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Week Ending Friday, July 28, 2006

The President's Radio Address

July 22, 2006

Good morning. This week I returned from Russia, where I met with world leaders at the G–8 summit. The summit was an opportunity for important talks with these nations, and it brought progress on key issues. We had wide-ranging discussions on the global economy. We agreed on new steps to strengthen our collective security, including a United Nations Security Council resolution on North Korea. This resolution condemned North Korea's recent missile launches, and it urged the North Korean regime to abandon its nuclear programs and return to the six-party talks.

Much of our time at the summit was spent discussing the situation in the Middle East, especially the recent violence in Israel and Lebanon. The recent crisis in the region was triggered by the kidnaping of Israeli soldiers by the terrorist group Hizballah and the launch of rockets against Israeli cities. I believe sovereign nations have the right to defend their people from terrorist attack and to take the necessary action to prevent those attacks.

We're also mindful of the cost to innocent civilians in Lebanon and in Israel, and we have called on Israel to continue to exercise the greatest possible care to protect innocent lives. Throughout this crisis, I have spoken to leaders in the Middle East and around the world. Our efforts to resolve this dangerous situation are guided by an international framework that is already in place.

In 2004, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1559, which recognizes the sovereignty of Lebanon, calls for all foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon, and calls for the disbanding and disarmament of all militias. Hizballah defied the world's just demands by maintaining armed units in the southern region of Lebanon and attacking Israel in defiance of the democratically elected Lebanese Government.

I've directed Secretary of State Rice to travel to the Middle East in the coming days to discuss the best ways to resolve this crisis with leaders in the region. Secretary Rice will make it clear that resolving the crisis demands confronting the terrorist group that launched the attacks and the nations that support it.

For many years, Syria has been a primary sponsor of Hizballah, and it has helped provide Hizballah with shipments of Iranian-made weapons. Iran's regime has also repeatedly defied the international community with its ambition for nuclear weapons and aid to terrorist groups. Their actions threaten the entire Middle East and stand in the way of resolving the current crisis and bringing lasting peace to this troubled region.

We're also concerned about the impact the current conflict is having on Lebanon's young democracy. This is a difficult and trying time for the people of Lebanon. Hizballah's practice of hiding rockets in civilian neighborhoods and its efforts to undermine the democratically elected Government have shown it to be no friend of Lebanon. By its actions, Hizballah has jeopardized Lebanon's tremendous advances and betrayed the Lebanese people.

Over the past week, nations like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have stepped forward to offer humanitarian aid and assistance to the Lebanese Government. America and our allies will join these efforts. We're also working to help American citizens who wish to leave Lebanon. American military personnel and Embassy officials are working hard to ensure this operation proceeds smoothly and safely. We continue to pray for the safety of all people in Lebanon—Americans, Lebanese, and citizens of other countries.

America remains committed to lasting peace in the Middle East. The United States

and our partners will continue to seek a return to the roadmap for peace in the Middle East, which sets out the pathway to establishing a viable democratic Palestinian state that will live in peace with Israel. We will continue to support moderate leaders like Palestinian Authority President Abbas. We will continue to call on Hamas to end its acts of terror. And now, more than ever, the Palestinians need leaders who are not compromised by terror and who will help the Palestinian people provide a future for their children based on regional peace and security.

In the long term, this peace will come only by defeating the terrorist ideology of hatred and fear. The world's best hope for lasting security and stability across the Middle East is the establishment of free and just societies. America and our allies will act decisively because we know our security is at stake in this struggle and we know the cause of freedom will prevail.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on July 21 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 21 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony

July 24, 2006

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks for letting me come back, General, proud to be here. I'm really looking forward to witnessing what is going to be a very uplifting ceremony.

In a few moments, these men will swear the oath to become citizens of the United States of America. As part of the ceremony, they will promise to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic. This isn't going to be the first time these men have made such a promise. They took a similar oath when they became soldiers of the United States Army. And their presence here bears witness that they kept their word so that others might be free.

I appreciate General Farmer, and I want to thank all the folks who work here. I'm incredibly impressed by the health care and the decency and the compassion of the people who work here at Walter Reed. You bring great credit to our country. I can't tell you the number of times, when I travel around America, that I brag about Walter Reed and the health care you deliver.

I appreciate Dr. Emilio Gonzalez, who will be administering the oath of office. He's the Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. He's the head guy; he came over to deliver the oath. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Colonel Deal and everybody else. I particularly want to say thanks to the families of these three men. Thank you for joining us today.

Through the generations, our Nation has remained strong and free because men and women put on our uniform and defend this country and defend our beliefs. The three men we honor today have brought honor to America. Like those who have come before, each of these men chose to protect our country because they love what America stands for.

Army Specialist Sergio Lopez had always wanted to join the Army, and in 2003, he volunteered. After basic training, he moved to Fort Hood, Texas, home of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Infantry Division. Specialist Lopez then deployed to Iraq. He put his life on the line each day, driving between observation posts and his unit's forward operating base in the Baghdad area. In January, he was injured by an improvised explosive device. Specialist Lopez says that becoming a citizen, quote, "represents being acknowledged as having done my duty, having done my part for the country, like the oath says, defending the United States."

Today we honor Army Private First Class Eduardo Leal-Cardenas. He was injured when an IED blew up his vehicle in Iraq. Private Leal-Cardenas is a man of few words, and he's a man of action. When some questioned whether he would ever walk again, he laughed, and he began his rehab while still