

Prime Minister Martin. Thank you.

President Bush. Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News], the Prime Minister needs a translator. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:13 p.m. at the Lester B. Pearson Building. In his remarks, the President referred to President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Prime Minister Martin referred to Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Pettigrew of Canada. A portion of the Prime Minister's remarks and some questions from the Canadian press were in French, and an English translation was provided.

Statement on the Resignation of Tom Ridge as Secretary of Homeland Security

November 30, 2004

Tom Ridge has been a key member of my Cabinet, working to help make America safer and stronger. As the Nation's first Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and first Secretary of Homeland Security, he oversaw the most extensive reorganization of the Federal Government in 50 years. His efforts have resulted in safer skies, increased border and port security, and enhanced measures to safeguard our critical infrastructure and the American public. In the fight against terrorism, he has played a vital role in protecting the American people from a real and ongoing threat.

Tom has served America for decades, including as a decorated Army soldier, as a United States Congressman, and as Governor of Pennsylvania. He is a long-time friend, and I thank him for his leadership and dedicated service to our country. America is safer and our Government is better able to protect our people because of his hard work. I wish him and Michele all the best.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also made available Secretary Ridge's letter of resignation.

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada in Gatineau, Canada

November 30, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you all very much. Thank you. The Prime Minister just said, "It's good to be home." I'm here to tell you, it's good to be in Canada. I want to thank you for the warm reception, and I was pleased to see when I opened up the menu that we'll be eating Alberta beef.

Mr. Prime Minister, Madam First Lady, former Prime Ministers, distinguished leaders of Canada, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen, Laura and I are really honored to be here in this great nation. Canada is an old friend. Canada is an honored ally of America.

On this magnificent museum's coat of arms is a motto: Many cultures in one country. In your nation and in mine, people of many cultures, races, and religions embrace a set of ideals that proclaim the liberty and equality of all. These principles are the source of great unity in our diverse lands, and they are the foundation of a close and warm friendship between our two nations.

Our common bond of values and mutual respect have created an alliance that is unsurpassed in strength and depth and potential. Ours is one of the largest trading relationships in the world. We depend on each other to secure the energy resources that help our economies expand. We work together to protect the land and waters of our beautiful continent. Most importantly, our nations work together to protect our people from harm.

For nearly 50 years, the military personnel of your nation and mine have worked together as a single unit at NORAD to monitor the air approaches to North America and to protect us from attack. On September the 11th, it was a Canadian general, holding the chair at NORAD, who gave the order to initiate our defenses. In an era of new threats, American and Canadian law enforcement and intelligence agencies are working more closely than ever before, and our peoples are more secure because of it.

We also share the mission of spreading the blessings of liberty around the world. In October of this year, millions of Afghans, including millions of women, voted peacefully to elect a leader of moderation. We're working together for stability and prosperity in Haiti and the Sudan. With Canada's generous contribution, the reconstruction of Iraq will help that nation become a peaceful democracy.

Our efforts in these troubled regions are driven by our faith, faith in the ability of liberty to unite different cultures, races, and religions and faith in the ability of liberty to lift up people, to offer an alternative to hate and violence, and to change the world for the better.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, in admiration for all you've done to create a world governed by liberty and justice and friendship, I offer a toast to you, to the people of Canada, and to the friendship of our two peoples.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:15 p.m. at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. In his remarks, he referred to Sheila Martin, wife of Prime Minister Martin; former Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and John Napier Turner of Canada; Lt. Gen. E.A. Findley, Canadian Forces, deputy commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is located across the Ottawa River from Ottawa, Ontario. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Martin.

Statement on Signing the Veterans Health Programs Improvement Act of 2004

November 30, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 3936, the "Veterans Health Programs Improvement Act of 2004." The Act is designed to strengthen the management and administration of health care facilities and programs for our Nation's veterans.

Section 414(e)(4)(D) of the Act requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Secretary) to include, in a written notice of a mission change for any of several departmental medical facilities, an analysis of any alternatives to the mission change proposed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The executive

branch shall construe this provision in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

Section 501(c) of the Act purports to require the Secretary to submit to the Congress recommendations for changes in law in certain circumstances. The executive branch shall implement this provision in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

George W. Bush

The White House,
November 30, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 3936, approved November 30, was assigned Public Law No. 108-422. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 1. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks in Halifax, Canada

December 1, 2004

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you, and Mrs. Martin, for a fantastic dinner last night in Ottawa. We really loved it. My only regret today is that Laura is not with me. She is—went home to thank those who have been decorating the White House for the great Christmas season that's coming up. I married well. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the Premiers who are here. Premier Hamm, thank you for your hospitality. Premier Lord, Premier Binns, and Premier Williams, I appreciate you all joining. I want to specifically mention the Premiers because, as an ex-Governor, I feel a special kinship to those who—[*laughter*—]—run the provinces here in Canada. But thank you for your service. Ambassador Cellucci, mayors, local officials, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be with you