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make the—that part of the world more secure.

Thank you all very much. See you when I get back.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Kristin Hagerstrom, team leader, Ramadi Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team; John Jones, team leader, Diyala Provincial Reconstruction Team; John Smith, team leader, Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, Baghdad 7; and Riyadh Samarrai, leader of the Adhamiya Awakening group, who was killed by a suicide bomber in Baghdad on January 8.

Statement on Efforts To Achieve Lasting Peace in Sudan

January 8, 2008

Tomorrow marks the third anniversary of the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement in Sudan, which ended 21 years of civil war in that country. I am proud of the role the United States played in achieving that historic result. I remain committed to assisting both sides with the rigorous and complete implementation of all aspects of the agreement. While much progress has been made in forming a Government of National Unity, sharing wealth, and respecting a cessation of hostilities, many challenges remain to the agreement's full implementation. Every effort should be made to ensure that a nationwide census is immediately conducted to allow national elections to be held on time next year. The work of Sudan's border commission also must be reinvigorated, along with efforts to redeploy troops away from disputed border areas to reduce the chances of a return to violence. The comprehensive peace agreement laid the groundwork for lasting peace and unity for all of Sudan, and its vigorous application will continue to underpin U.S. involvement across Sudan.

I have asked my new Special Envoy for Sudan, Ambassador Richard Williamson, to continue the United States strong involvement on north-south issues to help find solutions to these challenges. Ambassador Williamson is also charged with advancing efforts to end the violence in Darfur. I am deeply troubled that innocent civilians continue to fall victim to the scourge of Government and rebel-led attacks in Darfur. I remain firmly committed to the rapid deployment of an effective peacekeeping force, coupled with serious political dialog between the parties, to help end the crisis and the suffering of the innocent people of Darfur.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Tel Aviv, Israel

January 9, 2008

President Peres and Prime Minister Olmert, I thank you for your warm welcome. You know, it's been nearly a decade since I've been in Israel, and I've really been looking forward to coming back. Truth of the matter is, when I was here last time, I really didn't think I'd be coming back as President of the United States. But I knew I'd come back because Israel is a special place. And it's a great honor to make my first visit as the President of the United States. Thank you all for coming out to welcome me.

My one regret is that my wife isn't traveling today. Laura is back home in Washington, but she sends her very best regards to both of you all and to the people of Israel.

The United States and Israel are strong allies. The source of that strength is a shared belief in the power of human freedom. Our people have built two great democracies under difficult circumstances. We built free economies to unleash the potential of our people. And the alliance between our two nations helps guarantee Israel's security as a Jewish state.

Each of our nations must guard against terror. We must firmly resist those who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives. We must recognize that the great ideology based upon liberty is hopeful. In working the lines here, one of the religious leaders said, "Remember, Mr. President, justice and love." Justice and love is based upon a society that welcomes human rights and human dignity, a society which recognizes the universality of freedom. And that's what we stand for today. We will do more than

defend ourselves. We seek lasting peace. We see a new opportunity for peace here in the Holy Land and for freedom across the region.

I look forward to my meetings with President Peres and Prime Minister Olmert. We will discuss our deep desire for security, for freedom, and for peace throughout the Middle East. I want to thank the people of Israel for their friendship and hospitality, and I appreciate the opportunity to visit your beautiful country once again. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. at the Ben Gurion International Airport.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Shimon Peres of Israel in Jerusalem, Israel

January 9, 2008

President Peres. Mr. President, distinguished guests: As the President of the state, I am delighted to speak on behalf of our people. I want to tell you in simple language, you came to a land and a people that loves deeply the United States of America, and without any reservation.

And also, may I say that I have the highest respect for you and the highest regard, because, speaking as a politician, you have introduced character in politics. It's a great contribution to politics—character, courage, vision. And I'm thinking about the last few years, you did really three things of importance: your address in 2002, which for the first time established the basis for a solution and the basis for a consensus in the Arab countries and the rest of—the two-state solution.

Then you and the Secretary worked very hard in Annapolis, in spite of all the skeptics around. Finally, Annapolis gave us one thing, at least: a year to work and make progress. And time is so precious. Dare I say that, firstly, I believe it won't be the last year, but it may be the best year for peace. God knows what can happen later on; we'll have to take it extremely seriously.

And I also believe that the process may be slow, but the progress can be sweet. The process will be slow because negotiations by character calls for time between the opening positions and the fallback positions. You argue. You argue; you have to wait for them. But in the meantime, you can build a support for the negotiation that can make it realistic, tangible. I'm referring to economy; it can raise the standard of the life of the people. That will help immensely the Arabs, the Palestinians, Abu Mazen, nothing more than an economic—[*inaudible*]—advance, and also the security arrangements, which are also possible.

About the economy, may I say, it can be done very quickly because things are ready, and that will have the most profound impact upon all people around. And I would like to add also that while the political side is controversial in our country, economic is a win-win situation. It is accepted by the whole Parliament; it is accepted by the Arabs; it is accepted by you and the Europeans. And you can really build a constructive coalition with the Europeans on that issue under your leadership.

We take your visit not as a ceremonial occasion—very powerful—but a third opening after the two states, after the year of Annapolis, and now the year to implement the highest and the greatest hopes we have. It is in this spirit that I welcome you so much.

President Bush. Thank you. Mr. President, thank you for your kind words about me. I'm just following your example. [*Laughter*]

President Peres. Be careful. [*Laughter*]

Q. Ten years to follow.

President Bush. I wouldn't say that. [*Laughter*]

You're well-known in my country, and you're well-respected. And so I bring the respect of America not only to you but to the people of Israel. Secondly, I come as an optimistic person and a realistic person—realistic in my understanding that it's vital for the world to fight terrorists, to confront those who would murder the innocent to achieve political objectives. We've been called to this task in the past. World War II was such a time, when the world was called to fight people who murdered the innocent to achieve a dark political vision.

Here in the 21st century, America knows firsthand, just like Israel knows firsthand, what it's like to confront those who would