a clear message to the leader of North Korea that the world condemns that which he did. Part of our strategy, as you know, has been to have others at the table, is to say as clearly as possible to the North Korean, "Get rid of your weapons, and there's a better way forward." In other words, there's a choice for him to make. He can verifiably get rid of his weapons programs and stop testing rockets, and there's a way forward for him to help his people.

I believe it's best to make that choice clear to him with more than one voice, and that's why we have the six-party talks. And now that he has defied China and Japan and South Korea and Russia and the United States—all of us said, don't fire that rocket. He not only fired one; he fired seven. Now that he made that defiance, it's best for all of us to go to the U.N. Security Council and say loud and clear, here are some red lines. And that's what we're in the process of doing.

The problem with diplomacy, it takes a while to get something done. If you're acting alone, you can move quickly. When you're rallying world opinion and trying to come up with the right language at the United Nations to send a clear signal, it takes a while.

And so yesterday I was on the phone with—I think I mentioned this to the press conference yesterday—to Hu Jintao and Vladimir Putin; the day before to President Roh and Prime Minister Koizumi. And Condi, by the way, was making the same calls out there to her counterparts, all aiming at saying, "It's your choice, Kim Jong Il; you've got the choice to make."

So we'll see what happens at the U.N. Security Council. I talked to Condi this morning first thing, in anticipation of this question, and she feels good about the progress that can be made there.

North Korea/Six-Party Negotiations

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, what matters most of all is for Kim Jong Il to see the world speak with one voice. That's the purpose, really.

Here's the problem, it seems like to me, that there have been agreements with North Korea in the past. There's the '94 agreement. I think you were around here then, Sanger [David Sanger, New York Times]. And then it turns out he didn't live up to the agreement. He said—in September of '05, there

was a joint declaration that talked about lasting peace, and we all signed on to a document that said we'll denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. That's a noble and important goal. This was signed by the five of us plus North Korea. He had also talked about the rocket moratorium. He assured Koizumi in '04, Prime Minister Koizumi, that he would adhere to that. And you just got to wonder whether the man's word means anything. And one way to make sure it does mean something is for nations other than the United States to say the same thing, to speak loud and clear. And that's what you're seeing evolve.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea

Q. Thank you, sir. Some experts say North Korea may be launching missiles to attract more concessions. Are you prepared to offer any more concessions beyond that already offered in the six-party format? And have you ruled out the possible military option in responding to them?

The President. As you know, we want to solve all problems diplomatically. That's our first choice.

What was the first part of your question? This is what happens when you're 60——

Q. ——are they trying to exchange—[*inaudible*].

The President. Look, I don't know what the man's intentions are. I don't know what they are. It's an interesting question: Is he trying to force us to do something by defying the world? If he wants a way forward, it's clear. If he wants to have good relations with the world, he's got to verifiably get rid of his weapons programs like he agreed to do in 1994, stop testing missiles, and there is a way forward. Part of the discussions in September were, here's a way forward. Here's a way for—he's worried about energy, and our partners at the table said, well, here's an energy proposal for you to consider. And so the choice is his to make.

And I made it very clear to our partners that it seems like to me, that the message ought to be one that said, you shouldn't be rewarded for violating that which you've said you're going to do and kind of ignoring what the world has said. And it's just—whether it be the Iranian issue or the North Korean issue, there is a way forward for these leaders that will lead to a better life for their people and acceptance into the international community. And one of the things we've done in the United States is to work with the coalition to send that message. It's a clear message. He knows what his options are.

Kelly [Kelly O'Donnell, NBC News]. A couple—then we'll start working the local thing. Warm up.

Hamdan v. Rumsfeld

Q. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Q. I'd like to ask you to speak on the broad implications of that recent Supreme Court case—not the specifics of the case. But the Justices said that you overreached your authority, and your critics have been saying that too. Given your support and respect for the Court, are you willing to rethink how you use your Presidential authority?

The President. I am willing to abide by the ruling of the Supreme Court. And the Supreme Court said that in this particular case, when it comes to dealing with illegal combatants who were picked up off a battlefield and put in Guantanamo for the sake of our security, that we should work with the United States Congress to develop a way forward. They didn't say we couldn't have done—made that decision, see. They were silent on whether or not Guantanamo—whether or not we should have used Guantanamo. In other words, they accepted the use of Guantanamo, the decision I made. What they did say was, in terms of going forward, what should the court system look like? How can we use a military commission or tribunal?

And we'll work with the United States Congress. They have said, work with the Congress. I have been waiting for this decision in order to figure out how to go forward. I want to move forward. First of all, I stand by the decision I made in removing these people from the battlefield. See, here's the problem: These are the types of combatants we have never faced before. They don't wear uniforms, and they don't represent a nation-state. They're bound by an ideology. They've sworn allegiance to individuals but not to a nation. The Geneva Conventions were set up

to deal with armies of nation-states. You've got standard rules of war.

So this is new ground. This is different than any President has been through before, in terms of how to deal with these kind of people that you're picking up off a battlefield and trying to protect the American people from.

So we have about 600 or so there, and 200 have been sent back home. We'd like to send more back to their countries of origin. Some need to be tried, and the fundamental question is, how do we try them? And so in working with the Supreme—in listening to the Supreme Court, we'll work with Congress to achieve that objective.

And so your question is slightly loaded, which is okay; I'm used to it. But the idea of making the decision about creating Guantanamo in the first place was upheld by the courts. Or let's say, the courts were silent on it.

Let's see—Jessica [Jessica Yellin, ABC News]. Go ahead and yell it out.

Q. Yell it out. Alright, sir.

The President. Or don't yell it out.

North Korea/Missile Defense System

Q. It's been three days since North Korea fired those missiles. Yesterday you said you did not know the trajectory of the long-range missile. Can you now tell us, where was it headed? And if it were headed—if it had been headed at the United States, how would our national ballistic missile system have taken it down?

The President. I still can't give you any better answer than yesterday. I can embellish yesterday's answer. It may sound better. No, I, really, I haven't talked to the Secretary of Defense about that.

Our missile systems are modest—our antiballistic missile systems are modest. They're new. It's new research. We've gotten—testing them. And so I can't—it's hard for me to give you a probability of success. But, nevertheless, the fact that a nontransparent society would be willing to tee up a rocket and fire it without identifying where it's going or what was on it, means we need a ballistic missile system.

So that's about all I can tell you on that. Yes. Obviously, it wasn't a satisfactory answer.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, I think we had a reasonable chance of shooting it down. At least that's what the military commanders told me.

Rick. Let's get a little local here, Ricky. Do you consider yourself local or national? Hybrid? Are you a hybrid?

CIA Employee Identity Leak Investigation

Q. It seems trendy——

The President. Yes, very trendy. You're kind of a trendy guy. Got the gray shirt.

Q. Thank you very much. Mr. President, the work of U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald in prosecuting alleged corruption is well-known here in Chicago as well as nationally. It's my understanding that technically, he hasn't been reappointed to his position and serves at your pleasure. Do you have any plans to formally reappoint him to the post, or any other position at Department of Justice?

The President. As a special prosecutor?

Q. And would you give us your assessment of the job that he's doing?

The President. I don't have any plans to reappoint him because I haven't thought about it. I will now think about it, now that you brought it up.

The only—I can give you an assessment of how I thought he handled the case in Washington. I haven't been following the cases here. I thought in Washington, he handled the case with professionalism; he was very professional about it. You didn't see a lot of leaks; you didn't see a lot of speculation; you didn't see a lot of people, kind of, dropping a little crumb here for the press to chew on. And I really thought he handled himself well.

But as far as reappointing him as a special prosecutor, I don't know whether the Attorney General is going to do that or not. That's his choice to make.

Chris. Or, Paul. Paul.

Energy/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Mr. President, gas prices are high, as you know. Oil is at 75 a barrel. There is a

poll that suggests that three in four Americans are not content with your leadership on the issue, and that the State of the Union pitch for alternative fuel technology has fallen flat and is not moving. Why not call for an emergency energy summit and lift the issue to a higher priority?

The President. Well, I thought addressing the issue at the State of the Union was pretty much lifting it to a high priority. When you include it in the State of the Union, it means it's a top priority, and it is.

It took us a while to get in a position where we're reliant upon sources of energy from outside our boundaries, and it's going to take us a while to become less dependent. It just takes a while; things just don't happen instantly. I told the people, if I could lower gasoline prices with a snap of the fingers, I'd do it. And I've been talking about energy independence since I first got elected. And we've made some progress. We made progress by encouraging the spread of ethanol. And I think if you were to look at the facts, that ethanol has gone from low market penetration to pretty significant market penetration in selected parts of the country, relatively speaking, particularly in the Midwest.

There is more work to be done. There is a lot of ethanol plants being built as we speak, and there's incentives in Government law to do that. We've effected CAFE standards when it comes to light trucks, which will help consumers make a rational decision. We put incentives for people to buy hybrid vehicles in law. If you go out and buy a hybrid vehicle, you get a tax credit.

I happen to believe it's essential for us to promote nuclear power as a way to make us less dependent on natural gas from overseas, for example. Also, this will help us be wise stewards of our environment. We're spending a lot of money on technologies—battery technologies, for example—that would enable Chicago residents to drive the first 40 miles on electricity before one would have to use gasoline.

And so we do have a full-blown strategy to make this country less dependent on foreign sources of oil, to help relieve pressure at the gas pump. When the demand for crude oil in China rises, it affects the global price of crude oil, which affects your price of gasoline. And therefore, the strategy has got to be to diversify away from crude oil.

One of the issues that we're trying to get done here is that if you—if people are genuinely concerned about the price of gasoline, they ought to be supporting my initiative to encourage the construction of additional refinery capacity. Certainly, it's not the long-term solution, but it's an important solution for the short run. If you have constrained gasoline supplies and demand remains high, you're going to have higher prices of gasoline. We haven't built a new refinery in this country since the early 1970s. And so the truth of the matter is, I would hope people would contact their Members of Congress to insist that they support a—the bill that we ran up to the Hill, which would have made it much easier to permit and construct refineries.

So we have a comprehensive plan. This is a serious issue. I understand people are paying high gasoline prices here—it's like a tax. I understand it's like a tax. And we got a strategy to deal with it.

Anna. We're going to work our way down the row here. The Daily Herald, is that one of Pearson's competitors? It is?

Free Trade

Q. Well, we compete with everyone. My question is focusing, too, also, on technology. There's been a lot of mergers with companies in the technology industry, and one of the more recent ones was Lucent Technologies with Alcatel, which is French-owned. How do you feel about a lot of the foreign-owned companies buying out U.S. tech companies, especially those that have military contracts?

The President. We have laws that prevent sensitive technologies from being transferred as a result of sale and/or merger. And we watch that very carefully.

On the broader scale, I have no problem with foreign capital buying U.S. companies; nor do I have a problem with U.S. companies buying foreign companies. That's what free trade is all about. As a matter of fact, there are workers working here in Illinois because of foreign investment. A foreign company takes a look at Illinois; they like the tax structure; they like the governance; they like the workforce; and they invest. And when they invest, they create jobs.

A lot of the jobs in America exist as a result of foreign companies investing here in our country. So I believe in opening markets. I do believe in protecting secrets, but we've got laws on the books to prevent secrets from being transferred or vital technology from being transferred. But I believe in free flows of capital, and I believe in free trade. And that's not a given in the United States. There are people who say, "Well, we can't compete with China; let's throw up roadblocks; let's protect ourselves," or, "We don't want foreigners coming to invest in our country." I think that would be a mistake. I think that's the early signs of protectionist sentiments, which would mean our economy wouldn't grow.

In my State of the Union—the very same State of the Union that I addressed the energy problem—I talked about trends that are worrisome. One trend would be protectionism, and its corollary would be isolationism. An isolationist world basically says, "Don't worry about what happens overseas; we'll just worry about what happens here at home. Don't worry about HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa, not our problem. Don't worry about Darfur; it's not our problem. Don't worry about the fact that there's tyrannies in the Middle East; that's not our problem."

The truth of the matter is, all of these issues are our problem, and if we became isolationist, we would not do our duty to protect the American people and, kind of, lay the foundations for a better world.

People say, well, you know, China is too tough to compete with; let's just throw up tariffs. I completely disagree. I think competition is good and healthy. I think it's important to have a competitive world. It means that people are constantly producing a better product and a better service at a better price, which is good for consumers.

Yes, sir.

2006 Elections

Q. An aide to Judy Topinka was quoted as saying that given your low approval ratings in the polls, they prefer you to come here in the middle of the night.

The President. Didn't work. I'm coming at lunch. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm wondering if you're offended by those remarks, and whether or not you think your presence may actually harm Republican candidates when you come out to campaign for them.

The President. I'm not offended. First of all, I think—am I offended that you read the person's remarks to me? No, I'm not offended that you were reading that at all, nor am I offended at what the person said. The first I've heard it was just then. And I'm coming to lunch. I think it's going to be a pretty successful fundraiser. And I—we will hold the House and the Senate. And I've spent a lot of time on the road. I like campaigning, and I'm proud she invited me. And—yes.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—approval ratings, do you think that—[*inaudible*].

The President. That's up to the candidates to decide. I was invited; I gladly came. And I think we're going to have a pretty successful fundraiser for her.

Here's how you win elections. You win elections by believing something. You win elections by having a plan to protect the American people from terrorist attack. You win elections by having a philosophy that has actually produced results—with economic growth, for example—or kind of changing the school systems for the better or providing prescription drug coverage for elders. That's how you win elections. And I'm looking forward to these elections. I think you'll be surprised. Or maybe you won't be surprised. You're probably a sophisticated political analyst; you know what's going on.

Iraq/North Korea

Q. Mr. President, a lot of people here in Chicago tell us that they see an incongruity in your foreign policy. We're involved in a shooting war in Iraq; yet we have a leader in North Korea who has announced his affection for nuclear weapons and no hesitation to use them against the United States. Is your policy consistent between the way you have dealt with Iraq, the way you have dealt with North Korea? And if so, are we headed toward a military action in North Korea? And if so, can this Nation sustain military action on three fronts—Iraq, Afghanistan, and North Korea?

The President. I have always said that it's important for an American President to exhaust all diplomatic avenues before the use of force. Committing our troops into harm's way is a difficult decision. It's the toughest decision a President will ever make. And I fully understand the consequences of doing so.

All diplomatic options were exhausted, as far as I was concerned, with Saddam Hussein. Remember that the U.N. Security Council resolution that we passed when I was the President was 1 of 16, I think—16, 17? Give me a hand here. More than 15. [*Laughter*] Resolution after resolution after resolution saying the same thing, and he ignored them. And we tried diplomacy. We went to the U.N. Security Council—15-to-nothing vote that said, "Disarm, disclose, or face serious consequences."

I happen to believe that when you say something, you better mean it. And so when we signed on to that resolution that said, disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences, I meant what we said. That's one way you keep the peace: You speak clearly, and you mean what you say.

And so the choice was Saddam Hussein's choice. He could have not fooled the inspectors. He could have welcomed the world in. He could have told us what was going on. But he didn't, and so we moved.

And we're in the diplomatic process now with North Korea; that's what you're seeing happening. Remember—remember, we put a coalition together at the United Nations that said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." It was 15 to nothing. It wasn't a U.S., 1 to 14. It was 15 to nothing; other nations stood up and said the same thing we said.

So we're now working the diplomacy, and you're watching the diplomacy work, not only in North Korea but in Iran. It's kind of painful, in a way, for some to watch because it takes a while to get people on the same page. Everybody—not everybody thinks the exact same way we think. There are different—words mean different things to different people, and the diplomatic processes can be slow and cumbersome. That's why this is probably the fourth day in a row I've been asked about North Korea—it's slow and cumbersome. Things just don't happen overnight.

But what you're watching is a diplomatic response to a person who, since 1994, has said they're—not going to have a weapon.

Q. Do you believe the United States [*inaudible*]——

The President. I don't accept that hypothetical question. You're asking me a hypothetical. What I believe is, we can solve the problem diplomatically.

Let's see here—Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Upcoming G–8 Summit/Iran

Q. Mr. President, if the EU does not receive a definitive answer from Iran on the incentives package by next week, do you foresee the G–8 summit as being a springboard to bring that issue to the U.N. Security Council? And what do you say to Americans who are frustrated by the familiar roadblocks, it seems, of China and Russia on harsh sanctions?

The President. I said I wasn't going to answer a hypothetical; now you're trying to get me to answer a hypothetical. The G–8 will be an opportunity for those of us involved with this issue to make it clear to the Iranians that they—we're firm in our resolve for them not to have a nuclear weapon.

I talked to President Putin about North Korea; I also talked to him about Iran. I believe he understands the dangers of the Iranians having a nuclear weapon.

Some nations are more comfortable with sanctions than other nations, and part of the issue we face in some of these countries is that they've got economic interests. And part of our objective is to make sure that national security interests, security of the world interests, trump economic interests. And sometimes that takes a while to get people focused in the right direction.

You know, the first step of a diplomatic solution is for there to be a common goal agreed upon by those of us participating in the process. The goal in North Korea is a nuclear weapons-free peninsula—not just in North Korea but North and South Korea. And that's an important goal. It's important for the neighborhood to have embraced that goal.

The goal for Iran is for them to have a—verifiably get rid of their weapons program. The first step, however, is to—for their verifiable suspension. And by the way, if they will verifiably do which they said they would do in Paris, we will come back to the table. That's what we've said we will do.

And whether or not they—what their posture is, we're finding out as a result of the conversations of Mr. Solana of the EU and Mr. Larijani. I do appreciate Javier Solana's work on this issue. I saw him when I was in Austria, and I thanked him for doing a good job.

Yes. I'm trying to kind of tamp the follow-ups down a little bit here.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Do I have a sense of urgency? I have a—I'm realistic about how things move in the world. Sanger will tell you; he's been covering North Korea since the mid '90s—these problems don't arise in a nanosecond. It takes a while for a problem to fester and grow, and then it takes a while to solve them diplomatically. That's just the nature of diplomacy. I wish we could solve them overnight. But I'm a realistic—one thing I'm not going to let us do is get caught in the trap of sitting at the table alone with the North Korean, for example. In my judgment, if you want to solve a problem diplomatically, you need partners to do so.

And a good partner to have at the table with us is China. They're in the neighborhood, got some influence in the neighborhood. Another good partner to have at the table is South Korea. They've got a lot at stake of what happens in North Korea, so it's important to have them at the table as well. My concern—I've said this publicly a lot—my concern about being—handling this issue bilaterally is that you run out of options very quickly. And sometimes it's easier for the leader of the nontransparent society to turn the tables and make a country like the United States the problem, as opposed to themselves.

The problem in North Korea and the problem in Iran is, their leaders have made choices. And what we're saying is, "There's a better avenue for you. Here's a different route; here's a different way forward for your people."

I said yesterday—and I truly mean this—I am deeply concerned about the plight of the folks who live in North Korea. I'm concerned about starvation and deprivation. I'm concerned that little children are being denied enough food so they can develop a mental capacity to be citizens of this world. I'm concerned about concentration camps. There is a better way for the people of North Korea, and their leader can make better choices if he truly cares about their plight. And we have made clear what that choice is.

Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, CNN].

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, if I could follow up, you say diplomacy takes time——

The President. Yes, it does.

Q. ——but it was 4 years ago that you labeled North Korea a member of the "axis of evil." And since then, it's increased its nuclear arsenal; it's abandoned six-party talks; and now these missile launches——

The President. Let me ask you a question. It's increased it's—that's an interesting statement: "North Korea has increased its nuclear arsenal." Can you verify that?

Q. Well, intelligence sources say—if you can—if you'd like to dispute that, that's fine.

The President. No, I'm not going to dispute; I'm just curious.

Q. Our intelligence sources say that it's increased the number—its nuclear capability——

The President. Let me put it this way: The guy is dangerous—dangerous. He's got potential danger.

Q. It's increased its nuclear capabilities. It's abandoned six-party talks, and it's launched these missiles.

The President. Yes.

Q. Why shouldn't Americans see the U.S. policy regarding North Korea as a failed one?

The President. Because it takes time to get things done.

Q. What objectives has the U.S. Government achieved when it comes to North Korea? And why does the administration continue to go back to the same platform process if it's not effective in changing North Korea's behavior? Thank you.

The President. Suzanne, these problems didn't arise overnight, and they don't get

solved overnight. It takes a while. Again, I think if you look at the history of the North Korean weapons program, it started probably in the '80s. We don't know—maybe you know more than I do about increasing the number of nuclear weapons. My view is, we ought to treat North Korea as a danger, take them seriously. No question that he has signed agreements and didn't stick by them. But that was done during—when we had bilateral negotiations with him, and it's done during the six-party talks.

You've asked what we've done. We've created a framework that will be successful. I don't—my judgment is, you can't be successful if the United States is sitting at the table alone with North Korea. You run out of options very quickly if that's the case. In order to be successful diplomatically, it's best to have other partners at the table. You ask what we've done. We got the six-party talks started. And that's a positive development. It's a way to solve this problem diplomatically.

Bill.

Usama bin Laden

Q. Mr. President——

The President. I just thought for a minute you might have known more than I do about—when you say, definitively say, he's increased the number of weapons. I don't think we know that.

Q. Maybe you know, but you're not telling.

The President. That's an option. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, you said some time ago that——

The President. Maybe I don't know and don't want to tell you I don't know. Anyway [*laughter*]——

Q. You said some time ago that you wanted Usama bin Laden dead or alive. You later regretted the formulation, but maybe not the thought.

The President. I regretted the formulation because my wife got on me for talking that way.

Q. We suspected as much, sir. [*Laughter*] But the question I have is, it appears that the CIA has disbanded the unit that was hunting him down. Is it no longer important to track him down?

The President. It's just an incorrect story. I mean,we got a lot of assets looking for Usama bin Laden. So whatever you want to read in that story, it's just not true, period.

Q. You're still after him?

The President. Absolutely. No ands, ifs, or buts. And in my judgment, it's just a matter of time, unless we stop looking. And we're not going to stop looking so long as I'm the President—not only for Usama bin Laden but anybody else who plots and plans attacks against the United States of America. We're going to stay on the offense so long as I'm your President. And my judgment is, if we let up the pressure on them, the world is more dangerous. In the short run, we will bring these people to justice. We will use good intelligence. We will share information with our allies. We will work with friends. We'll bring people to justice. In the long run, the way you defeat this enemy is to spread liberty, and that's what you're seeing unfold.

Yes, sir. You are?

Mayor Daley of Chicago

Q. Carlos.

The President. Who are you working for, Carlos?

Q. CLTV, the Tribune TV station in town.

The President. CLTV.

Q. I work with Pearson, so——

The President. You do?

Q. Well, thank you, Mr. President. Last summer, when you were here to sign the transportation bill in Denny Hastert's district, you described Mayor Daley as "a great mayor." If you've read the morning papers, you'll find that Patrick Fitzgerald has secured the conviction of one of the mayor's top—former top officials for rigging city jobs to benefit the mayor's political workers. Does that change your assessment of Mayor Daley's tenure?

The President. I still think he's a great mayor. This is a well-run city, and he gets a lot of credit for it. He doesn't get sole credit, but he gets a lot of credit. He's a leader. The thing I like about Daley is he—when he tells you something, he means it. Like, he told me, he said, we're going to whomp you in the 2000 election. He meant it. [*Laughter*] He's a—yes, I'm proud to call

him friend. I'm proud to have shared my 60th birthday with your mayor.

Yes, sir. Yes, Mark.

Progress in Iraq/U.S. Armed Forces

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you. Mr. President, three Illinois National Guard units left this week for Iraq. At a time when there's discussion about withdraw or drawdown of troops, what are the families of these Illinois National Guardsmen to expect?

The President. They expect that their loved one will be participating in a noble and important cause. If I didn't think it was important, I wouldn't have put out the orders to have people go there. And if I didn't think we could win, I wouldn't be there. That's what they can expect. They can expect tough work, tough sledding, and they can expect a grateful Commander in Chief and a grateful nation for their sacrifices.

In terms of troop levels, those decisions will be made by General Casey. There's a debate in Washington as to whether or not we set an artificial timetable for withdrawal. That's what it's about in Washington, DC. And the answer is, absolutely not. You can't win a war if you have an artificial timetable for withdrawal. You can't have people making troop decisions based upon political considerations. It just won't work. It's unfair to those families that we're sending—of the kids we're sending over, and it's unfair to the troops.

Artificial timetable for withdrawal sends the wrong message to the Iraqis; they're seeing it's not worth it. There's a lot of Iraqis over there determined—trying to make up their mind whether they want to be a part of democracy or whether or not they're going to take to the hills and see what happens. Artificial timetable for withdrawal, kind of early withdrawal before this finishes, sends the message to the enemy, we were right about America. That's what they say. Al Qaida has said it's just a matter of time before America withdraws. They're weak; they're corrupt; they can't stand it; and they'll withdraw. And all that would do is confirm what the enemy thinks.

And getting out before we finish the job would send a terrible message to the troops who've sacrificed. We'll win. We'll achieve our objective, which is a free country that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and will be an ally in the war on terror. And we're making progress toward that goal.

The problem is that the enemy gets to define success better than we do. See, they'll kill innocent people like that; they don't care. Life is not precious to them. And they're willing to kill women and children in order to achieve a tactical objective. And it gets on our TV screens. And people mourn the loss of life. This is a compassionate nation that cares about people, and when they see people die on their TV screens, it sends a signal: Well, maybe we're not winning.

We occasionally are able to pop in with great success, like Zarqawi or 12 million people voting. But increasing electricity in Baghdad is not the kind of thing that tends to get on the news, or small-business formation is not the kind of thing to get—or new schools or new hospitals, the infrastructure being rebuilt that had been torn apart. And I'm not being critical. I'm just giving you a fact of something I have to deal with in order to make it clear to the American people that the sacrifice of those families is worth it. We are winning. And a free Iraq is an essential part of changing the conditions which causes the terrorists to be able to recruit killers in the first place.

For a long period of time, our foreign policy was just, kind of, excuse tyranny and hope for the best. It didn't work. The world may have seemed placid, it may have seemed calm, but beneath the surface was resentment and hatred, out of which came an attack that killed 3,000 of our citizens.

And so I am committed to the spread of liberty. It's, after all, how we were founded. And there's a debate here in the United States that says, well, maybe it's too much for the United States to insist others live in a free world. Maybe that's just too unilateral. I view that as cultural elitism for people who say that. It's like saying, we're okay to be free, but you're not.

I believe freedom is universal, and I believe etched in the soul of every person on the face of the Earth is the desire to be free. And I know that freedom has got the capacity to change regions of the world for the better.

Our press corps is bored with this story, but I'm going to tell it anyway—the Koizumi story. [*Laughter*] That's what you get when you get familiar with people—they can anticipate your remarks.

I hope you thought it was interesting that Prime Minister Koizumi and I went to Graceland. It was really a lot of fun, wasn't it? It's an interesting part of the development of our relationship, from one in which Japan was the enemy of the United States and today, the son of a person who fought the Japanese and the son of a person who resented the United States are close friends. We talk about keeping the peace. We talk about working together to change the world for the better: What do we do? How do we feed people who are hungry? How do we build roads in Afghanistan? What do we do?

And so what happened? What happened was, is that Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy after World War II, and the conditions of our relationship—the condition of the country changed; the attitude changed; and our relationship changed.

The Far East was a pretty difficult place. I know we spend a lot of time talking about the Far East today because of North Korea, but if you really look at the development in the Far East, it's pretty remarkable, isn't it? South Korea has emerged into a vibrant capitalist society. Japan has still got a little hangover from their previous activities in the region, but nevertheless, is a thriving partner in peace. Taiwan is making progress. China has got opening markets. Their economy is growing. Their entrepreneurial class is strong. They need to—the political system needs to evolve. But nevertheless, the region is relatively peaceful except for one outpost; one system that's not open and transparent; one system that doesn't respond to the will of the people; one system that's dark, and that's North Korea.

It took a while for that peaceful evolution to occur. And that's what's going to happen in the Middle East. It is. And it's hard work. And I want those parents to know that. These are historic times. We will lose if we leave too early. The stakes of success are vital, but a free Iraq is going to help inspire others to demand what I believe is a universal right of men and women.

General Casey will make the decisions as to how many troops we have there. And that's important for the families to know. It's really important. General Casey is a wise and smart man who has spent a lot of time in Baghdad recently, obviously. And it's his judgment that I rely upon. He'll decide how best to achieve victory and the troop levels necessary to do so.

I spent a lot of time talking to him about troop levels, and I told him this; I said: You decide, General. I want your judgment, your advice. I don't want these decisions being made by the political noise, by the political moment. It's just unfair to our troops, and it's unfair to their families. It's the reasoned judgment of our military commanders that the President must count on in order to achieve a victory that is necessary to help make this country more secure. And that's exactly how I'm going to make my decision.

So if the people are listening, they need to know I'm proud of their families. The cause is noble and necessary. And the size of the troops that will be there will depend upon the sound judgment of our military commanders.

Thank you for this press conference. I've enjoyed it. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10 a.m. in the Museum of Science and Industry. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; Rep. Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., of Illinois; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; President Hu Jintao of China; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois and Department of Justice CIA leak investigation Special Prosecutor; Judy Baar Topinka, candidate for Governor of Illinois; Secretary General Javier Solana of the Council of the European Union; Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme National Secretary Council and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; and Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at a Lunch for Gubernatorial Candidate Judy Baar Topinka in Chicago

July 7, 2006

Thank you all. Go ahead; please be seated. Thanks for coming. I am honored to be here. I proudly stand with Judy Baar Topinka as the next Governor of the State of Illinois.

Laura sends her best. Like Judy says, "Sorry Laura didn't come." I say, "Yes, most candidates say that." [*Laughter*] I'm really lucky that Laura said yes when I asked her to marry me. And I think the country is lucky to have her as the First Lady. And she sends her very best to Judy. She, like me, hopes that Judy will win. And she, like me, knows that when Judy does win, she's going to be a fabulous Governor for the people of Illinois.

I'm glad to be here with the Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming. Somebody said, "What is it like dealing with Hastert?" I said, "Solid as a rock." [*Laughter*] He's predictable. You can count on him. He's doing a fine job as the Speaker of the House of Representatives. I love working with you. We're getting a lot done. And I want to thank you for being here.

Jim Edgar, what a good man. Thanks for coming, Governor. I appreciate you being here. We're members of the ex-Governors club. [*Laughter*] And we got to know Jim and Brenda well during his time as Governor of Illinois, and he was a dandy. All you got to do is aspire to be as good as Jim Edgar, and you'll do a great job, Governor Topinka. He is—he set the standard, didn't he, for Governors here in Illinois. And I'm proud you're here, and thanks for helping Judy Baar.

I want to thank all the candidates who are here. There's a lot here, so I'm not going to try to rip them all off, but I do want to thank you for running statewide—Lieutenant Governor candidate, attorney general candidate, treasurer candidate, comptroller candidate. Maybe I ought to say it just to see if I can get some ink for you: Joe Birkett, running for Lieutenant Governor. [*Applause*] Yes, let's do it that way—Christine Radogno running for State treasurer. Senator, thanks for coming. Senator Dan Rutherford running for secretary of state—there he is. Senator Bill Brady, he's not running for anything statewide, but he's here. Senator, thank you.

It's a good sign to see all the senators. When senators and members start to swarm around, it means they're smelling victory. [*Laughter*] They want to be close to the next Governor. Judy Baar, it's a good sign when you've got people like Tom Cross, the Illinois house minority leader. He's from your district, right, Speaker? Yes. Stu Umholtz is running for attorney general. Thanks for coming, Stu. Yes.

I want to thank Andy McKenna and all the grassroots activists who are here. This has been an incredibly successful fundraiser. And I thank you for your hard work in supporting Judy Baar. It's hard to do a big fundraiser like this, and it takes a lot of good organizers and people willing to go out and pick up the phone and call and ask. And you've done a fantastic job. It's a good sign. People don't want to back somebody who can't win. And you're here to back Judy Baar because, one, you like her; two, you trust her; and, three, you know she can win and become the Governor of the State.

So I thank you all for contributing mightily to her campaign, and I urge those of you who are involved in grassroots politics to kind of warm up and get ready to turn out the vote come November. She's going to need people putting up the signs and stuffing the letters and making the phone calls and urging the good people of this State—Republican, Democrat, and independent—to show up to the polls and do their duty and to vote for Judy Baar. She's going to do a fine job as you're Governor. She's a good, fine, honest person who knows what she's doing. She's got a track record. She can get the job done.

Having been a Governor, I know what it means to be a Governor. You got to have somebody who can set an agenda; somebody that doesn't try to be all things to all people; somebody that says, "Here's what I'm running for, and here is what I intend to do," and then is going to do it. That's what the people of Illinois want. They don't want a bunch of fancy footwork and empty slogans. They want a practical person to say, let's make this State, for example, the best State in the country to be an entrepreneur. Let's