AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

there is in the system, the better the system functions on behalf of the American people.

Again, I thank the Members. It's my honor now to sign the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

The President. All right, dismissed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:47 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. S. 2590, approved September 26, was assigned Public Law No. 109–282.

The President's News Conference With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

September 26, 2006

President Bush. Thank you. Please be seated. It's my honor to welcome President Karzai back to the White House. Mr. President, Laura and I fondly remember your gracious hospitality when we met you in your capital. We had a chance today to reconfirm our strong commitment to work together for peace and freedom. And I'm proud of your leadership.

You've got a tough job——

President Karzai. Yes, sometimes it is.

President Bush. ——and you're showing a lot of strength and character. And we're proud to call you ally and friend. I really am.

We discussed how the Government is building institutions necessary for Afghans to have a secure future. We talked about how America and our international partners can continue to help.

Our allies are working on initiatives to help the Afghan people in building a free Afghanistan. And we discussed those initiatives. We discussed whether or not they could be effective, and we discussed how to make them effective. We discussed our cooperation in defeating those who kill innocent life to achieve objectives, political objectives.

The Afghan people know firsthand the nature of the enemy that we face in the war on terror. After all, just yesterday, Taliban gunmen assassinated Safia Ama Jan—cold-blooded kill—she got killed in cold blood. She was a leader who wanted to give young girls an education in Afghanistan. She was a person who served her Government. She was a person who cared deeply about the future of the country. And, Mr. President, Laura and I and the American people join you in mourning her loss.

And her loss shows the nature of this enemy we face. They have no conscience. Their objective is to create fear and create enough violence so we withdraw and let them have their way. And that's unacceptable. It's unacceptable behavior for the free world and the civilized world to accept, Mr. President.

I know that Taliban and Al Qaida remnants and others are trying to bring down your Government, because they know that as democratic institutions take root in your country, the terrorists will not be able to control your country or be able to use it to launch attacks on other nations. They see the threat of democratic progress.

In recent months, the Taliban and other extremists have tried to regain control, mostly in the south of Afghanistan. And so we've adjusted tactics, and we're on the offense to meet the threat and to defeat the threat. Forces from dozens of nations, including every member of NATO, are supporting the democratic Government of Afghanistan. The American people are providing money to help send our troops to your country, Mr. President, and so are a lot of other nations around the world. This is a multinational effort to help you succeed.

Your people have rejected extremism. Afghan forces are fighting bravely for the future of Afghanistan, and many of your forces have given their lives, and we send our deepest condolences to their families and their friends and their neighbors.

The fighting in Afghanistan is part of a global struggle. Recently British forces killed a long-time terrorist affiliated with Al Qaida named Omar Farouq. Farouq was active in Bosnia and Southeast Asia. He was captured in Indonesia; he escaped from prison in Afghanistan; he was killed hiding in Iraq. Every victory in the war on terror enhances the security of free peoples everywhere.

Mr. President, as I told you in the Oval Office, our country will stand with the free people of Afghanistan. I know there's some in your country who wonder or not—whether

or not America has got the will to do the hard work necessary to help you succeed. We have got that will, and we're proud of you as a partner.

President Karzai. Wonderful. Great.

President Bush. We discussed our efforts to help the Government deliver a better life. President Karzai said this about his aspirations—he said he "wants to make Afghanistan a great success and an enduring example of a prosperous and democratic society."

We're helping you build effective and accountable Government agencies. We discussed different agencies in your Government and how best to make them accountable to the people. We're going to help you build roads. We understand that it's important for people to have access to markets. I thought our general had a pretty interesting statement—he said, "Where the road ends, the Taliban tries to begin." The President understands that.

We're helping you with a national literacy program.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. We understand that a free society is one that counts upon a educated citizenry. The more educated a populace is, the more likely it is they'll be active participants in democratic forms of government. We're helping you build schools and medical centers.

We talked about the illegal drug trade. The President gave me a very direct assessment of successes in eradicating poppies and failures in eradicating poppies. It was a realistic assessment of the conditions on the ground. And he talked about his strategy, particularly in dealing in Helmand Province. And, Mr. President, we will support you on this strategy. We understand what you understand, and that is, we've got to eradicate drug trade for the good of the people of Afghanistan.

Tomorrow President Karzai and President Musharraf and I will have dinner. I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be an interesting discussion amongst three allies, three people who are concerned about the future of Pakistan and Afghanistan. It will be a chance for us to work on how to secure the border, how we can continue to work together and share information so we can defeat extremists, how we can work together to build a future of peace and democracy in your region, Mr. President.

I thank you for coming today. I'm looking forward to our discussion tomorrow evening. Welcome back to the White House. The podium is yours.

President Karzai. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's a great honor to be in your very beautiful country once again, especially during fall with all the lovely leaves around. And thank you very much for the great hospitality that you and the First Lady are always giving to your guests, especially to me. And thanks also for your visit to Afghanistan and for seeing us in our country, for seeing from close as to who we are and how we may get to a better future.

I'm very grateful, Mr. President, to you and the American people for all that you have done for Afghanistan for the last 4½ years, from roads to education, to democracy, to Parliament, to good governance effort, to health, and to all other good things that are happening in Afghanistan.

Mr. President, I was, the day before yesterday, in the Walter Reed Hospital. There I met wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. And there also I met a woman soldier with six boys, from 7 to 21, that she had left behind in America in order to build us a road in a mountainous part of the country in Afghanistan. There's nothing more that any nation can do for another country, to send a woman with children to Afghanistan to help. We are very grateful. I'm glad I came to know that story, and I'll be repeating it to the Afghan people once I go back to Afghanistan.

We discussed today all matters that concern the two countries—the question of the reconstruction of Afghanistan, improvement for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the equipping of the Afghan Army, the training of the Afghan Army, the police in Afghanistan, and all other aspects of reconstruction.

We also discussed the region around us, discussed our relations with Pakistan and the question of the joint fight that we have together against terrorism. And I am glad, Mr. President, that you are, tomorrow, hosting a dinner for me and President Musharraf. And I'm sure we'll come out of that meeting with a lot more to talk about to our nations in a very positive way for a better future.

Mr. President, we, the Afghan people, are grateful to you and the American people for all that you have done. I have things in mind to speak about, and you did that, so I'll stop short and let the questions come to us.

President Bush. Thanks. We'll have two questions a side. We'll start with Jennifer Loven [Associated Press].

National Intelligence Estimate/Situation in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, sir. Even after hearing that one of the major conclusions of the National Intelligence Estimate in April was that the Iraq war has fueled terror growth around the world, why have you continued to say that the Iraq war has made this country safer?

And to President Karzai, if I might, what do you think of President Musharraf's comments that you need to get to know your own country better when you're talking about where terror threats and the Taliban threat is coming from?

President Bush. Do you want to start?

President Karzai. Go ahead, please. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. I, of course, read the key judgments on the NIE. I agree with their conclusion that because of our successes against the leadership of Al Qaida, the enemy is becoming more diffuse and independent. I'm not surprised the enemy is exploiting the situation in Iraq and using it as a propaganda tool to try to recruit more people to their murderous ways.

Some people have guessed what's in the report and have concluded that going into Iraq was a mistake. I strongly disagree. I think it's naive. I think it's a mistake for people to believe that going on the offense against people that want to do harm to the American people makes us less safe. The terrorists fight us in Iraq for a reason: They want to try to stop a young democracy from developing, just like they're trying to fight this young democracy in Afghanistan. And they use it as a recruitment tool, because they understand the stakes. They understand what will happen to them when we defeat them in Iraq.

You know, to suggest that if we weren't in Iraq, we would see a rosier scenario with fewer extremists joining the radical movement requires us to ignore 20 years of experience. We weren't in Iraq when we got attacked on September the 11th. We weren't in Iraq, and thousands of fighters were trained in terror camps inside your country, Mr. President. We weren't in Iraq when they first attacked the World Trade Center in 1993. We weren't in Iraq when they bombed the *Cole*. We weren't in Iraq when they blew up our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. My judgment is, if we weren't in Iraq, they'd find some other excuse, because they have ambitions. They kill in order to achieve their objectives.

You know, in the past, Usama bin Laden used Somalia as an excuse for people to join his jihadist movement. In the past, they used the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was a convenient way to try to recruit people to their jihadist movement. They've used all kinds of excuses.

This Government is going to do whatever it takes to protect this homeland. We're not going to let their excuses stop us from staying on the offense. The best way to protect America is defeat these killers overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. We're not going to let lies and propaganda by the enemy dictate how we win this war.

Now, you know what's interesting about the NIE—it was a intelligence report done last April. As I understand, the conclusions—the evidence on the conclusions reached was stopped being gathered on February—at the end of February. And here we are, coming down the stretch in an election campaign, and it's on the front page of your newspapers. Isn't that interesting? Somebody has taken it upon themselves to leak classified information for political purposes.

I talked to John Negroponte today, the DNI. You know, I think it's a bad habit for our Government to declassify every time there's a leak, because it means that it's going to be hard to get good product out of our analysts. Those of you who have been around here long enough know what I'm talking about. But once again, there's a leak out of our Government, coming right down the stretch in this campaign—to create confusion in the minds of the American people, in my judgment, is why they leaked it.

And so we're going to—I told the DNI to declassify this document. You can read it for yourself. We'll stop all the speculation, all the politics about somebody saying something about Iraq, somebody trying to confuse the American people about the nature of this enemy. And so John Negroponte, the DNI, is going to declassify the document as quickly as possible. He'll declassify the key judgments for you to read yourself. And he'll do so in such a way that we'll be able to protect sources and methods that our intelligence community uses. And then everybody can draw their own conclusions about what the report says.

Thank you.

Q. My question——

President Bush. What was that question?

Q. Why is that declassification not——

President Bush. Because I want you to read the documents, so you don't speculate about what it says. You asked me a question based upon what you thought was in the document, or at least somebody told you was in the document. And so I think, Jennifer, you'll be able to ask a more profound question when you get to look at it yourself—[*laughter*]—as opposed to relying upon gossip and somebody who may or may not have seen the document trying to classify the war in Iraq one way or the other.

I guess it's just Washington, isn't it, where, you know, we kind of—there's no such thing as classification anymore, hardly. But, anyway, you ought to take a look at it, and then you'll get to see.

Why don't you ask somebody—yes, you've got the two-part question.

President Karzai. Ma'am, before I go to the remarks by my brother, President Musharraf, terrorism was hurting us way before Iraq or September 11th. The President mentioned some examples of it. These extremist forces were killing people in Afghanistan and around for years, closing schools, burning mosques, killing children, uprooting vineyards with vine trees—grapes hanging on them, forcing populations to poverty and misery.

They came to America on September 11th, but they were attacking you before September 11th in other parts of the world. We are a witness in Afghanistan to what they are and how they can hurt. You are a witness in New York. Do you forget people jumping off the 80th floor or 70th floor when the planes hit them? Can you imagine what it will be for a man or a woman to jump off that high? Who did that? And where are they now? And how do we fight them; how do we get rid of them, other than going after them? Should we wait for them to come and kill us again? That's why we need more action around the world, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, to get them defeated—extremism, their allies, terrorists and the like.

On the remarks of my brother, President Musharraf—Afghanistan is a country that is emerging out of so many years of war and destruction and occupation by terrorism and misery that they've brought to us. We lost almost two generations to the lack of education. And those who were educated before that are now older. We know our problems. We have difficulties. But Afghanistan also knows where the problem is—in extremism, in madrassas preaching hatred, preachers in the name of madrassas preaching hatred. That's what we should do together to stop.

The United States, as our ally, is helping both countries. And I think it is very important that we have more dedication and more intense work with sincerity, all of us, to get rid of the problems that we have around the world.

An Afghan press? You?

War on Terror/Progress in Afghanistan

Q. ——from Voice of America. Mr. President, what is your strategy—your new strategy to fight against terrorism and also to deal with narcotics in Afghanistan? Thank you.

President Karzai. All right. This was to me or to President Bush? Okay. Ma'am, there is no new strategy on the fight against terrorism. We are continuing the strategy that we have. We are implementing the strategy. We are moving further in that strategy. We are getting more of them. We are trying to clean the country of these elements and the region of these elements by doing more reconstruction, by doing more search for the terrorist elements hiding around there. So the fight against terrorism will continue the way we started it.

Q. Mr. President, sorry, do you think it's working now the way it's going?

President Karzai. It is absolutely working. We come across difficulties as we are moving forward, and that's bound to happen. And we get over those difficulties; we resolve them; and we go to the next stage of this fight against terrorism for all the allies.

At one stage 4 years ago, we had a war against them to dislodge them from Afghanistan, to remove them from being the Government of Afghanistan. And then there were major operations against them to arrest or to chase them out. And then we began to rebuild the country, to have roads, to have schools, to have health clinics, to have education, to have all other things that people need all over the world. And now we are at a stage of bringing more stability and trying to get rid of them forever. The desire is to do that sooner, but a desire is not always what you get. So it will take time, and we must have the patience to have the time spent on getting rid of them for good.

On narcotics, it is a problem. It is an embarrassment to Afghanistan. And I told President Bush earlier in my conversation with him that we feel very much embarrassed for having narcotics growing in our country. But again, it has come to Afghanistan because of years of our desperation and lack of hope for tomorrow. I know Afghan families, ma'am, who destroyed their pomegranate orchards or vineyards to replace them with poppies, because they did not know if they were going to have their children the next day, if they were going to be in their own country the next day, if they were going to be having their home standing the next day. It has become a reality because of jobs and years of misery.

We have worked on the problem. In some areas of the country, we have succeeded; in other areas of the country, we have failed because of the circumstances and because of our own failures. We have discussed that, and we will continue to be very steadfast. It is Afghanistan's problem, so Afghanistan is responsible for it, and Afghanistan should act on it with the help of our friends in the United States and the rest of the world.

President Bush. Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Former President Clinton/War on Terror

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Former President Clinton says that your administration had no meetings on bin Laden for 9 months after he left office. Is that factually accurate, and how do you respond to his charges?

President Bush. You know, look, Caren, I've watched all this finger-pointing and naming of names and all that stuff. Our objective is to secure the country. And we've had investigations; we had the 9/11 Commission; we had the look back this; we've had the look back that. The American people need to know that we spend all our time doing everything that we can to protect them. So I'm not going to comment on other comments.

But I will comment on this—that we're on the offense against an enemy who wants to do us harm. And we must have the tools necessary to protect our country. On the one hand, if Al Qaida or Al Qaida affiliates are calling somebody in the country, we need to know why. And so Congress needs to pass that piece of legislation. If somebody has got information about a potential attack, we need to be able to ask that person some questions. And so Congress has got to pass that piece of legislation.

You can't protect America unless we give those people on the frontlines of protecting this country the tools necessary to do so within the Constitution. And that's where the debate is here in the United States. There are some decent people who don't believe—evidently don't believe we're at war and therefore shouldn't give the administration what is necessary to protect us.

And that goes back to Jennifer's question, you know. Does being on the offense mean we create terrorists? My judgment is, the only way to defend the country is to stay on the offense. It is preposterous to think if we were to withdraw and hope for the best, things would turn out fine against this enemy. That was my point about, before we were in Iraq, there were thousands being trained in Afghanistan to strike America and other places. The only way to protect this country is to stay on the offense, is to deal with threats before they fully materialize and, in the long term, help democracy succeed, like

Afghanistan and Iraq and Lebanon and a Palestinian state.

But there's a difference of opinion. It will come clear during this campaign, where people will say, "Get out; leave before the job is done." And those are good, decent, patriotic people who believe that way—I just happen to believe they're absolutely wrong. So I'm going to continue to work to protect this country. And we'll let history judge—all the different finger-pointing and all that business. I don't have enough time to finger-point. I've got to stay—I've got to do my job, which comes home every day in the Oval Office, and that is to protect the American people from further attack.

Now, there are some who say, "Well, maybe it's not going to happen." Well, they don't see what I see. All I ask is that they look at that terror plot that, along with the Brits, we helped stop—people who were going to get on an airplane and blow up innocent lives in order to achieve political objectives. They're out there; they're mean; and they need to be brought to justice.

International Support for the War on Terror/Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, are you convinced, like President Bush, that the deal General Musharraf signed with the tribal leaders in Waziristan actually meant to fight the Taliban? And why are you convinced that Usama bin Laden is not in Afghanistan?

If I may, Mr. President, do you agree with the analysis from the counter chief European—counterterrorism chief European spokesman who said today that the international support for terrorism has receded? Do you agree with that? And do you see the tension between two important allies of yours, Pakistan and Afghanistan, undermining your effort to get Usama bin Laden? Thank you.

President Bush. It's a four-part question. First of all, I didn't—what was this person a spokesman for?

Q. Counterterrorism chief in Europe.

President Bush. Some obscure spokesman?

Q. No, actually, he has a name.

President Bush. Okay, he's a got a name. [*Laughter*] Well, no, I don't agree with the spokesman for the obscure organization that said that the international commitment to fighting terror is declining. It's quite the contrary, starting with the evidence that NATO has committed troops in Afghanistan. These are troops who are on the ground who are serving incredibly bravely to protect this country.

Secondly, when the Brits, along with our help, intercepted the plot to attack us, everybody started saying, "They're still there." They began to realize that their hopes that the terrorist threats were going away weren't true. Since September the 11th, it's important for the American people to remember, there have been a lot of attacks on a lot of nations by these jihadists. And some of them are Al Qaida and some of them are Al Qaida-inspired. The NIE talked about how this group of folks are becoming more dispersed. That's what I've been saying as well. After all, look inside of Great Britain. These are people inspired by, perhaps trained by Al Qaida, but nevertheless plotted and planned attacks and conducted attacks in the summer of 2005, and then plotted attacks in the summer of 2006. See, they're dangerous, and the world knows that.

And so from my perspective, intelligence-sharing is good; cooperation on the financial fronts is good—and that more and more nations are committing troops to the fight, in Afghanistan in particular.

Now, the other question——

Q. The tension between two allies—does this undermine the efforts of getting bin Laden?

President Bush. No. No, it doesn't. It's in President Karzai's interest to see bin Laden brought to justice. It is in President Musharraf's interest to see bin Laden brought to justice. Our interests coincide. It will be interesting for me to watch the body language of these two leaders to determine how tense things are.

President Karzai. I'll be good. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Yes. From my discussions with President Karzai and President Musharraf, there is an understanding that by working together, it is more likely that all of us can achieve a common objective, which are stable societies that are hopeful societies,

that prevent extremists from stopping progress and denying people a hopeful world.

I know that's what President Karzai thinks, and I know that's how President Musharraf thinks. And so—I'm kind of teasing about the body language for the dinner tomorrow night, but it's going to be a good dinner, and it's an important dinner.

So, to answer your question, no. What you perceive as tension is stopping us from bringing high-value targets to justice—quite the contrary, we're working as hard as ever in doing that.

President Karzai. On the question of Waziristan, ma'am, President Musharraf, when he was in Kabul, explained what they had done there. My initial impression was that this was a deal signed by the Taliban—and then later I learned that they actually signed with the tribal chiefs. It will have a different meaning if it is that signed with the tribal chiefs—that for us, for the United States, for the allies against terror.

The most important element here is item number one in this agreement, that the terrorists will not be allowed to cross over into Afghanistan to attack the coalition against terror—that is, the international community and Afghanistan together. We will have to wait and see if that is going to be implemented exactly the way it is signed. So, from our side, it's a wait and see attitude. But, generally, we will back any move, any deal that will deny terrorism sanctuary in north Waziristan or in the tribal territories of Pakistan.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you.

President Karzai. Thank you, sir.

President Bush. Well done.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:37 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to senior Al Qaida associate Omar al-Farouq, who was killed in Iraq on September 26; Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, USA, commander, Combined Forces Command—Afghanistan; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Gijs de Vries, counterterrorism coordinator, European Union.

Statement on the Report of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education

September 26, 2006

Today Education Secretary Margaret Spellings released the report of a commission whose focus was to help make America's higher education system more affordable and more accessible and to provide parents and students with information that will help them make better-informed choices. I strongly support the thrust of this important report and look forward to working with Secretary Spellings, the higher education community, the Congress, and the States to ensure that our higher education system remains the finest in the world.

America's colleges and universities have always played an important role in advancing innovation, opportunity, and prosperity throughout our Nation and the world. We must all work to provide our students with the knowledge and skills they need to shape a hopeful future for our country.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this statement.

Statement on the Death of Byron Nelson

September 26, 2006

I was saddened to learn today of the passing of Byron Nelson. Byron Nelson was a legend in the game of golf, setting extraordinary standards for excellence on the course. More importantly, he was a true gentleman and role model for generations of golfers. Laura and I join fellow Texans and the sports world in extending our sympathies to his wife, Peggy, and his family and friends.