

worldwide, and as we observe this holiday season, I encourage Americans of all faiths to join in building a culture of service that demonstrates the true character of our Nation.

America treasures the relationship we have with our many Muslim friends, and we respect the vibrant faith of Islam which inspires countless individuals to lead lives of honesty, integrity, and morality. This year, may Eid also be a time in which we recognize the values of progress, pluralism, and acceptance that bind us together as a Nation and a global community. By working together to advance mutual understanding, we point the way to a brighter future for all.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous Eid, and for health, happiness, and prosperity in the coming year.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 5, 2002

Thank you very much. With the lighting of the National Christmas Tree, we observe one of the great traditions of our Nation's Capital. And throughout the Christmas season, we recall that God's love is found in humble places, and God's peace is offered to all of us. Laura and I are pleased to be with you at this Christmas Pageant of Peace, and we thank you all for coming as well.

I want to thank Barbara for hosting this event. I want to thank all the entertainers for making the night such a special evening. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank Peter and the board of directors and the production team for organizing this fine event. I appreciate Santa coming. *[Laughter]* Looks like he needs a belt for Christmas. *[Laughter]* Finally, I want to thank all the good people of the National Park Service. The National Christmas Tree is a living tree, and the Park Service looks after it every single day of the year.

For nearly 80 years, in times of calm and in times of challenge, Americans have gathered for this ceremony. The simple story we remember during this season speaks to every generation. It is the story of a quiet birth in a little town on the margins of an indifferent empire, yet that single event set the direction of history and still changes millions of lives. For over two millennia, Christmas has carried the message that God is with us, and because He's with us, we can always live in hope.

In this season, we celebrate with our families—and deeply miss family members no longer with us. Thousands of families in our Nation are still grieving over the terrible losses that came to them last year on September the 11th. We pray for their comfort. We pray for the comfort for everyone who has lost a life this year.

Our entire Nation is also thinking at this time of year of the men and women in the military, many of whom will spend this Christmas at posts far from home. They stand between Americans and grave danger. They serve in the cause of peace and freedom. They wear the uniform proudly, and we are proud of them.

Laura and I wish every American family the blessings of this season, happy holidays, and a merry Christmas. And now we have the honor of lighting the National Christmas Tree. And joining us we've got two new friends, Samara Banks and Ben Schneller, to help us light this tree.

Now, if everybody—you all step up here. *[Laughter]* Get ready. Please join us in the countdown: Five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:57 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to actress Barbara Eden, hostess, and Peter F. Nostrand, chairman, Christmas Pageant of Peace; entertainer Roy Clark, who played Santa Claus; and Samara Banks and Ben Schneller, children who assisted the President in lighting the National Christmas Tree. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

**Statement on the Resignations of
Treasury Secretary Paul H. O'Neill
and National Economic Council
Director Lawrence Lindsey**

December 6, 2002

My economic team has worked with me to craft and implement an economic agenda that helped to lead the Nation out of recession and back into a period of growth. I appreciate Paul O'Neill's and Larry Lindsey's important contributions to making this happen. Both are highly talented and dedicated, and they have served my administration and our Nation well. I thank them for their excellent service.

**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.

November 30

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

December 1

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

December 2

In the morning, the President had intelligence and FBI briefings. He also had a telephone conversation with President Daniel T. arap Moi of Kenya to express his condolences concerning the November 28 terrorist attacks in Kenya.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with the 2002 NASCAR Winston Cup Series champion, Tony Stewart, and Stewart's team owner, Joe Gibbs.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Daniel T. arap Moi of Kenya and Prime Minister Meles

Zenawi of Ethiopia to the White House on December 5.

The President announced the appointment of Zalmay Khalilzad as Special Envoy and Ambassador at Large for Free Iraqis.

December 3

In the morning, the President had intelligence and FBI briefings. Later, he traveled to Shreveport, LA. In the afternoon, he traveled to New Orleans, LA, and later returned to Washington, DC.

December 4

In the morning, the President had intelligence and FBI briefings and met with the National Security Council.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen of Finland to Washington, DC, on December 9.

The White House announced that the President will host President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain for a meeting and luncheon on December 18.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert D. McCallum, Jr., to be Associate Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

The President declared a major disaster in Alaska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms, flooding, coastal erosion, and tidal surge on October 23–November 12.

December 5

In the morning, the President had intelligence and FBI briefings and met with the National Security Council.

December 6

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Putin of Russia concerning the situation in the Korean Peninsula. He then had intelligence and FBI briefings and met with the National Security Council.

In the afternoon, the President went to the headquarters of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, where he spoke to USTR employees. Later, in the State Room at the White House, he attended a 100th birthday