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One of the things I stressed as well is that the United States, in the midst of this financial crisis, will not abandon our commitments to people in the developing world; that the HIV/AIDS initiative, known as PEPFAR, will remain strong and vibrant; that our deep desire to significantly reduce malaria deaths in countries on the continent of Africa will not be diminished; that our obligation to help feed the hungry will not stop; that in the midst of all this turmoil and financial crisis, we will meet our obligations. These obligations are in our national security interests and our economic security interests, and they in—are in our moral interests.

And so I will tell you that I thought this was a very successful summit. And they're going to meet again. I keep saying "they" because some of you may not have heard yet, but I am retiring. But I told the leaders this: That President-elect Obama's transition team has been fully briefed on what we intended to do here at this meeting. I told them that we will work tirelessly to make sure the transition between my administration and his administration is seamless. And I told them that I hope he succeeds, that it's good for our country that people see a peaceful transfer of power. And I hope it was good for them to hear that even though we're from different political parties, that I believe it's in our country's interest that he succeed.

So I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come and visit with you. Thanks for covering this summit. Goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, in his capacity as President of the European Council; and President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Citizens Medals

November 17, 2008

President Bush. Congratulations to our recipients. Welcome, the families and friends here at the White House.

The Presidential Citizens Medal was created nearly four decades ago to recognize Americans who have performed exemplary service to our Nation. It is among one of the highest honors that can be conferred on a citizen. As President, I rarely have the opportunity to surprise anybody. [*Laughter*] It is tough to be stealthy with a security detail that comprises a 20-car motorcade. [*Laughter*] That makes me especially pleased to present the President's Citizens Medal to four outstanding and unsuspecting leaders in the arts: Bruce Cole, Dana Gioia, Adair Margo, and Bob Martin. [*Applause*] No, no; not yet. Please do not rush the stage. [*Laughter*] Remember the big security detail? [*Laughter*]

As leaders of our Government's cultural institutions, each of today's recipients have made lasting contributions to American life and civic culture, and each is greatly deserving of this honor.

As Chairman of the National Endowment of Humanities, Bruce Cole has encouraged the study of American history through the "We The People" program and has helped preserve America's rich heritage for future generations.

As Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, Dana Gioia has combined his passion as a poet and his skill as a businessman to enrich the lives of Americans, from young readers to soldiers returning from war.

As the Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities—and a fellow Texan—[*laughter*]—Adair Margo has rallied support for American cultural institutions and has used the arts to strengthen our relationships with nations from Mexico to China.

As former Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Bob Martin has helped preserve our treasured collections and bring libraries and museums into the 21st century with new technology. He's helped recruit and train a new generation of librarians to replace the many skilled library professionals who are preparing to retire. I know of such person preparing to retire. [*Laughter*]

Bob Martin's successor, Anne Radice, could not be here. This is a stealthy ceremony. [*Laughter*] She's doing something else. But nevertheless, in appreciation of her

service, she will be presented the Citizens Medal as well and is probably wondering why she was not notified. [*Laughter*]

Each of today's honorees understands that encouraging individual creativity and freedom of expression through the arts and scholarship strengthens and enhances our great country. And so I want to thank them for their service. I congratulate them. And now I ask the military aide to read the medal citations.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Clay Beers, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.*]

President Bush. Once again, Laura and I thank you for coming. I hope you have found this eve—this day as joyous as we have. Congratulations. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and the presentation ceremony of the National Medals of Arts and National Humanities Medals.

Remarks at the Department of Transportation

November 18, 2008

Thank you. Please be seated. Madam Secretary, thank you for the kind introduction. Thank you for the reception. I am honored to be with the men and women who work here at the U.S. Department of Transportation. I appreciate you giving me a chance to come by and visit with you today. I want to thank you very much for the great job you are doing to make sure that across America our railroads and highways and airways are working to keep our citizens moving. You have done a terrific job, as far as I am concerned. The past 8 years I have not seen a traffic jam—[*laughter*]—waited for an airplane—[*laughter*]—or had my bags lost. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate very much the fabulous job—and I emphasize fabulous job—that the Secretary of Transportation, Mary Peters, has done and is doing for our country. And I want to thank you for your service, Madam Secretary. She has been an outstanding member of the Cabinet; she is a strong leader. I saw her leadership, as did the country, firsthand when Minnesota's I–35 bridge collapsed. The Secretary coordinated a swift and an effective Federal response. Swift was important for the people in Minneapolis. Effective is always important when it comes to reminding our citizens that the Government can respond in a way that will make them proud.

I appreciate the fact that she launched a thorough review of bridge safety across our country and worked with the Congress to get the monies necessary to rebuild that bridge. The bridge reopened months ahead of schedule, thanks in large part to the organization, determination of our Secretary and the people who work for her.

Madam Secretary, you did your job. That's what I expected when I asked you to serve, and I really want to thank you for your service.

I'm proud to be here, as well, with the Deputy Secretary, Tom Barrett; thank you—as well as the former Deputy Secretary, and at one time Acting Secretary, Maria Cino.

I know that a lot of folks in our country think about transportation a lot, particularly this time of year. People are getting ready to move around for Thanksgiving, and with Christmas not very far behind. And a lot of our citizens are nervous about travel. They're not nervous about their safety, but they're nervous about what the experience will be like: the long delays, lost bags, overbooking of flights. One way to look at it is they're saying, "Will traveling home for the holidays be 'It's A Wonderful Life,' or will it be 'The Nightmare Before Christmas'?" [*Laughter*]

Our job is to make sure it is as comfortable an experience as possible. Now, obviously, the Federal Government can't control all aspects of how the airlines, for example, conducts their business. We're not in the business of managing airlines. We are in the business, however, of making it easier for airlines to do the job we expect them to do.

And so, to this end, you might remember, at Mary's recommendations, that we—the military opened its east coast airspace to civilian flights during the Thanksgiving holiday season. And it worked. This year, we're going