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Editor's Note: The President was in Al Janadriyah, Saudi Arabia, on May 16, 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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Week Ending Friday, May 16, 2008

The President's Radio Address

May 10, 2008

Good morning. Today is my daughter Jenna's wedding day. This is a joyous occasion for our family as we celebrate the happy life ahead of her and her husband, Henry. It's also a special time for Laura who, this Mother's Day weekend, will watch a young woman we raised together walk down the aisle.

Mother's Day is a special time for mothers all across America. On this holiday, we pause to celebrate the love and compassion of the women who have raised us and to thank them for the many years of patience and selflessness. Throughout our lives, mothers are there with an encouraging word, a sympathetic ear, and a tender heart. They set our direction in life, and from time to time, they have been known to correct our course.

Like many of you, my life has been blessed by a mother who is a source of unconditional love. Those of us who have been so fortunate are forever in debt to these caring women. So on this holiday weekend, we celebrate all those mothers who help make our country a better place.

On this Mother's Day weekend, we think of the mothers who are celebrating this holiday for the very first time. Few blessings can compare to starting a new family, and few bonds are stronger than those between a mother and her newborn baby. This is also a special time for new adoptive mothers, who have welcomed their children into their homes with open arms and an open heart. We wish all these new parents many happy Mother's Days to come.

On this Mother's Day weekend, we think of the many mothers who raised the brave men and women serving our country in uniform. And to those mothers, I offer the thanks of a grateful nation. Your sons and daughters are defending our freedom with dignity and honor. And America appreciates the sacrifices that your families make in the name of duty.

On this Mother's Day weekend, we remember the mothers grieving a son or daughter lost in the service to their country as well as the children who have lost a mother in uniform. We share their pride in these wonderful Americans who have given everything to protect our people from harm. Nothing we say can ever make up for their loss. But on this special day, we hold them in our hearts, and we lift them in our prayers.

I wish every mother listening this morning a blessed Mother's Day, including my own. And I have a message for every son and daughter listening this morning: Remember to tell mom, the first thing tomorrow, how much you love her.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:20 a.m. on May 8 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 9 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 10. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Departure From Waco, Texas

May 11, 2008

Laura and I want to wish everybody a happy Mother's Day. It's just a special day for—to give thanks to our moms, to appreciate the hard work that moms do. And I understand that for some, however, Mother's Day is a sad day for those who lost their lives in Oklahoma and Missouri and Georgia because of the tornadoes—are wondering whether or not tomorrow will be a bright and hopeful day.

We send our prayers to those who lost their lives, the families of those who lost their lives. And the Federal Government will be

moving hard to help. I'll be in touch with the Governors to offer all the Federal assistance we can.

This Mother's Day weekend was awfully special for Laura and me. Our little girl Jenna married a really good guy, Henry Hager. The wedding was spectacular. It's just—it's all we could have hoped for. The weather was—cooperated nicely, and just as the vows were exchanged, the sun set over our lake. And it was just a special day and a wonderful day, and we're mighty blessed.

Anyway, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:52 a.m. at Texas State Technical College. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma; Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri; and Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia.

Interview With Nadia Bilbassy Charters of Al Arabiya Television

May 12, 2008

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Mr. President, thank you very much for your time, sir.

The President. I am honored to be with you again. Thank you.

Situation in Lebanon

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Thank you. And of course, we're going to focus on Lebanon. You have been a strong supporter of Prime Minister Siniora. Yet when he came under attack, he seems to be abandoned—not the U.S. and not the U.N., not Arab countries came to his aid. How do you explain that?

The President. Well, I don't think it's an accurate description that the United States hasn't stayed in contact with him, has listened to him, has listened to his requests. I mean, we're in contact with him a lot. And the reason why is because I personally admire Prime Minister Siniora, and the Lebanese democracy is essential to a peaceful Middle East in many ways. And so we're—we will help him. We will help him particularly and primarily through strengthening his armed forces, the Lebanese Armed Forces. It's probably the most practical way that we can get some help to him quickly.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Just to follow up on that, during the fight with Fatah al-Islam, you have helped the Lebanese Army, but in this particular case, it doesn't seem to be coming. So what—can you just give us some details——

The President. Yes, we probably got some more work to do, Nadia. I mean, we've got—it's interesting, the situation has evolved from one where Hizballah supposedly was protecting the Lebanese people from Israel; now we're going to need—inherent in your question is a desire for the Lebanese Armed Forces to protect the Lebanese people from Hizballah. And the roles are seemingly reversed. And so Condi, in particular, has been in touch—Condi Rice has been in touch with the Prime Minister a lot to assess needs and to help and see how we can help.

Safety of Lebanese Leaders

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Three of your closest allies, which is Saad al-Hariri, Walid Jumblatt, and Prime Minister Siniora, are under siege. They're under house arrest. Is this any guarantee that you—their life or—is safe or that they're not going to be attacked? And if they are attacked, what the United States can do?

The President. Well, we're constantly looking at options, of course. And we're monitoring the situation very closely by staying in touch with these leaders, particularly Prime Minister Siniora. And the best solution is for the Lebanese Armed Forces to be—is to be capable of protecting the leaders. And that's what we expect. And our Ambassador evidently was in with the Prime Minister when he gave instructions to the military to protect these leaders.

And the Lebanese Armed Force is pretty good. They're not great yet, but they're pretty good. And we want to make them better so that they can respond.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. But you're confident that their safety is not going to be touched?

The President. I hope so. I'm not confident the—I was hopeful that Hizballah would become patriotic—patriots to Lebanon and not respond every time to Syrian or Iranian demands. And so we'll see what happens. As you know, there's been a lot of confusing stories coming out. But one thing

that we're concerned about is, obviously, the safety of our friends and leaders.

U.S. Troop Movements/Situation in Lebanon

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. One other thing we have seen was the USS *Cole* has moved from the Suez Canal opposite the Lebanese shores. Is this just a show of force, or are they able to do something?

The President. Well, this is a part of a routine training mission that had been scheduled a long time before. Again, I repeat to you, the best way for us to help stabilize the situation and eventually allow this Lebanese democracy to go forward is, one, keep the pressure on Syria, and two, bolster the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces so that they respond to the Government—and the Government says, okay, you need to go protect these people, or go take care of business here, they'll be able to do so.

Lebanese Armed Forces

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. So you're satisfied with their role so far, the army?

The President. Satisfied with?

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. With the army.

The President. No, I'm not satisfied with the army, but I'm satisfied that, given their equipment, they've done a good job. And the question then is, can we help them get better equipment and better training in the short run? In other words, we want it to be better than today. I was satisfied with the earlier incursion that you talked about. I thought they handled themselves very well.

Meeting With Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon/Situation in Lebanon

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. You wanted to meet with Prime Minister Siniora in Sharm el-Sheikh, but he's under siege. How he's going to get out of Lebanon?

The President. Yes. I don't know; we'll see. I'd like to meet him. And we'll just have to deal with that when I get over there.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Is there any plans?

The President. No, I haven't—there may be; I just haven't talked to anybody about it today, Nadia. In terms of—you know, I'd love to see him. I think it would be a good message if I could see him and stand with him, side by side, and say my—say the truth, which is, I admire his courage. And I think the Arab world needs to support him stronger, and I think the Arab world needs to make it clear to the Iranians and Syrians that—allow this good man to govern his country without interference.

Situation in the Middle East/Iran

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Sir, a former Israeli Army—[*inaudible*]—said that it's better if Hizballah is in control of Lebanon. It will make it easier for Israel to attack. Would you agree with this man?

The President. I'm a peace man. I think—I don't know who this guy is, and I haven't read about it, but I will tell you that I would much rather have the Siniora Government succeed and survive and that there be peaceful—a peaceful process. I think we ought to all work to prevent the necessity for armed conflict in order to solve problems. Obviously—look, I believe that using the military as a last option is important to keep on the table. But I would hope that we—through better policy that we would create the conditions—that we would not create the conditions that would enable another war inside Lebanon. These people have suffered too long.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. I hope so.

The President. So have the Palestinians, by the way, and that's why I'm for a Palestinian state.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Well, we're going to follow up on the Palestinian issue in a minute, but do you see what's happening in Lebanon as a proxy war between Iran and the U.S., fought this time on Lebanese territory?

The President. I think that it's a part of a larger ideological struggle where people are willing to use agents of violence in order to achieve their political objectives. And so whether it be Lebanon, Iraq, or the Palestinian Territories, you're seeing this type of strategy play out, and a lot of it is fueled by Iran.

Syria/Iran

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. What measures would you take to pressurize Syria or Iran

regarding the action of Hizballah in Lebanon?

The President. Well, we're taking pressures, as you know, through sanctions, which sometimes are effective, sometimes aren't. And what's very important during this period, Nadia, is to remind people of the truth and the realities on the ground, to encourage them to be more tough on implementing these U.N. Security Council resolutions.

And obviously, we're trying to solve problems diplomatically. I mean, it's important that we work with friends and allies to see if we can't convince the Iranians to stop funneling monies to these violent groups or to stop their enrichment—suspend their enrichment activities; or in Syria's case, to put financial pressure on them to adhere to the U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding Lebanon.

And we've been successful sometimes, as I mentioned, and sometimes we haven't, because sometimes commercial interests don't take the threats nearly as seriously as you do or I do. And so it's just a lot of work to keep the pressure. But to me, that's the best way to try to solve these problems, is through diplomacy.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. So there is no selective military strike that could be considered?

The President. Well, there's always—as you know, there's always that option. I made it very clear during my Presidency that option is on the table. And of course—and I've also always said diplomacy is our first choice.

Iran/Middle East Peace Process

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Some will say that Iran is establishing a foothold in the Mediterranean, whether it's happening in Lebanon now, and this issue of Gaza, to a certain extent, by Hamas. How would you, sir, kind of react to Iranian influence in the region?

The President. Well, it's clearly there. And the first thing is to tell the truth. That's why I'm glad you're asking me about this question, because I want people who are listening to understand that it's the Iranian influence that is creating problems for the Palestinians trying to have a state. I mean, isn't it interesting that there's a two-state solution on the table that needs to be negotiated. I readily understand that, that you can negotiate the boundaries, negotiate the refugee issue, negotiate the other issues. But as those negotiations go forward, there are Iranian-backed groups trying to kill people to stop it, trying to create enough violence and confusion so that the peace talks don't go forward.

And it's just a clear example of why the Iranian influence needs to be dealt with. And the United States is very much involved with doing that through, for example, success in Iraq. And we're trying to stand with our friend—not trying—we are standing with our friend Siniora. We're analyzing ways that we can continue to do so. And I'm going to the Middle East to talk very clearly about the Palestinian state and how I'd like to get it defined before I leave office. And I think we can. I think we can.

United States-Israel-Palestinian Authority Meeting

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. But the fact that you don't have a trilateral meeting between yourself, Abbas, and Olmert——

The President. I don't think——

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. ——as some would say, it's like——

The President. Yes, I know, but don't read into that. I mean, it's—look, I think I can be plenty effective meeting with these leaders. And remember, Condi is over there meeting—the main negotiators, by the way, happen to be Tzipi and Abu Ala. And they're talking all the time, and we're trying to get their data, get to where they are, and bring it to the leadership level at times. And the leaders are meeting as well. So it's a very complicated process. And I don't think necessarily not having a trilateral meeting should be read as anything other than that it just didn't work out. It's not a sign that the talks aren't going forward.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. My time is over. They give me the two x's. But can I—do I—can I——

The President. Yes, fire away. Of course you can.

Middle East Peace Process

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Okay. Thank you, sir. You know, I mean, some will say that you were the first President to call for a Palestinian state, yet people do not see a tangible results on the ground. You're going now in a very tough time. Prime Minister Olmert is facing corruption charges. You're celebrating 60 years of Israel independence; for the Palestinians, 60 years of misery. What can we offer tangibly, on the ground, to the Palestinians that will say, George Bush did this for us?

The President. No, I appreciate that very much. One is a security force that can respond to the—Prime Minister Fayyad's work and President Abbas's desires. I mean, it's—in other words, people want to see whether or not the state is capable of protecting them. And therefore, as this Palestinian force gets more capable, we expect the Israelis to move back, and move back to the point where the state can actually begin to function a little bit in the West Bank.

Secondly, economic development—I mean, people are wondering, okay, it's great; Bush shows up; he talks about a Palestinian state, but where are the tangible benefits? And so the idea of working these entrepreneurial programs or some of these programs that my friend Tony Blair is doing—who I will meet with, by the way, just to get a sense for how we can advance them.

But I fully understand your question. And your question is, all we hear is talk; when are we going to see action? Well, part of the plan is for people to see a better life. And the other part of the plan is for there to be a clearly defined state, so it's no longer just a two-state solution. It's, "here's what the borders will look like; here's how we're going to deal with the refugees; here's how we're going to deal with the different, complicated issues," so people could actually see and analyze, do I want this, or do I want what's happening in Gaza, for example. And given that choice, I'm confident, having met a lot of Palestinians and know the Palestinians fairly well, about how people just want peace. They want their children to grow up in peace, and they want to be able to make a living.

Look, the Palestinians are very entrepreneurial and—people. They know how to make a good living, and that's all they want. And moms want their kids to go to schools—and without fear of violence and fear of poverty and fear of disease. And there—believe me, I understand that there needs to be a lot of work, but from my perspective, the definition—a clear definition of a state would be a major step forward of providing hope and a different vision, a different way forward.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. So an agreement still can be reached by the time you leave office?

The President. Yes, I think so. That's what I'm aiming for, absolutely. We're pushing hard.

President's Upcoming Visit to the Middle East/Saudi Arabia

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Just on the Saudis—also, you're visiting Saudi Arabia to celebrate 75 years of—[*inaudible*]—nations.

The President. I am going to go to Saudi. See, I'm going to go to Israel, but I'm also going to two other important stops, which is Saudi Arabia as well as Egypt.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. And what do you hope to achieve in your visit with the Saudis?

The President. Well, first of all, His Majesty—it's always a pleasure to be in his company. He's a dear friend of mine, and he's kindly invited me back to his farm, which is a great—it's an honor. And we'll talk about a lot of bilateral relations, visas, and different relations. And of course, he'll be very interested in a lot of other subjects too. He'll be interested in knowing about progress in the Palestinian issue. He'll be——

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Iraq?

The President. Yes, Iraq. He'll be interested in Iran. He'll be interested in a lot of issues. And I'm looking forward to briefing him in person.

Price of Oil and Supply

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Right. And the price of oil, would you raise it with him?

The President. Yes. I mean, I raise it with him every time I see him. And it's gotten higher. And, yes, of course, I will. It's—the interesting thing for people to understand, though, is that there's not just—there's not a lot of excess capacity in the world now.

Demand has risen so fast relative to supply that it's very tight. And there is no easy solution. It took us awhile to get to where we are, and it's going to take us awhile to get out of where we are.

The Presidency and the Middle East

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Finally, what would be your advice to the next President regarding the Middle East? How would you——

The President. Take the Middle East seriously because that's the center of—that's the place where people are—get so despondent and despair that they're willing to come and take lives of U.S. citizens.

On the other hand, be hopeful, because the Middle East is full of really decent, honorable people that want to live in peace. And use our influence to promote peace, whether it would be in Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, or elsewhere.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Thank you very much.

The President. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Bilbassy Charters. Thank you for your time. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 12:09 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipora "Tzipi" Livni of Israel; former Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia (Abu Ala), Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Quartet Representative in the Middle East Tony Blair; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Ms. Bilbassy Charters referred to Parliament Members Saad Hariri and Walid Jumblatt of Lebanon; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel.

Statement on the Earthquake in China

May 12, 2008

I extend my condolences to those injured and to the families of the victims of today's earthquake in China's Sichuan Province. I am particularly saddened by the number of students and children affected by this tragedy. The thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the Chinese people, especially those directly affected. The United States stands ready to help in any way possible.

Statement on the Situation in Lebanon

May 12, 2008

I strongly condemn Hizballah's recent efforts, and those of their foreign sponsors in Tehran and Damascus, to use violence and intimidation to bend the Government and people of Lebanon to their will. The United States will continue to firmly support the Government of Lebanon, led by Prime Minister Siniora, against this effort to undermine the hard-fought gains in sovereignty and independence the Lebanese people have made in recent years. The international community will not allow the Iranian and Syrian regimes, via their proxies, to return Lebanon to foreign domination and control. To ensure the safety and security of the people of Lebanon, the United States will continue its assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces to ensure they are able to defend the Lebanese Government and safeguard its institutions.

It is critical that the international community come together to assist the Lebanese people in their hour of need. I plan to consult with regional leaders on my upcoming trip to the Middle East to coordinate efforts to support the Lebanese Government and implement U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701, among others, which seek to bolster Lebanon's sovereignty against external efforts at destabilization and interference. The Lebanese people have sacrificed much for the sake of their freedom, and the United States will continue to stand with them against this latest assault on their independence and security.

Interview With Jacob Eilon and Gil Tamari of Israel's Channel 10 TV

May 12, 2008

Q. Mr. President, thank you for speaking with Channel 10.

The President. Yes, sir.

Jenna Bush's Wedding

Q. First of all, congratulations on your daughter's wedding this weekend. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. It was—as my Jewish friends tell me, there was *mazel tov*. And it was a beautiful experience. It was very emotional, and it was—to see your little girl marry a good guy. And Laura and I were thrilled.

Q. Made you proud?

The President. Yes, I was very proud of her. It was a wonderful time. And we did it on our ranch, which was—we didn't do it here in the White House because Jenna wanted a more low-key, kind of homey environment. And she loves the ranch, and so do we, so it was perfect. It was wonderful. Thanks for asking.

Q. Great. Now to business.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert just said a couple days ago that he would resign if he was indicted with some new corruption charges. Does that change in any way your strategy on the peace process in the Middle East?

The President. No. The vision of the peace process still is the same. I have come to the conclusion that it is essential for Israel to have a Palestinian partner that is a democracy committed to peace. I fully understand not all Palestinians agree with that vision. But I also believe, over time, that when confronted with life in Gaza, what that's like, or life in a place where you can raise your child in peace, most of the Palestinians will choose peace, and that the best way to marginalize these radicals who murder the innocent to achieve their political objectives is through Palestinian democracy.

Q. And you can do that with Olmert and Abbas?

The President. Well, the Prime Minister's—as I understand it, the legal issue goes on, and I fully understand that and respect Israeli rule of law. I will just tell you, in my—I have great relations with the Prime Minister. I find him to be a frank man, an honest man, an open man, a guy easy to talk to, and somebody who has—understands the vision necessary for Israeli security.

And so we will continue working hard. And I do believe we can get a state defined by the end of my Presidency. A state won't exist until certain obligations are met by everybody, but to have it defined is very important.

Middle East Peace Process/Hamas

Q. So that's the goal? By the end of the year, a defined—what borders of a Palestinian state?

The President. Well, that and refugee issue as well as the other key security issues that are necessary for a state to come into being. But the roadmap has obligations for all parties. And so my goal is to get the state defined.

Look, I firmly believe that—first of all, I supported the Sharon move on Gaza and still think it was the right move; and that I supported the elections, because there needs to be clarity. Everybody's got to see the truth. And the truth is that Hamas can't deliver promised—promises for the Palestinian people. And the truth is, is that there's an opportunity now to offer a different vision from theirs. Their vision is, destroy Israel. How about a vision that says, we want to coexist with Israel so we can raise our children in peace?

Now, they—I'm sure people say, oh, Bush, man, he sounds hopelessly idealistic. But the truth of the matter is, in order for peace to secure, it's that kind of idealism that has got to prevail.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, you have said that the bombing of the Syrian/North Korean facility by Israel sent a message to Iran. What was the message? You are next?

The President. No, it's just that people are going to take care of their security needs. And the message to Iran is that your desire to have a nuclear weapon, coupled with your statements about the destruction of our close ally, has made it abundantly clear to everybody that we have got to work together to stop you from having a nuclear weapon.

I mean, to me, it's the single biggest threat to peace in the Middle East, is the Iranian regime, not only because of their desire to have the technologies to build a weapon—the technologies necessary to build a weapon,

but it's also to—their funding of Hizballah. Look what's happening in Lebanon now—a young democracy trying to survive. By the way, it's in Israel's interests that the Lebanese democracy survive.

Q. So what's going to stop them?

The President. Well, pressure, sanctions, diplomacy. All options are on the table. They're trying to destabilize the young Iraqi democracy. And what stops them there is when we catch them moving their weapons in, they're brought to justice. That's what stops them.

Israel/Iran

Q. Many Israelis think that the only thing that would stop them would be a military attack. Have you considered that?

The President. I've always told people that all options are on the table. I've also learned that in my 7½ years as President, it's probably best not to be talking about the specifics of any option.

Q. If Israel does that, would you understand?

The President. You're becoming very hypothetical in your questions. I fully understand Israel's concerns about Iran. That's going to be my message when I come to Israel, and that is that you need to be concerned about Iran, and you are concerned about Iran, and so are we. And part of our job is to—you know, look, we want to solve anything—I mean, stopping them enriching is—the first choice is to do it diplomatically, of course. And that's why we're working on the sanction regime, and that's why we're trying to affect their money flows.

But it's hard, because not everybody shares the same anxiety as Israel and the United States does. And—but it's a tough issue, and I fully understand it. And I will continue to pressure as best I can.

Jonathan Pollard Case

Q. Mr. President, did you get any official request to pardon Jonathan Pollard, and if yes, would you consider it? And do you know, many people in Israel think that the arrest of Ben-Ami Kadish in another spy case tended to influence you.

The President. We are constantly analyzing cases. There's been no change in the Government's attitude at this point.

Q. So——

The President. No change.

Q. But your—did you get such a request from Israel?

The President. Oh, yes, constantly.

Q. Constantly?

The President. Sure.

Q. So for our 60th birthday, any new——

The President. We'll analyze every request, but there's been no change of attitude.

Situation in the Middle East/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, it took, like, 7 years before you got involved in the Middle East.

The President. No, that's not an accurate statement, please.

Q. Well, in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, maybe to be more accurate.

The President. No, that is an inaccurate statement too. But, anyway, go ahead. I will let you finish your question.

Q. Would you recommend the next President to start earlier?

The President. Look, I inherited—when I came in office, there was an intifada. It's hard in the middle of the intifada to be talking peace. I mean, you had people scrambling for their security. But I gave a speech in June 2002—remember, I was sworn in in 2001—which really helped define the two-state solution. It talked about who we would or not deal with. I've been—no, we've been very much engaged in terms of setting the conditions. Remember, the roadmap was done during my time. Anyway, no, we've been very much involved in the Middle East. It's a——

Q. And should the next President start early?

The President. Like me?

Q. You're not the next President.

The President. No, no, you mean, start it early like I did? Sure, yes——

Q. No. Okay——

The President. ——you can't help it. Look, this is the—one of the accomplishments—or one of the interesting things that's happened in this administration is we have

placed American foreign policy—a top priority of our foreign policy is squarely in the Middle East. We got Iraq; we got Lebanon; we got Iran; and of course, we got the Middle Eastern—the peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis, which frankly is moving down the road pretty good. And I hope during my time, before it's over, we get the vision defined. But it's—I think any American President is going to be committed to Israel's existence and understand the realities and threats in the Middle East.

President's Upcoming Visit to Israel

Q. Finally, Mr. President, you are coming to Israel for your second visit as President of the United States. What do you expect from this visit?

The President. I expect a chance to speak in the Knesset, which I'm excited about, and I'm thankful. And I'm looking forward to telling people that I fully understand the nature of the world, and that there are ideologues who murder innocent people to achieve their political objectives. And we must do—we must stand strong against those ideologues, and we must, on the one hand, be strong in our security measures, and on the other hand, offer a competing vision. And that's what I'm going to talk about.

It's a hopeful speech. It's an optimistic speech. And it's one that I hope assures Israel—Israelis that during the Bush administration and the subsequent administrations, they'll have a strong friend and ally in the United States of America.

Q. Mr. President, we wish you a pleasant trip to Israel. Thank you very much.

The President. I'm looking forward to it. Thank you, sir.

Q. Thank you very much for this interview.

The President. Yes, thanks. Good to see you guys.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:30 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Henry Hager, husband of Jenna Bush; and former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. The interviewers referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; former civilian U.S. Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Pollard, who was convicted of treason and espionage in 1987; and former civilian U.S. Army mechanical engineer Ben-Ami Kadish, who was arrested on April 22, 2008. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Interview With Mona Shazli of Egypt's Dream TV

May 12, 2008

Ms. Shazli. Mr. President, it's not an easy thing to interview the President of the most powerful state on—in the world. However, what is more difficult is to size down your questions to fit in the minutes.

The President. In the timeframe. [*Laughter*]

Egypt-U.S. Relations

Ms. Shazli. Yes. My first question is, people in Egypt, sometimes they get confused. On one hand, they hear the U.S. statements, speeches that stress on the long-lasting relationships with Egypt, the strategic importance of Egypt to the U.S. and to the Middle East, Egypt as the major player in the peace process. On the other hand, they could see indications that contradicts with this: U.S. depending on other parties in the region, your snatching visit to Sharm el-Sheikh last January, the partial cutting of the U.S. aid. How would you comment on that?

The President. Yes. I would comment this: That from my perspective, the Egyptian-U.S. relationship is a very important part of our Middle Eastern foreign policy, for these reasons: One, Egypt has got a proud history and a great tradition, and a lot of people look to Egypt for help.

Now, the United States can't solve a lot of problems on our own. Has to have allies be a part of it. And so on the Palestinian issue, for example, Egypt can be very constructive and has been constructive and helpful. Egypt has got a society that honors diversity and gives people a chance to realize their talents, like you. I mean, you're a very smart, capable professional woman who has showed the rest of the Middle East what's possible in the Middle East. And Egypt has been on the forefront of modernization. Egypt is a—strategically located.

And so our relationship is strong and good. We've had our differences—on elections, for

example. But nevertheless, to answer your question, I would say the relationship is very solid and very important.

Democracy in Egypt

Ms. Shazli. Then how would you perceive the state of democracy in Egypt?

The President. I would say, fits and starts; good news and bad news. In other words, there's been some moments where it looked like Egypt was going to continue to lead the Middle East on the democracy movement, and there's been some setbacks. But I guess that just reflects the nature of the administration and their—on the one hand, their desire for democracy; on the other hand, their concerns about different movements. My view is, is that democracy is a powerful engine for reform and change and leads to peace.

Ms. Shazli. But the public opinion—sometimes they perceive the U.S. criticism to the development of democracy in Egypt as an unacceptable intervention in the internal affairs.

The President. Yes, I can understand that. Look, nobody wants the big, influential guy to come from the outside and tell them what to do. I'm sensitive to that. On the other hand, I do believe it's important for a leader in a country to adhere to certain values, universal values. I think the idea of giving people a chance to vote and a chance to participate freely in society is a universal value. And so it's—I try to balance, on the one hand, my beliefs, and on the other hand, a friendship with the Government and friendship with President Mubarak.

Middle East Peace Process

Ms. Shazli. It's a matter of hours, and you will be in Tel Aviv celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. This celebration might be perceived by Palestinians and Arabs like—it is criticized, because it's ignoring the flip side, which is the 60 years of agony, pain, and struggle in the area, in the region. What would you tell Palestinians and Arab concerning this?

The President. Well, I am going to talk to the Palestinians face to face when I come to Sharm el-Sheikh. And I will say that there's been 60 years of struggling on both sides, and it's time that the struggle has got to end. And now for—is the time for the development of a Palestinian state that has got defined borders, that doesn't look like Swiss cheese; in other words, it's contiguous territory, where the refugee issue is dealt with. And that's what my message is, is that I'm going to—I fully recognize the agony and pain that have been lived by everybody in the region, and that here's one way forward. And it's a—and we will continue to work, and hopefully by the end of my Presidency, we'll get the definition of a state. And so I'll talk to President Mubarak about how we can work together.

Palestinian State

Ms. Shazli. Is this—some people would consider this as getting the ceiling lower and lower. Before, you said this—your administration will witness the condition of the Palestinian state. Now we are talking about only the definition of the state.

The President. No, no, it's always been the definition, cause I always said that the state won't come into being until certain obligations are met through the roadmap. And so the whole purpose was to define—it's a semantical difference, but I really haven't changed my position.

Middle East Peace Process

Ms. Shazli. Former President Jimmy Carter was in Cairo weeks ago, and he was really trying to tell how he was seeing things. He said with a simple comparison between the victims from the Israeli side and the Palestinian side, you can see who is suffering more.

The President. Yes. Well, everybody has got their opinions. I just happen to believe that I'm in a position to help move the definition of a state, which will help solve the problem in the long run. I'm the first President ever to have articulated a two-state solution, two states living side by side in peace. And my only thing I want to tell your listeners is that I'm going to drive hard, along with Secretary Rice and other people in my administration, to see if we can't get the Palestinians and Israelis to agree on what that state will look like.

War on Terror

Ms. Shazli. Mr. President, do you still believe that who's not with us is against us?

The President. Yes. Yes, in the war on terror, I do. Yes. When you kill innocent people to achieve political objectives, I think they're against civilized people. We've witnessed this kind of ideological——

Ms. Shazli. But minutes ago, you said we have differences. We have——

The President. Of course we have differences.

Ms. Shazli. ——it's normal to have differences.

The President. It is, but killing people to achieve political objectives is—it's one thing to have differences of opinion; it's another thing to have differences of action. And my comments about that—what—the line you just quoted was in the context of dealing with these extremists, like Al Qaida or Hamas, who just murder innocent people. And, yes, I still feel very strongly about that. Most people don't believe in using murder as a political tool. Most people want to live in peace, and so do I.

President's Image Abroad

Ms. Shazli. I have only just a chance for one question.

The President. Sure.

Ms. Shazli. You will be in the region very soon—Israel, Saudi Arabia and then Egypt. The question is, maybe there are 250 million Arabs who think that President Bush has added to their sufferings and problems during his administration. How would you adjudicate this?

The President. I would just ask them to wait for history to answer the question. There's an advent of a young democracy in Iraq. Ask those people what it's like to live under a freer society, rather than the thumb of a tyrant or a dictator; or the people that we're trying to help in Lebanon by getting the Syrians out through a U.N. Security Council resolution; or the Palestinians who—for whom I've articulated a state.

In other words, I understand people's opinions. All I ask is that when history is finally recorded, judge whether or not I've been a contributor to peace or not.

President's Legacy

Ms. Shazli. Do you think history will be in your side?

The President. I think history will say, George Bush clearly saw the threats that keep the Middle East in turmoil and was willing to do something about it, was willing to lead, and had this great faith in the capacity of democracies and the great faith in the capacity of people to decide the fate of their countries; and that the democracy movement gained impetus and gained movement in the Middle East. Yes, I think people will say, "Well, he had a difficult set of circumstances to deal with, and he dealt with them with a sense of idealism."

Ms. Shazli. Mr. President, thank you for this interview.

The President. Yes, thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:42 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Interview With Lukman Ahmed of BBC Arabic

May 12, 2008

Jenna Bush Wedding

Mr. Ahmed. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for this. And first, I must congratulate you for your daughter's wedding. And how does it feeling, being a father? I know you are listening to your mom; I know you are a father, and you are having a daughter's wedding. How does it feel?

The President. You know something, I was emotional, and—because I was so happy and proud. And she's marrying a good guy, Lukman. And we were out there on our ranch, which is a part of the world Laura and I love, and it was just a special evening, and it was great. I feel great. Thank you.

Lebanon/Iran

Mr. Ahmed. All right. You have given—we are going to Lebanon. You are giving Hizballah the choice of being terrorist organization or a political party. What do you think would prompt Hizballah to abandon

its—[*inaudible*]? Why Hizballah claim the existence of legitimate concern for these weapons?

The President. Yes. I don't know. I mean, it's hard for me to get inside Hizballah's head. I do know that they are destabilizing Lebanon. I do know that they were viewed at one time as the protectors against Israel, and now, in fact, they're turning against the Lebanese people themselves.

And I do know that Lebanon's success is very important for peace in the Middle East. And so our position—the—my Government's position is to support the Siniora Government, is to beef up his army so that he can have a chance to respond to people who are acting outside the confines of government.

And, you know, Hizballah wouldn't be—would be nothing without Iranian support. And Iranian is the crux of many of the problems in the Middle East, whether it be funding of Hizballah, funding of Hamas, or obviously, actions within the young democracy of Iraq. And so a lot of my trip is going to be to get people to focus not only on Lebanon and remember Lebanon but also to remember that Iran causes a lot of the problems around the Middle East.

Lebanese Armed Forces

Mr. Ahmed. We are going to touch that Iranian support and Syrian support to Hizballah. Many supporters of the U.S. policy in Lebanon criticize the lack of practical American support to the Siniora Government. That's what we are seeing right now. The USS *Cole* is now heading to the region, in what you call a—or previously mentioned, the support of an American ally. Does this mean the USS *Cole* is willing to offer this practical assistance?

The President. Well, the most practical assistance, really, is to help the Lebanese Armed Forces become effective. And that's what we're doing. A couple years ago, I sent one of our top admirals to Lebanon to assess the needs of the military. And as well as I've been watching very carefully to assess the courage of the leadership, like Prime Minister Siniora. I'm impressed by the Prime Minister. He's a good guy who cares deeply about the future of his country. And he needs a military that has got the practical equipment necessary to deal with elements in this society that are destabilizing. And that's really where our practical help is going to be.

Situation in Lebanon

Mr. Ahmed. And as supporting the Lebanese military, that means they should go, or do you think would go, to disarm Hizballah?

The President. Well, of course, I don't see how you can have a society with Hizballah armed up the way they are. I mean, any time they feel like moving, they try to do it. In this case, though, they moved against the Lebanese people. They're not moving against any foreign country; they're moving against the Lebanese people. And it should send a signal to everybody that they're a destabilizing force. And—but the first step, of course, is to make sure that the Siniora Government has got the capacity to respond with a military that's effective, that can move point A to point B in a quick fashion, and that's got the capacity to get the job done.

Syria/Iran

Mr. Ahmed. You are calling both Iran and Syria to halt their support to Hizballah. But in the absence of any direct contact with Iran and Syria, your administration—how do you think both countries should stop doing this? You are not negotiating with them. You are not exploring other means to have them halt their support.

The President. So what's there to negotiate? I mean, they know my position. Early on in my administration, we sent the word to the Syrians, with top administrative officials, that if you want better relations with the United States, stop supporting these extremist groups that are trying to stop the advance of free societies. And every time, their response was nothing. So they know our position, the Syrians and the Iranians.

I have made it abundantly clear there's a better way forward. If the Iranians want to have relations with us, they ought to verifiably suspend their enrichment, and then they will—they can visit with us and other nations involved with the—through the U.N. process.

But they—both sides, both countries have made the decision to not take up offers. And they're very destabilizing influences. And

they're—I truly believe that the Middle East is where the world ought to spend a lot of time, attention, and focus to help bring prosperity and peace, and that when people do pay attention closely, they'll recognize the destabilizing influence that the Iranians and the Syrians are having.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Iran

Mr. Ahmed. So what are the other means that you think you could take to have them stop their support?

The President. Well, you know, there are sanctions, of course. There's international—working with the international community to send common messages, working with the financial community. And we're doing that. The problem is, some folks just don't see the same—the threat that Iran poses in the Middle East, for example, as others do. I view them as a serious threat to peace, and therefore, I spend a lot of time trying to convince other nations, other leaders to join in this common concern.

Palestinian State

Mr. Ahmed. We are going to the Palestinian and Israeli issue. And we know that you are going there to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Israel, and you are the President who put the idea of the two-state solution. There are the other sayer in the Palestinian side. They call this anniversary as *Nakba*, or disaster. What do you say to them, Mr. President?

The President. I say to them that I care deeply about the Palestinian people and their future. They're going to have a choice to make, hopefully, and that choice is, here's what a state's going to look like, or do you want the kind of state that Hamas has brought you? And there needs to be a vision that people can see, that's clearly spelled out, with defined borders and the refugee issue settled and something on how to move forward on the holy sites, security discussions.

And those discussions are ongoing right now. And our job in the United States, it seems like to me, is to encourage the parties to come and reach a common solution so that they can then say, the world can say, here's what a state will look like, and now you suffering Palestinians have a choice to make: You can accept that, or you can continue to follow or accept in your presence these extremists who murder innocent people.

Isn't it interesting that as the talks begin to emerge, there's more rockets flying into Israeli neighborhoods? Why? Because they want to stop the advance of a Palestinian state. And so, no, I got a good message for the people of the Palestinian Territories.

Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Ahmed. In fact, I'm going to carry on that message. I'm given 30 seconds, so I hope if you could allow me to ask this question here. In your last meeting with Abu Mazen here in the White House, you stated, as I quote here, that, "I'm confident we can achieve the definition of a state." Actually, Abu Mazen, he expressed some concern after that meeting that he couldn't see anything that would suggest that the possibility of establishing the state before the——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Ahmed. ——end of your term. And he's hoping, and you are hoping, right now you are heading there. Are you willing to tell me that before the end of your administration, there will be an agreement to be concluded, based on the assurance you get from the—both sides?

The President. I think we can; I really do. We're going to work hard for that end. Look, it's hard. I understand that. And Abu Mazen was expressing frustrations with the process, and that's okay. He's sending a message. He wasn't speaking necessarily to the American people. He was sending a message back home that he's frustrated, and he expects there to be more progress made to his liking. I understand that. That's what negotiations are all about.

Abu Mazen and Olmert are, of course, necessary to get a good deal, but there's still—Tzipi Livni and Abu Ala are talking now. There's a lot of discussions going on. And it's just a process. And the fundamental question is, when it gets down to it, will they be able to agree? They've closed a gap, closed a gap; will they be able to agree at that last minute? And that's why Condi Rice and Hadley and others are going out there all the time to encourage them to get a deal done.

It's in their interests. It's in the Israelis' interests that there be a state living side by side with them in peace, and it's in the Palestinians' interest. The status quo is unacceptable; Gaza's unacceptable. What they need is a state that responds to the will of the people. And the first step is to define what the state looks like. And we'll work hard for the next months to see if we can't get it done.

Palestinian State

Mr. Ahmed. And the agreement that you are trying to get it done, is it going to be a description of the state or the establishment of the state?

The President. No, it will be a description of the state. Remember, I told everybody earlier that there's got to be some roadmap obligations that have to be met. Everybody understands that. Step one is the description. And the state can't look like Swiss cheese. It has to be contiguous territories with defined borders—and the refugee issue concluded as well.

Mr. Ahmed. And that's what we're going to get before the end of your administration——

The President. I think so.

Mr. Ahmed. ——is a description of the state?

The President. I'm working hard to get there.

Iran

Mr. Ahmed. Thank you so much. With regard to Iran, President——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Ahmed. ——Bush, it's very vital, as you say it always, that their cooperation to have stability in Iraq. Do you think that it—you consider one day that—talking direct to them to have them achieve that goal to——

The President. They know—look, if I thought talks would matter, we'd talk. But they know our position. We have had talks between our Embassy and their Embassy. They know, and they know that the Iraqi Government, along with the U.S. Government, wants them to stop sending their weapons from Iran into Iraq, all aiming to kill innocent people. That's what they're doing. They're being very—they're not being constructive at all. But they absolutely know our position. And when we catch them doing it, they'll be brought to justice. And we are catching them doing it right now.

Syria/North Korea

Mr. Ahmed. And the issue of the possible cooperation between Syria and North Korea on the weapon of—nuclear weapons, actually——

The President. Yes. Well, their—yes, that was a troubling development, wasn't it, that all of a sudden, out of the blue, there's—in the middle of a kind of a remote area, a reactor is there, built with the help of Koreans, North Koreans. And it just goes to show, unless there's transparency and openness, unless there's a strong inspection regime, what could happen. And that's why it's very important that the world stay diligent and pay attention to what goes on in the Middle East, and not hope for the best, but remain active.

Mr. Ahmed. But thus, the evidence is seriously being—my last question, last question. This evidence, Mr. President, seriously being questioned. Obviously, the people have in mind that—the presentation at the U.N. with regard to the Iraqi weapon of mass destruction. So how do you see that, how——

The President. Yes, look, I mean, it's—the difference was, in this case, there was concrete examples. I mean, everybody that analyzed the data realized it was true. I mean, are people saying that it didn't exist? Is that what the line of reasoning is? Well, I just—just not the case or the truth. The truth is, is that out of nowhere was discovered this reactor that nobody talked about. The Syrians didn't tell anybody about it. The North Koreans didn't tell anybody about it. And it was discovered, and now it's destroyed.

Mr. Ahmed. Mr. President, thank you so much.

The President. You're a good man.

Mr. Ahmed. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

The President. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:52 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Henry Hager, husband of Jenna Bush; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and former Prime

Minister Ahmed Qureia (Abu Ala) of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipora "Tzipi" Livni of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Message to the Congress on the Russia-United States Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

May 12, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Agreement, and a Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Agreement (in accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), a classified annex to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately). The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the non-proliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Russia based on a mutual commitment to nuclear non-proliferation. It has a term of 30 years, and permits the transfer of technology, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of Restricted Data, and permits transfers of sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities, and major critical components of such facilities by amendment to the Agreement. In the event of termination, key non-proliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material and equipment subject to the Agreement.

The Russian Federation is a nuclear weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Like the United States, it has a "voluntary offer" safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That agreement gives the IAEA the right to apply safeguards on all source or special fissionable material at peaceful nuclear facilities on a Russia-provided list. The Russian Federation is also a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which establishes international standards of physical protection for the use, storage, and transport of nuclear material. It is also a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose non-legally binding Guidelines set forth standards for the responsible export of nuclear commodities for peaceful use. A more detailed discussion of Russia's domestic civil nuclear program and its nuclear non-proliferation policies and practices, including its nuclear export policies and practices, is provided in the NPAS and in the classified annex to the NPAS submitted to the Congress separately.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the Agreement and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30-day

continuous session period provided for in section 123 b., the 60-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 12, 2008.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Statement on Farm Legislation

May 13, 2008

In January 2007, I was hopeful that leaders in Washington could come together on a good farm bill. At that time, my administration had completed more than 50 listening sessions across the country and developed a reform-minded farm bill based on the thousands of comments received. Our proposal would make wise use of the people's money by reforming farm programs, funding emerging priorities, and providing a safety net that better targets benefits for farmers.

I am deeply disappointed in the conference report filed today, as it falls far short of the proposal my administration put forward. If this bill makes it to my desk, I will veto it.

Today's farm economy is very strong, and that is something to celebrate. It is also an appropriate time to better target subsidies and put forth real reform. Farm income is expected to exceed the 10-year average by 50 percent this year, yet Congress's bill asks American taxpayers to subsidize the incomes of married farmers who earn $1.5 million per year. I believe doing so at a time of record farm income is irresponsible and jeopardizes America's support for necessary farm programs.

Congress claims that this bill increases spending by $10 billion, but the real cost is nearly $20 billion when you include actual Government spending that will occur if this bill becomes law. Instead of fully offsetting the increased spending, the bill resorts to a variety of gimmicks, such as pushing commodity payments outside the budget window. Adding nearly $20 billion in additional costs to the current 10-year spending level of approximately $600 billion is excessive, especially when net farm income is at a record high and food prices are on the rise. My administration clearly identified numerous reforms as essential to justify even a $10 billion increase in spending, yet this bill includes none of those reforms in full.

Crop prices have averaged a 20-percent increase since just last year. Still, Congress wants to raise payment rates for most crops and create new subsidies which can be triggered even at very high prices. The bill fails to stop the practice of collecting subsidies even when crops are sold later at a higher price; it restricts our ability to redirect food aid dollars for emergency use in the midst of a global food crisis; and it falls short of the administration's conservation proposals. By increasing trade-distorting subsidies, the bill undermines our ability to open foreign markets to American agricultural goods. The bill creates an egregious new sugar subsidy program that will keep sugar prices high for domestic consumers, while making taxpayers subsidize a handful of sugar growers. These are just a few of the reasons why I cannot support this bill.

In the absence of a good farm bill, I call on Congress to extend current law for at least 1 year. The administration's reform-minded proposal would be preferable to current law, but in light of the bill produced by conferees, an extension is now the better policy for American agriculture and American taxpayers. It is a far superior option than supporting a bill that increases farm subsidy rates, spends too much, and fails to reform farm programs for the future.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Tel Aviv, Israel

May 14, 2008

Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Olmert, thank you very much for your warm welcome. It's good to be back again. We're proud to reaffirm the friendship of our peoples, and we're delighted to join you in celebrating the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel.

Our two nations both faced great challenges when they were founded, and our two

nations have both relied on the same principles to help us succeed. We've built strong democracies to protect the freedoms given to us by an Almighty God. We've welcomed immigrants who've helped us thrive. We've built prosperous economies by rewarding innovation and risk-taking and trade. And we've built an enduring alliance to confront terrorists and tyrants.

Americans and Israelis can be proud of our past, and the best way to honor our founders is to continue the work they started. Tomorrow I'm going to address the members of the Knesset and the people of Israel. I look forward to discussing how I believe our two nations can continue to advance our ideals and approach our next 60 years of partnership with confidence and with hope.

Laura and I appreciate your invitation, your kind invitation to share these days of celebration with you. We consider the Holy Land a very special place, and we consider the Israeli people our close friends.

Shalom.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. at Ben Gurion International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and Aliza Olmert, wife of Prime Minister Olmert. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Peres and Prime Minister Olmert.

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

May 14, 2008

President Peres. Mr. President, Secretary of State, distinguished delegation: I got permission from the Americans to be a—and Miss Tzipi Livni, our Foreign Minister—I got permission to be, all my life, an optimist. And you bring with you optimism, so I feel a sort of competition. [*Laughter*] But let me say that I know you have elections sometimes, by the end of this year, and maybe there will be a change of administration, a change of guards. I think before you will leave office, you will see a change of guards here in the Middle East.

President Bush. Yes.

President Peres. What looks today so gloomy may be the last effort by some very extremist group to remain alive. Because it's concentrated, it becomes sharp and clear, particularly in two places. In Lebanon, Hizballah is simply destroying Lebanon. It's a matter that concerns not only the United States or Israel; it concerns the Arab world. For them, the destruction of Lebanon is the destruction of statehood in many other places. And it's a protest without a message. And the second goes to Gaza, where Hamas is responding to the establishment of a Palestinian state. I think you, and may I say the Secretary of State, invested so much effort to enable the Palestinians to correct the historic mistakes in—from 1947, because would they then accept an Arab state, we wouldn't have all these troubles. But never the mind, we cannot change the past.

But today, the real obstacle, when I consider everything else for—before creation of—the—[*inaudible*]—recreation of a Palestinian state, is Hamas. And talking with the Palestinians, I know that's their view. We are not their enemies, as we are not enemies of Lebanon. On the contrary, I think we would like to see a united, integrated Lebanon living in peace, who don't have any ambitions neither to their water, nor to their land, nor to their politics. We would like to see the Palestinians living together. They suffered a great deal of their life. The separation is a tragedy for them and for the rest of us.

Now the Arab world will have to take a stand, not about the conflict between us and them, but about their own destiny, where are they moving. And that will affect us.

Your 8 years were very moving years for all of us.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Peres. [*Inaudible*]—that you can really watch a friendship without any bad mood. And I know that we are not the—[*inaudible*]—half the time. But you never interrupted your understanding, your support——

President Bush. Thank you.

President Peres. ——and really trying to do whatever you, your administration, and the lady who is on the State Department really did then to help us negotiate a difficult time.

So for us, it's a celebration not only because we're a little bit older—60 years, it's not too much—but also because we feel that our efforts are not in vain. And it is in this optimistic view that I welcome you here.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

President Peres. Thank you.

President Bush. Mr. President, it's great to be with you. You're known as a wise soul, and your comments reflect your wisdom. I am delighted to be here for the 60th birthday party. As a person who is 61 years old, it doesn't seem that old. [*Laughter*]

But I suspect if you looked back 60 years ago and tried to guess where Israel would be at that time, it would be hard to be able to project such a prosperous, hopeful land. No question, people would have said, "Well, we'd be surrounded by hostile forces." But I doubt people would have been able to see the modern Israel, which is one reason I bring so much optimism to the Middle East, because what happened here is possible everywhere.

And the objective of the United States must be to, one, support our strongest ally and friend in the Middle East—the only true democracy against the forces of terror that you just described—and at the same time, talk about a hopeful future.

So I'm really looking forward to my time here. I want to thank you for giving me a chance to speak to the Knesset. I hear it's quite an experience. It'll be a huge honor to represent my country for your 60th birthday.

In the meantime, we will continue to work toward a vision of—where the—where people who are just reasonable and want a chance to live at peace with Israel have that opportunity, and at the same time, speak clearly about the forces of terror who murder innocent people to achieve their political objectives and how the world must stand against them.

And so I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and see you again. And you're looking good. [*Laughter*] I hope you're feeling well.

Thank you, sir.

President Peres. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. at the President's Residence.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel in Jerusalem

May 14, 2008

Prime Minister Olmert. I am delighted to honor President George W. Bush on his second visit. This time, President came to celebrate with Israel the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel.

We are particularly excited by the fact that the President chose to come this week, which is a very meaningful and very exciting week in his private life. And I congratulate you again, President——

President Bush. Thank you.

Prime Minister Olmert. ——for the marriage of your daughter Jenna this last weekend. We are very happy to host you here.

We had a long discussion about a variety of issues. The first of the issues was the attempts made by Iran to acquire nuclear capabilities. This is a danger of the highest order to the safety of the region—of course, Israel is part of it—and many other countries in the world. And there is an international effort, led by the United States of America, to try and stop Iran from acquiring nuclear power. And the discussions between our two countries will continue on this issue. And of course, Israel will try to join the main forces, led by the United States of America and the President, to try and stop the Iranians from continuing their efforts, which are going on and which are clearly dangerous and threatening for the stability of the world.

We also discussed the situation in Lebanon. We observed the events in Lebanon, and we are very much concerned that there will be an attempt to upset the democratic process, which has to take place properly in Lebanon. And we will continue to observe the situation, and hopefully the situation will stabilize in Lebanon and the Government of Prime Minister Siniora will prevail against the provocations and the efforts made by Hizballah and the Iranians, which are obviously heavily involved in the attempts to upset the situation over there.

We also discussed the situation in Gaza. A couple of days ago, I had a visit of General Omar Suleiman, the head of the Egyptian military intelligence, and we discussed possible terms for what may emerge as a ceasefire in the Gaza district. The fact is that while General Suleiman was visiting here, Qassam rockets were still shot at innocent people in the south of Israel, and two people were killed. And this is a very threatening signal. An organization which pretends to want to stop terror can't continue to shoot at innocent people. We will make exceptional efforts that we will not explain. But Israel naturally will not be able to tolerate continuous attacks on innocent civilians.

We hope that we will not have to act against Hamas in other ways, with the military power that Israel hasn't yet started to use in a serious manner in order to stop it. But it entirely depends on responding positively to the principles set forth by me and by the Israeli Cabinet in order to stop these operations.

We also briefed the President on the negotiations between us and the Palestinians. We are genuinely interested in meeting the time framework that we talked about in Annapolis. I still remember the very eloquent presentation of President Bush prior to the public meeting in Annapolis, in which he described the difficulties, the sensitivities, the complexities, and also the opportunities that the Annapolis process proposes for both sides. The Israeli side is making an exceptional effort on all fronts. We need to reach an understanding that will define accurately the parameters for the realization of the vision of you, Mr. President, of a two-state solution that will relate to the issue of borders, to the issue of refugees, to the issue of the security arrangements, and will set forth also, at the end of the day, the framework for how to deal later with the issue of Jerusalem.

We will continue this discussion. And I'm sure that America will continue the extraordinary efforts made by Secretary Rice and President Bush to try and influence the process so that it will end up in a positive way.

Again, this is not just a ceremonial visit. I thank you, Mr. President, for your friendship, for your dedication to the basic principles which are shared by our two countries, and for your great friendship. You are a great person; you are a great leader; and you are a great friend. And it's a great honor for me to have the opportunity to host you in the home of the Prime Minister of the State of Israel on the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your friendship, and thank you for your hospitality. Laura and I are looking forward to having dinner with you and Mrs. Olmert tomorrow night, as well as the celebrations tonight and tomorrow.

I'm honored to be representing our country here for the 60th anniversary of the existence of the State of Israel. It's just a great honor, and it's a chance for me to express the enduring friendship of the American people with the Israeli people. It's also an interesting time to come because, you know, here we are in the heart of a thriving democracy, and yet that democracy, as are other democracies, are being challenged by extremists and terrorists, people who use violence to try to advance their dark vision of the world.

I happen to believe it's an important role of the United States to stand with democracies and to stand strong against terrorists, whether it be to stand with Israel against the existential threat of a nuclear weapon with Iran or whether it be to stand with the Siniora Government.

What's interesting—what took place in Lebanon—is that Hizballah, the so-called protector of the Lebanese against Israel, has now turned on its own people. And as you mentioned, Hizballah is supported by Iran. This is an Iranian effort to destabilize that young democracy. And the United States stands strongly with the Siniora Government.

You brought up Hamas. Hamas's objective—stated objective is the destruction of the State of Israel. And therefore, the United States will stand strongly with Israel, as well as stand strongly with the Palestinians who don't share that vision.

And so I thank you very much for your efforts to describe what's possible for the millions of Palestinians who simply want to live side by side with Israel in peace. We've had an extensive discussions on a variety of issues, and there's no better person to discuss those issues with than you. You clearly see the

threats. You clearly see the opportunities. And I want to thank you for your strong leadership, and thank you for your friendship.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at the Prime Minister's Residence. In his remarks, he referred to Aliza Olmert, wife of Prime Minister Olmert; and Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon.

Remarks in Jerusalem

May 14, 2008

Thank you all. President Peres, thank you, sir, for your hospitality. Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Olmert, it's great to be with you. We consider you friends. Heads of state, thank you all for coming. I think it's a great tribute to this conference, as well as to Israel, that so many heads of state have come. Ex-heads of state and ex-leaders, thanks for being here. Save a seat in the ex-leader's club. [*Laughter*] Citizens of Israel, Laura and I loved coming to your beautiful country, and thank you for your warm hospitality. Citizens of the United States, my fellow Americans, spend freely, and behave yourselves. [*Laughter*]

Distinguished guests, I really appreciate your warm welcome. And we are thrilled to be here with one of America's closest friends. Laura and I are honored to represent the American people on the 60th anniversary of your independence. Happy birthday.

As we celebrate the anniversary, it is useful to look back at the story of your founding. It is the story of how faith guided the Jewish people through centuries of bitter exile. It is a story of how those living behind ghetto walls and barbed wire never lost sight of Jerusalem. It is a story of how brave pioneers risked everything to redeem the promise of this land. It is a marvelous story.

When Israel's founders gathered in Tel Aviv to sign your Declaration of Independence, the threat of war loomed. But it could not overshadow the joy of people who had lived to see their prayers answered. Celebrations broke out all across this land, and of course, they broke out in America as well. In New York, young men and women danced the *hora* in the streets. In Washington, a crowd gathered to watch a flag-raising ceremony outside the building that would become Israel's first Embassy. After one man saw the flag bearing the Star of David, he said, "I never thought I'd live to see this day."

Looking back 60 years later, it is important to remember what the founders of Israel had to overcome at every stage of the journey. They established one of the world's great democracies in a region where democracy had few roots. They formed a unified army out of immigrants and refugees from many different countries. They planted the seeds of a modern economy in the sands of an ancient desert. In these accomplishments, we see the visionary leadership of men and women like Herzl and Weizmann and Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir and Rabin and Sharon, and we honor each of them this evening.

And looking back 60 years later, we've also got to remember the courage of President Harry S. Truman. As Israel prepared to declare independence, President Truman faced a tough choice over whether to recognize a new state. The future of Israel hung in the balance. As Chaim Weizmann told the President, he said, "History and providence have placed this issue in your hands." And today, we know that the forces of providence could not have chosen a better man than America's 33d President.

Eleven minutes after Israel came into existence, the United States became the first nation to recognize its independence. And because Harry Truman did what was right instead of following the conventional wisdom, we can say today that America is Israel's oldest and best friend in the world.

With every passing year, the bonds of friendship between America and Israel have grown stronger. America stands for peace, and so does Israel. And as we stand in peace, we must understand the realities of the world in which we live. We must be steadfast and we must be strong in the face of those who murder the innocent to achieve their objectives. And in the long run, we share a powerful belief in a powerful weapon against the terrorists. We believe that the surest way to defeat the enemies of hatred is to advance the cause of hope through the cause of freedom—liberty as the great alternative to tyranny and terror.

Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for inviting me to speak at the Knesset tomorrow. I hear it's a place of many a sharp elbow. [*Laughter*] I'm looking forward to giving my speech. [*Laughter*] I'm not going to be throwing any elbows. But I will talk about the day when I believe every child in the Middle East can live in peace and live in freedom. With trust in the Rock of Israel, we know that day will come. And when it does, the United States of America will be at your side.

God bless Israel, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 p.m. at the ICC Jerusalem International Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and Aliza Olmert, wife of Prime Minister Olmert.

Remarks to Members of the Knesset in Jerusalem

May 15, 2008

Thank you. President Peres and Mr. Prime Minister; Madam Speaker, thank you very much for hosting this special session; President Beinisch; Leader of the Opposition Netanyahu; Ministers; members of the Knesset; distinguished guests: *Shalom*. Laura and I are thrilled to be back in Israel. We have been deeply moved by the celebrations of the past 2 days. And this afternoon, I am honored to stand before one of the world's greatest democratic assemblies and convey the wishes of the American people with these words: *Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach*.

It is a rare privilege for the American President to speak to the Knesset. [*Laughter*] Although, the Prime Minister told me there is something even rarer: to have just one person in this chamber speaking at a time. [*Laughter*] My only regret is that one of Israel's greatest leaders is not here to share this moment. He is a warrior for the ages, a man of peace, a friend. The prayers of the American people are with Ariel Sharon.

We gather to mark a momentous occasion. Sixty years ago in Tel Aviv, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel's independence, founded on the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate. What followed was more than the establishment of a new country; it was the redemption of an ancient promise given to Abraham and Moses and David, a homeland for the chosen people, *Eretz Yisrael*.

Eleven minutes later, on the orders of President Harry Truman, the United States was proud to be the first nation to recognize Israel's independence. And on this landmark anniversary, America is proud to be Israel's closest ally and best friend in the world.

The alliance between our governments is unbreakable, yet the source of our friendship runs deeper than any treaty. It is grounded in the shared spirit of our people, the bonds of the Book, the ties of the soul. When William Bradford stepped off the *Mayflower* in 1620, he quoted the words of Jeremiah: "Come let us declare in Zion the word of God." The Founders of my country saw a new promise land and bestowed upon their towns names like Bethlehem and New Canaan. And in time, many Americans became passionate advocates for a Jewish state.

Centuries of suffering and sacrifice would pass before the dream was fulfilled. The Jewish people endured the agony of the pogroms, the tragedy of the Great War, and the horror of the Holocaust—what Elie Wiesel called "the kingdom of the night." Soulless men took away lives and broke apart families. Yet they could not take away the spirit of the Jewish people, and they could not break the promise of God. When news of Israel's freedom finally arrived, Golda Meir, a fearless woman raised in Wisconsin, could summon only tears. She later said: "For 2,000 years, we have waited for our deliverance. Now that it is here, it is so great and wonderful that it surpasses human words."

The joy of independence was tempered by the outbreak of battle, a struggle that has continued for six decades. Yet in spite of the violence, in defiance of the threats, Israel has built a thriving democracy in the heart of the Holy Land. You have welcomed immigrants from far—from the four corners of the Earth. You have forged a free and modern society based on the love of liberty, a passion for justice, and a respect for human dignity. You have worked tirelessly for peace. You have fought valiantly for freedom.

My country's admiration for Israel does not end there. When Americans look at Israel, we see a pioneer spirit that worked an agricultural miracle and now leads a high-tech revolution. We see world-class universities and a global leader in business and innovation and the arts. We see a resource more valuable than oil or gold: the talent and determination of a free people who refuse to let any obstacle stand in the way of their destiny.

I have been fortunate to see the character of Israel up close. I've touched the Western Wall; I've seen the sun reflected in the Sea of Galilee; I have prayed at Yad Vashem. And earlier today I visited Masada, an inspiring monument to courage and sacrifice. At this historic site, Israeli soldiers swear an oath: "Masada shall never fall again." Citizens of Israel, Masada shall never fall again, and America will be at your side.

This anniversary is a time to reflect on the past. It's also an opportunity to look to the future. As we go forward, our alliance will be guided by clear principles, shared convictions rooted in moral clarity and unswayed by popularity polls or the shifting opinions of international elites.

We believe in the matchless value of every man, woman, and child. So we insist that the people of Israel have the right to a decent, normal, and peaceful life, just like the citizens of every other nation.

We believe that democracy is the only way to ensure human rights. So we consider it a source of shame that the United Nations routinely passes more human rights resolutions against the freest democracy in the Middle East than any other nation in the world.

We believe that religious liberty is fundamental to a civilized society. So we condemn anti-Semitism in all forms, whether by those who openly question Israel's right to exist or by others who quietly excuse them.

We believe that free people should strive and sacrifice for peace. So we applaud the courageous choices Israeli's leaders have made. We also believe that nations have a right to defend themselves and that no nation should ever be forced to negotiate with killers pledged to its destruction.

We believe that targeting innocent lives to achieve political objectives is always and everywhere wrong. So we stand together against terror and extremism, and we will never let down our guard or lose our resolve.

The fight against terror and extremism is the defining challenge of our time. It's more than a clash of arms; it is a clash of visions, a great ideological struggle. On the one side are those who defend the ideals of justice and dignity with the power of reason and truth. On the other side are those who pursue a narrow vision of cruelty and control by committing murder, inciting fear, and spreading lies.

This struggle is waged with the technology of the 21st century, but at its core, it is an ancient battle between good and evil. The killers claim the mantle of Islam, but they are not religious men. No one who prays to the God of Abraham could strap a suicide vest to an innocent child or blow up guiltless guests at a Passover seder or fly planes into office buildings filled with unsuspecting workers. In truth, the men who carry out these savage acts serve no higher goal than their own desire for power. They accept no God before themselves. And they reserve a special hatred for the most ardent defenders of liberty, including Americans and Israelis.

And that is why the founding charter of Hamas calls for the elimination of Israel. And that is why the followers of Hizballah chant "Death to Israel! Death to America!" That is why Usama bin Laden teaches that the killing of Jews and Americans is one of the biggest duties. And that is why the President of Iran dreams of returning the Middle East to the Middle Ages and calls for Israel to be wiped off the map.

There are good and decent people who cannot fathom the darkness in these men and try to explain away their words. It's natural, but it is deadly wrong. As witnesses to evil in the past, we carry a solemn responsibility to take these words seriously. Jews and Americans have seen the consequences of disregarding the words of leaders who espouse hatred. And that is a mistake the world must not repeat in the 21st century.

Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them

they have been wrong all along. We've heard this foolish delusion before. As Nazi tanks crossed into Poland in 1939, an American Senator declared: "Lord, if I could only have talked to Hitler, all this might have been avoided." We have an obligation to call this what it is: the false comfort of appeasement which has been repeatedly discredited by history.

Some people suggest if the United States would just break ties with Israel, all our problems in the Middle East would go away. This is a tired argument that buys into the propaganda of the enemies of peace, and America utterly rejects it. Israel's population may be just over 7 million, but when you confront terror and evil, you are 307 million strong, because the United States of America stands with you.

America stands with you in breaking up terrorist networks and denying the extremists sanctuary. America stands with you in firmly opposing Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. Permitting the world's leading sponsor of terror to possess the world's deadliest weapons would be an unforgivable betrayal for future generations. For the sake of peace, the world must not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

Ultimately, to prevail in this struggle, we must offer an alternative to the ideology of the extremists by extending our vision of justice and tolerance and freedom and hope. These values are the self-evident right of all people, of all religions, in all the world because they are a gift from the Almighty God. Securing these rights is also the surest way to secure peace. Leaders who are accountable to their people will not pursue endless confrontation and bloodshed. Young people with a place in their society and a voice in their future are less likely to search for meaning in radicalism. Societies where citizens can express their conscience and worship their God will not export violence; they will be partners in peace.

The fundamental insight that freedom yields peace is the great lesson of the 20th century. Now our task is to apply it to the 21st. Nowhere is this work more urgent than here in the Middle East. We must stand with the reformers working to break the old patterns of tyranny and despair. We must give voice to millions of ordinary people who dream for a better life in a free society. We must confront the moral relativism that views all forms of government as equally acceptable and thereby consigns whole societies to slavery. Above all, we must have faith in our values and ourselves and confidently pursue the expansion of liberty as the path to a peaceful future.

That future will be a dramatic departure from the Middle East of today. So as we mark 60 years from Israel's founding, let us try to envision the region 60 years from now. This vision is not going to arrive easily or overnight. It will encounter violent resistance. But if we and future Presidents and future Knessets maintain our resolve and have faith in our ideals, here is the Middle East that we can see.

Israel will be celebrating the 120th anniversary as one of the world's great democracies, a secure and flourishing homeland for the Jewish people. The Palestinian people will have the homeland they have long dreamed of and deserved, a democratic state that is governed by law and respects human rights and rejects terror. From Cairo to Riyadh to Baghdad and Beirut, people will live in free and independent societies, where a desire for peace is reinforced by ties of diplomacy and tourism and trade. Iran and Syria will be peaceful nations, with today's oppressive—oppression a distant memory and where people are free to speak their minds and develop their God-given talents. Al Qaida and Hizballah and Hamas will be defeated, as Muslims across the region recognize the emptiness of the terrorists' vision and the injustice of their cause.

Overall, the Middle East will be characterized by a new period of tolerance and integration. And this doesn't mean that Israel and its neighbors will be best of friends. But when leaders across the region answer to their people, they will focus their energies on schools and jobs, not on rocket attacks and suicide bombings. With this change, Israel will open a new hopeful chapter in which its people can live a normal life, and the dream of Herzl and the founders of 1948 can be fully and finally realized.

This is a bold vision, and some will say it can never be achieved. But think about

what we have witnessed in our own time. When Europe was destroying itself through total war and genocide, it was difficult to envision a continent that six decades later would be free and at peace. When Japanese pilots were flying suicide missions into American battleships, it seemed impossible that six decades later Japan would be a democracy, a lynchpin of security in Asia, and one of America's closest friends. And when waves of refugees arrived here in the desert with nothing, surrounded by hostile armies, it was almost unimaginable that Israel would grow into one of the freest and most successful nations on the Earth.

Yet each one of these transformations took place. And a future of transformation is possible in the Middle East, so long as a new generation of leaders has the courage to defeat the enemies of freedom, to make the hard choices necessary for peace, and stand firm on the solid rock of universal values.

Sixty years ago, on the eve of Israel's independence, the last British soldiers departing Jerusalem stopped at a building in the Jewish quarter of the Old City. An officer knocked on the door and met a senior rabbi. The officer presented him with a short iron bar, the key to the Zion Gate, and said it was the first time in 18 centuries that a key to the gates of Jerusalem had belonged to a Jew. His hands trembling, the rabbi offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God, "who had granted us life and permitted us to reach this day." Then he turned to the officer and uttered the words Jews had awaited for so long: "I accept this key in the name of my people."

Over the past six decades, the Jewish people have established a state that would make that humble rabbi proud. You've raised a modern society in the promised land, a light unto the nations that preserves the legacy of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And you have built a mighty democracy that will endure forever and can always count on the United States of America to be at your side.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. at the Knesset. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Speaker of the Knesset Dalia Itzik, and former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Dorit Beinisch, president, Supreme Court of Israel; Nobel Prize winner and author Elie Wiesel; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran.

Remarks at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem

May 15, 2008

Thank you all for coming. Never a man to shy away from a microphone. [*Laughter*] I didn't realize it got so cold here in Jerusalem in May. [*Laughter*] Yes, but thanks for coming.

I first want to thank James Snyder and the museum folks for hosting this fantastic reception. Mr. President, thanks for joining us, and Mr. Prime Minister, I'm so honored that you all would take time to be here, as I am, members of your cabinet, members of the Knesset. We've got leaders from around the world who are here to share in this fantastic celebration. Laura and I really wanted to come by and say thanks to our fellow Americans for coming as well.

So I'm driving in the limousine, waving at friendly faces, half of whom seem to be from California or—[*laughter*]. I hope you're having as much fun as we are. It's been a—it's been such a fantastic couple of days for us, and what a fitting way to end with our buddies from the United States of America. You know, Israel has got no closer ally than America, and one of the reasons why is because of the connections between our—citizens of the U.S. and the citizens of Israel.

And so we're thrilled to be with you. We're also honored to be steps away from some of the oldest Biblical texts. I don't know if you've had a chance to go through the museum. I strongly urge you to do so—if they open it up for you like they did—[*laughter*]. But these documents tell the story of the righteous—of a righteous God and His relationship with an ancient people.

There's no doubt in my mind that the patriarchs of ancient Israel and the pioneers of modern Israel would marvel at the achievements of this nation. I mean, if you really think about it, I doubt few of the prognosticators would have projected Israel to be what it is today: a modern, thriving democracy in the heart of the Middle East. It's been an amazing transformation of dry valleys to

fertile lands. And the new technologies being nurtured here are a great testimony to the truest resource of the Israeli people, and that's the brain power and ingenuity and drive.

I gave a speech today in the Knesset. It was such an honor to stand in that hallowed hall. One of the things I wished I would have projected maybe more clearly was the fact that this is a land of courageous people, people who have had to withstand bombings and suiciders but never lost faith, people who have shown incredible resilience. And it's a nation worthy of our support and a nation worthy of our friendship.

As I said in my speech, I'm—I truly believe that if we stay firm in our resolve, resist the temptation to give in to the terrorists, and believe in the transformative capacity of liberty, someday other nations in the region will share the blessings of democracy and liberty. Someday they'll know that they'll have governments that respond to the people. They'll build schools instead of bombs. That they'll not want a war with their neighbors, but want to live in peace. And that's the dream, and that's the hope. And I firmly believe it can come true.

I do want to pay tribute to one brave soul, and that is Liviu Librescu. I don't know if you remember him, but he was the teacher at Virginia Tech. His folks live in Israel. I bring him up because it was a courageous act of selflessness—he blocked the doorway to his classroom with his body to allow his students to escape. And I think it's a fitting final statement here in Israel for me to make—to say that, isn't it amazing that a survivor of the Holocaust gave his life for others in the Virginia countryside? And I just want his family to know that we appreciate his courage and that his legacy lives on.

And so thanks for coming. Thanks for honoring a great nation and a worthy friendship. I'm proud to be here on Israeli soil as the President of the United States of America. I'm proud to carry our banner of liberty around the world. And I'm proud to proclaim our deep desire for peace.

Thanks for coming. God bless you. God bless Israel, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:40 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to James S. Snyder, director, the Israel Museum; and President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel.

Proclamation 8256—National Safe Boating Week, 2008

May 15, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation's beautiful waterways provide opportunities for recreational activities for millions of Americans. During National Safe Boating Week, we raise awareness of the importance of practicing and promoting safe boating.

Recreational boating is one of America's most popular pastimes, and it is important for every boater to take proper safety precautions. The United States Coast Guard encourages citizens to take preventive measures such as wearing a life jacket, never boating under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and taking a boating safety course. Too often, accidents occur on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction. Receiving a vessel safety check once a year will also help ensure a safe boating experience. To learn important information about boating, visit uscgboating.org. During National Safe Boating Week and throughout the year, I urge all Americans to put safety first when enjoying our country's magnificent waters.

In recognition of the importance of safe boating practices, the Congress, by joint resolution approved June 4, 1958 (36 U.S.C. 131), as amended, has authorized and requested the President to proclaim annually the 7-day period prior to Memorial Day weekend as "National Safe Boating Week."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 17 through May 23, 2008, as National Safe Boating Week. I encourage the Governors of the 50 States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, to join in observing this

week. I also urge all Americans to learn more about safe boating practices and always act responsibly while on the water.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:58 a.m., May 19, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 16, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 20.

Proclamation 8257—World Trade Week, 2008

May 15, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Free and fair trade helps secure a future of freedom and promise. During World Trade Week, we recognize the positive effects of opening markets around the world. Open markets play an integral role in America's economic progress, creating better-paying jobs, expanding consumer choices, and providing increased opportunities for American workers and employers. Free and fair trade also increases economic growth among our trading partners.

My Administration is committed to expanding economic freedom worldwide. We will continue to seek an ambitious outcome in the Doha Round that will reduce and eliminate tariffs and other barriers on goods and open new markets for services trade. The Doha Round provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to advance open markets, strengthen economic growth, and help millions rise out of poverty.

We also encourage the Congress to approve our pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. Our free trade agreement with Colombia is important, because it will support one of our closest allies in the Western Hemisphere currently under assault from a terrorist network. Congressional approval of this agreement would make clear America's unshakeable commitment to advancing the benefits of free markets and the interests of free people.

Today, nearly 250,000 U.S. firms export U.S. products. Ninety-seven percent of those exporters are small- or medium-sized businesses. The number of U.S. small business exporters has more than doubled since 1992. Those businesses have surpassed a quarter of a trillion dollars in annual export sales.

Free and fair trade helps reinforce our Nation's commitments to democracy, transparency, and the rule of law. This week and throughout the year, we recognize the importance of trade in promoting prosperity and freedom in the United States and around the world.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 18 through May 24, 2008, as World Trade Week. I encourage all Americans to observe this week with events, trade shows, and educational programs that celebrate the benefits of trade to our Nation and the global economy.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:58 a.m., May 19, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 16, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 20.

Remarks in a Discussion With Israeli Youth in Jerusalem

May 16, 2008

The President. Please sit down. First of all, Laura and I are honored that you'd join us. Thanks very much for sharing some thoughts with us. As you know, we're parents of young professional women. We're interested to know what's on your mind. And if

you've got any questions of me, I'll be glad to answer them.

What's on my mind is peace. I hope someday that everybody will be able to coexist and respect each other's religions and work together for harmony. And I believe it's possible. And I know it's going to happen when young people put a—get their minds together and say, "Listen, let's make this work."

So I'm interested in your thoughts, and so is Laura. And we're pleased to be joined by Condoleezza.

And perhaps you'd like to say something to begin with?

Participant. Mr. President, Mrs. Bush, thank you so much for choosing to spend this time with us. This is an amazing opportunity, and I'm very honored and glad to be here. Congratulations, *mazel tov* for your daughter's wedding. [*Laughter*]

I think this museum comes to show how unique this land and this region is. It's so rich with history, the cradle of civilization. While on the other hand, we see that Israel is such a new, vibrant country, only 60 years old. And we're still building our country; nothing is for certain here. And we—I, my friends, we want peace; we want to see the world like—live in peace, especially in this region. And I do hope—and I guarantee that myself as, hopefully, a future leader will do the best I can, the best of my abilities in order to make it happen.

I think that it's for now. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. You want to share some thoughts?

[*At this point, another participant made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

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.

May 10

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

May 11

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri and Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia to discuss the recent storms and tornadoes in their States.

Later in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma to discuss the recent storms and tornadoes in the State.

May 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Russia. Then, in the Oval Office, he participated in a roundtable interview with foreign print media.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in an interview with Mark Knoller and Peter Maer of CBS Radio.

The President announced the designation of a U.S. honorary delegation to attend celebrations in honor of the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel on May 14 and 15 in Jerusalem, Israel.

May 13

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he participated in an interview with Mike Allen of Politico for Yahoo! News.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Tel Aviv, Israel, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate John R. Beyrle to be Ambassador to Russia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rosemary A. DiCarlo to be the Alternate Representative of the United States for Special Political Affairs to the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador, and an Alternate Representative of the United States to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carol A. Rodley to be Ambassador to Cambodia.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jan Donnelly O'Neill as a member of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

The President announced his intention to designate Leland A. Strom as Chairman of the Farm Credit Administration Board.

May 14

In the morning, aboard Air Force One, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, after arriving in Tel Aviv, Israel, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, Israel, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the President's Residence. Later, he traveled to the Prime Minister's Residence. He then returned to the Kind David Hotel.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the ICC Jerusalem International Convention Center. Later, they returned to the King David Hotel.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on May 10 and continuing.

May 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Masada, Israel, where they participated in a greeting with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and his wife, Aliza. They all then visited Masada National Park.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in a gift presentation with Prime Minister Olmert and Mrs. Olmert. They then returned to the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, Israel.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Knesset, where they participated in an arrival ceremony and met with Israeli Government officials. Later, they returned to the King David Hotel.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with Quartet Representative in the Middle East Tony Blair.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Israel Museum, where they participated in a greeting with President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Olmert of Israel and his wife, Aliza. They then toured the museum. Later, they attended a reception in honor of the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Prime Minister's Residence, where, in the dining room, they attended a social dinner with Prime Minister Olmert and Mrs. Olmert. Later, they returned to the King David Hotel.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem on May 21–23: Robert M. Kimmitt (head of delegation); John J. Sullivan; Robert A. Mosbacher, Jr.; Larry W. Walther; Walter Isaacson; and Ziad Asali.

May 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush toured the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem. They then traveled to Ben Gurion International Airport, where they participated in a greeting with President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and his wife, Aliza.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where, upon arrival in the afternoon at King Khaled International Airport, they participated in an arrival ceremony with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Al Janadriyah, Saudi Arabia, where, at Al Janadriyah Farm, they had lunch with King Abdallah. Later, he met with King Abdallah.

In the evening, the President had dinner with King Abdallah.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev of Bulgaria to the White House on June 18.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands to the White House on June 5.

The President announced his intention to designate Michael O. Leavitt (chief delegate), William Raymond Steiger, and Warren W. Tichenor as U.S. delegates to the 61st World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization.

The President announced his intention to designate the following individuals as alternate U.S. delegates to the 61st World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization: Mark A. Abdoo; Gerald C. Anderson; Joxel Garcia; David E. Hohman; John E. Lange; Michael W. Miller; Penelope S. Royall; and Mary Lou Valdez.

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 May 13

John R. Beyrle,
of Michigan, 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 Russian Federation.

Rosemary Anne DiCarlo,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Rosemary Anne DiCarlo,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during her tenure of service as Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations.

Carol Ann Rodley,
of Virginia, 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 Kingdom of Cambodia.

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 May 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's honorary delegation attending celebrations in honor of the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel on May 14–15 in Jerusalem, Israel

Released May 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2929

Released May 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino, National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley, and Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Elliott Abrams

Released May 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Advance text of the President's remarks to members of the Knesset in Jerusalem

Released May 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Counselor to the President Edward W. Gillespie

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev of Bulgaria

Statement by the Press Secretary on the announcement by Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters on action to reduce flight backups, add competition, lower fares, and give airlines incentives to offer better service

Fact sheet: Strengthening Diplomatic Ties With Saudi Arabia

Acts Approved by the President

Approved May 13

S. 2929 / Public Law 110–230
To temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965