Greek ideals had an enormous influence on the American Founders. James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, wrote this: "Among the confederacies of antiquity, the most considerable was that of the Grecian Republics."

We respect the ancient influence of Greece, and we value its modern friendships. Greece and America have been allies in the great 20th century struggles against nazism, Soviet communism, and Iraqi aggression. Our two nations are bound by history, by trade, by mutual respect, by common ideals, and one of the world's most important alliances.

We in the United States consider Greece to be a friend, a strong ally, and a powerful force for good in the world. And all the world will see this in vivid display when Athens hosts the Olympics of 2004. We're all looking forward to the great event.

I'm very pleased with the strong and expanding relationship between the United States and Greece. Our trade has increased by 16 percent in the last year. Tourism and high level contacts between the United States and Greece have also increased.

I want you to know that the United States stands ready to help Greece and Turkey as they work to improve their relations. I'm also committed to a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus dispute. My administration fully supports the U.N. Secretary-General's efforts to bring peace and prosperity to all Cypriots. Our goal is an early resumption of the U.N. process.

The greatest gifts of Greece, however, to this country are the immigrants it's sent, men and women who enrich our Nation with their spirit. They're the models of community and enterprise, of family, of education and public service. And we honor Greek independence. And as we honor Greek independence, I also want to honor the Greek contribution to our national character.

So it's my pleasure to welcome you, Your Eminence, our distinguished guests, to this celebration of Greek Independence Day.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in the the Indian Treaty Room in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America; Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Grigoris Niotis of Greece; Greek Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandros Philon; Cypriot Ambassador to the U.S. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis; and United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan

March 23, 2001

President Bush. Good afternoon. It's my honor to welcome the Secretary-General to the Oval Office. My administration thinks he is doing an excellent job as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and therefore, we heartily endorse his second term as the Secretary-General.

I appreciate your willingness to serve a second term, Mr. Secretary-General, and I'm looking forward to working not only to make sure that you serve a second term, but once that's done, work closely with you to keep the peace and to make the world more prosperous.

So, welcome.

Secretary-General Annan. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I'm also looking forward to working with you. And I'm very happy to be here. We have many issues to work on together, and I'm looking forward to our discussions this afternoon. We will go over a whole range of issues, including HIV/AIDS, poverty, the Balkans and African issues.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, all. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Macedonia

March 23, 2001

The United States joins its allies and the United Nations in strongly condemning the

violence perpetrated by a small group of extremists determined to destabilize the democratic, multi-ethnic Government of Macedonia. The United States and its allies have a longstanding commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Macedonia.

The insurgents in Macedonia claim to be advancing the cause of the Albanian minority. They are not. In fact, their violent methods are hurting the long-term interests of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, Kosovo, and throughout the region. We support instead those political leaders in Macedonia and the region who have rejected violence and terror in favor of democracy and dialog as a way to achieve political change.

I strongly support the efforts of President Trajkovski and the Macedonian Government to uphold democracy and the rule of law. We encourage the Government to act with restraint and to work closely with elected representatives of the Albanian community to address legitimate concerns, while taking the necessary steps to prevent further violence.

The United States is working with its allies and friends in the region to assist the Macedonian Government in countering the violence perpetrated by the extremists. We support NATO's effort to assess Macedonia's immediate security needs. We are already providing surveillance information to the Macedonian Government, and our Defense Department is dispatching Predator unmanned aerial vehicles to assist in this effort. KFOR patrols have been increased along Kosovo's border with Macedonia in order to improve border security and curtail the insurgents' activities.

Macedonia is a close friend, a partner country of NATO, and a successful example of a democratic, multi-ethnic state in the Balkans. As the United States knows only too well, perfecting such a state—and addressing the legitimate concerns of minorities—is a continuous process. It can only be done through dialog and democracy—and never through violence. That is why we call on all those who seek political change in Macedonia to work through the democratic political process.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to President Boris Trajkovski of Macedonia. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address
March 24, 2001

Good morning. Just over 2 weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed a large part of my tax relief plan. Now the House is about to vote on my budget, the funding we provide for the needs and goals of our Government. I have sent the Congress a budget plan that reflects our values as a people.

My budget is compassionate. It dedicates $238 billion to Medicare next year alone, enough to fund all current programs and to begin a new prescription drug benefit for low income seniors. It protects all 2.6 trillion of the Social Security surplus for Social Security and for Social Security alone. It increases spending on education substantially. It provides tax credits to help low income people buy health insurance. It adds funding for medical research, and it gives our men and women in uniform a $1 billion pay increase.

My budget is also responsible. It pays down the national debt faster than any country has ever repaid its debt before. It establishes a contingency fund for unexpected needs, and it provides a reasonable 4-percent increase in discretionary Government spending; that is, 4 percent after we have paid every promised dime for Social Security and Medicare. Then, after meeting all these priorities, we return about $1 out of every 4 in the surplus to the American taxpayer.

Some in Washington do not think a 4-percent spending increase is enough. They want Government to take a much larger part of the surplus. But think about it. For the past few years, average hourly wages have risen at a rate of about 4 percent. If the taxpayer can get by on a 4-percent raise, the tax collector ought to be able to make do with 4 percent, as well.

There's a lot at stake here. Last year Federal discretionary spending grew at a massive 8 percent. If this spending spree were to continue, we would drain the surplus by funding a permanently larger Government. This would be bad for the taxpayer and bad for