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Week Ending Friday, September 21, 2007

The President's Radio Address

September 15, 2007

Good morning. This week, General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress on the progress of America's strategy in Iraq, including the surge in forces. They agreed that our coalition faces formidable challenges. Yet they also said that security conditions are improving; that our forces are seizing the initiative from the enemy; and that the troop surge is working.

Because of this progress, General Petraeus now believes we can maintain our security gains with fewer U.S. troops. He's recommended a force reduction of 5,700 troops in Iraq by Christmas, and he expects that by July we will be able to reduce our troop levels in Iraq further, from 20 combat brigades to 15. He's also recommended that in December we begin a transition to the next phase of our strategy in Iraq, in which our troops will shift over time from leading operations to partnering with Iraqi forces, and eventually to overwatching those forces.

I have accepted General Petraeus's recommendations, and I have directed that he and Ambassador Crocker deliver another report to Congress in March. At that time, they will provide a fresh assessment of the situation in Iraq and of the troop levels we need to meet our national security objectives. The principle that guides my decisions on troop levels is "return on success." The more successful we are, the more troops can return home. And in all we do, I will ensure that our commanders on the ground have the troops and flexibility they need to defeat the enemy.

Anbar Province is a good example of the progress we are seeing in Iraq. Last year, an intelligence report concluded that Anbar had been lost to Al Qaida. But local sheiks asked for our help to push back the terrorists—and so we sent an additional 4,000 marines to Anbar as part of the surge. Together, local sheiks, Iraqi forces, and coalition troops drove the terrorists from the capital of Ramadi and other population centers. Today, citizens who once feared beheading for talking to our troops now come forward to tell us where the terrorists are hiding. And young Sunnis who once joined the insurgency are now joining the Army and police.

The success in Anbar is beginning to be replicated in other parts of Iraq. In Diyala, a Province that was once a sanctuary for extremists, is now the site of a growing popular uprising against the extremists. In Baghdad, sectarian killings are down, and life is beginning to return to normal in many parts of the city. Groups of Shi'a extremists and Iranian-backed militants are being broken up, and many of their leaders are being captured or killed. These gains are a tribute to our military, to Iraqi forces, and to an Iraqi Government that has decided to take on the extremists.

The success of a free Iraq is critical to the security of the United States. If we were to be driven out of Iraq, extremists of all strains would be emboldened. Al Qaida could find new recruits and new sanctuaries. And a failed Iraq could increase the likelihood that our forces would someday have to return and confront extremists even more entrenched and even more deadly. By contrast, a free Iraq will deny Al Qaida a safe haven. It will counter the destructive ambitions of Iran. And it will serve as a partner in the fight against terrorism.

In this struggle, we have brave allies who are making great sacrifices to defeat the terrorists. One of these Iraqis was a man named Sheikh Abdul Sattar. He was one of the tribal leaders I met on my recent visit to Iraq, who was helping us to drive Al Qaida out of Anbar Province. His father was killed by Al Qaida in 2004. And when we met Sheikh Sattar, he told me, quote, "We have suffered a great deal from terrorism. We strongly support the

democracy you have called for." Earlier this week, this brave tribal sheikh was murdered. A fellow Sunni leader declared, "We are determined to strike back and continue our work." We mourn the loss of brave Iraqis like Sheikh Sattar, and we stand with those who are continuing the fight.

If Iraq's young democracy can turn back its enemies, it will mean a more hopeful Middle East and a more secure America. So we will help the Iraqi people defeat those who threaten their future and also threaten ours.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 7:50 a.m. on September 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 15. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Jubeir Rashid, member, Anbar Salvation Council. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2008

September 14, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2007–33

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2008

Pursuant to section 706(1) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–228)(FRAA), I hereby identify the following countries as major drug transit or major illicit drug producing countries: Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela.

A country's presence on the Majors List is not necessarily an adverse reflection of its government's counternarcotics efforts or level of cooperation with the United States. Consistent with the statutory definition of a major drug transit or drug producing country set forth in section 481(e)(2) and (5) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), one of the reasons that major drug transit or illicit drug producing countries are placed on the list is the combination of geographical, commercial, and economic factors that allow drugs to transit or be produced despite the concerned government's most assiduous enforcement measures.

Pursuant to section 706(2)(A) of the FRAA, I hereby designate Burma and Venezuela as countries that have failed demonstrably during the previous 12 months to adhere to their obligations under international counternarcotics agreements and take the measures set forth in section 489(a)(1) of the FAA. Attached to this report are justifications for the determinations on Burma and Venezuela, as required by section 706(2)(B). I have also determined, in accordance with the provisions of section 706(3)(A) of the FRAA, that support for programs to aid Venezuela's democratic institutions is vital to the national interests of the United States.

Although President Karzai has strongly attacked narcotrafficking as the greatest threat to Afghanistan, one third of the Afghan economy remains opium-based, which contributes to widespread public corruption, damage to licit economic growth, and the strengthening of the insurgency. The government at all levels must be held accountable to deter and eradicate poppy cultivation, remove and prosecute corrupt officials, and investigate and prosecute or extradite narcotraffickers and those financing their activities. We are concerned that failure to act decisively now could undermine security, compromise democratic legitimacy, and imperil international support for vital assistance.

In Afghanistan, one model for success can be drawn by comparing the marked differences in cultivation between the northern and southern provinces. Several northern provinces contributed to a decline in poppy cultivation resulting from a mixture of political will and incentives and disincentives, such as public information, alternative development, and eradication. Furthermore, several northern provinces with very low