

Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation

February 13, 2008

Director, thank you for joining me. Good morning. At this moment, somewhere in the world, terrorists are planning new attacks on our country. Their goal is to bring destruction to our shores that will make September the 11th pale by comparison. To carry out their plans, they must communicate with each other, they must recruit operatives, and they must share information.

The lives of countless Americans depend on our ability to monitor these communications. Our intelligence professionals must be able to find out who the terrorists are talking to, what they are saying, and what they're planning.

To help our intelligence agencies do this, Congress passed the Protect America Act last year. Unfortunately, Congress set the law to expire on February the 1st and then failed to pass new legislation that would keep these tools in effect over the long run. And so at the 11th hour, Congress passed a temporary 15-day extension of the current law, which will expire at midnight this Saturday. I signed that extension. I did so to give Members of the House and the Senate more time to work out their differences.

Well, the Senate has used this time wisely. I am pleased that last night, Senators approved new legislation that will ensure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to make us safer, and they did so by a wide, bipartisan majority. The Senate bill also provides fair and just liability protections for companies that did the right thing and assisted in defending America after the attacks of September the 11th.

In order to be able to discover enemy—the enemy's plans, we need the cooperation of telecommunication companies. If these companies are subjected to lawsuits that could cost them billions of dollars, they won't participate, they won't help us, they won't help protect America. Liability protection is critical to securing the private sector's cooperation with our intelligence efforts. The Senate has passed a good bill and has shown that protecting our Nation is not a partisan issue. And I congratulate the Senators.

Unfortunately, the House has failed to pass a good bill. And now House leaders say they want still more time to reach an agreement with the Senate on a final bill. They make this claim even though it is clear that the Senate bill, the bill passed last night, has significant bipartisan support in the House.

Congress has had over 6 months to discuss and deliberate. The time for debate is over. I will not accept any temporary extension. House Members have had plenty of time to pass a good bill. They have already been given a 2-week extension beyond the deadline they set for themselves. If Republicans and Democrats in the Senate can come together on a good piece of legislation, there is no reason why Republicans and Democrats in the House cannot pass the Senate bill immediately.

The House's failure to pass the bipartisan Senate bill would jeopardize the security of our citizens. As Director McConnell has told me, without this law, our ability to prevent new attacks will be weakened, and it will become harder for us to uncover terrorist plots. We must not allow this to happen. It is time for Congress to ensure the flow of vital intelligence is not disrupted. It is time for Congress to pass a law that provides a long-term foundation to protect our country. And they must do so immediately.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3773.

Remarks on Signing the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008

February 13, 2008

Thank you all. Sit down. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm pleased to be joined by leaders of both parties to enact an economic growth package on behalf of the American people.

You know, a lot of folks in America probably were saying that it's impossible for those of us in Washington to find common ground, to reach compromise on important issues. I didn't feel that way; I know the leaders didn't feel that way. And as a result, we have come

together on a single mission, and that is to put the people's interests first. And I really do welcome the Members of Congress, and I thank you for your hard work.

Madame Speaker, I thank you for your leadership. Senator Reid, I thank you for your leadership as well. I appreciate very much the fact that the Vice President has joined us, along with Congressman Boehner, Congressman Hoyer, Senator Mitch McConnell, Congressman Roy Blunt, Congressman Jim Clyburn, and other Members of the House and the Senate. You're welcome here in the people's house any time.

I'm very grateful that members of my Cabinet have joined us. Secretary Paulson was the leader in the negotiations on this, and I thank you very much for your hard work, Mr. Secretary. You're earning your pay. [Laughter] Appreciate other members of my Cabinet who have joined us as well.

You know, I know a lot of Americans are concerned about our economic future. Our overall economy has grown for 6 straight years, but that growth has clearly slowed. And so in January, I—we had an important phone call with the leaders of the Congress to talk about whether or not we could come together to provide a booster shot for our economy, a package that is robust, temporary, and puts money back into the hands of American workers and businesses.

Congress passed a really good piece of legislation, and they did so in a very expeditious manner. The bill I'm signing today is large enough to have an impact, amounting to more than \$152 billion this year, or about 1 percent of GDP. The bill provides temporary tax incentives for businesses to make investments in their companies so that we create new jobs this year. The bill provides individual tax relief in the form of tax rebates. These rebates will amount to as much as \$600 for individuals and \$1,200 for married couples, with additional rebates for families with children.

The Members resisted the temptation to load up this bill with unrelated programs or unnecessary spending, and I appreciate that. I thank the Members for acting quickly. I thank them for acting to provide immediate tax relief to the American people.

There are other ways we can work together to help our economy through this rough patch. I know many Americans are worried about meeting their mortgages. My administration is working to address this problem. Last fall, for example, we brought together the HOPE NOW Alliance to help struggling homeowners avoid foreclosure. Yesterday Secretaries Paulson and Jackson joined HOPE NOW in announcing what is called Project Lifeline. It's a targeted outreach effort to help more at-risk homeowners.

Congress can also help by passing legislation to reform the regulation of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, to modernize the Federal Housing Administration, and to allow State housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to help homeowners refinance their mortgages. I hope that Congress can act on these matters quickly.

Helping our economy requires us to take action. It is equally important that we not overreact. Our economic success is not the result of the wisdom of politicians in Washington, DC, but of the collective wisdom of the American people. Shopkeepers, farmers, laborers, entrepreneurs in the private sector have given us the most—the strongest and most resilient economic system in the world.

Over the past 7 years, this system has absorbed shocks: recession; corporate scandals; terrorist attacks; global war. Yet the genius of our system is that it can absorb such shocks and emerge even stronger. In a dynamic market economy, there will always be times when we experience uncertainties and fluctuations. But so long as we pursue progrowth policies that put faith in the American people, our economy will prosper, and it will continue to be the marvel of the world.

Now I'm honored to sign the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 5140, approved February 13, was assigned Public Law No. 110-185.

Executive Order 13460—Blocking Property of Additional Persons in Connection With the National Emergency With Respect to Syria

February 13, 2008

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*)(IEEPA), the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code,

I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, find that the Government of Syria continues to engage in certain conduct that formed the basis for the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, including but not limited to undermining efforts with respect to the stabilization of Iraq. I further find that the conduct of certain members of the Government of Syria and other persons contributing to public corruption related to Syria, including by misusing Syrian public assets or by misusing public authority, entrenches and enriches the Government of Syria and its supporters and thereby enables the Government of Syria to continue to engage in certain conduct that formed the basis for the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338. In light of these findings, and to take additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, I hereby order:

Section 1. (a) Except to the extent provided in section 203(b)(1), (3), and (4) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(1), (3) and (4)), the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 (title IX, Public Law 106–387), or regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this order, and notwithstanding any contract entered into or any license or permit granted prior to the effective date of this order, all property and interests in property that are in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of any United States person, including any overseas branch, of the following persons are

blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in: persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to be responsible for, to have engaged in, to have facilitated, or to have secured improper advantage as a result of, public corruption by senior officials within the Government of Syria.

(b) The prohibitions in paragraph (a) of this section include, but are not limited to, (i) the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any person designated pursuant to this order, and (ii) the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

Sec. 2. Section 3(a)(iv) of Executive Order 13338 is hereby amended to read as follows:

“(iv) to be or to have been responsible for or otherwise significantly contributing to actions taken or decisions made by the Government of Syria that have the purpose or effect of undermining efforts to stabilize Iraq or of allowing the use of Syrian territory or facilities to undermine efforts to stabilize Iraq; or”.

Sec. 3. (a) Any transaction by a United States person or within the United States that evades or avoids, has the purpose of evading or avoiding, or attempts to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

(b) Any conspiracy formed to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

Sec. 4. For purposes of this order:

(a) the term “person” means any individual or entity;

(b) the term “entity” means a partnership, association, trust, joint venture, corporation, group, subgroup, or other organization; and

(c) the term “United States person” means any United States citizen, permanent resident alien, entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States (including foreign branches), or any person in the United States.

Sec. 5. I hereby determine that the making of donations of the type specified in section 203(b)(2) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C.