

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. at the Roswell Convention and Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Robert D. Beckel, USAF (ret.), superintendent, New Mexico Military Institute; Mayor Bill B. Owen of Roswell, NM; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### Exchange With Reporters in Roswell, New Mexico

January 22, 2004

#### President's Visit to Roswell

**The President.** I need some ribs.

**Q.** Mr. President, how are you?

**The President.** I'm hungry, and I'm going to order some ribs.

**Q.** What would you like?

**The President.** Whatever you think I'd like.

#### Homeland Security

**Q.** Sir, on homeland security, critics would say you simply haven't spent enough to keep the country secure.

**The President.** My job is to secure the homeland, and that's exactly what we're going to do. But I'm here to take somebody's order. That would be you, Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]—what would you like? Put some of your high-priced money right here to try to help the local economy. You get paid a lot of money, you ought to be buying some food here. It's part of how the economy grows. You've got plenty of money in your pocket, and when you spend it, it drives the economy forward. So what would you like to eat?

**Q.** Right behind you, whatever you order.

#### Nuthin' Fancy Cafe

**The President.** I'm ordering ribs. David [David Gregory, NBC News], do you need a rib?

**Q.** But Mr. President—

**The President.** Stretch, thank you, this is not a press conference. This is my chance to help this lady put some money in her pocket. Let me explain how the economy works. When you spend money to buy food, it helps

this lady's business. It makes it more likely somebody is going to find work. So instead of asking questions, answer mine: Are you going to buy some food?

**Q.** Yes.

**The President.** Okay, good. What would you like?

**Q.** Ribs.

**The President.** Ribs? Good. Let's order up some ribs.

**Q.** What do you think of the Democratic field, sir?

**The President.** See, his job is to ask questions; he thinks my job is to answer every question he asks. I'm here to help this restaurant by buying some food. Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News], would you like something?

**Q.** An answer.

**Q.** Can we buy some questions?

**The President.** Obviously these people—they make a lot of money, and they're not going to spend much. I'm not saying they're overpaid; they're just not spending any money.

**Q.** Do you think it's all going to come down to national security, sir, this election?

**The President.** One of the things David does, he asks a lot of questions, and they're good, generally.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:25 a.m. at the Nuthin' Fancy Cafe. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

### Statement on Senate Passage of the "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004"

January 22, 2004

I am pleased that the Senate has passed the omnibus budget bill, which fulfills important commitments like AIDS relief, education and DC school choice, veterans health care, law enforcement, and other priorities.

This bill stays within the spending limits I proposed, which is necessary as we work to cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years. I will continue to work with the Congress to focus on priorities, cut wasteful spending, and be wise with the people's money. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders  
Reporting on Continued Operations  
of United States Forces in Bosnia and  
Herzegovina**

January 22, 2004

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

In my report to the Congress of July 22, 2003, I provided information on the deployment of combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other states in the region in order to participate in and support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led Stabilization Force (SFOR). The SFOR began its mission and assumed authority from the NATO-led Implementation Force on December 20, 1996. I am providing this supplemental report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on continued U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia.

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to continue SFOR for a period of 12 months in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1491 of July 11, 2003. The mission of SFOR is to provide a focused military presence in order to deter hostilities, stabilize and consolidate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contribute to a secure environment, and provide, within its means and capabilities, selective support to key tasks and key civil implementation organizations.

The U.S. force contribution to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is approximately 1,800 personnel. United States personnel comprise approximately 15 percent of the total SFOR force of approximately 12,000 personnel. During the second half of 2003, 14 NATO nations and 11 others provided military personnel or other support to SFOR. Most U.S. forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are assigned to Multinational Brigade, North, headquartered near the city of Tuzla. The U.S. forces continue to support SFOR efforts to apprehend persons indicted for war crimes and to conduct counterterrorism operations. In the last 6 months, U.S. forces have not sustained any combat-related fatalities.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in these operations pursuant

to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed about developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I will continue to consult closely with the Congress regarding our efforts to foster peace and stability in the former Yugoslavia.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

**Remarks to the United States  
Conference of Mayors**

January 23, 2004

Thanks for your kind words, Big Jim. [*Laughter*] I've known him for quite a while, and he's an honorable man who's doing a fine job for the mayors. And I appreciate you all giving me a chance to come by and visit. I've got some thoughts I'd like to share with you about how we can work together to make this country hopeful and safe and secure.

I want to, first, thank you for serving your communities. It's not easy to be a mayor. Probably a lot harder than being a President. After all, I don't have to fill potholes—[*laughter*]—or empty the trash. [*Laughter*] But I do really want to thank you. This country is a fabulous country because we've got good, honorable people who are willing to serve at all levels of government. And one of the key levels of government, of course, is running the city hall, and you're doing a fine job. And I look forward to working with you, and so does my administration.

I do want to thank you all for the invitation. I want to thank Mayor Plusquellic, who's going to be chairman next year. Is that done? Yes—okay, good. I didn't want to jump the gun. [*Laughter*] I look forward to working with you. Mayor O'Neill, thank you very much for having me.

Mayor Riley, it's good to see you, sir. You reminded me, my mother went to high school in the town he runs in South Carolina,