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Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Meetings With Foreign Leaders
Alabama
Briefing on tornado damage in Enterprise—254
Enterprise High School in Enterprise, tour—255
American Legion—263
Brazil, remarks at Petrobras Transporte S.A. Facility in Sao Paulo—287
Kentucky, dinner for senatorial candidate Mitch McConnell and the National Republican Senatorial Committee in Louisville—249
President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, meeting with Cochairs—271
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce legislative conference—256

Communications to Congress

Iran, message on continuation of national emergency—287

Communications to Federal Agencies

Assignment of Certain Functions Relating to Procurement Sanctions on Persons

Communications to Federal Agencies—Continued

Engaging in Export Activities that Contribute to Proliferation, memorandum—263

Executive Orders

Establishing a Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors and a Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes—269
Extending Privileges and Immunities to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations—286

Interviews With the News Media

Exchange with reporters in Enterprise, AL—255
Interviews
Enrique Gratas of Univision—281
Foreign print journalists—271
Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN *En Espanol*—284
Natalia Orozco of RCN TV of Colombia—279
News conference with President Lula da Silva of Brazil in Sao Paulo, Brazil, March 9—289

(Continued on the inside of the back cover.)

Editor's Note: The President was in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on March 9, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Contents—Continued

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Brazil, President Lula da Silva—289

Notices

Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran—286

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—299
Checklist of White House press releases—299
Digest of other White House announcements—297
Nominations submitted to the Senate—298

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Week Ending Friday, March 9, 2007

Remarks at a Dinner for Senatorial Candidate Mitch McConnell and the National Republican Senatorial Committee in Louisville, Kentucky

March 2, 2007

Thank you all. Thank you. Okay, thank you, sit down, please. [*Laughter*] That Kentucky whiskey still works. [*Laughter*] How about being with the ultimate power couple—[*laughter*]—a Secretary in my Cabinet and a powerful United States Senator. This has got to be good for the State of Kentucky.

I heard Elaine talk about Alben Barkley. In other words, Mitch is the second party leader in the United States Senate since—and the first was Alben Barkley. I don't know how good Alben Barkley was—this guy is really good for the people of this State. And he's very good for the country, and I'm proud to be with him. And I thank you for contributing to Mitch McConnell.

If you want to get something done in the United States Senate, you go to Mitch McConnell, whether you're from Kentucky or anywhere else. It seems like to me that if you're a citizen of this important State, whether you're Republican, Democrat, or independent, it makes sense to have somebody representing you in Washington, DC, who is full of integrity and decency and who can get the job done for the people. And that person is Mitch McConnell.

And I'm proud to call him friend. But I am tired of him constantly reminding me about the success of the Louisville Cardinal football team. I'm not begrudging the success; I'm just tired of hearing about it from Mitch McConnell. If he told me Orange Bowl once, he told me Orange Bowl 10 times. [*Laughter*]

You know, it's interesting, I asked Mitch about what we could do here. I went to New Albany, across the line there, to go to a school—and I want to share some thoughts about public education in a minute—but I said, "What can we do that would be interesting?" And he said one thing—he said, "I want you to talk to McConnell scholars at the University of Louisville." Isn't that interesting? He said the one thing he would like his buddy, the President, to do, would be to spend time with the young scholars in a program that he helped start. I think that's insightful into the nature of the person. We could have been parading around in front of the TV cameras or doing this, that, and the other, but not—this Senator's idea of utilizing his friend's time was to sit down and talk to people who he's trying to inspire to serve.

In other words, he's a selfless person. He's a person who puts the State above his self-interests. And I'm really proud to know and to work with a man of his caliber. He's a really—look, when it comes to voting here in Kentucky, you've got to help make sure the people do the right thing, the right thing for the United States of America, and that's send Mitch McConnell back to the United States Senate.

You know, people oftentimes ask me what it's like to be President. I said, it is a decision-making experience, and in a complex organization like we have in Washington, you've got to learn to delegate. And I'm very comfortable delegating to members of my Cabinet, particularly since they are people of the caliber like Elaine Chao. And I thank Elaine for her service to our country, and I appreciate her being here.

Mitch married well, and so did I. If Mitch were smart, he would have invited the A-team to do the fundraiser, but she happens to be on the road today. But I do bring greetings from Laura. You know, it's a—I'm sure some of you are probably wondering, "Gosh, what's it like to be married to the President and everything?" It can be awfully, I guess, difficult, unless you happen to be a person who is patient, calm, and loving. And that's my wife. And I'm really proud of her, and

I happen to think she's a great First Lady for the country.

I want to recognize Mike Duncan, who is now the chairman of the Republican National Committee. So when we needed somebody to lead our party into an important year, 2008, we came to Kentucky. When we needed somebody to accomplish the objective to make sure that Mitch is majority leader and that we have a Republican Speaker of the House and we hold the White House, we asked Mike Duncan to lead the charge. And I appreciate you doing it, Mike, and I want to help you in any way I can over these next couple of years.

I welcome the Lieutenant Governor, Steve Pence. Thanks for coming, Governor. I appreciate you being here. I bet you 10 years ago, you would have been shocked if you heard somebody say this—the Kentucky State Senate President, David Williams. And Judge Robyn; thank you for coming, Judge Robyn. It's good to see you. Dave, it's good to see you again. I'm not shocked that you're the president, but shocked that a Republican is the president. [*Laughter*] Maybe some are shocked you're the president—[*laughter*]—I'm not going there, though. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the other State and local officials. Rachel Schrepferman, who happens to be the chairman of this fantastic event, the mother of twins. We're all members of the, like, twins club.

I want to thank Gail Russell, who is the acting chairwoman and national committeewoman of the Republican Party. I want to thank the grassroots activists—that's what I'm doing, I'm thanking the grassroots activists for the work that you do and have done and will do. See, Mitch is going to win because the grassroots activists are going to man the phones and turn out the vote. And this is a good start to what's going to be a successful campaign. It's a good sign when this many people show up in 2007 for a 2008 election. And I appreciate you all kicking off—helping kick off this good man's campaign. And I want to thank those of you who are going to help him get elected for what you're going to do when he's coming down the stretch in November of 2008.

He's going to win because he backs really solid ideas. Mitch believes in a strong national defense, and so do I. Mitch believes in less government and low taxes, and so do I. And Mitch believes in the values and the good judgments of the citizens of this Commonwealth of Kentucky. That's what he believes in. Those are values that Kentuckians from all walks of life can share.

We got a lot to do in Washington, DC, and I'm looking forward to working with Senator McConnell to achieve them. And I want to share some of the thoughts about what we've got to do. Mitch mentioned the war on terror. I wish I could report to you that it was over. It is not over. And the most important function of the Federal Government is to safeguard the American people. Our most important job—[*applause*]. And the best way to do that in the short term is to stay on the offensive, bring the killers to justice, defeat them overseas so we don't have to face them here in the United States of America.

And Mitch McConnell understands it as well as anybody in Washington, DC. He's clear-eyed about the realities of the world in which we live, and we need clear-eyed thinkers in the Nation's Capital. If the most important duty of our Government is to protect you, then we'd better have people in Washington who are steadfast in understanding the responsibilities that come with the offices we hold. And Mitch understands it.

In the long term, the best way to defeat these ideologues of hate is to offer a better ideology, one of hope. Remember, the killers are the people that advocated no rights for women; that children—young girls shouldn't go to school; that there's no such thing as religious tolerance; that if you disagreed, you'd be taken into the public square and whipped. That's what they believe.

I know it's hard for some in Kentucky and the country to understand, but these folks are motivated by an ideology—and so are we. Ours is an ideology of human dignity and human rights and decency. Ours is an ideology based upon liberty and freedom. We believe there is universality when it comes to freedom. We believe all want to be free. And I believe it's in the interests of the United States of America to help promote

liberty as the alternative to the hateful ideology of the extremists, so we can lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

This war against the extremists is being fought on a variety of fronts. The most notable front is Iraq. I was confronted with the decision on Iraq. I was unhappy with the conditions on the ground last fall. And as the Commander in Chief, I have an obligation, if dissatisfied with the status quo, to make decisions that would alter the status quo.

One decision I was confronted with was withdrawing and hoping for the best, as I knew the capital city of that young democracy was engaged in sectarian violence. In other words, one option was to kind of let the so-called fight burn out. My worry with that option was that the violence and the chaos in the capital city of a young democracy could spill out into the countryside and eventually spill out into the region. And I know that chaos is to the advantage of the extremists, and that chaos emboldens those who would do us harm. I also understand, and it's important for our citizens to understand, that if we were to fail in Iraq, the enemy would follow us here to the United States of America, and we cannot let that happen.

It's a new concept that we have to learn to deal with after the attacks of September the 11th, 2001. What happens overseas matters to the security of the United States. And if our job is to secure this country, then we've got to make sure that we succeed in helping this young democracy flourish and survive and become an ally in the war on terror.

And so the option that I chose was one that recognizes the realities of the world in which we live, which said, as opposed to leaving, we're going to send more people in there to reinforce the troops that are on the ground. I understand it's a controversial decision for some. But the citizens of this State must understand I made the decision after thoughtful consideration and after consultations with people like Mitch McConnell and those who don't agree. I listened carefully. But most importantly, I listened to the United States military about what it takes to help this democracy defeat the ideology of terror, help this democracy not become a safe haven for those who would do us harm, help this young democracy survive. And their recommendation was, "Mr. President, we need more troops in the capital city."

And not only did I accept their suggestion, I nominated a new commander in General David Petraeus. And he went up in front of the United States Senate for a hearing, and he got a fair hearing. Senator, I think the Senate conducted themselves with dignity and gave him a chance to talk about what he thought was necessary to succeed in Iraq. And he was approved unanimously, not one negative vote against General David Petraeus. And shortly thereafter, the House of Representatives passed a resolution expressing disapproval for the very plan that the General suggested we do—the man who was unanimously confirmed. This may be the first time in the history of our country that the Senate has voted to send a new commander in battle, and then the House of Representatives immediately voted to oppose his plan.

I understand differences of opinion, and I expect that in the Nation's Capital. It's good for our country that there be differences of opinion. Everybody has the right to express their opinion. And nobody should say, "If you disagree or agree with the President, you're more patriotic, or not." But soon Congress is going to have to make a decision that's got real consequences, and that is whether to fund our troops and give us the flexibility necessary to achieve our mission. Our men and women in uniform risk their lives as they carry out this plan to secure Baghdad and to secure this country, and they need the support of the United States Congress.

No matter where Members stand on my decision, they have a solemn responsibility to support those who wear the uniform of the United States and to make sure that we have the flexibility necessary to protect this homeland.

I want to thank Mitch for his steadfast leadership on this issue. I appreciate his clarity of thought. The troops of the United States have no stronger friend than Senator Mitch McConnell from the State of Kentucky.

We also—let me say one other thing about foreign policy; it's important for me to share this with you. I believe to whom much is given, much is required. We've been given

a lot in this country, and I'm going to continue to call upon Congress to fund initiatives like the HIV/AIDS initiative on the continent of Africa. I'll tell you why. It matters to me personally, and it matters to this country, when we see a pandemic like HIV/AIDS sweeping through a continent and we can do something about it. Thanks to the generosity of the American people—I want to share something with you—thanks to the generosity of the American people, in 3 short years, 800,000 people on the continent of Africa now receive antiretroviral drugs; 800,000 lives have been affected as a result of this initiative that's making the world a better place.

And now I'm going to look forward to working with Mitch on the next initiative, which is to free countries from malaria. It's an achievable goal, and it's a good goal, and it's good for the world to see the generosity and compassion of the United States of America. It's also in our interests that we help feed the hungry when we can, and to help deal with disease. What happens overseas matters to home. And so whether it be in fighting the extremists or battling disease, we'll have an aggressive, compassionate, decent foreign policy. And I'm glad to have Mitch McConnell by my side.

Here at home, Mitch talked about the economy. He says, "You should get credit for it, Mr. President." No, I don't deserve credit for the economy. It's the American people who deserve credit for the economy. The American people are working hard. It's the entrepreneurs who are taking risks. It's those small-business owners that have got their ideas, and they're working to make it work.

Listen, our economy is strong because America is strong. And the fundamental question is, will we keep policies in place to keep the economy growing? And I've got a good idea for the United States Congress. We passed tax relief. It's worked. They need to make the tax relief permanent.

Oh, you'll hear them saying, "We need to raise taxes to balance the budget." That's what you'll hear them say. Well, raising taxes hurts the economy, which means less tax revenues come in. And by the way, they'll figure out new ways to spend the money. That's the way Washington works, unless you have got people like Mitch McConnell, who is watching out for the taxpayers' interests. Washington says, "Give me a little bit more of your own money, just a little bit, and we'll figure out how to spend it better." What Mitch McConnell says, and George Bush says, we're going to let you keep more of your own money so the economy continues to grow, and we're going to balance the budget by being wise about the money—by setting priorities.

You might remember I said, we would cut the deficit in half in 5 years. And I'm sure the critics scoffed a little bit, but we did it 3 years in advance. And now we've sent a new budget up to Washington, DC, that says we'll balance the budget in 5 years. And we will—without raising one dime of taxes.

I appreciate Mitch's attitude about big issues. He knows what I know, that it's important to address problems and not pass them on. The temptation sometimes in life and in politics is to see a big problem and say, "We'll just let the next group deal with it. We'll kind of shuffle it on to the next Congress or the next President." We've got a big problem in entitlements; that's basically Social Security and Medicare.

And the reason it's a big problem is baby boomers like me and some of you are getting ready to retire. It turns out my retirement date, when I turn 62, is 2008, which is quite convenient in my case. [*Laughter*] And yet, there's a lot of us retiring and fewer people paying for the benefits that we've been promised. And those benefits are going up faster than the previous generation's benefits are going up. So you begin to calculate it in your head, the math—a lot of people getting greater benefits, living longer, with fewer people paying—you can understand why we got a problem. And if you've got somebody fixing to get in the workforce, that person is going to be paying money into a system that's going broke. And a lot of us in Washington know it's going broke, including Senator Mitch McConnell. And he wants to work with me to convince people of both parties to come together and, in good will, sit down at the table. And my call to both Republicans and Democrats is, put your best ideas out there, come to the table, think about how to solve it, and let's put your ideas out so

we can show to the American people that we're capable of setting aside politics and focusing on solving big problems for the United States of America.

Mitch thinks that way, and the Senate is better off to have somebody, a statesman like Mitch McConnell, who is willing to call people to sit down and solve these big problems now, before it's too late.

Now that I've got you here, I'd like to run a few other issues by you. [*Laughter*] No Child Left Behind is a really good piece of legislation. It has to do with public schools. Just quickly—I believe that unless you measure, you can't tell whether or not a child is getting a good education. And I don't like a system that says to—says, we're just going to move you through without knowing whether or not you can read and write and add and subtract. It doesn't do this country any good. As a matter of fact, we've got an issue when it comes to education, because if we don't get it right early, we're not going to get it right late, and if we don't get it right at all, jobs are going to go overseas. That's just the nature of the world in which we live.

So I went to New Albany today to talk about No Child Left Behind. It is a piece of legislation which says, we believe in local folks figuring out how to run their schools, but when we send you Federal money, you need to measure. And you need to measure whether or not a child can read. And if a child can't read, you better do something about it now, before it's too late. That's why it's called the No Child Left Behind. In other words, we're going to measure; we're going to correct; so we can say with certainty we've done our duty all across the country to make sure children have the basics necessary to be able to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

That bill needs to be reauthorized. I'm looking forward to working with Senator McConnell to get the Senate and the House to get the bill to my desk this year.

Health care: Costs are going up; businesses can't afford it; we need to do something about it. The big debate in Washington, DC, is who best to make health care decisions. Mitch and I believe the best people to make the health care decisions are the doctors and the patients, not insurance companies and government officials. And therefore, I'm looking forward to working with him to do things such as change the Tax Code so that there is no disadvantage in the Tax Code for the individual and/or that person who is working for a small-business company that can't afford insurance relative to those who work for businesses.

I'm looking forward to working with Mitch to help deal with the cost of health care by the spread of information technology. I mean, for those of you in medicine, you kind of know what I mean when you say, you're a little lagging, relative to other fields. We've got doctors still writing things on paper. And the writing is illegible half the time—[*laughter*]—and therefore, there are medical errors and unnecessary expenses.

I'm looking forward to working with Mitch to enhance transparency in medicine. How many of you have ever asked, how much does it cost? Very rarely does anybody in health care ask, how much does it cost? And therefore, since the Federal Government is a big health care user, we're going to insist that those we work with let us know what it costs and what the quality is, so that as consumers become more involved in health care through plans like health savings accounts, there's actual consumerism in health care; there's something helpful when it comes to dealing with rising costs when somebody says, "I think I may try to find a better deal. If the cost is too high, I'm going to try an alternative."

I'll continue to work with Mitch to make sure that people in Congress don't undermine the Medicare reforms that we put in place. I believe we have an obligation to make sure Medicare works for our seniors. We put forth a prescription drug benefit for poor seniors, cheaper prescription drugs for all seniors. You know what happens, the marketplace actually works in America. We believed in the marketplace, and therefore, it's up to Congress to leave the marketplace alone when it comes to Medicare.

And I'm looking forward to working with Mitch to make sure that medicine is accessible and affordable by doing something about these junk lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice and running up the cost of your medicine.

One final point—this is an energy State. You produce a lot of coal, and that's good. We need to do something about coal emissions so that we can say that we're energy independent and good stewards of the environment. And that's why Mitch and I are going to work with the Congress to pass substantial monies on clean coal technologies. Listen, we've got 250 years of supply. People are concerned about the dependency on foreign sources of energy; you ought to be. Dependency upon energy from somewhere else is a national security risk, and it's an economic security risk. And we can do something about it through technologies.

I want to share with you right quick an interesting—some interesting breakthroughs that are coming along. One, we spent a lot of money on research, as is the private sector, on new battery technologies. I believe within a reasonable period of time, you'll be able to plug your battery in your car—a plug-in battery in your car, so that you can run your first 40 miles on electricity, and you'll be happy to hear that the car is not going to look like a golf cart. [*Laughter*]

I believe you're going to be running your automobiles on ethanol made from switch grass or wood chips. I know that sounds science fiction to some of you, but that technology is coming. We're now using about 7 billion gallons of ethanol a year made from corn. I believe not only can we expand corn-based ethanol; I believe we're on the verge of technological breakthroughs to be able to make ethanol from things that—from refuse—as I said, switch grass. That's good for people like me who come from a State that's awfully dry.

But isn't it interesting, to be able to predict to the American people that our farmers are going to be vital producers of energy, that we'll be able to use our cars. And the more ethanol we use, obviously, the less gasoline you use, and the less gasoline you use, the less dependency on oil.

We're on the verge of some incredible—which leads me to conclude—oh, let me say one other thing about Mitch. Well, not one—it may not be the only thing I say about him. [*Laughter*] Mitch understands what I know, that we have a responsibility to fill our benches with judges who strictly interpret the law and not try to legislate from the bench. We've got plenty of legislators in Washington; we don't need them doing that from the third branch of our Government. I am very proud—when it came time for tough fights on our judges, judges like John Roberts and Sam Alito, there was no stronger advocate for a sound judiciary than Senator Mitch McConnell.

And so I'd like to conclude by telling you, we've got a big agenda. And I believe we're going to get a lot of it accomplished, and one of the main reasons we're going to get a lot it accomplished is because you've sent a skillful legislator, a master of the United States Senate, to Washington, DC.

I'm here to ask the people of this State, when it comes time to vote, to think very carefully about your Senator. I know that some of them say, "Well, I can't vote for somebody who is a Republican, or somebody"—you know, based upon party. I ask the people to vote for a man who is competent, who is accomplished, who is good for the United States.

I want to thank you all for supporting this good man. I appreciate you coming out tonight. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6 p.m. at the Seelbach Hilton Louisville. In his remarks, he referred to District Judge Robyn Williams of Kentucky's 40th Judicial District; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Tornado Damage in Enterprise, Alabama

March 3, 2007

You know, Mayor, I told the people yesterday that I come down with a heavy heart, and I will try, to the best of my ability, to comfort those who lost life and property. I know you and your council and the citizens here have done that as well.

I hope it helps for the citizens here to hear that we declared your county a major disaster area, which will provide some relief. You can

never heal a heart, but you can provide comfort, knowing that the Federal Government will provide help for those whose houses were destroyed or automobiles were destroyed. And I would strongly urge the citizens here to—if you've got a question, to call 1–800–621–FEMA, and there will be somebody answering your call and will give you a chance to find out whether or not you will qualify for the relief under the major disaster declaration.

Secondly, I was talking to the Governor, and he has said that there have been some funds set up to help the people who suffered. And my call to people here in Alabama and around the United States is, if you feel the generosity in your heart to help people affected by this terrible tornado, I would ask you to contribute. One such fund is the Red Cross. There will be others. We will make sure that USA Freedom Corps will have posted on it a place where people can contribute money. Some people are going to need your help. There have been some poor citizens who may or may not qualify for Federal help, but are going to need the help of our fellow citizens. And I would ask you to, out of the generosity of your heart, to help the folks down here.

This storm is a tough storm. It went 8 miles and affected a lot of lives. And this country is a prayerful country; there are a lot of people praying for you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:40 a.m. at Enterprise Municipal Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kenneth W. Boswell of Enterprise, AL; and Gov. Bob Riley of Alabama.

Remarks Following a Tour of Enterprise High School and an Exchange With Reporters in Enterprise

March 3, 2007

The heart of a community like Enterprise, Alabama, is the schools. And today I have walked through devastation that's hard to describe. Our thoughts, of course, go out to the students who perished. We thank God for the hundreds who lived. I want the folks of Enterprise to know that to the extent the Government can, our Federal Government can, in working with the State, we'll help rebuild the school system—this high school. We can never replace lives, and we can't heal hearts, except through prayer. And I know—I want the students to know and the families to know that there's a lot of people praying for them.

I met with the president of the student body, who recognizes that the end of her senior year is going to be difficult. But as a student leader, she will have the opportunity to help people rebuild, and that she will learn that out of the devastation—and her classmates will learn that out of the devastation can come hope and a better tomorrow.

And so we ask for the blessings on the students and their families. We ask for the blessings on the principal and the administrator. We thank this good community for rallying strongly by the side of those who have been affected. And I thank the people of Enterprise for the warm welcome I have received here.

The people of America have got to know that the citizens here, even though affected by devastation, have shown great courage and compassion for their citizens in need. And it's really part of the strength of the United States to know that there's such decent folks.

God bless everybody. Thank you all.

Aerial Tour of Areas Damaged by Tornadoes/Recovery

Q. How did it look from the air, sir?

The President. It looks as bad from the air as it looks from the ground. And you can see right here the effects of the storm. But the biggest effect of the storm is the shattered lives. We can rebuild buildings, and the fundamental question is, will the spirit stay strong in Enterprise, Alabama? And I predict that it not only will stay strong; it will be strengthened. That's my prediction. And it's easy to tell when you talk to the people, whether it's young or old, this town refuses to be devastated. This town is a town full of people that will not be—will not succumb to the effects of the storm. The mayor is strong; the principal of the school is strong; the Lieutenant; and the children, the high school seniors.

And so it's a—these are very tough times for the people here, and there are going to

be tough times for the people in Georgia that were affected. And I just hope they know that a lot of people are praying for them, that a lot of strangers that they'll never have met care for them, and that out of this rubble will emerge a better tomorrow, and that's the commitment that I hear here in Enterprise. And the role of the Government is going to help, to the extent that we can.

All right, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:24 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Megan Parks, student government association president, and Rick Rainer, principal, Enterprise High School; and Mayor Kenneth W. Boswell of Enterprise, AL.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Legislative Conference

March 5, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated—*sientese*. *Buenas tardes*. [*Laughter*] *Gracias por la bienevenida*. For those of you not from Texas, that means, good afternoon—[*laughter*]—and thank you for the welcome. I'm honored to be back again with the men and women of the Hispanic Chamber. I appreciate your hospitality.

I'm pleased to report, the economy of the United States is strong, and one of the reasons why is because the entrepreneurial spirit of America is strong. And the entrepreneurial spirit of America is represented in this room.

I thank you for the role of the Chamber. I appreciate so very much the work you do with our banks to help move capital. I appreciate so very much the fact that you recognize outstanding Latina businesswomen through your Anna Maria Arias Fund. I appreciate the fact that you say loud and clear, *el Sueno Americano es para todos*.

I strongly believe that the role of government is to make it clear that America is the land of opportunity. I think the best way to do that is to encourage business formation, encourage ownership, is to say, if you work hard and dream big, you can realize your dreams here in America. I also believe it's essential to make sure that when people take risk, that they're able to keep more of their own taxes. Congress needs to make the tax cuts we passed a permanent part of the Tax Code.

I know that in order for us to make sure *el Sueno Americano es para todo*, that we have an education system that sets high standards for all children, demands accountability in our schools, so that we can say with certainty, children from all backgrounds are able to read and write and add and subtract. That is why I believe it is essential that Congress reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act.

I think it's very important for us to continue to expand Federal contracting opportunities for small businesses and to make sure that America is a place of promise and hope. It is important and essential that Congress pass comprehensive immigration reform that I can sign into law.

I want to talk about another important priority for our country, and that is helping our neighbors to the south of us build a better and productive life. Thursday, Laura and I are going to leave on a trip that will take us to Brazil and Uruguay and Colombia *y Guatemala y por fin*, *Mexico*. [*Laughter*] These are countries that are part of a region that has made great strides toward freedom and prosperity. They've raised up new democracies. They've enhanced and undertaken fiscal policies that bring stability.

Yet despite the advances, tens of millions in our hemisphere remain stuck in poverty and shut off from the promises of the new century. My message to those *trabajadores y campesinos* is, you have a friend in the United States of America; we care about your plight.

David, thank you very much for being the chairman of this important organization and for the invitation. I want to thank Michael Barrera, who is the president and CEO of the Hispanic Chamber. I thank my friend *y Tejano* Massey Villarreal, who is with us today. Massey, it's good to see you again. You've got a *barba crecida*. [*Laughter*] Looking good, though, man. I thank Frank Lopez, who is the president and CEO of Chamber Foundation.

I want to thank members of my Cabinet who have come. I think it's a good sign that

this administration recognizes the importance of having a neighborhood that is peaceful and flourishing—that we have so many members of the Cabinet who have joined us today. I want to thank Carlos Gutierrez, who's living the—[*applause*]—Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao—Madam Secretary; Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt; Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings—Madam Secretary. Thank you all for coming.

Tom Shannon, representing the State Department. Ambassador Randy Tobias, who runs USAID, who, by the way, prior to this assignment, led one of the most important initiatives in my administration that has helped to fight the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. I appreciate your service there, and I now appreciate your service at USAID, Randy. I want to thank John Veroneau, who is with us today, who is the Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.

We've got Members of the United States Congress with us today, powerful Members of the Senate and the House. I am so grateful they are here, starting with Senator Dick Lugar of the great State of Indiana. Appreciate you coming. Norm Coleman from Minnesota—Senator, thank you for being here. A buddy of mine, Jerry Weller, Congressman Weller from Illinois—proud you're here; thanks for coming.

Los Embajadores que estan aqui—the Ambassadors. Thank you all for being here. I see some of the Ambassadors for the countries to which I'll be going. I'm sure all of them are here, and I appreciate you coming. Thanks for your time.

This is an important speech for me today. It's a speech that sets out a direction for this country in regards to our neighborhood. A former President gave such a speech 46 years ago this month. President John Kennedy spoke to ambassadors from across the Americas, this time in the East Room of the White House. He began by citing the early movements of independence in the Latin American Republics. He invoked the dream of a hemisphere growing in liberty and prosperity. That's what he talked about 46 years ago. He proposed a bold new Alliance for Progress to help the countries of this hemisphere meet the basic needs of their people—safe homes and decent jobs and good schools, access to health care.

In the years since President Kennedy spoke, we have witnessed great achievements for freedom in this neighborhood. As recently as a generation ago, this region was plagued by military dictatorship and consumed by civil strife. Today, 34 members of the OAS have democratic constitutions, and only one member country lives under a leader not of its people's choosing.

From New York to Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires and Montreal, we speak different languages, but our democracies all derive their legitimacy from the same source—the consent of the governed. The expansion of freedom has brought our societies much closer. Today, the most important ties between North and South America are not government to government; they are people to people. And those ties are growing.

These ties are growing because of our churches and faith-based institutions, which understand that the call to love our neighbors as ourselves does not stop at our borders. These ties are growing because of our businesses, which trade and invest billions in each other's countries. These ties are growing because of the outreach of our universities, which brings thousands of exchange students and teachers to their campuses. These ties are growing because of the estimated $45 billion that workers in the United States send back to their families in Latin America and the Caribbean each year, one of the largest private economic initiatives in the world.

In all these ways, our two continents are becoming more than neighbors united by the accident of geography; we're becoming a community linked by common values and shared interests in the close bonds of family and friendship. These growing ties have helped advance peace and prosperity on both continents. Yet amid the progress, we also see terrible want. Nearly one out of four people in Latin America lives on less than $2 a day. Many children never finish grade school. Many mothers never see a doctor. In an age of growing prosperity and abundance, this is a scandal—and it's a challenge. The fact is that tens of millions of our brothers

and sisters to the south have seen little improvement in their daily lives, and this has led some to question the value of democracy.

The working poor of Latin America need change, and the United States of America is committed to that change. It is in our national interests; it is in the interest of the United States of America to help the people in democracies in our neighborhood succeed. When our neighbors are prosperous and peaceful, it means better opportunities and more security for our own people. When there are jobs in our neighborhood, people are able to find work at home and not have to migrate to our country. When millions are free from poverty, societies are stronger and more hopeful.

So we're helping to increase opportunity by relieving debt and opening up trade, encouraging reform and delivering aid that empowers the poor and the marginalized. And the record of this administration in promoting social justice is a strong record and an important record. Social justice begins with building government institutions that are fair and effective and free of corruption.

In too many places in the Americas, a government official is seen as someone who serves himself at the expense of the public good or serves only the rich and the well-connected. No free society can function this way. Social justice begins with social trust. So we're working with our partners to change old patterns and ensure that government serves all its citizens.

One of the most important changes we're making is the way we deliver aid. We launched a new program called the Millennium Challenge Account, which provides increased aid to nations that govern justly, invest in the education and health of their people, and promote economic freedom. So far, we've signed Millennium Challenge compacts with three Latin American nations. We've also signed an agreement with a fourth country that is working to meet the standards to qualify for a compact on its own. In the coming years, these agreements will provide a total of $885 million in new aid, so long as these countries continue to meet the standards of the Millennium Challenge program. We'll send more as we reach more agreements with other nations.

By the way, this aid comes on top of the standard bilateral assistance that we provide. When I came into office, the United States was sending about $860 million a year in foreign aid to Latin America and the Caribbean. Last year, we nearly doubled that amount, to a total of $1.6 billion. Altogether, thanks to the good work of Members of the United States Congress, we have sent a total of $8.5 billion to the region, with a special focus on helping the poor.

Let me share with you one example of how our aid is working for people in the region. Oh, it's a small example, but it had profound impact. A few years ago, we funded a project to help a town in Paraguay, set up a web site that makes all local government transactions public, from budget spending to employee salaries. The purpose was to help the people of Villarrica improve their local governance through greater transparency. It was a small gesture at first. But when they brought transparency into their government, they discovered that some government employees had used fake receipts to embezzle thousands of dollars from the city government. The mayor informed the public, and the employees who had stolen the money were tried and convicted, and they paid it back. For the people of Paraguay, this was an historic achievement. The local government had called its own officials to account at a public and transparent trial.

The United States can help bring trust to their governments by instilling transparency in our neighborhood. It didn't take much of a gesture, but it had a profound impact.

We're working for similar results in other nations. In El Salvador, we opened one of our international law enforcement academies. The new academy is helping governments in the region build effective criminal justice systems by training law enforcement officers to combat the drug lords and the terrorists and the criminal gangs and the human traffickers. Our efforts to strengthen these civic institutions are also supported by more than government, but by private programs run by U.S. law schools and professional associations and in volunteer organizations.

In the coming months, this administration will convene a White House conference on

the Western Hemisphere that will bring together representatives from the private sector and nongovernmental organizations and faith-based groups and volunteer associations. The purpose is to share experiences and discuss effective ways to deliver aid and build the institutions necessary for strong civil society. Is it in our interest we do so? Absolutely, it's in our interests. A transparent neighborhood will yield to a peaceful neighborhood, and that's in the interests of all citizens of our country.

Social justice means meeting basic needs. The most precious resource of any country is its people, and in the Americas, we are blessed with an abundance of talented and hard-working citizens—decent, honorable people who work hard to make a living for their families. But without basic necessities like education and health care and housing, it is impossible for people to realize their full potential, their God-given potential.

Helping people reach their potential begins with good education. That's why the Secretary of Education is here. Many people across the Americas either have no access to education for their children or they cannot afford it. If children don't learn how to read, write, and add and subtract, they're going to be shut off for the jobs of the 21st century. They'll be condemned to a life on the margins, and that's not acceptable.

The United States is working for an Americas where every child has access to a decent school. It is a big goal, but it is a necessary goal, as far as we're concerned. When people in our neighborhood reach their full potential, it benefits the people of the United States. Over the past 3 years, we've provided more than $150 million—in 3 years time, we spent $150 million for education programs throughout the region, with a special focus on rural and indigenous areas.

Today I announce a new partnership for Latin American youth that's going to build on these efforts. This partnership will devote an additional $75 million over the next years—3 years to help thousands more young people improve their English and have the opportunity to study here in the United States. I think it's good policy when people from our neighborhood come to our country to study.

I hope this warms the heart of our fellow citizens when I share this story. In the mountains of Guatemala, we established a project that helped raise the number of children who complete first grade from 51 percent to 71 percent. In Peru, we helped create the Opening Doors Program to help girls get through grade school. That program is succeeding, and it is self-sustaining. Across Latin America and the Caribbean, our centers of excellence for teacher training—in other words, we've set up these centers, and we've trained 15,000 teachers; nearly 15,000 people have benefited. Does that matter? Of course it matters. When you train a teacher, you're really helping provide literacy for a child.

These teachers have helped improve the literacy skills for nearly 425,000 poor and disadvantaged students. It's important for our fellow citizens and the citizens in our neighborhood to understand that the United States of America is committed to helping people rise out of poverty, to be able to realize their full potential, and that starts with good education. By 2009, we expect to have trained a total of 20,000 teachers through these centers and reach 650,000 students.

One person who has benefited is a young girl in the Dominican Republic named Lorenny. By the time she was 10, she had been in first grade three times, and she had never passed. When her mother enrolled her in school again, Lorenny said, "Teacher, teach me to read, because I have learning problems." With patience and hard work, this good woman taught Lorenny to read and write. The teacher says that she had watched Lorenny blossom, and that she never would have been able to reach this girl without the know-how acquired through our teacher training program. Societies can change one heart at a time. Here is an example of the good work of the American people taking place in our neighborhood.

Another person who felt the impact of U.S. education assistance is a 25-year-old Mexican named Victor Lopez Ruiz. Victor's family lives in Chiapas, where opportunity is in short supply and the people tend to speak only the languages of the local communities. Victor's family sold their only real asset—their cattle—to pay for him to learn Spanish and finish high school.

In 2004, Victor won a USAID scholarship, which he used to learn English and study business in international trade at Scott Community College in Bettendorf, Iowa. It must have been quite an experience for a man from Chiapas to head into the heartland. [*Laughter*] But he did so with help from the taxpayers of the United States—for this reason: He goes back to Chiapas; he's working for his bachelor's degree in accounting, and then he's going to start a bakery that will support his family. Where the path for this man once looked grim, education has opened a new door. And as Victor said, "It changed my life."

There are countless of people like Victor and Lorenny across our hemisphere, young people filled with talent and ambition, only needing the chance of an education to unlock their full potential.

Helping people reach their potential includes providing access to decent health care. In many of the same areas where families have no schools, they have no access to medical care. Since I took office, we've spent nearly $1 billion on health care programs in the region, all aimed at sending a message to the people of Latin America: We care for you. *Los corazones de las personas aqui* in America *son grandes*. It's in our interests that we get good health care to citizens in our neighborhood.

Today I'm going to announce a new initiative called the Health Care Professional Training Center in Panama that will serve all of Central America. I remember when Secretary Leavitt briefed me on this vital program. The center is going to teach students how to be good nurses and technicians and health care workers. We'll also train people so they can go back to their home countries and teach others these same skill sets.

In all these efforts, it's important for you to understand the role our United States military plays. In June, I'm going to send one of our Navy's medical ships, the *Comfort*, to the region. The *Comfort* will make port calls in Belize and Guatemala and Panama, Nicaragua and El Salvador and Peru and Ecuador and Colombia, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname. It's going to be busy. Altogether, the *Comfort*'s doctors and nurses and health care professionals expect to treat 85,000 patients and conduct up to 1,500 surgeries. These are people who need help. These are people who might not otherwise get the basic health care they need to realize a better tomorrow.

The *Comfort* was also going to partner with the Department of Health and Human Services on a new initiative to provide oral care to the region's poor. Dentists and hygienists will fill cavities and treat infections and provide treatment for the young children.

At the same time, military medical teams will be operating inland to help bring treatment and care to other communities. These teams do everything from vaccinating people against disease to building new medical clinics. The United States military is a symbol of strength for this Nation, but it's also a symbol of the great compassion of the American people and our desire to help those in our neighborhood who need help.

With the deployment of the *Comfort* and the work of the military teams, we're making it absolutely clear to people that we care. One good example is an area of Nicaragua. Santa Teresa is a rural area where 250 U.S. airmen, soldiers, and marines are now working with 30 members of the Nicaraguan Army to build a medical clinic. Many families in the area live in homes built of scrap wood with dirt floors and doorless entryways. For most of them, a doctor is too far away or too expensive. One man in Santa Teresa says, "The impact of this clinic is going to be tremendous."

I want you to hear the words of a fellow from Nicaragua. He said, "We're so glad you're here. People around here are noticing that the United States is doing something for them." And my message to the man is, we're proud to do so, and we do so because we believe in peace and the dignity of every human being on the face of the Earth.

Helping people reach their potential requires a commitment to improving housing. A strong housing industry can be an engine of economic growth and social stability and poverty reduction. Most Latin American capitals' high prices and high interest rates make good housing hard to afford. So the United States is launching a new effort to help build a market for affordable housing. Through the

Overseas Private Investment Corporation, we've provided more than $100 million that is being used to help underwrite mortgages to working families in Mexico and Brazil and Chile and the countries of Central America. Now we're going to provide another $385 million to expand these programs and help put the dream of homeownership within the reach of thousands of more people in our neighborhood.

On these three vital social issues—education and health care and housing—we're making a difference across the Americas. You see, by investing in programs and empower people, we will help the working families of our hemisphere build a more hopeful future for themselves.

Finally, social justice requires economies that make it possible for workers to provide for their families and to rise in society. For too long and in too many places, opportunity in Latin America has been determined by the accident of birth rather than by the application of talents and initiative. In his many writings, Pope John Paul II spoke eloquently about creating systems that respect the dignity of work and the right to private initiative. Latin America needs capitalism for the *campesino*, a true capitalism that allows people who start from nothing to rise as far as their skills and their hard work can take them. So the United States is helping these nations build growing economies that are open to the world, economies that will provide opportunity to their people.

One of the most important ways is by helping to relieve the burden of debt. In the past, many nations in this region piled up debt that they simply cannot repay. Every year, their governments have to spend huge amounts of money just to make interest payments on the debt. So under my administration, we worked with the Group of Eight industrialized nations to reduce the debt of Latin America and Caribbean nations by $4.8 billion. The members of the Inter-American Development Bank are close to an agreement on another debt relief initiative, and we look forward to helping them complete it. This agreement will cancel 3.4 billion owned by some of the poorest countries in our hemisphere—Bolivia and Guyana and Haiti and Honduras and Nicaragua. That works out to about $110 for every man, woman, and child in these countries, monies that their government should use to invest in the education and health of their citizens.

People of this region have the talent and drive they need to succeed. These are hard-working folks. I used to remind people in Texas, family values didn't stop at the Rio Grande River. There's a lot of mothers and dads in our neighborhood who care deeply about whether or not their children can grow up in a hopeful society. What they need is—in order to be able to realize that hope—is better access to capital. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong, strong in this room, and it's strong throughout the region. But what we need is capital.

And so over the past 5 years, the United States has devoted more than $250 million to help the entrepreneurial spirit flourish in our region. This funding includes microcredit loans for people starting small businesses. And these loans have been very successful, and I appreciate the Congress appropriating money for these microloans.

I'm also directing Secretary Rice and Secretary Paulson to develop a new initiative that will help U.S. and local banks improve their ability to extend good loans to small businesses. It's in our interest that businesses flourish in our own neighborhood. Flourishing businesses provide jobs for people at home. They provide customers for U.S. products.

As we help local entrepreneurs get the capital they need, we're also going to open up new opportunities through trade and investment. If you're a rural farmer scratching out a subsistence living, wouldn't you want to be able to sell your goods to new markets overseas? I think so. You're trying to make a living, and the market is closed, it seems to make sense that you should want to be able to sell into a larger universe.

If you're a worker looking for a job, wouldn't you want more employers competing for your labor? The more employers there are in your neighborhood, the more likely it is you're going to find a better job. That's not really sophisticated math or economics, it just happens to be the truth—*la verdad*.

When I took office, the United States had trade agreements with only two nations in our hemisphere. We've now negotiated agreements with 10 more. We're working for a strong agreement of the Doha round of global trade talks that will level the playing field for farmers and workers and small businesses in our country and throughout the hemisphere.

Entrepreneurs are taking advantage of the markets we've helped open. Here's an interesting story for you. Mariano Canu, he was an indigenous farmer in Guatemala whose land provided barely enough corn and beans to feed his family. He was scratching to get ahead. No one in his family had ever been to college. Most of the people in his village never got past the sixth grade. Mariano began tilling the fields at age 7. He had spent his life in grinding poverty, and it looked as though his children would suffer the same fate.

Trade helped him a lot, and here's how. To take advantage of new market opportunities, he organized an association of small farmers called Labradores Mayas. These farmers began growing vegetables that they could sell overseas, high-valued crops like lettuce and carrots and celery. They took out a loan. Capital matters. It's important to have capital available if we want our neighbors to be able to realize a better tomorrow. And they built an irrigation system with that loan. And soon they were selling their crops to large companies like Wal-Mart Central America. With the money Mariano has earned, he was able to send his son to college. Today, Labradores is thriving business that supports more than 1,000 jobs in production and transportation and the marketing of internationally sold vegetables.

One of the stops on my trip is going to be to see Mariano. I can't wait to congratulate him on not losing hope and faith. I also look forward to seeing a thriving enterprise that began with one dream, and it's in the interests of the United States to promote those dreams. People like Mariano are showing what the people of this region can accomplish when given a chance. By helping our neighbors build strong and vibrant economies, we increase the standard of living for all of us.

You know, not far from the White House is a statue of the great liberator, Simon Bolivar. He's often compared to George Washington—Jorge W. [*Laughter*] Like Washington, he was a general who fought for the right of his people to govern themselves. Like Washington, he succeeded in defeating a much stronger colonial power. And like Washington, he belongs to all of us who love liberty. One Latin American diplomat put it this way: "Neither Washington nor Bolivar was destined to have children of their own, so that we Americans might call ourselves their children."

We are the sons and daughters of this struggle, and it is our mission to complete the revolution they began on our two continents. The millions across our hemisphere who, every day, suffer the degradations of poverty and hunger have a right to be impatient. And I'm going to make them this pledge: The goal of this great country, the goal of a country full of generous people, is an Americas where the dignity of every person is respected, where all find room at the table, and where opportunity reaches into every village and every home. By extending the blessings of liberty to the least among us, we will fulfill the destiny of this new world and set a shining example for others.

Que Dios les bendiga.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:13 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to David C. Lizarraga, chairman of the board of directors, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Massey Villarreal, chairman of the board of directors, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation; and Juana Brunilda Rodriguez, teacher, Jose Armando Bermudez School in Santiago, Dominican Republic. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Memorandum on Assignment of Certain Functions Relating to Procurement Sanctions on Persons Engaging in Export Activities that Contribute to Proliferation

March 5, 2007

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Assignment of Certain Functions Relating to Procurement Sanctions on Persons Engaging in Export Activities that Contribute to Proliferation

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, the functions of the President under section 821 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (22 U.S.C. 6301) are assigned to the Secretary of State, except that the function of the President under section 821(c)(2)(A) is assigned to the Secretary of Defense.

In the performance of their respective functions under this memorandum, the Secretaries of State and Defense shall, as appropriate, consult each other, the Secretaries of the Treasury and Commerce, and the heads of other departments and agencies.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 12, 2007]

NOTE: This memorandum will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 13.

Remarks to the American Legion

March 6, 2007

Thank you very much, Paul, for that warm welcome. I appreciate the fact that you've given me a chance to come and address you. I welcome you to our Nation's Capital. I offer a special greeting to members of Post 77 from Houston, Texas. [*Laughter*] If you're here, my advice is, behave yourself. [*Laughter*] What happens in Washington stays in Washington. [*Laughter*]

People who know something about the Legion understand firsthand how much this organization does for our men and women in uniform, for those who have been wounded on the field of battle, and for their remarkable families. Our Nation has been able to call upon the Legion in times of promise and peril, and our Nation is grateful for your service.

I thank—not only do I thank your commander; I thank Earl Ruttkofsky. I appreciate Beverly, his wife, and JoAnn Cronin, who happens to be the president of the American Legion Auxiliary. She gets her hair done at the same place my mother does. [*Laughter*] Like, if you're listening, Mom, that's a compliment. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate so very much Secretary Jim Nicholson, who's in my Cabinet, Department of Veterans Affairs—Mr. Secretary. I want to thank the Members of the Congress who have joined us, starting with Senator Jim Bunning, Senator Orrin Hatch, and Senator Lindsey Graham. I'm honored you three men are here. Thanks for your time. And I thank you for your articulate defense for the support of our troops. I appreciate so very much Congressman Jim Saxton from New Jersey, Mike Pence from Indiana, and Joe Wilson from South Carolina. Welcome, and thank you for coming.

Since it's founding in the aftermath of World War I, the American Legion has assumed a sacred obligation: to preserve the traditions of our great democracy and to watch over those charged with its defense. In every war and in every era, our country's veterans have kept faith with the American people. And it's the obligation of the Government to keep faith with our veterans.

The support of our veterans has been a high priority in my administration. This year I've asked Congress for more than $86 billion for veterans' services. And if Congress approves my request, this would amount to a 77-percent increase of the budget since I took office; it would be the highest level of support for our veterans in American history.

We share with your concern about making sure our vets have good health care. I've talked to your commanders past, and suspect

I'll be talking to your commanders future—[*laughter*]—about making sure that our veterans have got good, decent, quality health care. Since 2001, we've helped over 1 million more veterans—we've added a million veterans—take advantage of the VA health care system.

The 2008 budget proposal will increase the VA health care budget by 83 percent since I took office. The Department of Defense's health care budget has grown from 19 billion to 38 billion. And that's an important commitment, and I look forward to working with Congress to say to our veterans, we care about you.

Money is one thing; delivery of services is another. I know I share—[*applause*]—listen, I am as concerned as you are about the conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. My decisions have put our kids in harm's way, and I'm concerned about the fact that when they come back, they don't get the full treatment they deserve. Many people working at Walter Reed are fine people. If you've been out there, you know what I'm talking about. They're dedicated, honorable healers who care deeply about our soldiers. Fine doctors, nurses, and therapists work day and night to help the wounded. Yet some of our troops at Walter Reed have experienced bureaucratic delays and living conditions that are less than they deserve. It's unacceptable to me; it's unacceptable to you; it's unacceptable to our country—and it's not going to continue.

I recently asked Secretary of Defense Bob Gates to assess the situation at Walter Reed firsthand and report back to me. He confirmed that there are problems, real problems. He has taken action to address those problems and hold people to account, including relieving the general in charge of the facility and accepting the resignation of the Secretary of the Army.

As we work to improve conditions at Walter Reed, we are also taking steps to find out whether similar problems exist at other military and veterans hospitals. The best way to do so in a constructive way, in a way that will bring forth the truth, is to create a bipartisan Presidential Commission. I've asked two distinguished public servants to lead the Commission, and they have accepted—Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala.

The Commission will conduct a comprehensive review of the care America is providing our wounded service men and women returning from the battlefield. This review will examine their treatment from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life as veterans, so we can ensure that we're meeting the physical and mental health needs of all. As this Commission begins its work and considers its recommendations, I have also directed the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to lead a Task Force composed of seven members of my Cabinet to focus and respond to immediate needs.

We have an obligation—we have a moral obligation to provide the best possible care and treatment to the men and women who have served our country. They deserve it, and they're going to get it.

My administration appreciates your strong support of the flag. The flag is emblazoned on the uniforms of brave men and women who serve our country. It is draped on the coffins of those who fall on the field of battle. It is a symbol of a noble nation and of a higher calling. I join with you and the elected legislatures of all 50 States in urging Congress to provide the flag with the constitutional protection it deserves.

My administration also shares your determination to keep faith with our prisoners of war and those missing in action. We cannot rest and must not rest until we have accounted for every member of our Armed Forces—from every war and every corner of the globe.

American Legion halls have been mainstays of our communities and neighborhoods for generations. You have taught millions of young people the importance of good citizenship and the values of "God and country." And I appreciate these valuable lessons in America. I saw them firsthand when I was the Governor of Texas. After all, you sponsor Boys State and Girls State. They're great programs. I found it very interesting how the executive director describes the programs. He says, quote, "The programs don't"—the programs, quote—the program, quote, "does not emphasize"—he has a little trouble with the English—[*laughter*]—and so do I—

[*laughter*]—describes this as an initiative that, quote, "does not emphasize classroom and textbook learning." That's my kind of program. [*Laughter*]

Your example of service offers invaluable lessons for future generations. In times of peace, you counsel vigilance. In times of war, you counsel resolve. More than 5 years have passed since the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, and we find ourselves debating the causes of this conflict and the course we have followed. Yet even among our differences, there are a few questions that surely have been settled. One is that September the 11th was not only a crime but an act of war—a war waged by fanatics who believe it is their duty to kill Americans and impose their hateful ideology as far as they can spread it.

Since 9/11, they have continued to try to attack us here at home. They're relentless, and they're determined. We stopped an Al Qaida plot to fly a hijacked airplane into the tallest building on the west coast. We stopped a Southeast Asian terror cell grooming operatives for attacks inside the United States. We stopped an Al Qaida cell developing anthrax to be used in attacks against America. For each life saved, we owe a debt of gratitude to our military and intelligence and law enforcement personnel who devote their lives to finding the terrorists and stopping and protect—stopping them and protecting the American people.

Our most solemn duty is to protect you. The most solemn duty of this Government is to protect the American people from further harm, and the best way to do so is to stay on the offense. So we pursued the enemy aggressively around the world—degrading their ability to organize and coordinate new attacks here at home. In the wake of 9/11, Americans made a choice: Instead of waiting for the enemy to strike on their terms, we would fight the enemy on our terms.

And we fight this war on many fronts. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we removed two of the world's most brutal regimes. And now we are undertaking the complex work of helping the people of these two countries establish functioning democracies that can protect their own people and be allies in this global war on terror. Sometimes we lose sight of the importance of this work in the midst of heated debates, and this is especially true when it comes to Iraq. The fight in Iraq is more than a conflict in one country; it is part of a larger struggle against extremism that is unfolding across the broader Middle East. The extremists are fighting to take control of Iraq so they can establish it as a base from which to overthrow moderate governments in the region and plan new attacks on the American people. If we fail in Iraq, the enemy will follow us home. Their success in Iraq would bring danger to America, and that is why America must prevail in Iraq.

I appreciate your strong support for those who have volunteered to wear our uniform. Thousands of courageous men and women have stepped forward to protect us. And they're not alone. Since this war began, nearly 120,000 Iraqis have volunteered to serve in their army. More than 8,000 Iraqis in uniform have died in the defense of their new nation. Recently in Anbar Province, where Al Qaida terrorists have gathered, 1,000 Sunnis volunteered for the police force in a period of 2 weeks. Last month in Hillah, an Iraqi police officer threw himself onto a suicide bomber—a final, heroic act that saved an untold number of Iraqis gathered outside a local mosque.

Every month, Iraqis risk reprisals from the terrorists and extremists to provide thousands of tips to coalition and Iraqi authorities. One recent tip from an Iraqi led to the discovery of a factory where insurgents developed sophisticated roadside bombs to kill our troops. With these acts of bravery, the Iraqis are standing up for the democratic future that 12 million of them voted for. The vast majority of Iraq's citizens want to live in peace, and they're showing their courage every day. And the United States of America will not abandon them in their hour of need.

To reach our goals and to prevail, we must recognize that the nature of the war in Iraq has changed. In 2005, the terrorists tried and failed to stop the Iraqi people as they held three national elections. They choose a transitional government, as they adopted the most progressive, democratic Constitution in the Arab world; and then they elected a Government under that Constitution.

So a thinking enemy adjusted their tactics, and in 2006, they struck. Last February, Al Qaida and other Sunni extremists blew up the Golden Mosque of Samarra. This atrocity was designed to provoke retaliation from the Iraqi Shi'a, and it succeeded. Radical Shi'a elements, some of whom receive support from Iran, formed death squads. And the result was a tragic escalation of sectarian rage and reprisal.

This changed the nature of the conflict in Iraq. We still faced the threat from Al Qaida, but the sectarian violence was getting out of hand and threatened to destroy this young democracy before it had a chance to succeed. So last fall, I ordered my national security team to conduct a comprehensive review of our strategy in Iraq. We devised an approach that is markedly different from previous efforts. This approach demands more from Iraq's elected Government, makes bringing security to Baghdad our top priority, and gives our troops the reinforcements they need to carry out their missions. And to carry out this strategy, I put in place a highly regarded commander, an expert on counterinsurgency, General David Petraeus.

General Petraeus's mission is to help Iraq's leaders implement the plan that they developed to secure Baghdad. Today, they can't do this on their own, so I have ordered reinforcements of more than 20,000 additional combat soldiers and marines to Iraq. The majority will go to Baghdad, where they will help Iraqi forces to clear and secure neighborhoods, and where they will partner with Iraqi units. The Iraqis in the lead, our forces will help secure the city by chasing down the terrorists and insurgents and murderers and roaming death squads.

We're fixing one of the major problems with our previous approach in Baghdad. In the past, our forces would help Iraqis clear out neighborhoods during the day and then go back to their bases at night, and often the enemy returned as soon as American forces left. This time, we will hold the neighborhoods we have cleared by establishing over 30 joint security stations throughout Baghdad. These will be neighborhood outposts where Iraqi forces, with U.S. help, will be deployed 24 hours a day to secure the population, provide emergency aid to the communities, and gather information to rout out extremist networks throughout the capital. At the same time, our forces will continue to train Iraqi Army and Police, so that we can help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing security that Baghdad needs.

It's too early to judge the success of this operation. General Petraeus recently arrived in the Iraqi capital; the plan he is executing is in its early stages. This strategy is going to take time, and we can expect Al Qaida and other extremists to try to derail the strategy by launching spectacular attacks.

Yet even at this early hour, there are some encouraging signs. The Iraqi Government has completed the deployment of three additional Iraqi Army brigades to the capital. They said they were going to employ three brigades, and they did. Iraq's leaders have lifted restrictions on Iraqi and coalition forces that prevented them from going into certain areas. Already, about half of the joint security stations have been established in neighborhoods across Baghdad. Iraqi and U.S. forces have rounded up more than 700 people affiliated with Shi'a extremists. They have recovered large weapons caches, including mortar weapons systems and rocket-propelled grenades.

Iraqi and American forces have also launched successful operations against the Sunni extremists. U.S. and Iraqi forces recently killed Al Qaida terrorists in Baghdad who were responsible for some of those bomb attacks that you're seeing on your TV screens. And in the past 2 weeks, U.S. and Iraqi forces have also uncovered large stockpiles of explosively formed projectiles—or EFPs—which are used by extremist groups to attack our troops. Iraqi and U.S. forces are making gradual but important progress almost every day, and we will remain steadfast until our objectives are achieved.

In addition to the steps they are taking to secure their capital, Iraq's leaders are also taking steps to achieve political reconciliation, reconciliation that is necessary after years of brutal tyranny. They have committed themselves to a series of benchmarks to advance this reconciliation: to share oil revenues amongst all Iraq's citizens; to put the wealth of Iraq into rebuilding of Iraq; to

allow more Iraqis to reenter their nation's civic life; to hold local elections; and to take responsibility for security in every Iraqi Province.

Iraqis have already begun to deliver on some of these promises. For example, Iraq's Council of Ministers recently agreed on legislation they will submit to their Parliament on the development of Iraq's oil resources and the sharing of revenues. Last month, the Iraqi Government approved a budget that includes $10 billion for reconstruction and capital investment. These are encouraging signs, and now Iraq's leaders must meet the other pledges they have made.

To succeed, Iraq's leaders also need the help of the international community. So the United States supports the Iraqi Government as it pursues an international initiative to build diplomatic, economic, and security support for its young democracy. Last week, the Iraqis announced that they will hold a conference in Baghdad that will include officials from Iraq's neighboring countries, as well as the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Conference.

It's going to be followed next month by a second conference that includes Secretary Rice and her counterparts from around the world. These meetings will be an important test. They'll be a test of whether Iran and Syria are truly interested in being constructive forces in Iraq. It will be a test for the international community to express its support for this young democracy, to support a nation that will be at peace with its neighbors.

Diplomacy is going to play an important part of securing Iraq's future. Yet diplomacy will fail without a robust military strategy. The goal of the enemies in Iraq is power, and they're willing to kill themselves and innocent men, women, and children to achieve that goal. People like these can't be satisfied by negotiations or diplomatic concessions. Our strategy recognizes the hard truth. So we're going to continue to pursue our enemies in Iraq relentlessly, and at the same time, we'll work with moderate forces to achieve reconciliation between sectarian factions.

Here in Washington, we have important decisions on Iraq ahead of us. And the most pivotal question is whether the United States Congress will stand behind General Petraeus and our troops as they work to secure Baghdad. General Petraeus has my confidence, and he also has the confidence of the United States Senate. In fact, he was recently confirmed to his post without one single vote against him. Yet almost immediately, the House passed a resolution that disapproved of his strategy for success in Iraq. I know you find that puzzling—[*laughter*]—you're not the only one. [*Laughter*] This may be the first time in the history of the United States Congress that voted to send a new commander into battle and then voted to oppose the plan he said was critical in winning that battle. [*Laughter*]

Members of Congress have every right to express their opinion. They have every right. They also have a responsibility to fund our war fighters. Some in Congress have called for cutting off funds for our troops, only to find opposition from their colleagues on Capitol Hill. Now others in Congress are planning to use an emergency war spending bill that will provide funds for the war on terror as an opportunity to add on billions of dollars for unrelated domestic programs. Tacking extra domestic spending to an emergency war spending bill only will complicate Congress's ability to provide the support that our troops urgently need. I ask the Congress to approve the funds we requested, and our troops are counting on, without strings and without delay.

Equally important to funding our troops is giving our commanders the flexibility to carry out their missions without undue interference from politicians in Washington. Some Members of Congress say that we can succeed in Iraq without providing the reinforcements that our forces have been promised and are expecting. I disagree. More importantly, our commanders disagree. Other Members of Congress seem to believe that we can have it all, that we can fight Al Qaida, pursue national reconciliation, initiate aggressive diplomacy, and deter Iran's ambitions in Iraq—all while withdrawing from Baghdad and reducing our force levels. That sounds good in theory, but doing so at this

moment would undermine everything our troops have worked for.

There are no shortcuts in Iraq. Our intelligence and military experts agree that given the current situation, Iraq will not be a stable nation until its capital is more secure. Political reconciliation is difficult when a country's seat of government is under constant siege. Economic improvements cannot take root when Baghdad's neighborhoods are the scene of daily sectarian violence and reprisals. And you cannot effectively battle Al Qaida by ignoring the sectarian violence they are inciting, especially in the capital.

If American forces were to step back from Baghdad now, before it is more secure, the scale and scope of attacks would increase and the intensity would increase. A contagion of violence could spill out across the entire country and, in time, the entire region. The enemy would emerge from the chaos emboldened, with new safe havens and new recruits and new resources and an even greater determination to harm America.

For our country, this is a nightmare scenario. For the enemy, it's their plan. They're not debating whether the war in Iraq is worth it. Hear the words of bin Laden in a message to the American people just last year. He says of Iraq: "The war is for you or for us to win. If we win it, it means your defeat and disgrace forever." In the face of such a determined enemy, the idea of pulling back from the fight and hoping for the best is not a reasonable position. America did not drive Al Qaida out of their safe haven in Afghanistan only to let them set up a shop in a free Iraq.

Now that the battle for Baghdad is underway, our country is best served by standing behind our troops and doing everything we can to aid in their success. The outcome of this conflicts involves more than the fortunes of any one President or any political party. Our mission is America's mission, and our failure would be America's failure.

Our country is fortunate that our mission is in the hands of America's finest citizens, the men and women who wear our uniform. They've been on the battlefield. They have seen this war up close. They know the consequences of failure. And they appreciate something larger, the consequences of success. We know what a free Iraq could mean for the region and the world, because we know how your sacrifices half a century ago helped create a free Germany that transformed Europe and a free Japan that sparked a wave of democracy and prosperity throughout much of Asia. We know that a free Iraq has the potential to spark a similar transformation in the Middle East and bring us closer to the day when moms and dads in the Arab world see a future of hope for their children. And we know that the sacrifices that our troops are making in Iraq today will lay the foundation of peace for generations of Americans to come.

Last year, I received a letter from a Navy Seabee named Andy Clements. He was serving in Iraq. He says he worked alongside Iraqis on a daily basis and that they appreciate what America is doing for their country. He told me this story: "I was at Baghdad International Airport several weeks ago and had a small Iraqi boy, near the same age as my own son, run up to me and salute. He kept repeating 'thank you' in broken English and wanted to shake my hand. I will remember that chance meeting forever. And that, to me, is what being done—here is all about."

In the brief history of our Nation, we've seen freedom remake the world many times, and yet we always seem surprised by the quiet power of our ideals. It's in our power to show those who hunger for liberty the path away from tyranny and terror. Throughout our history, we have gone through tough moments, and we have come out stronger on the other side. We've been guided by our belief that freedom is not an American privilege but a value that belongs to all mankind.

The struggle in Iraq may be hard, but this should not be a time for despair. We can have confidence in the final outcome of this struggle, because we have men on our side like Tommy Tardif. The 25-year-old marine was in an Iraqi town when his squad came under heavy fire. He was engaged in combat so intense that Marine Corps Commandant General Mike Hagee described it as a "hand grenade-throwing contest." In that combat, Sergeant Tardif was seriously wounded by grenade fragments, yet he refused medical attention until the battle had been won. Later, when he was evacuated, he called his

wife from the transit hospital in Germany, and he said this: "Honey, I could come home right now, but I feel I have responsibilities, and I'm going back to Iraq." He borrowed a uniform; he convinced his doctor to let him out of the hospital—and the man returned to his squad.

A lot of you can tell stories like this. Each of you knows a fellow patriot whose name is carried in your heart or who sits proudly beside you in this hall today. I want to thank you for the sacrifices you have made. I thank you for the example you have set. And I thank you for the steadfast support of the men and women who wear our uniform.

You know that America can overcome any challenge or any difficulty. You know America's brightest days are still ahead. And you know that nothing we say here—no speech or vote or resolution in the United States Congress—means more to the future of our country than the men and women who wake up every morning and put on the uniform of our country and defend the United States of America.

I thank you for your time. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. at the Renaissance Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Paul A. Morin, national commander, American Legion; Earl Ruttkofsky, national commander, Sons of the American Legion; Maj. Gen. George W. Weightman, USA, former commander, Walter Reed Army Medical Center; former Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Sgt. Timothy C. Tardif, USMC, who was awarded the Silver Star on May 3, 2004.

Executive Order 13426—Establishing a Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors and a Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes

March 6, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to provide a comprehensive review of the care provided to America's returning Global War on Terror service men and women from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment of Commission.* There is established the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors (Commission).

Sec. 2. *Membership of Commission.* The Commission shall be composed of nine members appointed by the President. The President shall designate two Co-Chairs from among the members of the Commission.

Sec. 3. *Mission of Commission.* The mission of the Commission shall be to:

(a) examine the effectiveness of returning wounded service members' transition from deployment in support of the Global War on Terror to successful return to productive military service or civilian society, and recommend needed improvements;

(b) evaluate the coordination, management, and adequacy of the delivery of health care, disability, traumatic injury, education, employment, and other benefits and services to returning wounded Global War on Terror service members by Federal agencies as well as by the private sector, and recommend ways to ensure that programs provide high-quality services;

(c) (i) analyze the effectiveness of existing outreach to service members regarding such benefits and services, and service members' level of awareness of and ability to access these benefits and services, and (ii) identify ways to reduce barriers to and gaps in these benefits and services; and

(d) consult with foundations, veterans service organizations, non-profit groups, faith-based organizations, and others as appropriate, in performing the Commission's functions under subsections (a) through (c) of this section.

Sec. 4. *Administration of Commission.*

(a) The Secretary of Defense shall, to the extent permitted by law, provide administrative support and funding for the Commission. To the extent permitted by law, office space, analytical support, and staff support for the Commission shall be provided by the Department of Defense.

(b) Members of the Commission shall serve without any compensation for their

work on the Commission. Members of the Commission appointed from among private citizens of the United States, while engaged in the work of the Commission, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by law for persons serving intermittently in Government service (5 U.S.C. 5701–5707), consistent with the availability of funds.

(c) The Co-Chairs of the Commission shall select an Executive Director to coordinate administration of the Commission.

(d) The heads of executive branch departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, provide the Commission with information as requested by the Co-Chairs.

(e) The Co-Chairs of the Commission shall convene and preside at the meetings of the Commission, determine its agenda, and direct its work.

(f) The functions of the President under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App.)(Act), except for those in section 6 of that Act, that are applicable to the Commission, shall be performed by the Secretary of Defense, in accordance with the guidelines that have been issued by the Administrator of General Services.

Sec. 5. *Report of Commission*. The Commission shall report its recommendations to the President through the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Commission shall issue a final report by June 30, 2007, unless the Co-Chairs provide written notice to the President that an extension is necessary, in which case the Commission shall issue the final report by July 31, 2007.

Sec. 6. *Termination of Commission*. The Commission shall terminate 30 days after submitting its final report, unless extended by the President prior to that date.

Sec. 7. *Establishment of Task Force*. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Secretary) shall establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs for administrative purposes only an Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes (Task Force).

Sec. 8. *Membership and Operation of Task Force*. The Task Force shall consist exclusively of the following members, or their designees who shall be at the Under Secretary level (or its equivalent) or higher:

(a) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who shall serve as Chair;
(b) the Secretary of Defense;
(c) the Secretary of Labor;
(d) the Secretary of Health and Human Services;
(e) the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development;
(f) the Secretary of Education;
(g) the Director of the Office of Management and Budget;
(h) the Administrator of the Small Business Administration; and
(i) other officers or employees of the United States, as determined by the Secretary.

The Secretary or the Secretary's designee shall convene and preside at meetings of the Task Force and direct its work. The Secretary shall designate an official of the Department of Veterans Affairs to serve as the Executive Secretary of the Task Force, and the Executive Secretary shall head any staff assigned to the Task Force.

Sec. 9. *Mission of Task Force*. The mission of the Task Force shall be to:

(a) identify and examine existing Federal services that currently are provided to returning Global War on Terror service members;

(b) identify existing gaps in such services;

(c) seek recommendations from appropriate Federal agencies on ways to fill those gaps as effectively and expeditiously as possible using existing resources; and

(d) (i) ensure that in providing services to these service members, appropriate Federal agencies are communicating and cooperating effectively, and (ii) facilitate the fostering of agency communications and cooperation through informal and formal means, as appropriate.

Sec. 10. *Administration of Task Force*. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the extent permitted by law, provide administrative support and funding for the Task Force.

Sec. 11. *Action Plan of Task Force*. Consistent with applicable law, the Task Force shall outline a Government-wide action plan that identifies existing Federal services for returning Global War on Terror service men and women and that ensures the provision of such services to those service members

as effectively and expeditiously as possible. The Task Force shall submit the action plan to the President within 45 days of the date of this order.

Sec. 12. *Termination of Task Force.* The Secretary, with the approval of the President, shall terminate the Task Force upon the completion of its duties.

Sec. 13. *General Provisions.*

(a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect (i) authority granted by law to an agency or the head thereof, or (ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees, agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 6, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:57 a.m., March 7, 2007]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on March 8.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Cochairs of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors

March 7, 2007

I am concerned that our soldiers and their families are not getting the treatment that they deserve, having volunteered to defend our country. Any report of medical neglect will be taken seriously by this administration, and I'm confident by the Congress, and we will address problems quickly.

I've asked two of America's fine public servants, Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala, to chair a Commission that will analyze our health care both at the Defense Department and at the Veterans Department, to ensure that not only our soldiers but their families have complete confidence in the Government's upholding its responsibility to treat those who have been wounded.

I am concerned that there may be flaws in the system between when a soldier is on the battlefield, through the Defense Department, through the Veterans Administration, and finally to the community. I can't think of two better people to analyze the situation and to make recommendations, two people to lead a Commission of probably nine people, and that would be Senator Dole, who is himself a veteran, and a wounded veteran at that, a former distinguished Senator, a man who knows Washington well, but more importantly, he knows the kind of questions to ask; and Secretary Shalala, who is an expert on health. She lived after 8 years in President Clinton's administration; she knows what to look for; she knows the questions to ask.

And I'm confident that this Commission will bring forth the truth. And as I assured the Chairmen, I am confident that there will be a quick response to any problems that you may find. So I can't thank you enough for taking time, and to serve your nation once again. God bless. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Bob Dole; and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala.

Interview With Foreign Print Journalists

March 6, 2007

The President. Thanks for coming. I'm very much looking forward to my trip. I believe that a peaceful neighborhood and a prosperous neighborhood is in the interest of the United States of America. My trip is an opportunity to remind the folks in our neighborhood that the United States has a robust policy toward empowering individuals to realize their full potential.

I gave a speech yesterday that I outlined a vision of a nation that cares about the human condition. I spoke in terms of dollars

being spent, but more significantly, I spoke in terms of programs that are actually empowering and helping people improve their lives. And that's my message. My message is that the United States is a—should be viewed as a constructive partner in helping deal with significant issues, whether they be the issues of prosperity or education or health.

I'm really looking forward to going down and visiting with the respective leaders with whom I'll be meeting. These are men I respect. These are people whose opinions matter. And I'm confident we'll have a good trip.

And with that, we'll go around the room and answer questions, and then I've got to go give a speech to the American Legion, and you're welcome to come and listen to it if you'd like to. Are you going to listen to it, Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters]?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. That's good.

Q. Absolutely.

The President. Will you cover it objectively? Of course you will; what am I thinking? [*Laughter*]

Do you want to start? Jose, where are you from?

Q. Mexico.

The President. So are you from Brazil?

Q. Yes.

The President. We'll go this way—this is the order of the trip: Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, *y* Mexico. Thank you, Patricia.

Q. So I start, right?

The President. Please.

Brazil-U.S. Relations/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Mr. President, my first question is, I would like to know, what is the importance of the development of this new ethanol market, regional market, in political and economical terms? And how is that going to strengthen U.S.-Brazil relations?

The President. First, U.S.-Brazilian relations are strong. I can remember my first visit with President Lula. He wasn't sure what to expect when he came to the Oval Office, and frankly, I wasn't sure what to expect when he came. You know, people have reputations that precede them in life. And yet, after we spent a brief period of time, we both came to realize, we share the same concerns—particularly for the poor, and we both represent big, influential nations; and that we can work together to achieve common objectives.

And one such objective is human rights and rule of law, a civil society that empowers individuals; that we believe government ought to respond to people and that people ought to have the ultimate say in the fate of government. And those were common principles. We came from different political directions—I readily concede—but nevertheless, when we listened carefully, we found common ground. And that puts us in a position where we can work in practical ways to address significant problems.

One such problem is trade, and President Lula and I will spend time on the Doha round to determine whether or not we're able to advance Doha in a constructive way that benefits our nations and, equally importantly, the world's poor. The best way to alleviate poverty is for there to be prosperity, and one way to enhance prosperity is through a world that trades freely and fairly.

The other area—another area of common ground is changing our energy uses. My last trip to Brazil, I was briefed extensively on Brazil's capacity to use its raw materials to develop a vast ethanol industry. And I was impressed by the progress Brazil has made. It reminded me of—the progress Brazil has made has reminded me of the vast potential that agricultural can make on the energy front.

So I now return to Brazil with a robust domestic agenda on ethanol. We had already had an agenda on ethanol, but it's now even more robust as a result of a mandatory fuel standard I laid out that said, the United States will be consuming about 35 billion gallons of ethanol.

The political implications of that, at least for the United States, are profound, in that we become less dependent on oil, which is good for our national security, as well as it helps us be good stewards of the environment. I happen to believe that the United States and Brazil can work together to, for example, share technologies with others in the region, which will help them become less

dependent on oil. And that's important, because dependency on oil exposes economies to the whims of the marketplace.

As China's demand for oil continues, if there's not a corresponding increase in international supply, what happens in China affects the ability of someone in Latin America to be able to keep more money—in other words, the gas prices go up. There is a direct correlation. And we live in a global economy, in which global economics—I mean, live in a global world in which global economics affects the lives of a lot of people in our neighborhood. And so becoming less dependent on oil will enhance the economic security of the region, and that's important because prosperity in the region is important for the United States. We want our friends and neighbors to be prosperous.

Anyway, thank you. Daniel.

Uruguay-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Recently, Uruguay and the United States signed a framework agreement on trade and investments. Now, how far do you think the United States and Uruguay can advance towards a free trade agreement? And taking into account that in the Uruguayan Government there are differing opinions on this subject and our President, a few days ago in a speech in reference to your trip, he said—he defined his Government as anti-imperialist——

The President. As anti-imperialist? Fine, that's—I would hope he would define my Government as profreedom. But back to the free trade issue. I think that—first of all, there are countervailing pressures in my own Government. People shouldn't take for granted that the United States wants to have trade agreements. As a matter of fact, there's a strong protectionist sentiment in America. I strongly resist those temptations. It's in our interests to be a nation which treats others the same way we want to be treated in the marketplace. Again, I repeat, I know it's in the interest of the poor to have markets open for their products.

And so I will go to Uruguay as a strong defender of trade. I fully understand there are local sensitivities. I fully understand that there are pressures on leaders regarding trade and that sometimes, it takes a period of time for people to get comfortable with different types of trading agreements. And therefore, I will make my case about why I hope we can continue what has been a constructive relationship with Uruguay without pressing the case beyond that, which is politically possible.

And again, I will assure the President that I will be—we want to listen to concerns, we will work closely as friends. And I will remind him that here at home, it's not an easy sell, necessarily, and that if he believes trade is in the interests of his country and I believe it's in mine, we've both got to work constructively to achieve common objectives.

As to characterizations of the United States, I will remind him that we are a generous, compassionate nation that believes in peace. And that on the one hand, we'll protect ourselves from attacks that I'm convinced the enemy wants to launch on America again. It's my most solemn duty. But at the same time, I'll remind him that the advance of liberty, the advance of human rights and human dignity is in our national interests.

Anyway, I'm looking forward to the trip. It's going to be—I'm told it's a beautiful country. I've never been to Uruguay, and I'm looking forward to it.

Carlos.

Colombian Government/Plan Colombia II

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation.

The President. *Por nada.*

Q. *Por la invitacion.*

The President. *Si. Por nada.*

Q. Thank you. In the last few months, Colombia has been shocked by scandal of possible links between paramilitary groups, which are terrorist organizations, and members of Congress as well as public officials. Given the fact that until now, only close allies and collaborators of President Alvaro Uribe have been involved in this scandal, can this scandal affect the support that your Government is giving to the Government of Colombia?

The President. President Uribe has made it very clear that he is going to—he promotes and expects there to be a full investigation

of any allegations. And as a result of strengthening the prosecutorial offices, he has sent a signal that if, in fact, there are allegations that are worthy of further investigation and the facts lead to prosecution, he will fully prosecute. And to me, that gives me great comfort in seeing his strong leadership. And I believe that that leadership will stand him in good stead with our Congress.

The budget I've submitted is one that's a little less than last year but, nevertheless, is a strong commitment to a Plan Colombia II. One of the reasons why the budget is a little less than last year is, it goes to show the progress that Colombia is making. In my judgment, President Uribe has done a fabulous job for leading that country. He's been very strong and very resolute, and it's an impressive record. Secondly, the economy is improving, as you know, and therefore, Colombia can carry more of the load of II. But nevertheless, the commitment is a significant commitment, and I will work very hard with Congress to get that commitment passed in the budget.

Eduardo.

Narcotics and Drug Trafficking/Crime Prevention

Q. Hi, Mr. President, thank you very much.

The President. How are you? Thanks for coming.

Q. Mr. President, a lot of people in Guatemala and in Central America is worried about the violence that might be generated by organized crime, gangs, and drug trafficking. How severe would you say this problem is? And how the Government of the United States can work together with Guatemala and the other Central American countries to fight this problem?

The President. Well, that's a common issue that we have with our very important friend to the south. It is an issue that concerns both Mexico and the United States. The issue of crime in Central America concerns both Mexico and the United States because, oftentimes, that crime can be exported into either country.

My attitude is that the United States can help provide Justice Department and information sharing—Justice Department collaboration with their respective people in government.

In terms of narcotrafficking, the first thing the United States can do is convince our people to stop using drugs. If there's a demand, inevitably there will be a supply, so we have an obligation here at home to work to reduce drug usage. If people don't find a better market—if people don't find a healthy market, there will be less pressure to produce drugs.

Secondly, we can enforce our borders and make it harder for drug dealers to be able to get their drugs to market. One way to better enforce our borders, besides stepping up presence on our border, is to pass a comprehensive immigration bill in the Congress, one that says that the person coming to do work that Americans aren't doing doesn't have to sneak across the border, thereby enabling our Border Patrol to be able to focus on narcotrafficking. In other words, you can raise the cost of getting drugs into our country by making it harder for them to penetrate our borders.

Thirdly, we can work internally with governments, and do. We do a lot of bilateral work. I don't want to jump to—I'm not going to jump to the next country, but one perfect example is the cooperation and collaboration between Mexico and the United States on helping each other with information sharing.

Fourthly, we have got Central American gangs in the United States, that as we find and arrest, we can share information we learn from them with the host government. So there's a lot of collaboration efforts.

The best way, however, to ultimately deal with crime, besides reducing the demand for their product, is to enhance prosperity. And that's why CAFTA is an important agreement. We would rather people try to make a living honestly. And therefore, there needs to be hope; there needs to be the possibility of that honest living to be able to be made so that youngsters don't turn—feel they have to turn to crime.

And finally, a social program, social justice programs, like education; the United States spends a lot of money in Latin America on education programs, programs aimed at either training teachers to teach and/or direct aid to education programs throughout our hemisphere. An educated child is one that

will have a hopeful future, and therefore, less likely to be recruited into a criminal gang.

Hombre.

Mexico-U.S. Border Issues/Immigration Reform

Q. *Gracias.*

The President. *Si.*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. *Si.*

Q. Again, thank you for the invitation. And my question goes in the same sense as my friend Eduardo.

The President. I thought so. I thought it might. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, as you know, President Calderon has positioned himself at the forefront in the war against drugs, and especially on violence that derives from drug trafficking. What do you think should be Mr. Calderon's next step? And would his efforts now motivate the U.S. to be more conscience in stopping illegal weapons crossing the border, north to south?

The President. It's a very interesting question. Mexico is rightly concerned that there are traffickers taking contraband from our country into Mexico. Just like we're concerned that there are traffickers bringing humans and/or drugs from south to north, which means that we have got to commit ourselves to rational border policy that will work.

I'll repeat what I said earlier about comprehensive immigration reform: I'm a strong supporter of comprehensive immigration reform. I believe strongly that a comprehensive bill will make it easier to focus on drugs and guns if people don't feel like they've got to sneak into the United States.

Secondly, such a bill will enable us to—it will help us dismantle an industry that has sprung up that uses human beings as product, as chattel. And that's unacceptable to this country. Now the incentive is for people who want to do work that Americans aren't doing, is to pay money to be stuffed in the back of an 18-wheeler, for example, and driven across and ducked out in the desert, where they hope somebody will come and rescue them and take them to a motel or a house where they have to rent, and then they finally work their way toward work. The industry that has sprung up as a result of the current immigration law is inhumane, and it doesn't reflect the values of the United States.

So to answer your question about drugs moving one way and guns moving the other, immigration reform will help. It will mean that the people and assets we have on the border can be focused on precisely that which you're concerned about.

Now, as to President Calderon's next steps, that's up to him, and one purpose of my visit—it to listen to his strategy. It's a Mexican strategy. I have confidence that this man, elected by the people, will devise a strategy that is best for Mexico. And the role of the United States is not to devise a strategy but is to listen very carefully as to how we can help implement that strategy, and part of my visit is to be a listener and a partner.

And I appreciate the strong stance that President Calderon has taken. He has shown courage because he is committing the stake to take on some very powerful, very rich, and very lethal people. And that takes courage, and I admire courage when it comes to leaders in public office.

Patricia.

We'll go one more round, then I've got to go give a speech, which Holland says he's going to go listen to. [*Laughter*]

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America/U.S. Foreign Aid

Q. There's a perception that one of the objectives of your trip is to strengthen relations with the countries that are U.S. friends. So my question is, what do you think of the rise of this so-called alternative development model, championed by President Chavez, that calls for nationalization, greater government intervention? And what is Brazil's role in the region, taking that new development model into account?

The President. Each leader is going to have to adopt a governing style and an economic model that they believe yields to prosperity for their people. I strongly believe that government-run industry is inefficient and will lead to more poverty. I believe if the state tries to run the economy, it will enhance poverty and reduce opportunity. So the United States brings a message of open markets and open government to the region.

My trip is to remind the people of Central and South America that we live in the same neighborhood and that the United States is committed to empowering individuals to realize their God-given potential.

I would like to cite some statistics for you, just to help prove my case. Since I have been the President, the line item for traditional bilateral aid has doubled, from about $800 million a year to $1.6 billion for the region. And that's a total, when you total all up the money that is spent, because of the generosity of our taxpayers, that's $8.5 billion to programs that promote social justice—for example, promote education and health.

The reason I bring that up, it's very important for me to remind our own people as to why it's important to continue to be generous in our neighborhood. If you're interested in peace, then you've got to be interested in prosperity and hope. Our programs are aimed at encouraging hope.

Secondly, there's about—make sure I get this right, here—there's about $350 billion of direct foreign investment in the region. Now that's important because investment yields jobs. And wise economic policy recognizes that investment can help improve the lives of the worker or the person who's anxious to make a living.

In my speech yesterday, I pointed out the fact that, by far, the vast majority of people in our neighborhood are really hard-working, decent, family-oriented people who just need a chance. And a direct foreign investment—that means somebody believing that the investment climate is worthy of investment—helps that working person, that hard-working person find employment.

And so our presence in the region is sometimes very quiet, but very effective. And one part of—main purpose of the trip is to tell people that we take the region and its problems very seriously and have got a good record.

And we'll let others make their case as to how best to proceed. We'll let others come and explain why their point of view makes sense. All I can tell you is that I believe that the system of government and the system of economies that we promote is fair.

Now, I fully recognize that until people actually feel progress in their pocketbook, that there's going to be frustrations with forms of government. But that doesn't mean you kind of revert to something that I don't believe will work. It does mean you've got to make sure that the aid and the progress that you're making actually helps.

Daniel.

Central and South America-U.S. Relations

Q. I'm going to do a followup on that question——

The President. Okay. Sure.

Q. For example, we, in Uruguay, we are seeing President Chavez's policy of financial agreements and commercial agreements on investments. And he's also going to Argentina on the same day that you are going to Uruguay, and he's even holding a street rally in Buenos Aires on that same day. I want to know how you view this——

The President. Look, I dare—I go a lot of places, and there are street rallies. And my attitude is, I love freedom and the right for people to express themselves. I bring a message of good will to Uruguay and to the region. My trip is one that says, let's find ways to work together for the common good. And the United States has got a strong record of helping people, and I'm really proud of it.

And it is very important for the American people to hear firsthand our concerns about our neighborhood in order for them to continue to support programs, such as the Millennium Challenge Account, which is an $855 million program, and encouraging good governance in the region; or the education for the—we've got a new teacher initiative we've laid out, and we believe by, I think it's 2008, we'll have trained 20,000 teachers.

There are a lot of—you've got to understand that in a country where there are isolationist tendencies, where people sometimes say, "It's not our problem," that the President has got to be constantly reminding people that poverty in our neighborhood is our problem. So the trip gives me an opportunity to highlight successes and to point out challenges so that the American people stay engaged.

One of the great assets in our country is the fact that there are compassionate people

that are willing to go into parts of the world where there's desperation and poverty. You know, our faith-based programs, for example. I'm not sure to the extent to which they've gone to Uruguay, but I know in Guatemala, there is an extensive program to help poor workers find market access so they can make a living. I'm going to visit one such program.

Our military—people think of the United States military as war fighters, and they are when the Commander in Chief puts them in such a situation, but our military is building health clinics throughout Central America, for example, in a very quiet way. And my trip will help herald some of the programs we're doing. One, we're trying to convince the American people it's worth it; and secondly, reminding our neighbors that we care.

Carlos.

Colombia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. President, in Colombia, there are growing concerns about two initiatives that the U.S. Congress is now considering. One is the free trade agreement with Colombia, and the aid package for 2008. Democrats in Congress have already raised some objections about labor, ecological, and human rights issues concerning the FTA. In the case of the aid package, some people in your administration have said that Colombia should assume more costs of Plan Colombia in the future. Also, Democrats are already talking about reducing the aid.

What will your administration do to increase the possibility for the approval of the FTA? And should Colombia expect to have a reduction in the aid it receives in the years to come?

The President. First, I will defend our budget strongly, that we've submitted to Congress, which, as I described earlier, does have a reduction, but only because we think Colombia is more capable of funding certain aspects of the program. But nevertheless, it is a robust program. And I look forward to telling President Uribe that he can count on the United States defending that which we sent up to Congress. That's what we believe is the right number, and we will vigorously defend the number.

Free trade with Colombia and Peru are coming up for votes. And like all free trade agreements, we will battle for their passage. Now, obviously, to the extent that we could—and by the way, the President has been here working hard, been making phone calls. But these are tough votes. And the reason I mention these tough votes, again, is that people shouldn't take access to the U.S. market for granted. I mean, the CAFTA vote was a tough vote, and we worked hard, along with the leaders. And this will be a tough vote; I don't want to send any other signal but that. On the other hand, it's an important vote. And we want to—and I call upon Democrats to understand the consequences of this vote—and Republicans. Members of Congress have got to understand that when we negotiate in good faith a free trade agreement that the—they need to understand the consequences of not supporting it.

And so I'm—this will not be my first trade battle, nor will it be my last, hopefully—but it's going to be a battle. And we look forward to working with the Government to get it passed.

Eduardo.

Trade/Prosperity in the Americas

Q. Mr. President, so far, what's your evaluation of the impact of the free trade with Central America? And what do you expect in the medium and long term to be delivered by the CAFTA? And how the countries of Central America and the United States can work together to improve or to make it better, the trade between countries?

The President. There are great expectations when trade agreements get signed that all of the sudden, there's going to be instant prosperity. But that's not the way it works. Economies develop. And I fully understand that in parts of Central America, when people heard that U.S. markets were open and the CAFTA markets were open that there would be—people say, well, we've done this to increase prosperity. And so there's—I'm sure there's some expectations that have not been met.

Part of my messaging in Central America will be that opening markets is the first step toward more prosperity. Now, I'm going to go to a program, Labradores Mayas, that is a great example of what is possible for an indigenous farmer that was scratching out a

living, ends up kind of establishing a co-op, goes and gets a loan, which, by the way, is an essential part of our program—and that is to provide microloans to people to be able to begin to realize dreams. And it works. It's actually a very effective program.

This was one such program. It was what, a micro thing, but nevertheless, the co-op was able to then develop an irrigation system, which then made their production of high-specialty crops more efficient. I can't wait to see this. The one reason I go is to herald what is possible. It is a reminder that the United States approach to the region is not a political approach, but it is a human approach. It is one that emphasizes that human potential exists and that the best programs are those that elevate the potential.

So I will try to help deal with expectations, Eduardo, about how markets evolve. And one way for me to do so is to remind people about the effects of NAFTA with our important neighbor to the south, Mexico.

When I grew up in Texas, the border, *la frontera*, was like a third world on both sides of the border. And then in the early nineties, NAFTA was passed. But there wasn't instant successes. It took awhile for people to realize how the inevitable adjustments that will come when people start accessing market. And if you were to go down to the border today, you'd be stunned at the prosperity on both sides of the border because of trade.

And yet today, obviously, it's 2007, and this is 16 years later. Now, when I was the Governor of Texas—I was elected—I was sworn-in '95—we were beginning to see the benefits of the NAFTA trade on the border. But it took awhile. And I understand if you're poor, it's hard to be patient. I fully understand that. And so there's a natural tension between the expectations of prosperity and the need to scratch out a living.

To answer your question, in the long run, what ends up happening is, again, I think the Mexican model is good to look at, because we're constantly dealing with trade disputes. There will be the argument over the—whatever. Since I've been President, we've dealt with Mexico on a variety of fronts, like, I think tomatoes or corn, whatever—avocados, exactly, *por cierto*—cement. There's a constant need to evaluate the trade agreements and to deal with the natural tensions that grow up. It's not easy to have a trading relationship, but it's a lot more hopeful than not having a trading relationship, is my view.

And that's why my discussions with President Lula on the Doha round are going to be very important. Brazil is a major player in the international community. And the Doha round, in my judgment, is a vital round that we would like to see progress, because I'd repeat to you that a system that trades fairly and a system with more open markets is one that allows people to more likely rise out of poverty. A successful round of Doha is by far the most effective poverty-alleviating program in the world.

Anyway. The final question. Jose.

Energy

Q. Mr. President, from your past experience——

The President. Joe.

Q. *Gracias*.

The President. Jorge. Jorge W. [*Laughter*]

Q. From your past experience in the energy sector, you know that Mexico and Canada are strategic partners for the U.S.—through the subject of energy. And what benefits do you think that Mexico will get, and also its neighbors, from a position of opening its energy sector to private investment?

The President. Jose was right that our biggest suppliers of energy are Canada and Mexico, and that's good. I'd much rather be getting energy from stable sources that are friendly than from sources that are unstable and not friendly. And since we import about 60 percent of our crude oil from overseas, we are obviously dependent upon stability—one reason why, Jose, that it's important for us to work with countries to help develop a more robust ethanol and biofuels industry. And I believe it's coming. However, having said that, we're still going to require oil. And to the extent that Mexico makes the decision internally to be able to attract enough capital to expand to keep up with world demand, that would be positive. But most of all, it would be positive for Mexico.

Mexico has got a valuable asset in its energy sector. The demand for that energy is significant, however, the exploitation of that

energy requires significant investment. It requires investment to keep their sector—the current sector modernized, and as you all know, that as Mexico continues to expand its production in deeper waters in the Gulf of Mexico, that requires even more capital investment. So to the extent that the Government feels comfortable being able to track sources of capital outside of the Government cashflow, to me that would be something that certainly ought to considered by President Calderon.

And we're fortunate that Canada and Mexico are vibrant energy producers.

Okay? Looking forward to the trip.

Cuba

Q. A final one on Castro?

The President. On Castro? Sure. Sure. The universal Castro question? [*Laughter*] Can you come up with a unified question?

Q. What role can the countries of Latin America, like Brazil, like other partners in Latin America, can play in the Cuban transition to democracy?

The President. The message, in my judgment, to the world during a transition period, is freedom—that we ought to expect that the Cuban people have the right to express themselves openly without fear of reprisal, to be able to express themselves at the ballot box, and to be able to realize potential as a result of an open economy.

What I hope happens is that we together insist that transition doesn't mean transition from one figure to another, but transition means from one type of government to a different type of government, based upon the will of the people. That will certainly be the position of the United States. We believe the Cuban people ought to make the decision for the future. We believe it ought to be up to the people, the long-suffering people of that island to decide their fate, not the fate—not to be decided because somebody is somebody's brother; the fate ought to be decided because that's what the people want.

And I would hope those who have lived under the blessings of liberty have the same message. *Vamos a ver, cuando*—how long he stays on Earth, that's a decision that will be made by the Almighty. But once that happens, once—you know, Fidel Castro may live—I don't know, I don't know how long he's going to live—but nevertheless, I do believe that the system of government that he's imposed upon the people ought not live, if that's what the people decide.

Okay. *Gracias*.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 9:03 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil; President Tabare Vazquez of Uruguay; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; and President Fidel Castro Ruz and First Vice President Raul Castro Ruz of Cuba. A reporter referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 7. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this interview. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Natalia Orozco of RCN TV of Colombia

March 7, 2007

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America

Ms. Orozco. Thank you, Mr. President, for this time with RCN TV Colombia.

The President. Thank you. I'm really looking forward to going to Bogota.

Ms. Orozco. Thank you, Mr. President. I have to start by asking you this. You're arriving to Bogota when President Bush—President Uribe is facing a deep crisis because of—we've got a political scandal. Does this affect the support, the confidence that you have always expressed to him?

The President. No. As a matter of fact, I've been very impressed by how he's handled this latest issue. President Uribe is a very strong leader; he's committed to justice; he believes in fairness; and he's a man who has proven he can get things done. And so my confidence in the President is very high. And I'm looking forward to expressing that confidence about—to not only the people of Colombia but also to the people in my Congress.

Plan Colombia

Ms. Orozco. Mr. President, $4 billion invested in Plan Colombia, but the drug keeps coming to the United States, and the leader of the guerrillas remains at large. Why do you support a second phase of the same Plan Colombia?

The President. Well, thank you for that question. First of all, we've had a lot of successes in working together. I recognize there's still a lot of *drogas* coming here. Part of that has to do with, we still use drugs, and we've got to do a better job of convincing people to stop using drugs. But we've also stopped a lot of drugs from coming. And therefore, I can argue to the Congress and the people that there has been a lot of notable successes. And the truth of the matter is, Colombia has changed to the better as a result of the Plan Colombia. There's still bad activities going on, but it's a lot less than it was before.

Colombia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Ms. Orozco. Mr. President, public opinion in Colombia, as well as in the U.S. Congress, is divided about the free trade agreement. Will you be ready to reopen those negotiations in order to make it pass?

The President. No, I don't think we want to reopen the negotiations. We've had good, strong negotiations between our respective parties. Obviously if there's some fine-tuning necessary—but we've negotiated good agreements, and I'm going to have to work hard with our Congress, and the President is going to have to work hard to convince the people of Colombia that trade is fair. And if I were a farmer in Colombia or a small-business person in Colombia, I'd want to be in a position to be able to sell my products into a large market like the United States.

And these trade fights are always tough, and I want to make sure, though, that we work to have a world that trades freely and fairly, because it's the best way to eliminate poverty.

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America

Ms. Orozco. Are you concerned about the influence that President Chavez is gaining in the region? As many experts have said, is your trip also an answer to that?

The President. No, my trip is a chance to tell the people of Colombia and Uruguay and Brazil and Guatemala and Mexico that the United States cares deeply about the human condition. My budget this year has got—or last year has $1.6 billion of bilateral assistance. Much of that money is spent on social justice programs—programs like education and health care.

You know, oftentimes, people really don't understand the United States, and my trip is to really explain to people that we believe in education for all; we believe in human rights and human dignity; we believe in prosperity. And the people of this country have been very generous in their help and support to people.

Ms. Orozco. But are you concerned about the influence of Mr. Chavez in the region?

The President. Each country is going to have to make up their own mind about the systems of government. To the extent that people feel like they can nationalize companies, I think is a mistake. I'm very much in favor of open systems, free press, the right for people to assemble and express their mind.

My trip, however, is all aimed at explaining to the people of South and Latin America that good foreign policy for the United States is to promote a prosperous and peaceful neighborhood.

Cuba

Ms. Orozco. Mr. President, today, have you the feeling that the policy applies to Cuba has done any good for the Cubans in the island?

The President. I think the worse thing that's happened for the Cuban people on the island is the fact that they're not free. And my position is, it is important for people to be free, and that if there is a transition to a new way in Cuba, it's got to be decided by the Cuban people. They should be allowed to freely assemble; they should be allowed to speak their minds; there ought to be strong rule of law. My position has been, and will continue to be, that a free Cuba is what is necessary for the people of Cuba.

FARC/American Hostages

Ms. Orozco. Thank you, Mr. President. There are three Americans held by the FARC now. Do you think President Uribe should achieve the humanitarian exchange, or should he insist in the military rescue?

The President. I trust President Uribe's judgment. And my message isn't to President Uribe; my message is to the FARC, and that is to give up these hostages. You're making it clear to the world the kind of people you are when you take innocent life and hold them hostage. And it's very sad for the families here in America. I'm deeply concerned about their fate.

War on Terror

Ms. Orozco. Mr. President, how long is the United States willing for the extradition of the narco paramilitary terrorists that remains in Colombia, because they are part of the peace process?

The President. How long will we wait for the extradition process?

Ms. Orozco. Right.

The President. I'll work with the President on that. That will be a subject matter in my private discussions with President Uribe.

Ms. Orozco. Mr. President, do you think that with the military aid, President Uribe, with the help of United States, is going to be able to win the war against terrorism in Colombia?

The President. I think that a war against terror can be won by firm resolve, plus a alternative to repression, kidnaping, murder, and drugs. And one thing that President Uribe has done is laid out a vision. A lot of people have come in from the jungles, as you know, because they realize there's a better way of life.

We all have a lot of work to do in our respective countries to make sure every person has a good education and good, decent health care. But when people realize there is a better tomorrow, it's much easier for a man of peace, like Uribe, to deal with a difficult problem that he inherited.

Colombia-U.S. Relations

Ms. Orozco. President Bush, what is the best memory that you have of all this time working with Colombia, so close, having Colombia as one of your main allies?

The President. You know, I think it's the fact that I have a very honest relationship with President Uribe. He loves his country. He is a very strong proponent of Colombia and the people of Colombia. We don't agree on ever single issue, of course, but I do respect his courage, and I respect the fact that he's done a good job in office. And I'm really looking forward to going back to Colombia. I've been, as President, once before. I can't wait to come back, this time, to your beautiful capital city.

Ms. Orozco. Thank you, Mr. President, for your time. We wish you a wonderful and successful trip.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:45 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia. He also referred to FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Ms. Orozco referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Enrique Gratas of Univision

March 7, 2007

Verdict in the Trial of I. Lewis Libby

Mr. Gratas. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity to talk about the trip and other issues. Yesterday, somebody very familiar to the administration, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, was found guilty of the charges of perjury, lying, obstruction of justice. What is the impact of your administration of this verdict, or your personal feelings?

The President. First, this was a very serious matter. A jury of his peers analyzed the data very seriously and rendered a verdict that must be respected. Secondly, I personally am sad. I'm sad for Mr. Libby and his family. There was a sense of sadness to hear the verdict read for me. And finally, this is an ongoing legal matter; there is more to be done in the courts; and therefore, at this time, it's inappropriate for the administration

to be commenting beyond just what you asked me.

Mr. Gratas. Thank you. Some Senators, one in particular, Mr. Kennedy, is suggesting that you would pardon him. What's your idea?

The President. Oh, I think—as I say, there's an ongoing legal matter. There's a lot of—if you listen carefully, the lawyers are talking about different avenues to approach this particular case. And so I'm pretty much going to stay out of it until the course—the case has finally run its final—the course it's going to take.

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America

Mr. Gratas. Thank you. About your trip to Latin America, some critics think that the administration, your administration has neglected—or prior administrations have neglected our Latin American neighbors. This is your fourth trip to Latin America.

The President. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gratas. What do you plan to accomplish?

The President. Well, first of all, I think I plan to accomplish—one—the main thing is to kind of disabuse people of the notion that America doesn't care about the neighborhood. And it troubles me to think that some people in our neighborhood believe we don't care. We do—I care deeply, personally, about Latin America, and our country does. And what I'm going to do is remind people, when I go down, that the American people have been very generous on bilateral aid. We've increased the aid since I've been President from $800 million a year to $1.6 billion. And there's ongoing projects. And the important thing for people to understand is that the aid primarily goes for social justice programs—for education programs or health programs.

And the second thing I want to talk to people about is that—the importance of trade. The United States is a big market, and if you're a poor farmer in parts of Central or South America, it seems like it makes sense to be able to sell your product into this market. Why? Because you may get a better price, and it means you can make a better living. And so trade, in my judgment, is positive, and it's a way to help people be lifted out of poverty.

To summarize, a prosperous and peaceful Latin America is in the interest of the United States.

War Protests

Mr. Gratas. Thank you. I'm sure you're aware of some protests in the countries that you will visit, mainly because of the war in Iraq. Are you concerned about those demonstrations?

The President. I am proud to be going to a part of the world where people can demonstrate, where people can express their minds. It happens quite frequently when I travel around the world. I understand people's concern about war. Nobody likes war. But I've had to make the decisions I made in order to not only secure our people but to deal with threats and to help people be free.

And so I'm not surprised, nor am I angry. It's a part of life when you're the President of the United States.

Democracy in the Americas

Mr. Gratas. Mr. President, in the last 15 months, leftist governments have been elected in many countries—I'll mention three, for example—last ones, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua. Are you worried about this tendency in Latin America?

The President. You know, the thing—first of all, I like the fact that the countries in our neighborhood are free and people get to decide who the governments—who is in the government. I like that. I think it's great. I would be worried if there are policies which ruin economies. That would worry me—in other words, if these governments make decisions that end up making it very difficult for people to make a living and/or for there to be more wealth throughout the society. I would be worried if there's no free press—in other words, if institutions that are necessary for a free society were undermined. I would be worried, of course, if just the basic needs of the people weren't met.

And so I applaud elections. I look forward to these governments responding to the real needs of the people.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Mr. Gratas. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has—on many occasions, has called you names, for example, liar, devil, terrorist, things like that. What is your opinion about him? And how do you respond to those insults?

The President. Well, I think it's really important for the people who are observing U.S. reactions and U.S. policy to understand that our policies are not aimed at creating tensions, but our policies are aimed at improving people's lives. And that's really my message down there. There is a lot of anticipation about what my trip means, and it's nothing more than to say, we want to be your friends, and we've got a very strong policy of improving the lives of others.

I've been in politics a long time; there's a lot of name-calling in politics. I've always found the best thing to do is to do what you think is right and move beyond the name-calling.

Immigration Reform

Mr. Gratas. Mr. President, the United States—and this concerns Latin America in general, because most immigrants come from that continent—never before in this country have so many raids against immigrants. Are you planning before you leave office support a plan to legalize so many millions of undocumented workers?

The President. A better way to describe this is, in the Oval Office, I gave a speech about comprehensive immigration reform. And comprehensive immigration reform says that we ought to have a temporary-worker program that recognizes the fact that people are coming to do jobs that Americans aren't doing so they can do so on a legal basis, but not forever.

Secondly, we got an issue with 12 million people that are here—that are here illegally. Now, we are a country of law, and we should expect people to recognize our laws. But I do not think there ought to be instant legalization—that's called amnesty. I think that would be a mistake. But I also recognize, we can't kick people out of the country. And so I'm going to work with Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, and devise a way that is rational and fair.

The current immigration system is not working. It needs to be changed. It needs to be changed for the good of our country, and it needs to be changed for the good of the people that are in our country.

Border Security/Mexico-U.S. Relations

Mr. Gratas. Mr. President, I have to ask this question. You're going to meet with President Calderon of Mexico. How are you going to resolve the difference between the construction of the wall on the border?

The President. Yes. I will explain to him that our Congress was very worried that not enough was being done on both sides of the border about preventing people from sneaking in. I will explain to him that the border is going to be secured two ways—one, by modernization—but it's more than fence. This is a long border. We're going to have Border Patrol agents, but instead of having a system that encourages people to sneak in, we ought to have a system that says, you're welcome to come in on a legal basis to do work America is not doing. I mean, it makes no sense to have a system that doesn't recognize reality.

Now, that doesn't mean automatic citizenship. There ought to be a different way to become a citizen. But it does say, there are people who are hungry in our neighborhood who want to do work that Americans aren't doing, and there ought to be a legal process to do it so they don't have to sneak across the border. So the best way to secure the border is to have a comprehensive immigration plan.

And it's controversial here in America. But I firmly believe my position is a rational position and the right position, and I'm going to work hard with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to get the bill this year.

Mr. Gratas. I have 14 more questions in Spanish, but I have no time. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much.

The President. *Gracias, senor.* [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:55 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. Mr. Gratas referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN *En Espanol*

March 7, 2007

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America

Mr. Lopez. Thank you for speaking with us. And my first question is about your trip. You're going to Latin America, the longest trip an American President has taken to the region. Why now? Why at this moment when Democrats control the Congress and there are issues that might be in their hands?

The President. Well, thank you for asking that question. This is not my first trip since I've been the President. I have been in—traveling the neighborhood, I think, maybe three other times. But this is a long trip, and the reason why is, I want to remind people throughout our neighborhood that America cares about them. And I bring a message of hope, a message that says, we care about the human condition and a message of accomplishment.

I don't know if you know this or not, but since I've been the President, our bilateral aid to Latin America has increased from 800 million to 1.6 billion. And the reason I say that is, the American taxpayer has been very generous about providing aid in our neighborhood, and most of that aid is social justice money—in other words, it's money for education and health.

And yet we don't get much credit for it. And I want the taxpayers, I want the American people to get credit for their generosity in Central and South America.

Jenna Bush

Mr. Lopez. Your daughter Jenna is writing a book about her experiences in Central America. She will be focusing on a single mother with HIV. Has she been part of your eyes and ears in the region now that she's been there for quite a while?

The President. Well, she is—first of all, I'm very proud of her. She is an accomplished woman. She came back—I haven't seen a lot of her because she's been spending a lot of time in Central America as a UNICEF volunteer—but she came back and talked to me about this young girl that she has befriended. And she's deeply concerned about alienationists in our world, and is going to try to raise some money to help the education programs there.

To me, her book and her example is what America is all about. We've got compassionate people, and when we find suffering and see income disparity or see poverty, we'd like to help people lift themselves up.

Trade

Mr. Lopez. You've talked about the importance of free trade. Opponents of free trade in Latin America say it's one-sided and favors the U.S. Opponents of free trade in the U.S.——

The President. That's right.

Mr. Lopez. ——say it's one-sided and favors those countries. So who's right, and what are you trying to do with this right now?

The President. They're both wrong. The opponents of free trade are wrong, in my judgment, because free trade—a good free trade agreement—and those agreements are signed by administrations and ratified by their elected assemblies—fair trade agreements are beneficial to both, and that's what we want.

All you've got to do is look at the trade between the United States and Mexico after the free trade agreement we signed between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. And the amount of trade has gone up appreciably, significantly.

And I truly believe that one of the most effective ways to eliminate poverty is through free and fair trade. But there's no question, there's protectionist sentiments in the neighborhood and in our own Congress. And I—we got the CAFTA vote by one vote in the House of Representatives, and I'm going to have to work hard to get more free trade agreements through. But the fact that it's hard won't deter me from doing what I think is right.

Mr. Lopez. They say you're exporting American jobs.

The President. Well, that's what Americans say. I look at it differently. I think what we're doing is, we are creating opportunities for business people, small-business people, to be able to sell products in other markets, whether it be U.S. products into Central America or South America and vice versa.

I also know that trade enhances the wealth of all people. I mean, it is in our interests that Mexico generate wealth so that people can make a living. If you're a person deeply concerned about immigration—and as you know, this is a hot issue here in the United States—doesn't it make sense to encourage trade so that people can find a job at home rather than feel compelled to try to find work elsewhere?

And trade is—you can track the success of a trade agreement—and I repeat again, the success of the trade agreement with Mexico.

Alternative Fuel Sources/Brazil

Mr. Lopez. Brazil, you're going. Ethanol seems to be at the top of the agenda. How important is this ethanol? Some analysts say that you will bring Brazil closer to the U.S., you will develop ethanol plants in Central America and have ethanol for U.S. consumption.

The President. First of all, the alternative fuel issue is a huge issue for the United States. I mean, we're too dependent on oil. It's in our national security interests and our economic security interests and for environmental concerns to develop alternatives to gasoline. Ethanol is the—is what we're investing a lot in here in the United States to do that. Brazil has been very successful, so it gives us common ground to talk.

I like the idea of helping Central America, by the way, develop an ethanol industry. I think it would be good for their national security and economic security interests. But my discussion with Brazil is more than just ethanol. Brazil is a very important country in South America. We will be talking about the Doha round of global trade. I'll be talking with my friend President Lula about international matters. Brazil is an international player, and the United States looks forward to working with Brazil to promote peace.

President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America

Mr. Lopez. Are you—is free trade—is this trip a way to show what the U.S. is doing and counter what other leaders might be doing? For example, Hugo Chavez, who called you the devil and says many things, said he will be in Argentina on Friday.

The President. The trip really is to remind people that we care. I do worry about the fact that some say, "Well, the United States hasn't paid enough attention to us," or, "The United States really isn't anything more than worried about terrorism." And when, in fact, the record has been a strong record.

And I will be going to promote—to look at programs that are—have benefited from the generosity of the American people. And so it's—I say, our country is a compassionate country. And there's significant connections between people inside America and people outside America. And it's in our interest that we promote those ties, and we promote—and I remind people about the generosity of our country.

It's not a given, by the way, that people will continue to spend—that the Congress will spend money. And therefore, it's important for me to show that we're not only spending money but the effects of spending money, the positive things that are happening as we help elevate people's lives.

Verdict in the Trial of I. Lewis Libby

Mr. Lopez. Mr. President, I want to ask you about the conviction of Lewis "Scooter" Libby. Your critics are saying that his conviction makes the promise that you made to bring honor and dignity back to the White House, that this promise will go unmet.

The President. Yes, first of all, this was a lengthy trial on a serious matter, and a jury of his peers convicted him. And we've got to respect that conviction.

Secondly, this is an ongoing legal matter. In other words, there's more legal procedures to take place, and at this time, it's inappropriate for me or the administration to be issuing comments about this serious matter.

On a personal note, I was sad. I was sad for a man who had worked in my administration, and particularly sad for his family.

Situation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

Mr. Lopez. As Commander in Chief, what do you say to the veterans who have gone through a very hard time at Walter Reed and

other hospitals? There are commissions, there are solutions that are being proposed. But, what do you, as Commander in Chief, say to those veterans in——

The President. I say, anything other than excellent care is unacceptable. And I've been to Walter Reed a lot. There's some fantastic doctors and nurses and healers. And yet we found that there was some substandard care in part of that organization, and we're going to correct it.

And I put the Commission together—a series of commissions, to make sure that there—that we fully understand the truth, fully elevate the problems, so we can solve them.

I had Bob Dole and Donna Shalala in today. They're Chairmen of this very important Commission I put together that will analyze the care our soldiers get from the battlefield into the Defense Department, then into the Veterans, and then into community. And I want to make sure there is—that is a seamless transition of excellent care.

Mr. Lopez. *Muchas gracias, Senor Presidente.*

The President. *Por nada.*

NOTE: The interview was taped at 12:06 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil; I. Lewis Libby, former Chief of Staff to the Vice President; and Bob Dole and Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Mr. Lopez referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Executive Order 13427—Extending Privileges and Immunities to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations

March 7, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 7(b) of the Department of State Authorities Act of 2006 (22 U.S.C. 288l), I hereby extend to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York, and to its members, the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the diplomatic missions of member states to the United Nations, and members of such missions, subject to corresponding conditions and obligations.

This extension of privileges and immunities is not intended to abridge in any respect privileges or immunities that the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York and its members otherwise may have acquired or may acquire by law.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 7, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 8, 2007]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on March 9.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 8, 2007

On March 15, 1995, by Executive Order 12957, the President declared a national emergency with respect to Iran pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran. On May 6, 1995, the President issued Executive Order 12959 imposing more comprehensive sanctions to further respond to this threat, and on August 19, 1997, the President issued Executive Order 13059 consolidating and clarifying the previous orders.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Iran continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on March 15, 1995, must continue in effect beyond March 15, 2007. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)),

I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to Iran. Because the emergency declared by Executive Order 12957 constitutes an emergency separate from that declared on November 14, 1979, by Executive Order 12170, this renewal is distinct from the emergency renewal of November 2006.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 8, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 9, 2007]

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 9, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 12.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 8, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Iran emergency declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2007.

The crisis between the United States and Iran constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran that led to the declaration of a national emergency on March 15, 1995, has not been resolved. The actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 8, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 9.

Remarks at Petrobras Transporte S.A. Facility in Sao Paulo, Brazil

March 9, 2007

Thank you for your hospitality, Mr. President. It's good to be back in your beautiful country. Laura and I really have been looking forward to the trip to Sao Paulo. It's one of the world's great cities. And I have been looking forward to our conversations. You know, Brazil and the United States are the two largest democracies in our hemisphere, and we've got a lot in common, and we've got a lot to do together to improve the lives of millions in our respective countries and, hopefully, in neighboring countries as well.

I find it really interesting that much of our talks on this visit are going to be centered on energy. It's a new kind of energy. I don't think 20 years ago, an American President or a Brazilian President would have thought, "Let's see; see if we can find common ground on energy production." And yet, as the President noted, that we had a long discussion in Brasilia about alternative fuels. And now we're at a plant that's actually manufacturing alternative fuels on an economic basis that has got the capacity to change our respective countries in the world. And I, like the President, am very upbeat about the potential of ethanol and biodiesel. And that's why we're here.

I do want to thank Sergio Gabrielli, who is the president of Petrobras, for his hospitality. I appreciate very much your briefing. And I want to thank all the workers here for greeting us. I want to thank the folks from Ford and General Motors who are here. It's nice of them to show up to see the American President. I appreciate your willingness to be

innovative and to meet market demands with products that actually matter, and in this case, flex-fuel vehicles.

People have wondered why the President of the United States would be so interested in diversification of our energy supply, and here are the reasons. One, if you're dependent upon oil from overseas, you have a national security issue. In other words, dependency upon energy from somewhere else means that you're dependent upon the decisions from somewhere else. And so as we diversify away from the use of gasoline by using ethanol, we're really diversifying away from oil.

Secondly, dependency upon oil creates an economic problem for not only the United States but anybody else who imports oil. In a globalized world, if the demand for oil goes up in China or India, it runs up the price of gasoline in our respective countries. And therefore, diversification away from oil product is in the economic interests of our respective countries.

And finally, as the President noted, it is—we all feel incumbent to be good stewards of the environment. And it just so happens that ethanol and biodiesel will help improve the quality of the environment in our respective countries.

And so I'm very much in favor of promoting the technologies that will enable ethanol and biodiesel to remain competitive and, therefore, affordable to the people in our respective countries and around our neighborhoods.

One of the things I like, as the President noted, is that a good ethanol policy and good alternative fuel policy actually leads to more jobs, not less. In other words, at this plant, there are jobs. But as the President noted, when you're growing your way out of dependence on oil, you're dependent upon people who work the land. And the distribution of wealth, the distribution of opportunity to farmers, particularly the smaller farmers in our respective countries, will enable the economy to be more on firm foundation.

And so, Mr. President, your vision is absolutely correct. I appreciate so very much the fact that here you—much of your energy is driven by sugarcane. It, frankly, gives Brazil a tremendous advantage in the world markets. Sugarcane is by far the most efficient raw material for the production of ethanol. The President has wisely invested in technologies that will increase your yields per acre, and that makes a lot of sense. In America, we've got a little different issue: we don't have a lot of sugarcane. And so our stock material, our base material for ethanol thus far, has been corn.

I appreciate very much the innovation that's taking place here in Brazil. I mean, if you're the leader in ethanol, I believe you'll continue to come up with technologies that should be available for others. Your H-BIO process for refining biodiesel from soy and other agricultural products is such an example. In other words, you'll be able to use regular refinery as a result of the technological developments that you've done here. And that makes a lot of sense, and I congratulate you, Mr. President, and Petrobras for staying on the leading edge of technological change.

A lot of people wonder whether or not it makes sense to develop an alternative-fuel infrastructure if the automobile doesn't stay up with it. Well, most people in America don't know that there are millions of flex-fuel vehicles on our street today—just people don't know it. In other words, we have now got the capacity to manufacture automobiles in a way that meets the demands for ethanol. Flex-fuel means you can either use gasoline or alternative fuels—your choice. And in America, we are—that technology is available. So my fellow citizens shouldn't fear the development of an alternative source of energy industry because the consumer has got the capacity to buy an automobile that will meet those new productions.

I'm very optimistic that America can benefit from alternative energy sources, so optimistic that I laid out an ambitious goal for our country, and that is to reduce gasoline consumption by 20 percent over 10 years. In other words, we have a mandated fuel standard of 35 billion gallons of alternative fuels to be used by 2017. That is now seven times more the amount of alternative fuels we're using. Right now we're using about 5 billion gallons of ethanol. I believe that the technologies will be such that America will be consuming 35 billion gallons of alternative fuels. And that's important for our country.

It is a commitment to becoming less dependent on oil, and it's a commitment to be better stewards of the environment.

In my budget, Mr. President, I proposed to Congress that we invest $1.6 billion over 10 years on additional research to make sure that we can have alternative fuel stocks to make ethanol. Just so you know, in the last years—so long as I've been the President, we spent about $12 billion on new technologies that will enable us to achieve economic independence, as well as be better stewards of the environment.

There's a lot we can do together. I appreciate so very much the idea of Brazil and America sharing research and development opportunities. You've got great scientists; we've got great scientists—it makes sense for us to collaborate for the good of mankind. And part of our initiative is that we are going to work together efficiently and to cooperate on research and development.

I also think the President's idea of helping others realize the benefits of alternative fuels makes a lot of sense. And so we applaud the Inter-America Development Bank, it's efforts to try to get loans and capital into countries that could benefit from alternative sources of energy. I'm particularly anxious to work with the President on helping Central America become less dependent on oil, become energy self-sufficient. It's in the interest of the United States that there be a prosperous neighborhood. And one way to help spread prosperity in Central America is for them to become energy producers, not become—not remain dependent on others for their energy sources.

And finally, the President mentioned the fact that at the United Nations, there was a International Biofuels Forum. What he didn't tell you; it was his idea. And I applaud the fact, Mr. President, that you put that idea out. It makes a lot of sense for countries like China and India to understand the potentials of alternative sources of energy. And I believe that Brazil and the United States has got the capacity to help lead the way toward that better day.

So, Mr. President, it has been a great first meeting here. I appreciate the fact that you're about to buy me lunch. I'm kind of hungry. [*Laughter*] Looking forward to eating some of that good Brazilian food.

But in the meantime, I hope the citizens of Brazil, like the citizens of the United States, are as optimistic about the future as these two Presidents are. And one reason we're optimistic is because we see the bright and real potential for our citizens being able to use alternative sources of energy that will promote the common good.

So, Mr. President, thank you for having me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil in Sao Paulo

March 9, 2007

President Lula da Silva. There's more journalists here than at the Oscar—[*laughter*]—although the artists aren't quite as good looking as the ones that get Oscars.

Your Excellency, Mr. George Bush, President of the United States of America; the members of the North American and Brazilian delegations; Governor of Sao Paulo, Jose Serra; our dear president of Petrobras, Mr. Gabrielli; ministers; journalists; my friends; ladies and gentlemen:

This second visit by President Bush to Brazil in little more than one year is another step in intensifying dialog between our Governments and our countries. This is a dialog which began even before I took office, when President Bush received me in a visit in December 2002 at the White House. During the frequent meetings and phone calls we have had since then, our relations have always been characterized by extreme frankness, mutual respect, and a constructive spirit.

Our societies are multiethnic. Many cultures and ideas live together within them. They were founded on the principles of pluralism, tolerance, and respect for diversity. The fact that our Governments respect each

other, mutually, explains the excellent moment that relations between Brazil and the United States are going through. It also reveals the great potential for cooperation between our countries, if we are able to continue building common objectives.

This has been the basis of the conversations we held today, when we went over our broad bilateral agenda and evaluated how we could best work on regional and multilateral issues. The relationship between Brazil and the U.S. historically has gone beyond individual governments at the head of either of our countries. One proof of this is the broad range of relations amongst business leaders, representatives of civil society, and the citizens of our two countries.

The United States are our largest individual trade partner and the largest investor in Brazil. During my first mandates in Government, trade between our countries increased over 50 percent; U.S. investments in Brazil doubled over the past decade. Brazilian companies are more and more active inside the U.S. economy. They are, alongside the major Brazilian community that lives there, are contributing to generate jobs and income in that country.

Ladies and gentlemen, Brazil is proud of having contributed to the decision by the U.S. Government to increase the share of biofuels in its energy mix. I recall the enthusiasm with which President Bush was first exposed in the meeting we had in Brasilia in 2005 to Brazil's success story in terms of biofuel.

Here in Brazil, we have an extremely successful program, considered a model, which came out of the investment of over 30 years in research and development. It's a program which brings together respect for the environment with the preservation and intensification of the food security of our society. It's a program which has a major social impact because of its capacity to generate jobs, to strengthen family farming, and to distribute income.

This is a field where our two countries can cooperate. The memorandum of understanding on biofuels, which our ministers signed today, is a decisive step in that direction. Bringing together their efforts, the U.S. and Brazil can further push the democratization of energy and bring biofuels to all.

One of the most complex tasks that we face will be to assure access to major consuming centers. Brazil hopes that the ethanol market will be benefited by free trade, free of protectionism. That is the only way that the fuel of the future will be able to promote sustainable development. It also benefit poor and developing countries, by making trade a factor of prosperity for all. This will be a challenge about which I spoke at length with President Bush. We need to eliminate imbalances that still constrain world trade and that aggravate the asymmetries of today's world.

I expressed to the President my feeling that we are closer than ever to a successful conclusion of the negotiations of the Doha round. All should come out winning, with an ambitious and balanced agreement, especially the poorest countries. More opportunities for growth and for development would be created in the poorest regions of the world. International trade in agriculture would increase, thereby reducing poverty, generating jobs and income in the least favored countries and regions.

That is why I repeated to President Bush my willingness to participate in a meeting in any part of the world to bringing together leaders if this can help us overcome the final difficulties between us and a truly historic agreement.

My dear Mr. President, your visit to Brazil coincides with an exceptional moment that our continent is going through, particularly South America. The dictatorships which our region suffered from for two decades are no more than a painful memory of the past. All South American Governments have arisen from free elections with broad, popular participation. All of them are working in projects for growth with income distribution, capable of putting an end to terrible social inequalities that we have inherited and which has been aggravated by macroeconomic adventures in the past. We are all finally involved in a project for South American integration.

The countries in our region have associated their destiny with that of the MERCOSUR and that of the South American Community of Nations. We know that integration is the best pathway to strengthen

democracy and to achieve regional prosperity. It creates wealth and promotes development. It guarantees a more sovereign presence of our region in the world. Our integration is taking place amongst independent nations, where diversity and tolerance are also factors of strength.

We respect the political and economic options of each country. This has allowed us to make notable advances: expanding trade, carrying out infrastructure works, strengthening our energy security, the well-being of our societies, and bringing closer together peoples that will be able to move down their own roads. Integration also opens the way for investments from outside the region in the area of infrastructure and will have a multiplying effect on our economies, dynamizing all forms of exchange.

Mr. President, redemocratization and the conquering of political freedom were not enough to keep millions of Brazilians and Latin Americans out of a situation of extreme poverty. That is why all governments in our region have implemented programs to develop our countries and to fight social exclusion. We, the Presidents, must think about the lives of those people who suffer the most and who, in addition to having democracy to elect their rulers, also have the right to health, to education, to housing, to public safety, to bring up their children as citizens. We all know that political democracy prospers when we have economic and social development, when we eradicate poverty, when we fight exclusion and social inequities.

That is why, my dear President Bush, your visit to Brazil—second visit in such a short time—opens the possibility for the U.S. and Brazilian peoples, and I believe all Latin American peoples, to have the prospect that we are not far away from being able to build a new standard of relations amongst nations, to be able to discuss freely and sovereignty about how rich countries can help poorer countries to develop, and more important than all of that, to assure that democracy will be the reason why the benefits of wealth, the building of wealth itself, and the social benefits that the people need, can fully justify the hard fight to win democracy in our continent.

President Bush, I would like to conclude by saying to you that Brazil is aware of the meaning of the integration of South America; Brazil is aware of the meaning of the integration of Latin America, just as Brazil is aware of the meaning coming closer—of Brazil coming closer to Africa, and also the U.S. coming closer to Africa. I think the U.S. and Brazil, working together, could build some—carry out some projects that could have the meaning for poorer countries to be able to provide certainty that people would not see in richer countries, just exploiters, but to see richer countries in the world as something else.

And that is why the Doha round is important. That's why the WTO agreement is important. And I see that your negotiating minister is here, the USTR is here—my minister is here, and I think that we should give them one single order: Come to an agreement as soon as possible. Because if the U.S. and Brazil come to an understanding, it's easier for us to convince those who are still not participating in that agreement.

I want to thank you and say that this relation between Brazil and the U.S., which is a longstanding relation consecrated by decades of time, will continue to be strengthened to the extent that we respect each other, to the extent that each respects the sovereign political decision of each state, and to the extent that we are able to build together projects that can help other countries to pull themselves out of the situation of poverty they're in.

Thank you very much, President Bush, for your visit to Brazil.

President Bush. I was really looking forward to coming back and visiting with you because every time we have a conversation about mutual concerns and opportunities, it is a constructive and positive dialog.

I respect President Lula. Obviously the people of Brazil respect him. After all, you won by a landslide election, and I congratulate you for your election, yet was not—had not been back to your country since the elections. I think it's great to be able to say a good friend won reelection because it confirms the fact that democracy is alive and well in Brazil. And Brazil serves as such a great example for other democracies about what is possible and what's important.

Thanks very much for the trip to the biofuels plant today. I think it's interesting, as I said there at the plant, that we spent a lot of time and a lot of conversations on how we can work together to promote alternative sources of energy. It's in the interests of the United States that we promote alternative sources of energy. And Brazil has showed what's possible.

And so, Mr. President, I appreciate very much your leadership on this issue. I talked to my country about the need to reduce our gasoline usage by 20 percent over 10 years, that we will have 35 billion gallons of alternative fuels by the year 2017. I think it's an achievable goal. You have shown what is possible. I look forward to sharing research between our countries. I look forward to continuing to explore opportunities.

I share your concerns about the people in democracy not receiving the benefits of democracy. I think you're very wise to recognize that democracy is only as strong as the people feel that the society benefits them. Part of the message on my trip to South America—and eventually Guatemala as well as Mexico—is to say that the American people care deeply about social justice, that we believe in education and health, that we believe in supporting programs that help lift people out of their current conditions, and we want to help.

Thank you very much for our strong discussion on trade. It turns out America and Brazil have—are in the center of the WTO debate; that if we're despondent on the trade talks, a lot of the world will be despondent on the trade talks; that if we're unable to work together on the WTO talks, the world can't work together on the WTO talks. And that's why our conversation was vital, because success of the Doha round for the WTO is necessary for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is—the most effective antipoverty program is trade.

And so I commit to you the same thing that you have just committed, and that is, we will work together. We will lock our trade ministers in a room—[*laughter*]—all aimed at advancing this important round.

I share your optimism about what can get done, and it's going to take a lot of work. I caution other countries, though, that if the United States and Brazil agree, that does not let them off the hook in terms of making the concessions necessary so that everybody is a winner in these trade negotiations.

One thing that I strongly believe in is that I think America needs to be more open to students coming to our country. And I talk to Secretary Rice about that a lot, and I hope a lot of Brazilian students are coming to the United States of America. I hope—I think you'll find it to be a fantastic opportunity to study and learn. And it's in our interests that we have people come and see what we're like, to have people come and see the compassion of the American people.

We talked about foreign policy in our discussions. We spent time on Central America, and one of the messages we will send to our Central American friends is that one way to help develop your countries is for you to adopt ethanol and biodiesel industries.

We talked about Haiti, and I congratulate the President for his strong leadership in accepting the responsibilities for helping Haiti. Brazil has been a strong leader in helping provide stabilization and providing troops. I know it's a strain, Mr. President, but you made a tough choice, and it's a humanitarian choice, and it's a decent choice, and the people of Brazil ought to be proud of your leadership on this important issue.

We talked about Africa. The President shares deep concerns about Africa, as do I. We talked about how we can work together on specific projects aimed at helping people. And so our foreign ministries will talk about specific programs—a Brazilian-American joint venture to help eliminate poverty and lift people's lives up.

I thank you for your leadership. People don't understand this, probably, but I spent a lot of time on world affairs, and the President of this country is highly respected around the world. People listen to him. He speaks clearly, but he speaks with a set of values that are noble.

And so, Mr. President, I'm so glad you're here—I mean, so glad I am here. I'm looking forward to welcoming you to the United States later on this month at Camp David, to be able to continue our dialog and our discussion about how we can work together for the common good.

Thank you.

President Lula da Silva. Thank you very much. As we agreed earlier, we will have two questions from Brazilian journalists and two from U.S. journalists. I'll open the floor for the first question from—[*inaudible*]—from the Brazilian Television Record Station.

Trade

Q. How could we believe that these possibilities, these commitments that you're taking on to negotiate opening up for the Doha round will be possible, since you have a very recent experience in negotiating FTAA, which did not work out? So what's the difference now in trade negotiations? Will you be trying to speak the same language, despite the difference between Portuguese and English, but try to speak the same language to the rest of the world that these two countries are willing to negotiate? Why is this negotiation at this time different? And perhaps your meeting in Washington will be another chance to set a deadline for the negotiations. Maybe by the end of this month, you can have a commitment.

President Bush. First, I think deadlines are a little dangerous when two countries set them, and we're dealing with a lot of other countries. Remember, we can agree, but if other major trading partners don't agree, then all of a sudden, we have set ourselves up for failure. I'm an optimist that we can get it done. Therefore, I think we need to be careful about creating the conditions that will—for the world to say, "Oh look, they failed."

Since we discussed the FTAA—and the United States has entered into a series of agreements, as have Brazil—in other words, there's a lot of bilateral and regional trade agreements going on. And so, just because we had difficulty getting the FTAA done should not discourage one from trying to do something globally. I mean, after all, there's been a lot of successes on the trade front, just not on that particular trade front.

And no question it was hard on the FTAA, and no question it's going to be hard on Doha. But the thing that's important about Doha is that it is—it really is an opportunity to—for the world to get together to help eradicate world poverty. And there's a compelling reason to keep trying.

And so I'm not the least bit discouraged by past failures, nor am I overly optimistic because we've had a lot of successes in trade agreements. I am realistic in knowing that it's hard work, but it's going to require the leadership of Brazil and the United States to stay at it and work hard and see if we can't reach a positive agreement.

President Lula da Silva. Well, my dear friend, Celso, first of all, to achieve an agreement between nations is not a simple thing to do. The complexity of economic problems, as well as political and social problems involved in final decisions may have extraordinary or disastrous results. I think that we have talked a lot about the Doha round in recent months, and I think that we are moving. We're moving on solid ground to find a chance for the so-called "G-point" to come to an agreement. I am convinced of the willingness, as President Bush said, if Brazil and the U.S. find—both find a point of equilibrium where we can make offers to other countries—because the U.S. had an advantage in this negotiation. There's a lot of people that depend on the negotiations from the U.S., but they negotiate in their own name. We, in Brazil, have to negotiate together with the G–20. And the European Union is a group of countries. So you can see that we, in addition to convincing the richer partners, we also have to convince our poorer partners to accept an agreement.

And we accept that challenge; we take it on. We're taking on that challenge because at this point, the success of negotiations is no longer just economic in nature. It's not just a matter of who is going to win or lose economically; the problem now is eminently political. The problem now is whether, as world leaders, we will be competent or not to decide, for better or worse, on the future of millions of human beings that depend on this agreement. I'm convinced that we'll get there.

Second, we cannot compare what we're negotiating now in the Doha round with conversations on FTAA. Of course, you covered my 2002 campaign, and you saw how many speeches I made against the FTAA, back in 2002 when I was first elected. Me and almost

all the Presidential candidates running for office in South America were against it, because we believed in the strengthening of MERCOSUR. And we achieved that. We believed, first of all, in strengthening the integration of South America as a first priority. And today, Brazil's largest share of trade is with the rest of Latin America.

This is a demonstration that we took major steps, and that does not mean that we cannot discuss as many bilateral agreements are as possible between Brazil and the U.S., other countries—U.S. and other countries with Brazil. Concretely, when you're negotiating, the numbers get built, and no country wants to be the first one to make an offer. It's just like playing cards; every card you put on the table is spent; you can't take it back. And nobody wants to make the first offer.

Of course, President Bush has his offer up his sleeve; Brazil has one in its vest pocket; the European Union has one stuck someplace. And others don't want to even play. But I'm certain that he and I do have our cards ready, because we want to play. So at some point, we're going to put our cards on the table, and we're going to see whether we'll be capable or not of coming to an agreement.

I want to say that I am convinced that we can make an agreement. It certainly will not be everything that we could do, but will do enough to continue encouraging the rest of the world, especially the poorest countries, that they will have a chance in the 21st century that they did not have in the 20th century.

Central and South America-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President Bush, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has been using his country's vast oil wealth to court a whole new generation of Latin Americans. You pretty much avoided using his name. He certainly used yours a lot, including saying earlier today, "Go home, *gringo*." Do you think a visit to Latin America and agreements like the one you forged today will help counter his influence or just give him more ammunition?

And to President Lula da Silva, were you able to persuade President Bush to help you on getting our Congress to lower the sugar ethanol tariffs?

President Bush. I'll answer that one for him; he can answer it too. It's not going to happen. The law doesn't end until 2009; then the Congress will accept it—will look at it when the law ends.

You may want to expand on that answer.

As to my trip, I bring the good will of the United States to South America and Central America. That's why I'm here. I don't think America gets enough credit for trying to help improve people's lives. And so my trip is to explain, as clearly as I can, that our Nation is generous and compassionate; that when we see poverty, we care; that when we see illiteracy, we want to do something about it; that when we find there to be a deficiency in health care, we'll help to the extent we can.

I'm sure most people here in South America don't understand the United States has doubled our bilateral aid to countries in Central and South America since I've been the President. It's gone from 800 [$800 million] * to 1.6 billion last year. And I say that not to just brag about dollars, but it's a starting point for people to understand this Nation is committed to this prospect. A prosperous neighborhood is in the interest of the United States; a peaceful neighborhood is in our interests.

And so we fully understand that if there's illiteracy, it will affect our country eventually. Plus, the American people have got a great compassion for human rights and human dignity. I'm going to go see some programs here after this press conference, all aimed at lifting the lives of citizens, all aimed at focusing on individuals and how best can they be helped.

There is a lot of investment in the region, as the President noted. Oh, for some, that's just a fancy word, but for others who benefit from the investment through jobs, it's a central part of their life. And so my trip down here is to remind our country that South America and Latin America are good places to invest, particularly in countries that adhere to rule of law and are transparent and believe in the fundamentals of freedom.

And so I'm reminding people that which is pretty evident, that a lot of people know

* White House correction.

that there are direct ties between our countries. There's a lot of remittances from the United States back to the region. Why? Because there are people working for a living in our country that are sending money home to support their families. So this trip is to remind people of the ties that bind us and the importance of this region for the future of the United States. And I'm real glad to be here, and I appreciate the hospitality.

Get another question moving.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Trade

Q. [*Inaudible*] My question is for President Bush, is whether you agree that in recent years, the U.S. really had its back turned to Latin America? And if so, what could be done to make up for the losses in the past, in the last 2 years of your Presidency?

And to ask President Lula, as well, yesterday, you criticized U.S. subsidies as nefarious. So if you really decided to put the two ministers in a room to have an agreement, did you receive any signals that it's possible to reduce domestic subsidies in the U.S. to their farmers?

President Bush. Well, I strongly disagree with your description of U.S. foreign policy. That may be what people say, but it's certainly not what the facts bear out. I just told you that our bilateral aid package has doubled.

Again, I fully recognize that money alone is not a sign of compassion or care, but it's money aimed at helping people improve their lives. It's social justice money. Most of the bilateral aid money that we spend goes to education programs, health programs.

I'm going to—when I go to Guatemala, I'm going to go to a—I'm going to go outside the capital and see our military building health clinics. The USS *Comfort* is coming to the region to provide care for thousands of people who need health care. We train teachers; we train doctors; we train nurses. And so the characterization that our back has been turned is just—it's not borne out by the facts. It may be a perception, but the facts certainly dispel that.

And that's why I've come. I've been in your great country twice in a very quick period of time, all aiming at sending the message that we care about our neighborhood a lot. And relations between our Governments are strong; we have an open relationship; the dialog is friendly. There's not 100-percent agreement on issues, but nevertheless, issues are brought to the table in a constructive manner. And it's amazing what you can do when it comes to solving problems, if there's a feeling of mutual respect and a priority.

It's easy to kind of dismiss the United States foreign policy in the region, but think about this: There are millions of people living in our country from the region. The United States is a multicultural society. We've got people from all over South and Central America living in the United States—many there legally, many there illegally, which, by the way, argues for a comprehensive immigration reform plan that teaches people with respect and dignity. It's one of the big issues that I put forth to our Congress, to get a comprehensive immigration plan done.

I appreciate your question, and I'm glad to be down here to be able to answer it.

President Lula da Silva. In terms of the question from the U.S. journalist, he asked whether I was capable of convincing President Bush to get the tariffs reduced. If I were able to—if I had that capacity for persuasion that you think I might have, who knows, I might have convinced President Bush to do so many other things that I couldn't even mention here. [*Laughter*]

This is a process. There's no difference between—in negotiating processes like this and normal negotiations between human beings. There's a time you look a person in the face and say, "I don't like that guy." And a few months later, they might be your best friend, and you were wrong when you said that you didn't like them. So I don't think that a country will give up on the things that protect their trade because someone else is asking. It's a process of convincing that has to take place, a lot of talking. And the day will come when that conversation will mature, and then we can find a common denominator that will allow us to come to an agreement.

In terms of the journalist from the O Globlo newspaper, your question, today we have a problem of what's at stake. I learned from my Minister Celso Amorim that if we draw a triangle, we could show you what the difficulties are in the negotiations we

have. What do countries want from the European Union? They want it to facilitate access to their agricultural market for poorer countries to export to them, including the U.S. wants to export to them.

What do we want from the U.S.? We want them to reduce subsidies that they pay in their domestic market. And what does the U.S. and the European Union—what do they want from us Brazilians and other countries in the G–20? That we have greater flexibility and access to markets for industrial products and services. That's what's at stake. That's what's in the game.

If we are intelligent enough and competent enough to pull out of our vest pockets the numbers that are still held secret, as top state secrets, then we will find a common ground. Don't ask me what the number is. If I knew, I wouldn't tell you, because if I knew, then I'd establish a paradigm, and he'd say that I should back off a little bit. So that's why these numbers are held back, though, as a soccer player, when they're going to kick a penalty goal, they never say which corner they're going to try to kick into. But things are happening. They're underway. Of course there's pessimists about everything in the world. That's no problem.

And the third thing I would like to say to President Bush, if you'd allow me to say one thing, over time I have become more and more convinced—and I've said this to my colleagues in CARICOM and Central America; I've said this to countries in Africa—that we actually do not need to be discussing aid to those countries. What we need to discuss is something that's even more important than aid. We need to build projects together, projects that mean development, and that after some time, we can see the concrete results of the money that's been invested. Because in some countries over the years, aid money doesn't always lead to concrete results because you don't control how it's spent that well.

I'm convinced that in the biofuel programs, if we are mature enough and have the political understanding and can carry out joint projects with other countries with the U.S., involving South Africa, China, India, European countries, and if we fund projects to produce biodiesel and ethanol in poorer countries, and then the richer countries buy biodiesel that's produced there, then we'll see that investments put into those countries have produced results and, even more important, generated jobs. Because nothing gives more citizenry to a man or a women than to know that they have a job, and to take some money home at the end of the month.

I think that's what we could do, and I said to President Bush, we could do that for Central America. We could build development projects for poorer countries. Then after 5, 10 years, we'll be able to see that something was done there that's generating wealth. That, in my opinion, is the real way, the major way that richer countries can aid poorer countries.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, the Iraqis hold their regional conference tomorrow. What are your expectations for it? And are you now willing to talk directly with Iran and Syria at this meeting?

President Bush. The expectations are that nations in the neighborhood, plus nations of the world, recognize that democracy can lead to peace, and that when 12 million people vote to live in a free society, it's in all our interests to help them realize the blessings of a free society. That's the expectations—in other words, a commitment to helping this young democracy survive and thrive.

Our message to the Syrians and Iranians won't change at that meeting that I've stated publicly, which is, we expect you to help this young democracy. And we will defend ourselves and the people in Iraq from the—from weapons being shipped in to cause harm; that we will protect ourselves and help the Iraqi people protect themselves against those who would murder the innocent to achieve political objectives.

And it's a positive meeting, Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters], particularly for Prime Minister Maliki and his Government, in that countries will now be coming to a rather formal meeting to express support. And it's positive because I think it's going to be important for the Iraqi people who have been suffering a lot to hear from other countries in the world that say, "We embrace your courage; we embrace your willingness to take risk for

freedom." And we'll see how it goes, but I'm happy to have supported the Prime Minister's request that this meeting take place.

Mr. President, thanks. Your press conferences are nice. I appreciate the Brazilian press for coming. Glad the American press behaved okay. [*Laughter*] Be careful, they may spend a lot of time at the bars around here. [*Laughter*] Yes.

Okay, thanks.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:27 p.m. at the Hilton Sao Paulo Morumbi. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. President Lula da Silva referred to Ambassador Susan C. Schwab, U.S. Trade Representative. President Lula da Silva spoke in Portuguese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Enterprise, AL, where he took an aerial tour of the area damaged by tornadoes on March 1. Later, he met with families whose homes were damaged by the tornadoes.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Americus, GA, where, upon arrival in the afternoon, he took an aerial tour of the damaged area. He then participated in a briefing on tornado damage and met with affected families.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on March 1.

The President declared a major disaster in Georgia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on March 1–2.

March 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President met with Foreign Service officers.

March 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President watched the verdict read in the trial of former Chief of Staff to the Vice President I. Lewis Libby.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush had dinner with King Abdallah II and Queen Rania of Jordan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph Timothy Kelliher to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and to redesignate him as Chairman.

The President announced his intention to designate Kerri Layne Briggs as Acting Assistant Secretary of Education for Elementary and Secondary Education and to nominate her to be Assistant Secretary of Education for Elementary and Secondary Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas G. Myers, Jeffrey Patchen, and Lotsee Patterson to be members of the National Museum and Library Sciences Board.

March 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush went to DAR Constitution Hall, where he made remarks to political appointees and Federal Government employees. Later, they returned to the White House.

Later in the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with congressional leaders.

March 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He and Mrs. Bush then traveled to Sao Paulo, Brazil, arriving in the evening. Upon arrival, they met with Brazil's Ambassador to the U.S. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota and U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Clifford M. Sobel.

March 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he greeted U.S. Embassy staff and their families.

Later in the morning, the President went to Petrobras Transporte S.A. Facility, where he toured the facility and participated in a briefing on biofuel technology.

In the afternoon, the President had a lunch meeting with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush went to Meninos do Morumbi, where they toured the facility with founder Flavio Pimenta and watched a performance.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Montevideo, Uruguay.

The White House announced that, to commemorate Saint Patrick's Day, the President will host Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland at the White House on March 16.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dale Cabaniss to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority and, upon confirmation, redesignate him as Chair.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carol Waller Pope to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Institute of Peace: Anne Cahn; Kathleen Martinez; Bruce Pitcairn Jackson; George E. Moose; and Jeremy Rabkin.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors: Marc A. Giammatteo; Jose R. Ramos; Tammy L. Edwards; Kenneth Fisher; C. Martin Harris; Edward A. Eckenhoff; and Gail R. Wilensky.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted March 5

Michael E. Baroody,
of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, vice Harold D. Stratton, resigned.

Michael E. Baroody,
of Virginia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2006, vice Harold D. Stratton, resigned.

Patrick Dennis Duddy,
of Maine, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

David George Nason,
of Rhode Island, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Emil W. Henry, Jr.

Submitted March 7

Kerri Layne Briggs,
of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education, vice Henry Louis Johnson, resigned.

Joseph Timothy Kelliher,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2012 (reappointment).

Douglas G. Myers,
of California, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2011, vice Peter Hero, term expired.

Jeffrey Patchen,
of Indiana, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a

term expiring December 6, 2011, vice John E. Buchanan, Jr., term expired.

Lotsee Patterson,
of Oklahoma, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2011, vice Donald Leslie, term expired.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released March 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel and Federal Emergency Management Agency Director R. David Paulison

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Georgia

Released March 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on the President's upcoming visit to Central and South America

Fact sheet: Advancing the Cause of Social Justice in the Western Hemisphere

Released March 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: Taking Care of America's Returning Wounded Warriors

Fact sheet: Pursuing a Strategy for Success in Iraq

Released March 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released March 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley, Counselor to the President Daniel J. Bartlett, and Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 49, H.R. 335, H.R. 433, H.R. 514, and H.R. 577

Released March 9

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Ahern of Ireland

Fact sheet: Job Creation Continues—More Than 7.5 Million Jobs Created Since August 2003

Fact sheet: The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors

Acts Approved by the President

Approved March 7

H.R. 49 / Public Law 110–7
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1300 North Frontage Road West in Vail, Colorado, as the "Gerald R. Ford, Jr. Post Office Building"

H.R. 335 / Public Law 110–8
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 152 North 5th Street in Laramie, Wyoming, as the "Gale W. McGee Post Office"

H.R. 433 / Public Law 110–9
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1700 Main Street in Little Rock, Arkansas, as the "Scipio A. Jones Post Office Building"

H.R. 514 / Public Law 110–10
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 16150 Aviation

Loop Drive in Brooksville, Florida, as the "Sergeant Lea Robert Mills Brooksville Aviation Branch Post Office"

H.R. 577 / Public Law 110–11

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 3903 South Congress Avenue in Austin, Texas, as the "Sergeant Henry Ybarra III Post Office Building"