

time for Bob Gates. I can't tell you what an honor it is to be the Commander in Chief of unbelievably fine people, and I suspect he will share that same sense of enthusiasm as the Secretary of the Defense.

The job of Secretary of Defense is one of the most important positions in our Government. The Secretary must understand the challenges of the present and see the threats of the future and find the best ways to prepare our Armed Forces to meet them.

We are a nation at war. And I rely on our Secretary of Defense to provide me with the best possible advice and to help direct our Nation's Armed Forces as they engage the enemies of freedom around the world. Bob Gates is the right man to take on these challenges. He'll be an outstanding leader for our men and women in uniform, and he's going to make our Nation proud.

Bob is a man of vision, integrity, and extensive experience. In 1966, Bob began his rise from an entry-level position at the Central Intelligence Agency to become its director. During his years of public service, Bob Gates has worked under six Presidents from both parties. He spent nearly 9 years at the White House working on the National Security Council staff. He's amassed nearly 30 years of experience in national security matters. Bob Gates's lifetime of preparation will serve him well as the Secretary of Defense.

Bob follows a superb leader at the Department of Defense. For nearly 6 years, Don Rumsfeld has served with exceptional strength and energy at a time of challenge and change, and he produced impressive results. During his tenure, he developed a new defense strategy, established a new command structure of our Armed Forces, helped transform the NATO Alliance, took ballistic missile defense from theory to reality, and undertook the most sweeping transformation of America's global defense posture since the start of the cold war. He led our Armed Forces with determination and distinction. And on Friday at the Pentagon, the men and women he led showed their admiration and devotion to him. I want to thank Don Rumsfeld for his service, and I wish him and his family all the very best.

As Bob Gates raises his hand and takes the oath of office, he does so at a time of

great consequence for our Nation. He knows the stakes in the war on terror. He recognizes this is a long struggle against an enemy unlike any our Nation has fought before. He understands that defeating the terrorists and the radicals and the extremists in Iraq and the Middle East is essential to leading toward peace.

As Secretary of Defense, he will help our country forge a new way forward in Iraq so that we can help the Iraqis achieve our shared goal of a unified democratic Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself and be an ally in our struggle against extremists and radicals.

Bob Gates is a talented and innovative leader who brings a fresh perspective to the Department of Defense. I'm pleased that he's answered the call to serve our Nation again. He has my trust and my confidence, and he has the gratitude and the prayers of the American people.

And so I look forward to working with Bob Gates. I congratulate you, sir. I appreciate you taking on this job. And now I'm going to ask the Vice President to administer the oath of office for our Nation's 22d Secretary of Defense.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. at the Pentagon. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary of Defense Gates. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Lighting the Hanukkah Menorah

December 18, 2006

Thank you all very much. Welcome to the White House. I'm pleased you all could join us. I appreciate members of my Cabinet who have joined us: Secretary Michael Chertoff, Ambassador Susan Schwab, and Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten.

Tonight is the fourth night of Hanukkah, a holiday which commemorates a victory for freedom and the courage and faith that made it possible. Laura and I are honored to have this Hanukkah menorah here at the White House. It's a symbol that the White House

is the people's house, and it belongs to Americans of all faiths.

The story of Hanukkah celebrates a great miracle. More than 2,000 years ago, the land of ancient Israel was conquered, its most sacred temple was desecrated, and Jews were forbidden to practice their faith. A patriot named Judah Maccabee and his followers took a stand for freedom and rose up against their oppressors to take back Jerusalem.

When the Maccabees returned to reclaim their holy temple, the oil that should have lasted only one day burned for 8. That miraculous light brought hope. And today, by lighting the menorah, Jews around the world celebrate the victory of light over darkness and give thanks for the presence of a just and loving God.

We're honored to have a beautiful menorah here from Lisa and Alan Stern of Los Angeles. The ceramic plaques around the base feature biblical scenes of the Hanukkah story. And between the menorah branches are painted doves, which represent the eternal wish for peace.

I want to thank Ariel Cohen and her family for being here. Ariel, you did a wonderful job of saying the Hanukkah blessings and lighting the candles. I also thank the Indiana University's Hillel HooShir Choir for your wonderful performance. We're really glad you came. Thanks for coming.

On Hanukkah, we're especially mindful of the sacrifices that freedom requires. Our Nation is grateful to the men and women of every faith who serve our country in uniform and who are away from their families this holiday. We pray for them and their families, and we pray that those who still live in the darkness of tyranny will someday see the light of freedom.

The word "Hanukkah" means dedication, and the message of Hanukkah calls on us to dedicate ourselves to recognizing the miracles in our daily lives. This dedication has the power to lift our souls and to make us better people and to make the world a better place.

Laura and I wish all the people of the Jewish faith around the world a Happy Hanukkah, and thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the Bookseller's Area at the White House.

Message Sending Holiday Greetings to Members of the Armed Forces

December 18, 2006

To the Men and Women of the United States Armed Forces

On behalf of all Americans, Laura and I send our best holiday wishes to you and your families.

During this hopeful time of year, the hearts of Americans are filled with gratitude for the many blessings in our lives. We are especially thankful for the priceless gift of freedom that our Armed Forces help defend by serving the cause of peace and standing watch over our security. As courageous Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, you have set aside comfort and convenience to protect the rest of us, earning the respect of a grateful Nation and a proud Commander in Chief.

Many of you are confronting our adversaries abroad and observing the holidays in places far from home, but you are close to our hearts. You are serving at a time when our Nation needs you, and your fellow citizens appreciate the many sacrifices that you and your families are making every day. Over the holidays and throughout the New Year, we will continue to ask the Almighty to bestow His care on you and your loved ones.

Laura and I wish each of you a safe and joyous holiday season. May God bless and watch over you, and may God bless America.

George W. Bush

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

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2006

December 18, 2006

"For unto us a child is born . . . and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6