AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Nora D. Volkow, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse; Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana and President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; Ambassador to the U.S. Carolina Barco Isakson and President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; and Karen Engle, executive director, Operation UNITE.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy

December 11, 2007

President Bush. Mr. President, it's my honor to welcome you to the Oval Office. We just had a very substantive meeting. And it will be my honor to feed you a lunch. I doubt it is going to be—the food will be as good as the food I had when I visited your beautiful country.

Bilateral relations with the United States and Italy are very good. We have a lot of interchange between our countries, with business as well as travel. And there are millions of Italian Americans who will be pleased, Mr. President, to know we've got good relations.

Secondly, we just had a really around-the-world trip as we discussed problem areas and our mutual desire to work together to help solve those problems.

We discussed Afghanistan, Lebanon, Kosovo. I briefed the President on the recent Annapolis conference that we hosted to help get the peace process started between the Palestinians and Israelis. We had a very compatible relation—discussion because by and large, we're in agreement on how to advance the solutions to these issues.

And finally, I'm—have expressed and will continue to dialog with the President about my deep concern about Iran. Iran is dangerous. Iran—we believe Iran had a secret military weapons program. And Iran must explain to the world why they had a program. Iran has an obligation to explain to the IAEA why they hid this program from them. Iran is dangerous, and they'll be even more dangerous if they learn how to enrich uranium.

And so I look forward to working with the President to explain our strategy and figure out ways we can work together to prevent this from happening for the sake of world peace.

So I'm sure proud to have you here, Mr. President; and welcome.

President Napolitano. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It has been a great pleasure for me to accept your invitation. You kindly addressed me 6 months ago when you were in Rome, and we had already then very positive talks.

And in the past few months, there have been important and rather positive developments in the international situation. First of all, I wanted to express to President Bush my deep appreciation for the responsibility he wanted to take to foster negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian authorities in view of a peace treaty.

Italy is present in several areas of crisis. In this moment, it is an Italian general who is taking the command of the Kabul region in Afghanistan. In Iraq, we give our contribution to the stabilization of the country, participating in NATO training activities. And as a matter of fact, there has been an undeniable improvement in the security conditions in Iraq in the past few months.

In fact, generally speaking, we share the same concerns, and we express a common commitment. And speaking particularly of Kosovo, we could verify how close are our positions on the way to deal with the independence of Kosovo, taking into account the difficult overall situation in the region.

We want to discuss constructively our positions on all questions and all threats. We just want to give our contribution and our idea how to face successfully all threats, including the relative threat of nuclear weaponization of Iran.

I just want to add a word about Europe, because in the past few months, there has been something important. Europe was able—European Union was able to overcome a stalemate, a very dangerous institutional stalemate. The constitutional treaty has been put aside, but a new treaty has been outlined unanimously, and the day after tomorrow it will be signed in Lisbon. And on the basis of this new treaty, which has to be ratified by the signed—I am sure it will be ratified

by all 27 member states—we'll have new figures; we'll have new institutions more capable to affirm the role of a united Europe on the international scene.

Italy and Europe both must think there is possibilities for international security and peace for the cause of liberty and democracy. And the more Europe will be united and will be effective, I think the better we can reach these goals.

We cannot ask the United States to take care of our security. International security is a common duty, and Europe must be up to this challenge.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:48 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Napolitano referred to Brig. Gen. Federico Bonato, Italian Army, commanding general, Regional Command Capital, NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Statement on the Situation in Burma

December 11, 2007

I am deeply disturbed by the report that U.N. Special Rapporteur Paulo Pinheiro released today in Geneva documenting his findings from his trip to Burma last month. It provides further alarming details about the Burmese authorities' crackdown on demonstrations by monks and democracy activists and the severe reprisals that continue today.

He describes how the regime harassed, detained, and killed many peaceful demonstrators. The Special Rapporteur received reports, for example, that a large number of bodies were burned September 27–30 at the Ye Way Crematorium.

I strongly condemn these actions and the junta's refusal to accept the need for real change in Burma. Even while Mr. Pinheiro was in Burma, the regime continued to arrest and harass monks and democracy activists. The regime has also closed down monasteries, including the Maggin Monastery in Rangoon that served as a hospice and treatment center for HIV/AIDS patients.

Mr. Pinheiro's report demonstrates why the world cannot go back to business as usual with General Than Shwe and his junta. I call on all members of the international community to condemn the atrocities detailed in Mr. Pinheiro's report in the strongest possible terms. Last month, I announced new sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their cronies. Should the regime continue to ignore calls for a true democratic transition and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, the United States is prepared to lead international efforts to place more sanctions on the regime. Laura and I will continue to stand with the Burmese people as they seek the freedom they deserve.

NOTE: The President referred to Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Burma; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

Proclamation 8211—Wright Brothers Day, 2007

December 11, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The cause of discovery and exploration is a desire written in the human heart. On Wright Brothers Day, we remember the achievement of two young brothers on the Outer Banks of North Carolina whose persistence, skill, ingenuity, and daring revolutionized the world.

Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first manned, powered flight on December 17, 1903. Orville experienced the thrill of flight when he felt the first lift of the wing of the small wood and canvas aircraft that would travel 120 feet in 12 seconds. The brothers' passion and spirit of discovery helped define our Nation and paved the way for future generations of innovators to launch satellites, orbit the Earth, and travel to the Moon and back.

Our country is continuing the Wright brothers' great American journey. My Administration is committed to advancing space science, human space flight, and space exploration. We will continue to work to expand the horizons of human knowledge to ensure