

situation was allowed to happen, how it can be fixed, and how we can prevent it from happening again. Walter Reed has a long tradition of outstanding medical service, and my administration will ensure that the soldiers recovering there are treated with the dignity and respect they have earned.

As we work to improve conditions at Walter Reed, we're also taking steps to find out whether similar problems have occurred at other military and veterans hospitals. So I'm announcing that my administration is creating a bipartisan Presidential commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the care America is providing our wounded service men and women. This review will examine their treatment from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life as veterans, so we can ensure that we are meeting their physical and mental health needs. In the coming days, I will announce the members of this commission and set a firm deadline for them to report back to me with their recommendations.

We will use the commission's recommendations as part of our ongoing effort to improve our service to our Nation's veterans. Since 2001, we've helped over one million more veterans take advantage of the VA health care system, and with my 2008 budget proposal, we will have increased the VA's health care budget by 83 percent over the past 6 years, from about \$20 billion to more than \$36 billion. Overall, I'm asking Congress for more than \$86 billion for veterans' services this year. If Congress approves my request, this would amount to a 77-percent increase since I took office and the highest level of support for veterans in American history.

The men and women recovering at Walter Reed and our other military hospitals are remarkable individuals. Many have suffered wounds that even time will never fully heal. Yet they're facing the future with optimism and a determination to move forward with their lives.

One of these brave warriors is Army Specialist Eduardo Leal-Cardenas. He was injured when an improvised explosive device blew up his vehicle in Iraq. The blast shattered bones in both legs, broke his ribs, and broke his back and neck. Some questioned

whether he would ever regain the ability to walk. There was no doubt in Eduardo's mind, and he began his rehab while still bedridden. Today, he's left Walter Reed, he's walking again, and he has something else he is proud of—during his recovery, Eduardo became a U.S. citizen. I was proud to be with him at Walter Reed when he took his citizenship oath. If you ask Eduardo what American citizenship means to him, he answers with just one word: "Freedom."

Our Nation is blessed to have so many fine Americans who are willing to serve. We're blessed to have so many compassionate volunteers who give their time to care for our injured soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. We're blessed to have so many fine medical professionals who dedicate their lives to healing our troops. This country has a moral obligation to provide our service men and women with the best possible care and treatment. They deserve it, and they will get it.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:25 a.m. on March 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 2.

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.

February 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will host King Abdallah II and Queen Rania of Jordan for a private dinner at the White House on March 6.

February 25

In the evening, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a performance by entertainer Ronan Tynan.

February 26

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru. He then had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President dropped by a meeting between National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley and members of Lebanon's March 14 coalition.

Later in the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President received the annual report of the Boy Scouts of America.

February 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senators Pete V. Domenici and Jeff Bingaman and Representatives John D. Dingell and Joe Barton to discuss energy legislation.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Rear Adm. Stephen W. Rochon, USCG, who he named as Director of the Executive Residence and Chief Usher.

The President announced that he has named Dennis Freemyer as Deputy Director of the Executive Residence and Deputy Chief Usher.

The President announced his intention to nominate T. Timothy Ryan to be Under Secretary of the Treasury (International Affairs).

February 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with Andrew Roberts, author of "A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900." Later, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with a congressional consultative group on the war on terror.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand to the White House on March 21.

March 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Gulfport, MS, where, at the Trent Lott National Guard Training Center, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Alan Petz. He then traveled to Long Beach, MS, where he toured a neighborhood and visited homes that had been rebuilt after being damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Later, he traveled to Biloxi, MS.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, where, at Lil' Dizzy's Cafe, he had lunch with elected officials and community leaders. Later, he went to Samuel J. Green Charter School where he toured the school and met with students.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Bob Riley of Alabama and Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael E. Baroody to be Chairman and member of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick D. Duddy to be Ambassador to Venezuela.

The President announced his intention to nominate David G. Nason to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Financial Institutions).

The President announced his intention to appoint Blake G. Hall and John Stringer Rainey as members of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Military Academy.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to Accra, Ghana, to attend the 50th Anniversary of Independence, March 5-7: Alphonso R. Jackson (head of delegation); Pamela E. Bridgewater; John J. Danilovich; Ronald A. Tschetter; Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer; and R. Timothy Ziemer.

March 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and a briefing on the tornado damage in Alabama, Georgia, and Missouri. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia. Later, in the Yellow Oval Room, he met with Members of the Senate.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New Albany, IN. Later, he toured Silver Street Elementary School.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Louisville, KY, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lea Fischbach. Later, he met with students from the McConnell Center.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil to Camp David on March 31.

**Nominations
Submitted to the Senate**

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted February 26

S. Ward Casscells,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice William Winkenwerder, Jr.

Claude M. Kicklighter,
of Georgia, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense, vice Joseph E. Schmitz, resigned.

William Charles Ostendorff,
of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Jerald S. Paul, resigned.

Submitted February 27

Jeffrey A. Taylor,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia for the term of 4 years, vice Kenneth L. Wainstein, resigned.

**Checklist
of White House Press Releases**

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released February 24

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome King Abdallah II and Queen Rania of Jordan

Released February 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 742

Released February 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released February 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand

Released March 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: Working With State and Local Leaders To Help Rebuild the Gulf Coast

Released March 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino