

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Glad you're here. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of Congress

December 6, 2006

I've just met with Members of Congress from both political parties. My message is this: I want to work with the Congress; I want to work with people in both parties, so that we can send a message to the American people that the struggle for freedom, the struggle for our security is not the purview of one party over the other. The American people want us to work together, and my intention is to do just that.

Today the Baker-Hamilton Commission, the Iraq Study Group put out what I thought was a very interesting report. There's some very good ideas in there. Not all of us around the table agree with every idea, but we do agree that it shows that bipartisan consensus on important issues is possible—really important for the American people to know that there are people of good will here in town willing to set aside politics and focus on the security of this country and the peace of the world.

And I want to thank you all for taking time out of your schedules to come. It means a lot to me, and I think it means a lot to the American people, to recognize that there are people in this town who are concerned more about the security of this country than they are about the security of their own political positions. And I'm proud to be with you. And I want to thank you for your thoughts. I take your comments very seriously. I take your ideas very seriously. And it's important to me that we continue to hear from the Congress as we fashion a way—a new way forward in Iraq, a new look, to achieve our objective of a country which can sustain itself, govern itself, defend itself, and be an ally in this war against extremism and terrorism.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Robert M. Gates To Be the Secretary of Defense

December 6, 2006

I am pleased the Senate has overwhelmingly voted to confirm Dr. Robert Gates as the next Secretary of Defense. In his confirmation hearing, Dr. Gates demonstrated he is an experienced, qualified, and thoughtful man who is well respected by members of both parties and is committed to winning the war on terror. Throughout his career, Dr. Gates has transformed the organizations he has led and empowered them to successfully address complex issues. I am confident that his leadership and capabilities will help our country meet its current military challenges and prepare for emerging threats of the 21st century.

I thank Chairman Warner and Ranking Member Levin for leading dignified and constructive hearings, and I thank the Senate for moving quickly on this nomination.

Executive Order 13417— Establishing an Emergency Board To Investigate Disputes Between Metro-North Railroad and Certain of Its Employees Represented by Certain Labor Organizations

December 6, 2006

Disputes exist between Metro-North Railroad (Metro-North) and certain of its employees represented by certain labor organizations. The labor organizations involved in these disputes are designated on the attached list, which is made a part of this order.

The disputes have not heretofore been adjusted under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act, as amended, 45 U.S.C. 151 *et seq.* (RLA).

A party empowered by the RLA has requested that the President establish an emergency board pursuant to section 9A of the RLA (45 U.S.C. 159a).

Section 9A(c) of the RLA provides that the President, upon such request, shall appoint an emergency board to investigate and report on the disputes.

Now, Therefore, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 9A of the RLA, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of Emergency Board (Board). There is established, effective 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time on December 7, 2006, a Board of three members to be appointed by the President to investigate and report on these disputes. No member shall be pecuniarily or otherwise interested in any organization of railroad employees or any carrier. The Board shall perform its functions subject to the availability of funds.

Sec. 2. Report. The Board shall report to the President with respect to the disputes within 30 days of its creation.

Sec. 3. Maintaining Conditions. As provided by section 9A(c) of the RLA, from the date of the creation of the Board and for 120 days thereafter, no change in the conditions out of which the disputes arose shall be made by the parties to the controversy, except by agreement of the parties.

Sec. 4. Records Maintenance. The records and files of the Board are records of the Office of the President and upon the Board's termination shall be maintained in the physical custody of the National Mediation Board.

Sec. 5. Expiration. The Board shall terminate upon the submission of the report provided for in section 2 of this order.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 6, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:50 a.m., December 7, 2006]

NOTE: This Executive order and its attached list were published in the *Federal Register* on December 8.

Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2007

December 6, 2006

Presidential Determination No. 2007-06

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia for Calendar Year 2007

Consistent with the authority vested in me by section 1303 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108-375) (the "Act"), I hereby certify that waiving the conditions described in section 1305 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106-65), as amended, is important to the national security interests of the United States, and include herein, for submission to the Congress, the statement, justification, and plan described in section 1303 of the Act. This waiver shall apply for calendar year 2007.

You are authorized and directed to transmit this certification, including the statement, justification, and plan, to the Congress and to arrange for the publication of this certification in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 7.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

December 7, 2006

President Bush. Thank you all. Please be seated. I just had a good visit with Prime Minister Tony Blair. I appreciate you coming back, Mr. Prime Minister. I always enjoy our