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agreement. The United States and the Russian Federation are actively working for unity among the UN Security Council members on these sensitive issues. We will continue consultations with our G–8 partners to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime.

Through our cooperation in the field of nuclear nonproliferation we seek to improve the security of our own peoples and of all others in the world community. In doing so, we are building on the unique historic roles and responsibilities of the United States and the Russian Federation in nuclear science and technology, both military and civilian. We are united in our determination to help make the benefits of nuclear energy securely available to all for peaceful purposes.

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

## Statement on the Landing of the Space Shuttle *Discovery*

*July 17, 2006*

On behalf of all Americans, I welcome home the crew of the Space Shuttle *Discovery* from a safe and successful mission. Your courage and commitment to excellence have inspired us all, and a proud Nation sends its congratulations on a job well done. The men and women of NASA have dedicated themselves to putting our space program back on track and implementing our Nation's vision for human and robotic space exploration. America's space program is a source of great national pride, and this mission has been another important accomplishment in advancing space science, human space flight, and space exploration.

## Proclamation 8036—Captive Nations Week, 2006

*July 13, 2006*

*By the President of the United States of America*

***A Proclamation***

The best hope for peace is the expansion of freedom throughout the world. During Captive Nations Week, we reaffirm our commitment to advancing liberty, protecting human rights, and helping people realize the great promise of democracy.

In proclaiming the first Captive Nations Week in 1959, President Dwight Eisenhower said that "the citizens of the United States are linked by bonds of family and principle to those who love freedom and justice on every continent." Over the past five decades, the force of human freedom has overcome hatred and resentment and overthrown tyrants in nations around the globe. Freedom is on the march, and today more people live in liberty than ever before.

The advance of freedom is the story of our time, and we have witnessed remarkable democratic progress in recent years. The people of Afghanistan elected their first democratic parliament in more than a generation. The people of Kyrgyzstan drove a corrupt regime from power and voted for democratic change. Ending 16 years of civil war and interim governments, the people of Liberia were able to go to the polls, electing Africa's first female president. The courageous citizens of Iraq reached yet another important milestone in their journey towards democracy by forming a national unity government based upon the constitution they approved last October. In Lebanon, citizens recovered their independence and chose their members of parliament in free elections. That newfound independence has come under attack in recent days from terrorists and their state sponsors, who see freedom and democracy as a threat. The United States and its allies will stand with those in Lebanon who continue to struggle for their independence and sovereignty and who refuse to give over their country to extremism and terror.

At this critical time in the history of freedom, no nation can evade the demands of human dignity. In countries like Iran, North Korea, Belarus, Burma, Syria, Zimbabwe, and Cuba, governments must become accountable to their citizens and embrace democracy. The desire for freedom is written in every human heart, and we can be confident that in this century freedom will continue to prevail.

This week is also an opportunity to honor those who have stood against oppression and advanced the fundamental right of all to live in liberty. The courage and sacrifice of these men and women reflect the fact that tyranny can never destroy the desire to be free. Inspired by their example, we will carry on their work to help others realize the universal gift of liberty and to spread the light of democracy to every corner of the world.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as "Captive Nations Week."

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 16 through July 22, 2006, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to reaffirm their commitment to all those seeking liberty, justice, and self-determination.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., July 19, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 18, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on July 20.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

*July 18, 2006*

***The President.*** I just had the pleasure of briefing the key Members of the House and the Senate on my trip to St. Petersburg and to Germany. Thank you all for coming.

You know, prior to my traveling to St. Petersburg, I thought the issue was going to be whether or not we could bring the world together to deal with North Korea and Iran—and by the way, during my stay there, we did get an unanimous United Nations Security Council agreement on North Korea. And it was my pleasure to be able to thank the Chinese and the Russians and the Japanese and our European friends for voting favorably for that resolution—but instead, a lot of the discussion was on the Hizballian attacks into Israel.

What was really interesting was that—and I briefed this to the Members—that we were able to reach a very strong consensus that the world must confront the root causes of the current instability. And the root cause of that current instability is terrorism and terrorist attacks on a democratic country. And part of those terrorist attacks are inspired by nation-states like Syria and Iran. And in order to be able to deal with this crisis, the world must deal with Hizballah, with Syria, and to continue to work to isolate Iran.

I strongly believe every nation ought to be able to defend herself from terrorist attacks. We're also mindful—and I talked to the Members—about the need to make sure the Government of Lebanon does not collapse. It's in our interest that Lebanon be free and the Siniora Government succeed.

We also talked about the evacuation of U.S. citizens in Lebanon. And Condi briefed the Members about the joint plan with the Defense Department to make sure there's enough transportation to expeditiously provide transportation for those who want to leave. And we're in the process of doing that.

All in all, it was a very positive visit there in the G–8. We dealt with significant problems. Sometimes it requires tragic situations to help bring clarity in the international community. And it is now clear for all to see that there are terrorist elements who want to destroy our democratic friends and allies, and the world must work to prevent them from doing so.

With that, I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Let's see, here. Yes.

### *Situation in the Middle East*

***Q.*** In trying to defuse the situation in the Middle East, is the United States trying to buy time and give Israel a chance to weaken Hizballah militarily?

***The President.*** Well, we have made it very clear that Israel should be allowed to defend herself. We've asked that as she does